



# THE REVERSE OF URBAN PLANNING

## TOWARDS A 20TH CENTURY HISTORY OF INFORMAL URBANISATION IN EUROPE AND ITS ORIGINS IN MADRID AND PARIS (1850-1940)

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**THE REVERSE OF URBAN PLANNING. TOWARDS A 20TH CENTURY  
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ORIGINS IN MADRID AND PARIS (1850-1940)**

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## PREFACE

To understand the research shown throughout the next pages, it is worthwhile to present a preliminary step and explain the personal journey that brought me to write this thesis.

In 2014, three years after I emigrated to France to flee the global economic crisis and Spanish unemployment, I obtained an Île-de-France scholarship to move to Rio de Janeiro. Being immersed in an urban and social landscape deeply marked by housing self-construction had been a life-long dream of mine. This desire originated in my early youth and was nourished by some lectures I had found by accident during my architectural studies in the early 2000s. John Turner, Paul Rudolph, and Christopher Alexander feed my interest for the “architecture without architects”. The existence of a “timeless way of building”—a universal but invisible pattern of language that as a “generative grammar” shaped unplanned urban growth—not only excited me deeply but allowed me to understand the poor results of the modern city and my scepticism towards the whole architectural discipline, and to give a politically anarchist sense to my architectural reflections and knowledge. These ideas inspired me to such an extent as to undertake a career in sociology, a discipline that I thought would be fundamental to understanding such phenomena.

My stay in Rio de Janeiro allowed me to finish my master’s dissertation in sociology on the informal housing squats of Madrid while doing a research stay at the Metropolitan Ethnography Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. I also had the possibility to visit several favelas and begin to understand the complex social power dynamics that conditioned their urban growth. This experience allowed me to start to demystify the phenomenon and to be aware of the European trend to romanticise urban poverty. At the same time, I discovered with much surprise that most of my colleagues did not believe that informal urbanisation processes could have happened on European ground. Poor housing development seemed like some kind of “original sin” of southern countries.

Sometime later, my return to Europe, which was forced by the beginning of the Brazilian economic crisis, strengthened my desire to pursue studying the dynamics of informal city growth. When I was living in Barcelona, my distance from Brazil perhaps played a role in the different rejections that I received from different PhD programmes regarding my research project about the self-management of city growth. In such a context, the possibility to participate in the UrbanHist project provided me with a double opportunity: to obtain a PhD from a prestigious programme and to open my knowledge of social sciences to the study of urban history and planning. However, it presented a big inconvenience; not only did the programme require me to delay my long-term desire to research Brazil, but the programme itself totally neglected this subject, despite my knowing that in Spain, France, and maybe other countries, informal urbanisation spaces had been very present through their historical development.

The solution was to compromise and propose a historical research project on European informal urbanisation. If accepted, it would allow me to challenge the assumed timeless dimension of informal urbanisation with a rigorous historical methodology and explore the supposed universality of the subject. That was the starting point of a research project that, as you will see, has had a strong evolution.

# INTRODUCTION

## Study objective, hypothesis, and justification

This text proposes to discuss the characteristics and extent of informal urbanisation in 20th-century Europe and illustrate its origins by using two cities, Madrid and Paris, as case studies. Through these examples, a historical process is shown that likely happened in other cities in the continent: an increasing problematisation of the informal urban growth that led public powers to plan city expansions and to prohibit the phenomenon. Such process would have led to its illegal and frequently clandestine redevelopment, giving rise to which is known today as *informal urbanisation*.

The goal of this inquiry, in addition to allowing the restitution and analysis of specific empirical facts used to constitute historical research (Maier, 1992), is to identify regularities surrounding that historical process. The specific cases of Paris and Madrid do not permit stating generalisations for the whole region; however, exploring the causalities, processes, and conflicts that engendered it do allow for some hypotheses to surface about the origins and history of informal urbanisation that could be discussed in other contexts.

To illustrate such historical processes, we analyse a range of urban growth expressions with diffuse boundaries that evolved over time and are identifiable through two main analytical categories. On the one hand, the notion of informal urbanisation is employed to refer to the process of developing shacks or precarious single-family housing areas that were not planned by the public powers and were considered to be substandard and problematic because of their material and social characteristics below “normality”. This term comprises a range of elements that appear throughout the text, such as shanty towns, shack areas, poor allotments, self-help houses, survival architecture, and so on. Also under this umbrella definition is substandard urbanisation, which we sometimes employ to differentiate, in the cases of Paris and Madrid, the specific stages in which informal urbanisation was considered only below “normality” but not yet illegal.

The term informal urbanisation is problematic. The concept of informality, commonly used in urban studies today but not in the past, is an anachronism. As M. Maneiro and N. Boutes (2017) explain, the term informality was initially formulated between 1971 and 1973 by K. Hart to designate the employment conditions of a sector of the African working class. Subsequently, its application was extended to designate the entire economy developed in a deregulated manner in a context of state regulation (Portes et al., 1989). Finally, in the 21st century, the term began to be used to define modes of urbanisation outside urban planning (Roy, 2004). The genealogy and different meanings assigned to the concept of informality do not facilitate its intuitive application to historical periods, hence the need to establish “ad-hoc” definitions (Marx & Kelling, 2019), as we have done in this thesis.

As shown later on, throughout Europe terms such as *plotlander*, *Barackenstadt*, *Grüne Slums*, *Elendsquartiere*, *Wohnlauben*, *Kåkstaden*, *divlja izgradnja*, *nouzové kolonie*, *zemlyanki*, *somostroy*, *vremianka*, *mahalale*, *bairros clandestinos*, *borgate*, *baracche*, *abussivismo*, *ānarhi dōmisi*, *afthēreto*, and undoubtedly many more, were used to design local processes or spaces which seem to correspond to the definition used in this thesis. In the cases of Madrid and Paris, the terms *aduares*, *chozas*, *casas bajas*, *cités*, *lotissements*, the *Zone*, *campements insalubres*, *chobolas*, *suburbios marginales*, and *bidonvilles* were also employed to name different historical stages of informal urban growth.

Despite local variations of informal urbanisation through the different geographical and historical contexts, this thesis identifies a phenomenon unified around a single anthropological dimension: the development of cheap, minimal constructions to allow for human habitats, permitting them to be considered “ideal types” (Weber, 2006). However, even though this kind of habitat has probably existed since ancient times, the temporal scope of this thesis starts with the construction of these habitats as a public problem and ends with its transformation into a clandestine practice. Accordingly, in order to understand and discuss the historical evolution of such a concept, this thesis requires the analysis of three elements over time: (i) the problematisation of substandard housing areas, (ii) the evolution of urban regulations, and (iii) the analysis of the housing development adaptations to the normative evolution.

The main hypothesis of this text is that, despite being a phenomenon with secular roots, informal urbanisation emerged as a public problem and occurred alongside another historical process, the birth of contemporary urban planning. Accordingly, its transformation into a deviant and illegal urban growth mechanism would have been a pan-European process that occurred at the same pace that urban planning developed during the first decades of the 20th century. Analysing that process requires studying the transition from unplanned urban growth to highly regulated spatial planning, conceptualised through three main stages.

1. Urban growth under a previous stage of relatively unrestricted development of any kind of substandard housing areas.
2. The problematisation of uncontrolled housing production, identifying it as an element to correct and normalise, leading to the increasing regulation of urban and suburban territories and finishing by banning the informal urban growth from the whole state.
3. The transformation of housing construction practices according to the increasingly restrictive legal frames and control devices. Passing from legal, explicit mechanisms of housing construction, to hidden strategies of land commercialisation for housing self-provision.

As will be discussed,<sup>1</sup> no research until now has shown the whole European extent of informal urbanisation development or the dynamics that allowed its reproduction despite the urban regulations prohibiting it. This novel perspective permits discussing a range of elements that could challenge consolidated perspectives about urban planning, informal urbanisation, and urban theory.

Firstly, until now it has never been revealed that informal urbanisation was an extended phenomena throughout 20th century Europe. This idea challenges an unexpressed “European exceptionalism” (Helmut & Aust, 2012), which suggests the non-existence of these processes in successful states of the very core of the capitalist world system (Wallerstein, 1988). The identification of relatively similar historical processes in northern and southern countries within Europe could challenge the common assumption that the cultural roots of the phenomenon were an expression of a Mediterranean “spontaneity” (Leontidou, 1990). This perspective contests the theoretical frameworks that had traditionally differentiated northern and southern contexts (Choplin, 2012), contributing to “de-western” urban theory (Edensor & Jayne, 2011; Robinson, 2006). While many current projects propose to tackle this objective by conducting empirical research on southern contexts, we complementarily propose to make

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 20 through 23, in the section titled “A historiographical state of the art”.

visible how urban processes that are generally identified with the urban south have shaped European cities.

Secondly, the history of informal urbanisation allows us to discuss the relationship between urban planning and public norms during the origin of this problematic mode of urban growth. Studying the birth of urban planning sheds light on the origins of informal urbanisation and permits to analyze it before the main element that seems to identify it nowadays: its illegality, producing a comparative, genetic history of what today is a largely problematic mode of urban growth. As P. Bordieu stated, *“faire une histoire génétique . . . est le seul antidote véritable à ce que j’appelle l’‘amnésie de la genèse’, qui est inhérente à toute institutionnalisation réussie, toute institution qui réussit à s’imposer impliquant l’oubi de sa genèse* (Bordieu, 2012, pp. 177–178). This point of view will allow us to start working on a “genealogy” of the phenomenon (Foucault, 2006), which could be completed in future work.

Although the legal regulation of building construction was a key element of the legal code already in the old regime, the public powers started to develop spatial and legal tools between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century to increase their management of city growth and determine land use in advance (Mancuso, 1980; Sutcliffe, 1981). Until then, the urban growth had been ruled mainly by the action of the real estate market. In addition to other explicit attempts to rationalise city growth, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the European public powers increased the planning tools to determine not only the material shape of the cities but their social character (Topalov & Magri, 1987). Beyond the plans to develop bright, new urban futures, this project required a counterpart—the development of various regulations to impede the substandard housing development and to eradicate the existing areas. The analysis of such a project, which was as transnational and pan-European as the own urban planning birth, requires a confrontation between the written, juridical texts developed by institutions and the ground-based practices of the popular classes in their struggle to provide themselves with shelter. This confrontation allows us to understand the central importance of conflict in the birth of urban planning. The comparison between informal urbanisation spaces and their legal frameworks, both in Madrid and in Paris, permits us to analyse relatively unknown forms of informal housing areas such as the *chozas* of Madrid or the *cités* of Paris, compare them transnationally and discuss their interdependence with urban planning and related urban regulations, an analysis never before done from a historical perspective.

Thirdly, the transition between unregulated city growth in the peripheries and planned city growth permits us to discuss the causes and consequences of public intervention on the land market. Although informal urbanisation has been frequently assumed to be a kind of ideal bottom-up urbanisation process (John F.C. Turner & Fichter, 1972), our research invites us to demystify it. As we will see, at least in its historical European expression, informal housing was frequently linked to speculative land processes in which the landowners included abusive clauses. Although it was initially explicit, the process was eventually hidden because of illegality of this kind of urbanisation. From this perspective, developing informal areas would not have been an alternative to the market-driven processes but an inherent part of the capitalist land market that the popular classes would have been compelled to use. Facing these free dynamics, the public authorities advanced planning development, specifically of zoning, to stabilise and reduce the inefficiency of the capitalist land market; public regulations allowed the anticipation of the nature, costs, and profits of the investments of future areas. The spontaneous development of substandard housing neighbourhoods was a threat to zoning and



menaced the status and land value of the surrounding areas, requiring to be regulated and, at some point, being prohibited.

To discuss the illegalisation of informal urbanisation this text will (i) propose some historical sociology frameworks and a comparative historiographical analysis of 20th-century European informal urbanisation, (ii) show the development of substandard areas in Paris and Madrid at the beginning of the 20th century, analyse its role in the development of urban regulations and the first master plans of those cities and their evolution, and (iii) discuss the structural and historical change patterns of informal urbanisation, making evident the role of the urban regulations in their historical development.

### **Methods, comparisons, and interdisciplinarity: Navigating between comparative historiography, comparative history and historical sociology**

*The concept of informality has been much abused and misunderstood. [. . .] With respect to urban development, it was once supposed to distinguish the global South. [. . .] Opinion is changing: more writers recognize that informality takes many forms and exists everywhere, but a consistent method comparing cities has not been articulated (R. Harris, 2018, p. 1).*

Analysing 20th-century informal urbanisation in Europe is an extraordinarily ambitious objective. To deal with this goal, we have opted to combine three disciplinary methods: (i) a historiographical comparative analysis, typically used in historical sociological research, (ii) an in-depth empirical analysis of two case studies, Madrid and Paris, and (iii) an elaboration of an ensemble of analytical considerations in order to produce a critical urban theory that contributes to the existing corpus of informal urbanisation bibliographies with a historical point of view. The scale of this comparison requires the use of a massive number of historiographical sources, which is an approach close to the field of historical sociology (Lachmann, 2013). However, the use of some micro-cases situates this research methodologically in the related field of socio-history, which, differently from historical sociology, focuses on empirical work to reveal the connection of contemporary problems with their historical genesis (Gérard Noiriel, 2006). Combining historiographical macro-research with local historical analysis seemed a promising way to develop transnational, regional research involving cultural connections, transfers, and transnational influences and interdependences (Charitonidou, 2016).

Concerning historiographical research, this analysis attempts to describe the extent of informal urbanisation in Europe, show similarities and variations around it, and discuss an initial hypothesis, that informal areas were developed not only in Mediterranean contexts, as is generally assumed (Leontidou, 1990), but in the entire continent. Because our guiding element is the evolution of urban planning regulations, their transnational and relatively synchronous nature could indicate a general problematisation of informal areas throughout the continent. Accordingly, this thesis began with a systematic revision of articles about informal urbanisation areas in English, Spanish, French, Catalan, and Portuguese. This methodology provoked an initial over-representation of western and southern European findings. However, identifying the local historical terms for informal urbanisation in diverse languages from the continent, which occurred through online research about keywords for informal urbanisation and

through online English-language research, allowed us to understand and introduce cases written in German, Czech, Russian, and Italian.

Additionally, we cross-referenced these sources with historical documents about self-developed, deprived peripheral areas, which were found in historical conference proceedings of transnational forums such as Housing and Town Planning conferences, the Association Internationale d'Hygienistes et des Techniciens Municipaux (1927), and the International Housing Association (1935). Collecting these texts, which were collected from historical libraries in Paris, Madrid, and London, was complicated due to the international fragmentation of the written records, and it was possible to gather only a part of the existing conference proceedings. Analysing international meetings about informal urbanisation would require further research to identify the different conferences that dealt with it and their role in the problematisation and eradication of the phenomenon throughout Europe.

Although using comparative historiography was the only way to trace the European dimension of the phenomenon, its use for data sources was methodologically fragile. The inability to know in detail the geographical and historical contexts of each in the countries where those kinds of areas had developed could lead us to making tautological hypergeneralisations (Maier, 1992), risking the development of superficial comparisons and missing important causal factors. In addition, developing rigorous empirical work was required to demystify an object of study that is frequently described through idealistic or stigmatising perspectives. Although these risks have frequently relegated using comparative historiography to elaborating the state of the art and contextualising parochial research over in last several decades (McFarlane, 2010), the use of secondary sources seemed to be an irreplaceable source, as showed in recent “Global Urban History” works.<sup>2</sup>

To face the lack of precision of the data obtained through compared historiography, we carried out a comparative analysis of the rise of informal areas in two metropolitan areas, Paris and Madrid. This approach allowed us to construct the research in an inductive way, by the development of *une explication générale à des phénomènes qui s'observent dans des espaces différents* (Julien, 2005, p. 194). Such an explanation would facilitate, as already mentioned, the development of hypotheses about the historical process of informal urbanisation.

In order to develop these hypotheses, the data collection focused on two specific areas: Saint-Denis in the Paris region and Vallecas in the Madrid periphery. However, as analysing informal urbanisation required studying the general process of peripheralisation and its spatial management, the objective was not to focus only on a single space but to relate the microscale to the general framework that shaped it. To do so, it was proposed to make city-scale research compatible with in-depth explorations, permitting us to discuss metropolitan dynamics and at the same time to nourish and illustrate them for spaces at the microscale.

Differently from many planning history analyses, and strongly influenced by seminal research about informal urban growth developed by Annie Fourcaut (2000) in Paris and Charlotte Vorms (2012) in Madrid, we wished to focus on three elements: the ideas and mentalities that led to problematising substandard housing areas, the planning and regulatory elements that were intended to address them, and their real implementation—that is, the ground practices leading to the materialisation of the city as a built environment and as a socioeconomic reality.

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<sup>2</sup> As the carried out by C. Nightingale in the monography “Segregation: A global history of divided cities” (2012) and the A. Mayne work “Slums: The history of a global injustice” (2017).

The analysis of the relationship between these three elements in two locations would permit the development of a comparative *histoire croisée* (Werner & Zimmermann, 2003).

The Paris and Madrid regions, were selected as the main comparison spaces for theoretical and practical reasons. The existing accounts of informal urbanisation history showed an important presence of informal urban growth processes in the peripheries of both cities since the mid-19th century until today.



Illustration 1. Saint-Denis area in the Paris periphery (left), and Puente de Vallecas area in the Madrid periphery (right).

Source: Author' edition on *Routes et chemins du département de la Seine : 1911*, Gallica and *Plano de Madrid de José Mendez : 1905*. Instituto Geográfico Nacional

The area of Puente de Vallecas in Madrid, and Saint-Denis in the Paris region, hosted settlements that seemed to grow between the 1910s and the 1970s despite the urban growth regulations (Natacha Lillo, 2001; Mancha, 2018). The relatively similar urban planning evolution of both capital cities, and the equivalent nature of their “anomalous” urban growth, allowed us to conduct parallel research (Bloch, 1928) in both contexts so that we can discuss the similarity and divergence of the forces that shaped the areas and their influences and international transfers. The divergent elements between Madrid and Paris, such as their different sizes, levels of industrialisation, and kinds of immigration and planning traditions (*ensanche* versus *alignements*), were, however, compatible with a balanced comparison. Concerning Vallecas and Saint-Denis, there were also some differences: whilst the first was a growing periphery with a relatively low industrial sector, the second one was one of the main industrial areas of France from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, both areas had also major similarities. The fact that they had been emblematic working-class areas of their respective urban regions at the beginning of the century, being at that time independent peripheral towns, permitted us to imagine comparable housing processes and administrative answers to the phenomenon. Both towns experienced explosive urbanisation dynamics during the first half of the 20th century and both hosted large and well-known informal urbanisation areas

during the second half of the century, making them paradigmatic spaces of this kind of urban growth in their respective countries.

The PhD programme, foreseeing the mobility between both cities, facilitated the development of comparable research periods. Although initially research in three cities was envisioned, it soon became clear that it was unrealistic. From a practical point of view, my background of having lived and researched in Paris and Madrid facilitated the archival work and permitted the gathering of previous lectures and local knowledge from both cities. In addition, I personally knew Vallecas and Saint-Denis; the first one was the case study of my master's dissertation in sociology and the second was where I had studied, at the Université Saint-Denis-Paris 8. Finally, that initial stage of the research was marked by my presence at the two first sessions of the project "La Ville Informelle au XXe Siècle" in 2017, directed by Charlotte Vorms. Although it is hard to measure the influence of this experience on the overall development of this thesis, the project has undoubtedly inherited some of the questions and goals that arose at that time.

As a consequence of the need to research two cities in different countries, the archival work was carried out mainly during two full-time archival work periods.

The first period in Madrid was developed over three months and involved visits to the Archivo de la Villa de Madrid, Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid, Archivo Regional de Madrid, Archivo General de la Administración, Consejería de Vivienda y Transportes de la Comunidad de Madrid, Archivo del Partido Comunista de España, Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Biblioteca del Ministerio de Fomento, and the Biblioteca Histórica del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid. Because of an initial lack of time, this research required one extra month during the writing phase, essentially developed in the Archivo de la Villa de Madrid in February 2020 and finally interrupted by the Covid-19 crisis. Finally,

A second research period in Paris was developed over five months and was completed through on-line archival research. During the in-person research period, there were visits to the Archive Municipal de Saint-Denis, Archive Départementale de Seine Saint-Denis, Archives Nationales, Archive de la Préfecture de Police de Paris, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Bibliothèque Poète et Sellier, Bibliothèque du Centre de Recherches sur l'Habitat, and Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) et Musée Sociale.

Both research periods were completed throughout the writing period by an extensive use of digital sources, mainly obtained from Memoria de Madrid, Biblioteca Digital del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, Instituto Geográfico Nacional, Hemeroteca Digital de la BNE, Gallica, Bibliothèque numérique de la Cité de l'Architecture, Bibliothèque Poète et Sellier and Musée du Carnavalet. Finally, some primary sources were obtained courtesy of other researchers such as José Sierra, Laurent Coudroy de Lille, and Aristides Romanos.

The archival work soon revealed the extreme complexity of the task.

There existed much heterogeneity between the sources of both cities. While in Paris an enormous historiography and specific research about informal urbanisation areas existed, in Madrid this question had scarcely been a topic of study. The differences concerning the primary sources were also enormous; in France the archives were abundant and well ordered at national, regional, and local levels, but in Madrid this was not the case. Due to the lack of economical resources, some archives had very short descriptions of their collections, and especially in the case of the local Archivo de la Villa, archival research depended to some

extent to the inability of the employees finding themselves some subjects. Within this archive, the files on pre-war Vallecas were largely missing, as most of the archives were lost as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War and the post-war annexation to Madrid. The few remaining files were barely catalogued, consisting in large ensembles of thousands of files without order. Although an effort was made to revise them, the results of that research were relatively scarce.

In addition, the archival registers regarding informal urbanisation were highly fragmented, not belonging to a single department or administration, but to a myriad of institutions. Both in Madrid and Paris, informal urbanisation had been the subject of reports and policies of local, regional, and national institutions, and different departments were covered: hygiene, police, urbanism, and so on. Although the initial goal was to focus on these last archives, the planning departments were to some extent unaware of this topic; the master plans were mainly focused on urban futures, ignoring areas that would disappear when the planned city grew. The lack of information about informal urbanisation of the planning documents did not correspond to the real dimension of the problem. Despite its relative absence from master plans, the phenomenon was largely understood as something to be fought and thus appeared in many fragmented traces throughout the administrative archives and in urbanistic monographies and journals. However, the comparison of these fragmented sources also became problematic, especially concerning understanding and comparing the complex legal apparatus developed by local, regional, and national authorities to control the phenomenon in both countries throughout various decades. This source fragmentation led to a lack of information about one of the phenomena described in this text: *la Zone*. The primary sources for this area were obtained from the Archives Municipales de Saint-Denis and consisted of economic evaluations of the infrastructures developed by the city council without much interest in this research. Accordingly, the analysis of this area has been done mainly using secondary sources.

Finally, it was extremely hard to find popular perspectives on the phenomenon. Although some archival documents revealed the dynamics of informal urban growth and the claims of the inhabitants of the resulting neighbourhoods, these perspectives seemed insufficient, having been filtered through the lens of public institutions. This situation was partially handled by studying the press, which, despite showing a hegemonic perspective of these areas, offered some fieldwork analysis and dialogues with the population living in informal neighbourhoods.

Although we initially thought that little or no archival data would be found about our topic of study, it soon became clear that we had a problem of “over information”, partially as a consequence of the digital means to capture documents. The original project was to structure the research around two key moments in the relationship between informal urbanisation and urban planning: the first around the 1920s, addressing the birth of urban planning, and the second around the 1960s, through the development of the first national planning systems and the eradication of the phenomenon. In addition, the necessity to know the origins of informal urbanisation regulation led also to studying the precedents of the phenomenon in the late 19th century. At some point, the amount of information became considerable. Obtaining digital copies from the archives created a compendium of 51,158 files, many of which included tens or hundreds of pages, making it impossible to fully consider the archival sources in only three years.

Accordingly, it was necessary to adjust the thesis. An initial text would trace the origins of the phenomenon and the process of illegalisation, and a subsequent one would work on the post-WWII eradication of informal urbanisation. Although this thesis is only a part of the whole research project, the knowledge obtained about the progress of the phenomenon during the second half of the 20th century has undoubtedly influenced this text and have informed the general hypothesis about the phenomenon included in the conclusion.

Finally, our interest in obtaining theoretical outputs is partly due to the fact that this thesis belongs to a larger proposal: the MSCA ITN UrbanHist, an academic, collective project that attempts to create a group of doctoral theses about the history of urban planning in Europe during the 20th century, analysing a range of themes that together would challenge the predominant Anglo-Saxon narrative of the discipline.

In addition to revealing a hidden history of housing (Ward, 2002), analysing informal urbanisation as key factors in 20th-century European urban growth and urban planning would challenge an implicit European exceptionalism, according to which the “successful” European states would have avoided that kind of city growth present only in the Mediterranean area and post-socialist countries. Furthermore, these findings would invite us to reassess the current situation of the continental peripheries in order to consider the influence of the hidden threads of history (Gérard Noiriel, 2006) on their current problems.

However, the project could be questioned from a non-European point of view because of the geographical boundaries inherited from the UrbanHist general framework. During the last century, the European authorities dominated most parts of the world, imposing institutional orders and legal frameworks according to their interests. As a consequence, to fully understand European urbanism during the 20th century, it would be necessary not only to analyse their European dimension and regional circulations but to study the transfers (Espagne, 2013) of informal urbanisation policies towards the colonial world, and their possible way back to Europe; the development of strategies of informal urbanisation control in the colonial world could be closely related to those developed in their European metropolis. Having into account the colonial representations and domination schemes would be necessary to understand informal urbanisation history in Europe, especially in the case of France, which was the country with maybe bigger informal urbanisation areas in part inhabited by colonial and migrant populations. However, to avoid further limitations and to delineate an achievable topic of study, we will do not explicitly analyse the colonial dimension of European informal urbanisation history in this thesis, which is already perhaps too ambitious for a three-year-long project. Further research will have to address this topic.

To sum up, the methodological choices of this research have been designed to combine historical, sociological, and comparativist perspectives and methods to balance the weaknesses of each of these subfields: the excessive generalisation of historiography, the descriptivity of historical analysis, and the risk of over-conceptualisation and lack of historical sources of urban and planning theory.

## Theories of informal urbanisation within the urban studies field and the use of history

Last few years, a number of academic initiatives have attempted to construct an informal urbanisation theory to understand the general logic of the phenomenon within the urban studies field. However, few authors seem to have attempted to use both history and urban studies references to build a perspective about the phenomenon.

In 2004, the influential book *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (Roy et al., 2004) included a prologue by Nezar AlSayyad titled “Urban Informality as a ‘new’ way of life”. In it, in addition to considering the contemporary increase of informal urbanisation around the world to be a consequence of capitalist deregularisation, the author expressed that informal urbanisation was nothing but an old phenomenon. To him, the impossibility of freely building a house started with the “enclosure” of communal areas (AlSayyad, 2004, p. 25) as a part of the big transformation of economical regulations that led to the development of capitalist markets (Polanyi, 1944).

In 2005, R. Neuwirth published the book *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World*. In addition to tracing a global panorama of the nowadays squatting housing areas, the author included some chapters about informal urbanisation history, based on secondary sources, showing the similarities between past and present informal urbanisation.

In 2006, at the same time that Mike Davis published *Planet of Slums* (2006), V. Rao (2006), proposed to change of focus of urban research and study slums through subaltern, historically grounded post-colonial perspectives (Appadurai, 1996; P. Chatterjee, 2004). Few later, Colin McFarlane proposed discovering “urban spaces and experiences made peripheral” to light up “urban shadows”, revealing processes that until then were ignored in urban theory (Mcfarlane, 2008, p. 356) and from which informal urbanisation could become one of the most promising fields. These texts served as the inspiration for the influential article “Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism” (Roy, 2011) in which the author demanded situations of power, domination, and subordination of populations possibly existing in the margins of archives and written registers became visible. The author asked herself if it would be possible to retrace and understand an ignored, historically rooted subaltern urbanism by studying urban informality.

Recently, the development of informal urbanisation research seems to have exploded, leading to an informal turn (Elsheshtawy, 2011) giving rise to a number of works that, including those in the European region, have attempted to construct theoretical visions of the phenomenon. However, within these works, the embracing of a historical perspective was scarce.

Collective works such as *Public Goods versus Economic Interests: Global Perspectives on the History of Squatting* (Anders & Sedlmaier, 2017) and the recently published *Comparative Approaches to Informal Housing Around the Globe* (Grashoff & Yang, 2020) were based on compilations of chapters from different authors, disciplines, and world regions. Although they showed different episodes of the phenomenon both in the past and present, they were not conceived to provide a coherent theoretical construction of the phenomenon. Facing to them, notable individual researchers, such as T. Aguilera (2015) and F. Chiodelli (2019; 2020; 2014; 2016) have also developed, using different disciplinary backgrounds, informal urbanisation theoretical outputs that, although impressive, did not include the historical dimension as a central element. Only R. Harris (2018), an author with several historical research works, seems

to have attempted to build a theoretical framework about informal urbanisation by integrating urban history perspectives.

Indeed, an interesting discussion published in the *Journal of Urban Affairs* between R. Harris and M. E. Smith on one side and W. Bowen, R. Dunn, and D. Kasdan (2011) on the other, showed how urban history is frequently not considered to be a part of urban studies but a different field. Accordingly, at least for the second group of authors, most scholars do not integrate historical perspectives as a fundamental part of their research, using them only as a tool to introduce and contextualise their work about the present. However, they also stated that historical analysis is not only a key element to understanding the present and identifying the material, normative, and ideological elements transmitted through the time, but also the basic element through which to build urban theory (Ibid 2011). Whilst most scholars do not integrate historical perspectives as a fundamental part of their research, a big part of the nowadays theoretical constructions about informal urbanisation are rooted in 21<sup>st</sup> century perspectives, making invisible the existence of historical patterns and causalities. Developing some general hypothesis of the European history of informal urbanisation would permit, thus, fill a gap in the existing urban studies bibliography.

### A historiographical state of the art

In the following pages, a historiographical revision of work on the history of informal urbanisation will permit us to discuss the extent, temporality, and some of the characteristics of the phenomenon in 20th Europe.<sup>3</sup> However, it seems pertinent to elaborate on previous analysis of the historiographical perspectives developed about the topic of this thesis in order to situate this research within them.

In addition to those historiographical works, and to some extent unconnected to them, various comparative researches about informal urbanisation in 20th-century Europe have emerged in the last several years.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of V. Kreibich (2000) can be mentioned, which compares Rome and Madrid from the 1950s, the work of L. Leontidou (1990) that analyses spontaneous urban growth in Athens as related to Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese historiography, the work of S. Tsenkova (2012) about contemporary informal urbanisation in south-eastern Europe, and the work of T. Aguilera (2015) about the current public management of illegal housing, which included a historiographical analysis informal urbanisation historical development in Madrid and Paris. Finally, B. Kováts seems to be developing a thesis comparing informal urbanisation history in Athens and Budapest though a quantitative, macro-sociological perspective (2020a, 2020b). However, among these works, only that developed by V. Kreibich seems to be based on a transnational archival work.

The disciplinary origin of the previously mentioned research is extremely diverse. Although informal urbanisation has been researched by sociologists, political scientists, historians, geographers, urban planners, and architects, most of the work has described the diverse elements that condition the history of the phenomenon as beyond their traditional disciplinary

<sup>3</sup> See the section titled “Towards a European analysis of informal urbanisation” (pp. 30–56).

<sup>4</sup> Very interesting works such as those edited by Peter Clark and Denis Menjot (2019) that refer to previous stages of the phenomenon, whilst the articles and books by A. Vasudevan (2015, 2017) do not refer specifically to Europe.



boundaries; institutional action, urban regulation, popular agency, and architectural form are intimately related regarding the shape and evolution of the phenomenon. Although the number of research works and comparative outputs is continuously growing, at the moment no research seems to have attempted to establish a continental analysis of the phenomenon in historical perspective, a work that although in an embryonic stage has at least been attempted through this thesis.

Concerning the French and Spanish cases, the extensive historiography on informal urbanisation makes it possible to identify the main perspectives and gaps on the subject.

In Paris, most of the related research has been carried out by historians focusing on urban history, social history, and the history of migrations. The Centre d'Histoire Sociale of the Université Paris 1-Sorbonne seems to have gathered many of the analyses of the phenomenon that embrace both the first and second half of the 20th-century research. Associated with this institution, Annie Fourcaut, expert on the French peripheries, has analysed the legal frameworks, space conformation, and sociology of the local informal urban growth, the *lotissements défectueux* (Fourcaut, 1989b, 1989a, 2000, 2003, 2007). Having a link with the same department, Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard has worked extensively on the migrant habitat, analysing their spaces in the first decades of the 20th century and the political management of the post-WWII informal urbanisation local expression, the *bidonvilles* (Blanc-Chaléard, 1998; Blanc-Chaléard, 2012, 2016; Blanc-Chaléard et al., 2015). Even within historical research, we can mention Volovitch-Tavares's work on the history of the Portuguese migrants to the *bidonville* of Champigny (Volovitch-Tavares, 1995), the research of Natacha Lillo about the migration and habitat of Spanish populations towards Saint-Denis during the 20th century (Lillo, 2005), the works of Cedric David about the rehousing processes of the *bidonvilles* (David, 2002, 2010), and Muriel Cohen's work on the perspectives and political management of these areas (Cohen, 2010, 2013; Cohen & David, 2016). Finally, historian Anne Granier's (2017) work about the *Zone*, the large informal peripheral fringe surrounding Paris during the 19th and 20th centuries, places a special focus on the spatiality and the factors leading to the morphological development of the area. Different from the rest, this research seems closer to urban geography or urbanism research.

In English, various historians have also worked on this subject, such as a cultural history analysis of the *Zone* by James Cannon (2015) and the works of J. Paskins (2009) and Melissa Byrnes (2013) on the political management of the *bidonvilles*.

Within a sociological perspective, François de Barros (2005, 2012) has studied the permeability of the decolonisation processes in *bidonville* management, whilst Victor Collet (2019) has focused on the genesis of social movements related to those spaces, M. Delon (2016) has studied the memory of diverse areas, and Mathilde Costil and Élise Roche (2017; 2015) have compared the treatment of these spaces in the past and nowadays.

From an architectural and urban planning viewpoint, historical works are less frequent, but it is worthy to mention the work of Jean-Louis Cohen regarding the *Zone*'s architectural and urban renewal (J.-L. Cohen, 1992) and the remarkable re-edition of the work of Serge Santelli and Isabelle Herpin (2018) about the spatial genesis of the *bidonville* de Nanterre. Although many of these works mention the link between urban planning and the diverse expressions of informal urbanisation, none of them seemed to cover the history of urban planning and its evolution related to the phenomenon.

A comparable situation seems to happen with Madrid historiography. In that city, the historical research about its urban peripheries seems to have been scarce for a number of years and compensated for by a recent renewal and motivation of this pursuit (Cuartero Miranda, 2020).

Within the historical discipline, academics from the Grupo de Investigación Espacio, Sociedad y Cultura en la Edad Contemporanea of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid have studied spaces historically affected by the development of substandard urban growth during the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, such as the Ensanche Norte (Pallol Trigueros, 2011) and the Ensanche Sur (Vicente Albarrán, 2011), focusing on cultural and social aspects of their historic life. In contrast, work on the political history of the city (De Miguel Salanova, 2017b, 2017a, 2019) and its grassroots movements (Hernández Quero, 2020; Hernández Quero & Pallol Trigueros, 2019; Pérez, 2002) have identified the role of substandard spaces in the evolution of the collective action of the city in the same temporal scope.<sup>5</sup> Finally, some younger researchers, such as Rafael Bohigas (2019; 2018) and Andrés Burbano (2015, 2017; 2020), have worked in substandard and informal processes, likely being the most focused on the history of space production and planning.

Unrelated with this research group, the classical works of Clementina Diez de Baldeon (1983) revealed the working-class architecture and its regulatory frames, and the recent work of Juan Jimenez Mancha (2018) has developed an analysis of a history of informal urbanisation closer to the local memory of a neighbourhood, focusing on the local history but including key analysis about local urban growth processes.

Charlotte Vorms, member of the Centre d'Histoire Sociale des mondes contemporains of Paris Sorbonne, requires special consideration. Her research identifying both informal urban growth in Madrid between the second half of the 19th century (Vorms, 2003, 2012) and post-Civil War (Vorms, 2013, 2017), mixes situated social history approaches with the history of urban growth and focuses on the agency of the popular classes and the development of the urbanisation process. Within this work is a recently published book chapter (Vorms, 2019) that compares the informal phenomena in Madrid and Paris, including reflections about their redevelopment after WWII. This chapter is closely related to the subject of this thesis, although some elements differ; its length is 21 pages, the methods include analysis from two circumscribed neighbourhoods, and the approach focuses more on the history of urbanisation than on its problematisation and public planning.

Within architectural and urban planning fields, the segmentation of academic research in Spain could have provoked a topic such as informal urbanisation to remain in a no man's land for a long time because as architects and urban planners generally focus on "planned" urban forms. This could explain why works such as those of Carlos Sambricio (1984, 1999, 2003b, 2004) and Fernando de Terán (1983; 1978), which described the history of urban planning in Madrid, only referred to local informal urban growth as secondary, nearly invisible phenomena, despite the quantitative and urban planning importance that such element had in the city. Contrasting with those general works, urban planners such as Ramón López de Lucio (1988), María Teresa Franchini (Franchini, 1988), and Ángela Matesanz, together with the French urban historian Fathia Belmessous (2014), have explored the genesis and evolution of informal spaces of

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<sup>5</sup> Although outside the case of Madrid, the work of another Spanish author, Jose Luis Oyón, is worth remembering, which included reflections on the history of the working-class movements and the urban space (Oyón & Serra Permanyer, 2010; Oyón, 2008).

Madrid but the geographical and temporal scopes of their work do not permit obtaining a clear picture of the general evolution of the phenomenon.

Finally, a remarkable article by the geographers Elia Canosa and Isabel Rodríguez Chumillas (1985) described the development of informal urbanisation from a historical perspective, and the doctoral thesis of the urban geographer Francisca Orellana (1991), although focusing on the general development of the northwest of the city, also included elements to explain the historical informal process of urban growth of the Madrid periphery. However, again those research works did not investigate the historical planning process that led to the prohibition of the phenomenon.

To sum up, the existent theoretical perspectives on informal urbanisation developed by urban geographers, urban sociologists, and political scientists have until now lacked historical perspective. To address this gap, urban historiography has increasingly worked on reconstructing 20th-century informal urbanisation processes in the European continent. However, most of this research has lacked of theoretical ambition, perhaps in part as a consequence of the disciplinary boundaries and the aforementioned lack of comparative research. The main exception seems to be the current work of the research group *La Ville Informelle au XXe Siècle*, led by Charlotte Vorms, that is attempting to build a global history of this phenomenon by coordinating academics from different geographical contexts and disciplinary backgrounds. At the moment, their preliminary results seem more focused on the social history of the spaces and their social control through census (De Barros & Vorms, 2019) than on urban growth processes. However, additional publications and network analysis among the members could lead to an enormous step forward in the upcoming years regarding the comparative and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon.

The bibliographical review of the urban studies and urban history fields reveals an existing academic gap. Although a number of fragmented historical research studies have examined various informal urban growth processes in Europe, none until now have attempted to understand the continental dimension of the phenomenon. Concerning the cases of Madrid and Paris, no previous research has made a theoretical inquiry into the historical interrelationships between the historical development of urban planning and informal urbanisation.

## THEORETICAL DIRECTIONS

In this research, in order to analyse the illegalisation of informal urbanisation in Europe, it seems pertinent to discuss various historical sociology perspectives to provide theoretical input to the factual historical accounts. In this project's purely historical analysis, the interpretative dimension has attempted to respect the sources as much as possible to avoid distorting the historical facts. In this chapter, however, some of the elements that could explain the phenomenon's nature and evolution will be presented. In a traditional sociological analysis, this framework would be a purely theoretical piece to be subsequently recalled throughout the text, but in this historical exercise we have considered it necessary to relate these abstract ideas to the historical facts that will be narrated. Doing so allows us to provide in advance ideas and interpretations that could guide the reader through the following empirical work, which will be expanded on in the conclusions.

### The never-solved housing question

The production of informal urbanisation areas was and still is closely related to the absence of cheap housing. Although this lack of cheap housing use to be tackled through unsuccessful politics promoting private building construction, those kinds of strategies have been shown only to increase the quantity of empty houses without distributing them among society (Manzano Gómez, 2015). Already in *The Housing Question* (Engels, 1873), this problem had been considered to be a result of capitalist speculation.

*The workers are being displaced from the center to the periphery; the workers' houses and, in general, the small houses, are more and more scarce and expensive, and in many cases it is impossible to find such a house, because in such conditions, the construction industry finds in the building of high rent houses an infinitely more favorable field of speculation, and only exceptionally builds houses for workers* (Ibid 1873, p. 20).

This process was identified in the specific context of the second Industrial Revolution in Europe, and some contemporary authors have noted the prophetic nature of the text that pointed to the structural impossibility of the private real estate market to develop decent housing for all levels of the social strata (Smith, 2016) and have verified its hypothesis from a longue-durée perspective (Topalov, 1987). In our historical case studies, the private real estate market also tended to produce middle- and upper-class housing, and the rental market tended to exclude populations without stable incomes, obligating poor and working-class populations to self-develop informal shelters.

In addition, Engels's text made a claim against converting tenancies into private housing, which was demanded by A. Mülberguer, supporter of the anarchist P.J. Proudhon. This idea converged with the claims of the 19th century reformist, who believed that housing ownership would allow workers to mortgage their homes if they became unemployed, making them responsible and morally correcting them. Against such arguments, Engels reasoned that popular ownership would not avoid capitalist accumulation and would lead to the long-term

reproduction of the previous dynamics. In addition, Engels thought that state regulations could not prevent the housing problem because economic laws would bypass them (F. Engels, 1873). According to him, there was not a housing problem but a systemic one, and the only solution was to abolish both the exploitation and oppression of the ruling class by the working class and the expropriation of private property (Engels 1872 Hodkinson, 2012). Solving the housing problem through the popularisation of property could have been partially done in the 20th century by developing informal housing throughout Europe.

Interestingly, one hundred years later, a debate about the development of informal urbanisation in southern contexts was reminiscent of the Marxist and anarchist approaches to the housing question. Whilst the anarchist approach, publicised by the architect John Turner, advocated for developing owned self-built areas, being supported by organisations such as the World Bank, the Marxist solution proposed the production of state-driven social housing.

The first approach purported that instead of building alienating and economically inefficient social housing states, the solution should be regularising the existing informal areas. Substituting a top-down bureaucratic urbanism with a self-governed system would permit the development of cheaper, use-value neighbourhoods, empowering their populations through the process (John F.C. Turner & Fichter, 1972). However, this approach was accused of facilitating the “*capital valorization of huge areas of land, property and finance in areas where previously there were severe blockages and bottlenecks*”, causing “*lucrative business of urban and land speculation and development*” to create displacement pressures and with it a whole new housing question (Burgess, 1978, p. 1120). These warnings seem to have been confirmed by various contemporary regularisation processes (Ascensão, 2018).

In our historical case studies, both approaches can be seen. The repeated patterns of informal housing growth could have provided shelter and empowerment for deprived populations. At the same time, the process could have allowed to temporarily alleviate the housing problem, relieving the public powers of their responsibilities while serving as mechanism to allow capital gains in the last fringes of the city.

### Territorial control and urban regulation

The historical evolution of informal urbanisation areas led us to question its relationship to the evolution of the state’s power over the territory. The existence of informal urbanisation as a hypothetical ungovernance of space (Clunna & Trinkunas, 2011), has been contested recently (Aguilera, 2015). Contemporary research has shown how sovereignty over the territory is not an issue in contemporary European states, at least from the point of view of coercive police action (Ibid, 2015). In fact, some authors have stated that the high economic value of urban land from pre-modern times until now would have implied high levels of land control and survey both in urban and peri-urban territories, making the lack of control over them implausible (R. Harris, 2018).

The works of Foucault (2006) have shown a historical increase of territorial control by the state. The development of diverse devices, *ensemble of explicit restrictions to govern behaviours* (Skornicki, 2017, p. 30) would have led to the development of a biopolitical power (Foucault, 2004b) in order to normalise and rationalise the performance of the working-classes. The development of biopolitical devices (Foucault, 2004b) would have allowed

transitioning from a punitive historical stage to a disciplinary one. This historical process would have been used by the public powers to achieve various monopolisation processes, thereby impeding the development of the non-state violence, extending the symbolic power of the dominant classes, and increasing the extent of tax incomes collection (Skornicki, 2017). Although the discussion of these socio-historical processes is outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to mention they seem to be constitutive elements of the birth of urban planning and the control of urban growth. As will be shown, extending urban regulations throughout the territory was justified by the need to control suspect populations, to develop cities the upper classes perceived as beautiful, and to increase public tax collection and reduce expenses. In fact, urban planning has been cited as a device of normalisation and production of “disciplinarian” space (Pløger, 2008).

Economically, developing urban regulations would ensure the investments in the real estate sector. Despite the liberal myths that suggest some kind of perfect self-regulation of capitalist dynamics, institutionalising sets of rules is an unavoidable step to dissociating the economy and workforce from quotidian life and permitting cumulative, hierarchical structures of capital extraction to develop (Polanyi, 1944). From this perspective, *“markets don’t just arise ‘naturally’ . . . the state and the law are actively involved in defining what is to be traded”* (Edwards 2000, p. 600 in Jäger, 2003).

As the French regulation theory has shown, *“the capitalist mode of production is contradictory in multiple ways, and a specific form of regulation of those contradictions is necessary to permit a stable path of accumulation”* (Jäger, 2003, p. 239). Therefore, every historical change of economic phase has required readjusting the legal framework to stabilise the economic system and permit stable paths of capital accumulation, leading to specific regimes of accumulation (Boyer, 1986). Within urban history, the birth of contemporary planning, along with zoning, could have been a crucial tool for urban regulation in a moment of crisis under the new Taylorist economy, when the city “exploded” and disaggregated itself through a periphery increasingly connected by mass transportation.

In that context, whilst the rising urban planning was seen as a tool for coordinating and specialising the metropolitan territories land use (Fernández Águeda, 2017; Topalov & Magri, 1987), the spontaneous development of informal areas could have constituted a threat not only to the land values of “normal” city spaces, but to the entire system of Fordist rationalisation of urban growth. Consequently, the politics that tended to control urban growth could have required establishing a planned city and also addressing and avoiding the reverse—spontaneous informal growth and its space footprint of poverty.

Lastly, the control over informal areas, especially the destruction of squatting spaces, could have had the purpose of ensuring the rule of law and the “sacred” right to ownership. The free use of lands to build housing would bypass the real estate market, solving the housing shortage for the popular classes and lowering rents and mortgage payments. As a result, this absence of restrictions would have permitted the popular classes to be partially liberated from salaried work. As Polanyi described concerning the British case, the modernisation of the 19th-century economy led to a dismantle the right to housing of the popular classes by the destruction of housing areas on common lands, making them dependent of the labour market and triggering the emigration to the industrial urban centres making (Polanyi, 1944).

However, as has been already discussed, the existence of informal housing areas could have also removed the state's responsibility to provide housing and permitted the industrial sector to operate with an extremely cheap labour force because of the low housing costs.

The public powers' management of informal urbanisation areas, making it illegal but frequently allowing it and which has been conceptualised as "precarious tolerance" (Gonçalves & Santos, 2021), would have played two roles. On one hand, informal urbanisation would have provided an escape mechanism for the housing problem, allowing the public powers to add or reduce pressure contextually to the housing deficit. On the other hand, the precarisation of those areas, which restricted public services and constructed them as spaces of territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant et al., 2014), would have created some sort of urban heterotopia (Foucault, 1994), disincentivising the working classes to bypass legality and self-develop a housing solution. Such equilibrium between public tolerance and punishment, between popular agency and social marginalisation, would have actually allowed the historically structural existence of an artificial shortage of cheap housing and, thus, real estate market.

### Exception spaces, displacement, and capital gains

The processes shown throughout this thesis are also related to the development of "exception spaces" where the state's sovereignty varies, frequently in order to adapt to capitalist market needs (Ong, 2006). The existence of exception zones has been theorised by the jurist philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2004), who explained that the development of a "*gap in the law, an area of anomie in which all legal determinations are deactivated*" (p. 99) would be inherent in juridical and political practice, allowing the existence of threshold spaces as a governmental technique.

These kinds of differentiated zones could be identified by what contemporary urban planning has named "grey spaces", which are defined as "*developments, enclaves, populations and transactions positioned between the 'lightness' of legality/approval/safety and the 'darkness' of eviction/destruction/death*" (Yiftachel, 2009b, p. 243). In contrast with "normal" urban spaces, "*gray spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans*" (Ibid 2009a, p. 243). These spaces, which receive differential spatial treatment, are tolerated and at the same time stigmatised, being subject to evictions and thus dependent on the decisions and contextual interests of the authorities in an exercise of precarious tolerance (Soares Gonçalves, 2014). Frequently, these areas are maintained rather than eliminated because of a politics of unrecognition that is accompanied by a discourse of "othering" to facilitate exercising power over them (Yiftachel, 2009b). Within this framework, urban planning would be a key element in their differentiation and spatial management: "*we must of course consider selective non-planning as part of planning . . . a system managing profound societal inequalities*" (Yiftachel, 2009b, p. 92).

The configuration and development of these urban exception zones are far from being accidental. Today they are constructed and maintained by both the public administration and real estate market interests. From this perspective, urban informality has also been considered "*a logic through which differential spatial value is produced and managed*" (Ananya Roy, 2011, p. 233). The relationship between exception zones and the capitalist production of the spaces could be related to the exploitation of "rent gaps" (Smith, 1979), defined as the "*disparity*

*between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground*" (1979, p. 545). Although this theory has often been identified by the gentrification of central urban areas, its fundamental basis would be the displacement of deprived populations (Smith, 2016), and contemporary research on informal urbanisation displacement has described it as a process of "periurban rent-gap" extraction (Apaolaza & Venturini, 2021). Although this theoretical framework has been used mainly to describe current ongoing processes, its structural character should be explored by "*integrating a sense of historical spatiality*" (Lees et al., 2010, p. 97). From a top-down perspective, the historical reproduction and transformation of informal urbanisation areas in the peripheries of European cities could correspond to a market-driven process that requires institutional collaboration in order to be regulated.

The historical illegalisation of informal urbanisation could have been, from this perspective, a further step in the use of "exceptionality" to manage informal areas and their populations, facilitating evictions and precarising the last fringes of the city that would eventually be renovated.

### Deviance production and subaltern resistance

Developing exception spaces and displacing their populations would require constructing stigmatising accounts about them to erode its public legitimacy and rights. Such stigmatisation could result from a dual process: the ideological construction and reproduction of accounts of "otherness" (Spivak, 2010) and the dynamic process of constructing ideas of deviance (Spitzer, 1975) related to specific spaces, depending on contextual interests.

Concerning the first process, the concept of "otherness" has been identified as an unchanging mechanism that leads to marginalising populations and reinforcing a dominant sense of superiority (Staszak, 2008), and by keeping "risky" individuals and subgroups within specific geographical limits (Lupton, 1999). These sociological and anthropological perspectives have been used to theorise about the current processes of territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant, 2009; Wacquant et al., 2014) and could explain the existence of structural public powers positions against informal urbanisation.

Concerning the second process, the development of urban regulations and the increasing illegalisation of such spaces differentiated them from the "normal" city, providing the public powers with the grounds to initiate actions against them. Constructing urban regulations would have been a tool for deviance production (Spitzer, 1975) by pointing out informal urbanisation areas and its inhabitants as outside the new legal frames. If we accept that exercising domination is deployed to maintain social order, then the public powers' construction of deviant urban spaces would focus on how those populations hinder the objectives of the dominant groups.

Accordingly, stigmatising informal spaces would serve to delegitimise the potentially disruptive actions of their inhabitants. Evicting the poorest areas would have made the process part of a general dynamic to "forcibly separate people" to "fragment and destroy" their common agency (De Angelis, 2007:135). This symbolic defamation of space (Slater, 2017) would have also served economic ends and facilitated rent-gap extraction, constituting a key element of a continuous class struggle related to the historical cycles of investment and disinvestment in cities (Ibid 2017).



On the other hand, producing legal frameworks to make substandard urbanisation illegal would be accompanied by a strategy of containment consisting of “*a geographic segregation of large populations and the use of formal and informal sanctions to circumscribe the challenges that they present*” (Spitzer, 1975, p. 649); this process is administered to a homogeneous group which is managed passively as long as it remains in its place (Ibid 1975). The production of “exception spaces”, where public authorities tolerate informal urbanisation, could be a way to facilitate surveillance, concentrating on the “dangerous classes” (Chevalier, 1958) of specific spaces and facilitating the role of the police.

While the management of informal urbanisation areas could be seen as the imposition of state control over deviant spaces, the growth of these areas could also be seen as a structural process for subaltern populations to escape the public powers’ impositions (Scott, 2009). Therefore, the cyclical redevelopment of informal areas in the peripheries beyond legal city boundaries could show, as in the cases of Madrid and Paris, a tendency to escape from urban restrictions and police control.

### **The shadow of law: The co-evolution of urban regulations and informal urbanisation practices**

The historical development of urban planning would have moved the boundaries of legality, particularly concerning the housing standards and land use permissions. This process could have happened not only in Europe but in all contexts in which contemporary urban regulations were implemented, and it would have provoked (i) the illegalisation process of certain urban areas and (ii) a process of adapting building practices to by-pass to the new legality.

The sociological literature indeed describes the transgression of legal norms as a process inherent in the public powers’ regulation, regardless of its geographical or historical situation. As M. Heyman and A. Smart describe,

*State law inevitably create counterparts, zones of ambiguity and outright illegality. [. . .] When states forbid things, they create opportunities for illegal goods and services. [. . .] States are constantly in formation and decline; rarely, if ever, do they achieve sustained legal hegemony. [. . .] In their laws, they pretend to be complete (a pretense that has real consequences); but they have never succeeded and probably never will (Heyman & Smart, 1999).*

Some authors have asked for new approaches that demystify informal urbanisation research to consider it a mode of urban production structurally entangled with formality (Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016). Indeed, there seems to exist a general consensus about the existence of a formal/informal continuum in the production of these spaces, where the limits of the legality imposed by the state would be flexible and mobile and the relationship between legality and illegality “*can shift over time, in a way that is complex, multiple and contingent*” (McFarlane, 2012, p. 103). Accordingly, the limits of legality are movable and allow both illegalising and regularising a specific space or building practice depending on contextual elements. However, as will be seen, from a comparative historical perspective, the prohibition and transformation of those urbanisation processes into clandestine practices could be seen as a long-durée pattern.

In contemporary sociological research, the co-evolution between public regulations and illegal practices has been described by the concept of nomotropism (Conte, 2000), defined as “*acting in light of the rules also when transgressing them*” (Chiodelli & Moroni, 2014, p. 6). However,

the reflections between the non-dichotomous relationship between legality and illegality is a long-standing issue in the sociology of legality. Weber previously affirmed that *“what determines the validity of a prescription is not the fact that it is observed, but the fact that certain activities are oriented according to it”* (Weber, 2007; in Maccaglia & Morelle, 2013, p. 4). Accordingly, in addition to studying the deviance from the law, it is *“the tolerance towards its possible transgression, which deserves an analysis, always with the aim of grasping the reality of a system of power, at the service of discipline and control of conduct”* (Maccaglia & Morelle, 2013, p. 3).

While in contemporary informal urbanisation the building practices seem to be related to local specifications, related to local construction techniques and to the existing materials and legal frameworks (Guilbert, 2020), from a historical perspective, the different legal restrictions could have provoked procedural and morphological evolutions in the production of informal spaces.

As we will see in the cases of Madrid and Paris, as a consequence of the development of urban regulations and the illegalization of informal urbanisation, the existing practices of substandard, self-help housing construction changed from written but abusive contracts within legality to opaque, verbal agreements. This process created black markets in which the inhabitants had no legal rights to face the state power. As stated by J. Heyman and A. Smart *“illegal markets are nothing more than normal markets in which entrepreneurs have been enticed by demand to overstep the bounds of the law in search of higher profits”* (Heyman & Smart, 1999). Accordingly, the illegalization of informal urbanisation and the subsequent development of opaque housing practices and could be a quasi-universal process, related to the transnational development of urban regulations and urban planning.

# TOWARDS A EUROPEAN ANALYSIS OF 20th-CENTURY INFORMAL URBANISATION

As already stated, no previous attempts have been made to analyse comparatively the 20th-century history of informal urbanisation in Europe. The history of this phenomenon has remained largely unexplored until recently, and has lacked of a regional dimension.

To address this gap, this chapter provides a bibliographical review about such urbanisation processes. As we will see in the upcoming text, the current accumulation of historiographical works and the international information gathered through our archival research have allowed us to develop a transnational, comparative work, showing the existence of informal urbanisation all around the continent and permitting discussions regarding its characteristics and regional evolution.

## Western and Northern Europe<sup>6</sup>

Western and northern Europe have been characterised by the development of their welfare states and social housing sectors (Dewilde, 2017). Tales about informal urbanisation in western and northern Europe are commonly imagined to be a part of the first industrialisation process, as characterised by F. Engels (1844, 1892) or as in Dickens's literature.

Although western and northern Europe represent themselves as wealth areas with a history of effective governing, our compared historiography shows that during the 20th century, informal areas arose, bypassing urban regulations in most of the countries of the region. Indeed, although it remains beyond the scope of this thesis, the extraordinary development of social housing areas in the old continent after WWII seemed to have been an answer to the phenomenon by substituting previous informal housing areas, reusing the lands, and transferring the populations, status, and symbolic capital of the old stigmatised neighbourhoods to the new housing states (in preparation Manzano Gómez, 2021a).

The historiography has shown the existence of informal urbanisation areas in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden and Austria during most of the 20th century, and in Sweden during the first decades. Additionally, the transnational, historical research developed in this thesis has allowed us to identify equivalent processes in the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg during the 1920s.

In the United Kingdom, building activity on squatted lands had been a traditional way of housing self-provision for the popular classes (Ward, 2002), and land rental for housing

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<sup>6</sup> Although the terms used to identify the European regions are extremely variable, they have been selected from those conventionally used in the urban comparative bibliography, for instance "Housing and Welfare in Southern Europe" (Allen et al., 2008) and recommended by the European thesaurus *EuroVoc* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2021).

purposes was a big part of the infamous 19th-century London slums (Gaskell, 1990). During the 20th century, the emergence of *plotlanders* led deprived populations to build shacks without permission in cheap, marginal lands all around Britain, but especially surrounding London, in areas with environmental risks, such as flooding, slopes, beaches, and clay soil. The lands, divided in plots (hence the name), were commercialised or squatted by deprived populations, who used cheap or recycled materials to self-build houses that became permanent and lacked electricity, water supply, sewerage, and other public infrastructures (Hardy & Ward, 1984). The practice, which started during the first decades of the 20th century but exploded between 1920 and 1939, was problematised by the authorities and wealthy classes because of the areas' ugliness, which constituted an aesthetic threat towards the traditional British landscape (Hall, 1989; Hardy & Ward, 1984; Harris, 1999). The *plotlands* were partially demolished by defence works along the beaches as a consequence of WWII, and were finally controlled through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. This act was developed to prevent a repetition of the unplanned development of the rural peripheries, and institutionalised the control and planning of building activity across the country (Hardy & Ward, 1984). The existing *plotlanders*, stigmatised and segregated because of their illegality, remained without public infrastructures for decades (Bower, 2017) and were finally regularised (Ward, 2002). The areas were highly transformed but some of them still persist today (Bower, 2017).



Photo 1. Late-20th-century plotland remaining in Birling Gap, United Kingdom.

Source: (Hardy & Ward, 1984, p. 56).

In France, an abundant historiography shows the existence of informal urbanisation neighbourhoods during the entire 20th century. Although in the second part of this thesis we show in detail the prohibition process that occurred during the first third of the 20th century, we provide here a small recap through historiographical sources.

During the second half of the 19th century, as a consequence of the city-centre Haussmann urban renewal process, the working classes moved towards the peripheries, giving rise to the development of barrack areas in the Paris *faubourgs* (Shapiro, 1985) and in the *Zone*, a non-aedificandi area surrounding the city walls where temporary shacks were permitted and developed, frequently through land rental systems (Granier, 2017). While the first areas became increasingly controlled by their annexation to Paris, the *Zone* would continue developing well into the 20th century, hosting the lower strata of the working classes (Beauchez & Zeneidi, 2019) and being represented as a marginal space of crime but also of romanticised popular culture (Cannon, 2015). Despite the collective action of the shack owners (Vilanova, 2017), the area was demolished from the 1930s, giving rise to social housing areas, green spaces, and the Parisian peripheral highway (Cohen, 1992).

During the first decades of the 20th century, another episode of informal urbanisation emerged as a consequence of metropolitisation: the development of shacks around peripheral industrial areas, again through land rentals and rent-to-buy contracts (Blanc-Chaléard, 2006; Lillo, 2005). This process was soon accompanied by the development of *lotissements défectueux*. Described in various works by Annie Fourcaut (2000, 2003), this phenomenon consisted of the development of barrack areas without any kind of infrastructure in the municipalities surrounding Paris and the main French cities as a consequence of the subdivision and the rent and sale of agricultural land by private developers. The development of political claims between the inhabitants asking for public services not only led the authorities to regularise the areas despite their inadequacy (Fourcaut, 2007) but gave rise to a durable, popular urban belt of left-wing neighbourhoods, the so-called *banlieue rouge* (Stovall, 1990).

In our historical research on international housing forums, the Paris Region situation of the 1920s seems to have been largely silenced, at least in the case of the International Housing Association and the international Housing and Town Planning conferences, where no information was found about the *Zone* or the *lotissements défectueux* of Paris. On the contrary, in Marseille, the existence of “5000 baraques délabrées constituant le taudis dans toute son horreur” (International Housing Association, 1935, p. 132) was described that peripheral *lotissements* were improved, an operation that would alleviate the housing shortage.

Despite the illegalisation of the phenomenon and the regularisation of most of the informal areas, new shacks continued to be constructed as a housing solution for the lower strata of the working classes, forming neighbourhoods called *bidonvilles* (Cattedra, 2006). Such shacks hosted mainly migrant populations from the Maghreb (Cohen, 2010, 2013; Hervo & Charras, 1971; Hervo & Mohand, 2016; Sayad & Dupuy, 1995), Portugal (Volovitch-Tavares, 1995), Spain (David, 2002; Lillo, 2005), Italy, and the former Yugoslavia, but also included those from marginalised French populations (Jaulin, 2008).

The new spaces, which developed spontaneously and were highly stigmatised (Delon, 2014; Gastaut, 2004; Paskins, 2009) and constantly threatened with demolition (Colette Pétonnet, 1979b), were developed on urban interstices (*terrains vagues*) and frequently recreated the housing typologies and urban fabric of their cultures of origin (N. Lillo, 2005; Santelli & Herpin, 2018). Seeing those spaces as shameful and obstructing planned urban development (Byrnes, 2013), the public powers deployed ambitious social housing programmes to demolish the areas and rehouse the inhabitants (Blanc-Chaléard, 2012, 2016), and also to control the

populations in a conflictive decolonisation context (Collet, 2019; De Barros, 2005, 2012) by developing re-educational housing devices, the *cités de transit* (M. Cohen & David, 2016; Lallaoui, 1993; C Pétonnet, 1968; Tricart, 1977). Despite public action, informal areas continued to develop after the rehousing operations of the 1960s and 1970s (Delon, 2017) and are still re-emerging today (Thomas Aguilera, 2015). Beyond Paris, informal urbanisation has been studied in France at different periods of the 20th century in the metropolitan areas of Lyon (Bechini, 2018), Marseille (Henu, 1998a, 1998b; Nasiali, 2012), and St. Etienne, Lille and Toulon (Gastaut, 2004).

In Germany, although various historical episodes of self-building on occupied public lands led to the development of shanty towns during the 19th century (Poling, 2014), informal areas developed throughout the 20th century mostly on rented lands. As in other central European and Nordic countries, the rural–urban migration in Germany was accompanied by the development allotment gardens, which were frequently self-managed and initially served as places of both leisure and food obtention. These spaces, however, became housing solutions in the late 19th century, leading to the development *Barackenstadt* (city of barracks) to be problematised because of their links to revolutionary movements (Hobbs, 2012). The continual rise of allotment gardens was indeed consequence of the real estate strategies; speculators, waiting for an adequate moment to build legal houses, rent their lands temporarily for allotment gardens and easily evicted inhabitants when needed (Hobbs, 2012).

As F. Steinberg and F. Urban have shown (Steinberg, 1993; Urban, 2013) and H. Hilbrandt (2015) has recently expanded, shanties began to proliferate explosively after WWI because of destruction from the war, population displacement, and economic crises. Ignoring the urban regulations for allotment gardens, inhabitants self-constructed huts from recycled and poor materials, and the housing areas, known as *Laubenkolonien*, often did not have public water supply, sewerage, or electricity. In 1919, a law stabilised the existence of allotment gardens beyond speculative practices and permitted the eviction of shacks being used as shelter. However, the informal housing continued to develop, as the phenomenon was, in fact, tolerated by the public powers.

In 1923, a law tried to restrict the development of shacks in allotment gardens by imposing construction requirements and surface standards, but the norm proved to be ineffective.

In our historical research, we also found sources describing the development of informal urbanisation in Germany. The work of the French politician Pierre Lavan identified these areas as *lotissements défectueux*, and he had been surprised that, in a country where urban planning legislation was more developed and coercive than in other countries and where “*la notion de loi eût la valeur d’un impératif catégorique*” (Lavan, 1930, p. 18), such kinds of illegalities happened. The author pointed out that shacks had been temporarily permitted in Berlin after the war and that the 1923 law could not impede their development.

*Ces dispositions, de l’aveu même des urbanistes municipaux de Berlin, n’ont été surtout que des données théoriques. Non seulement de nouveaux lotissements ont été créés, mais encore des bâtiments à usage industriel ou agricole ont été transformés sans autorisation en locaux d’habitation. Il s’en suit que l’évacuation de leurs occupants est, comme elle l’eût été chez nous, pratiquement impossible* (Lavan, 1930, pp. 18–19).

Lavan also noted that this information had been directly obtained from German institutional actors: *ces renseignements nous ont été fort obligeamment donnés par M. Le Conseiller de Walter Dôhle, chargé des affaires consulaires et commerciales à l’Ambassade d’Allemagne à*

Paris, par M. le premier Bourgmestre de Berlin, et par M. Koeppen, directeur de l'Office d'Urbanisme de la Ville de Berlin (Ibid, 1930, p. 18). However, the information personally consigned by his German colleagues clearly minimised the phenomenon, as Lavan quantified the number of houses in allotment gardens in Berlin to be 8,000 in 1930.

F. Urban (2013) shows that the Berlin census in 1933 accounted for 120,000 inhabitants in the allotment gardens, of whom only a small proportion lived in legal houses. The same year, a law was approved to regularise the existing constructions and prohibit further construction. However, a 1935 report described that most of the shacks still built with dismantled wooden boxes and tar paper.



Photo 2. New Holland Colony, Barefoot Street, around 1911.  
Source: Märkisches Museum, unknown author.

The existence of such areas was deplored by architects and urbanist, and they became the object of public stigmatisation, as they were considered areas of crime and social deviation. Known as *Wohnlauben*, or *Elendsquartiere*, during the Nazi period, these spaces were supposed to host politically unreliable inhabitants. However, the acute housing shortage provoked by the war and the bombardments led the authorities to legalise their development in the last years of the regime, subsidising the self-construction of houses.

After WWII, the laws allowing their development were temporary maintained; 21,000 families lived in allotment gardens in West Berlin in 1954, and 35,000 in East Berlin in 1948. However, as soon as the post-war housing crisis passed, plot dwelling became illegal in West Germany. The politics of slum clearance, both in East and West Berlin, led to the eradication of these spaces. By 1960, the number of families living in allotment gardens was reduced to 10,000, and these areas, known as *Grüne Slums* (Green Slums) were considered not only eyesores and

possible sources of disease and disruptive behaviours but threats to the desired modernity of the capital. By 1982, only 2,000 households remained in West Berlin.

In Vienna, as the architects F. Hauer and A. Krammer (2018, 2019) have shown and the historian H. Gruber (1991) has mentioned, after the end of WWI and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the arrival of refugees led to the appearance of informal urbanisation, known as *wilde Siedlungen* (wild settlements) but also known locally as *bretteldorf*. Although illegal housing areas had been tolerated before WWI, the end of the war provoked an enormous economic crisis, leading the popular classes to build permanent houses in allotment gardens, speculative empty plots of the periphery, and forests, frequently occupying land without the owner's permission. Beyond their threat to ownership, the new areas were often illegal from a planning viewpoint; the new areas did not respect the approved *alignements*, zoning, or local regulations for the allotment gardens. In our historical research, we have also found some information about the phenomenon that reflect the position of the socialist government of Wien at the time.

*Vienna has also suffered as a result of the laudable desire to own one's own house, which has led to groups of badly built houses being erected outside municipal boundaries without consultation with experts. These areas of open development are likely soon to become slums. Moreover, during the war and post-war crises, allotment holders built huts on their allotments and used them as permanent dwellings. These cannot rightly be called slums, but they must be destroyed. The control of housing by a central municipal authority would be the best means of preventing slums* (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 12).

As the historiography states (Hauer & Krammer, 2019), the answer of the authorities, threatened by constant demonstrations, was to support the shelters' inhabitants by trying to institutionalise their social movements, developing politics of aided self-help housing (Harris, 1999). Accordingly, an *allotment garden and settlement zone* was created that regularised the existing areas, contributed building materials and provided technical support for around 50 settlements. In order to legalise the situation, the local powers also bought illegally occupied lands and turned them into long-term rentals for the inhabitants. After 1922, no new land squats were tolerated, and the infamous *Red Vienna*' model of public housing attempted to solve the housing shortage. However, the inability to provide enough shelters led to a re-emergence of informal urbanisation, although on a smaller scale.

Finally, after WWII, a new wave of "wild" settlements reappeared in the middle of a new crisis, this time without remarkable housing social movements. Although considered a threat to city expansion, they were tolerated as "*most of the settlers were part of the governing social democratic party's patronage*" (Hauer & Krammer, 2019, p. 6). Informal urbanisation seemed to continue existing until the 1990s, when the remaining areas were regularised and provided with public water, electricity, and urbanisation.

In Sweden, the historian M. Deland (2001) has shown that suburban urban growth led to the development of informal urbanisation during the first half of the 20th. In Stockholm, unplanned neighbourhoods composed of shanties appeared around the municipal boundaries at the end of the 19th century because of less regulation of the rural municipal laws in these areas, remaining temporarily independent due to the unwillingness of the capital city to be responsible of such unfavoured areas. These spaces, known as *Kåkstaden*, were built throughout 50-year tenancies and had to be erased at the end of the contract, giving rise to defective, temporary shacks inhabited by the lower classes. The lease seemed to be part of a



speculative practice to maximise revenues while waiting for the areas to be part of the urban land market (Ibid 2001). In addition, poor and working-class individuals increasingly built shacks and lived illegally in “garden colonies” during the 1910s and 1920s, in a process parallel to that in the German and Austrian cases.

As R. Harris (1999) showed, the public powers’ answer was initially to acquire peripheral lands and commercialise them for private owners, allowing a substantial part of the working classes to legally build homes. However, the areas’ speculation quickly impeded this goal. The worsening of the housing crisis during the 1920s led to the emergence of building cooperatives, which then started to self-build housing areas. The municipal powers finally decided to support self-help housing and created diverse programmes that would allow families to self-build previously designed and supplied houses (Deland, 2001; Harris, 1999).



Photo 3. Träske, Stockholm, 1911; shanties in the background.  
Source: Stockholmskällan, Spårvägmuseet SM 1-2079.

After WWII, as N. Vall mentions (2018), the industrial neighbourhood *Gamla Lugnet* started to host workshops and workers frequently fleeing the city-centre renewal, and these individuals built shacks in the area. The neighbourhood was formed by houses developed without plans on squatted or casually rented lands and was also a site of water refuse for polluting industries.

During the 1970s, the area was publicly characterised as a lawless space and it acquired the reputation of Stockholm’s main slum. Meanwhile, the local landlords permitted housing extensions for temporary houses demanding cheap rents, facilitating cheap land acquisition whilst waiting for the revalorization of a neighbourhood that after some time would be renewed. The labelling of the area as an ecological threat, as well as the press campaigns signalling it as criminal space, would have provoked the public powers to intervene in the 1980s. Once the inhabitants, who were impoverished populations and ethnic minorities, were relocated to 1960s social housing states, the area was totally renovated, becoming known for its high ecological standards while also being criticised by international observers such as Peter Hall for being a middle-class ghetto (Hall, 2009). Although the absence of academic references does not allow us to include reliable sources, other shanty towns would have developed in

Stockholm during the second half of the 20th century, and the last area of this kind, located in the industrial area of Fisksjöäng, was demolished in 2003.

In addition to those cases, our historical research has allowed us to identify some phenomena of 20th-century informal urbanisation in countries where it had not been possible to identify a contemporary historiography to account for it.

That has been the case, for instance, in the Netherlands. The 1935 research of the International Housing Association showed that an unplanned neighbourhood developed in the periphery of The Hague in Scheveningen at the end of the 19th century. This area was composed of the following:

*Des groupes de petits pavillons, accessibles seulement par un labyrinthe de petites ruelles [ . . . ]. Pendant qu'à La Haye les maisons étaient la propriété de la bourgeoisie fortunée, qui plaça son argent plutôt en propriétés qu'en titres, les habitations à Scheveningen étaient ou bien la propriété des frêteurs ou bien des pauvres habitants eux-mêmes qui d'ordinaire n'étaient pas en état de faire les réparations nécessaires. C'est pourquoi beaucoup de ces maisons devinrent, au commencement du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, des taudis; on les appelle 'Krotten'* (International Housing Association, 1935, pp. 70–72).

The text indicates that between 1918 and 1934 the City Council had already demolished 2,000 of these houses in the area because of the impossibility of rehabilitating them.

In Belgium, research done by the Société Nationale des Habitations et Logements Bon Marché Bruxelles showed that 6,800 housing barracks existed in Belgium in 1935, in addition to another 21,375 houses that were to be demolished. The text, however, advertised that the real number was undoubtedly much higher (International Housing Association, 1935).

## Central and Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe, marked by the development of state socialism between 1945 and 1990, has been frequently identified as the European area with the highest current presence of informal urbanisation, which is a consequence of the post-socialist processes of liberalisation (Stephens et al., 2015; Tsenkova, 2009).

Already existing in most of the countries at the beginning of the 20th century, informal urbanisation seemed to increase in most of Eastern Europe during the second half of the 20th century. Considered to be a problem of the capitalist system, the lack of decent housing for the working classes in socialist Europe, despite the abundant means implemented to avoid it, would have led to a certain secrecy around informal urbanisation development, causing it to remain unknown both locally and internationally. However, at the same time, some cases of western European informal urbanisation were well known in the East (Le Normand, 2009). Although it would be necessary to do an in-depth, transnational comparison to obtain a solid perspective, the socialist states seemed to have a general incapacity to assume housing production and management in a centralised, hierarchical way to avoid the lack of shelter throughout the whole territory. In addition, despite the politics of the sedentarisation of Roma populations (Băncescu & Calciu, 2014), some of these groups continued living in very poor self-built habitats.

Various researchers have identified historical episodes of informal urbanisation in the former Yugoslavia, the former Czechoslovakia, the former USSR, Romania, and Hungary, both before and during the socialist governments. Additionally, the transnational historical research of international congresses shows that this kind of process existed during the 1920s and 1930s in Romania and Poland.

In the former Yugoslavia, two kinds of informal processes seemed to exist after the end of WWI. Unauthorised self-built houses were developed by land speculators in the outskirts, and these spaces, which lacked public services and infrastructures, were frequently regularised through the city-limit expansion, making possible the further development of public water supply, street lighting, and pavements. In these kinds of areas, the populations reached around 150,000 inhabitants by 1930 (Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018). In contrast, deprived populations squatted areas building shacks on public lands. Although the legislation did not allow it and institutions existed that controlled building activity and the demolishing of illegal housing, the public powers opted to tolerate the biggest areas, aware that in the absence of social housing alternatives their demolition only would lead to their reconstruction in a different location. Accordingly, the authorities provided some infrastructure, such as water and public lighting, and demanded taxes for the services. However, the 1931 approval of a stricter construction law led to step-by-step demolitions of the areas that hindered legal urban planning development (Vuksanović-Macura, 2012; Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018).

B. Le Normand (2009, 2014) describes how informal urbanisation became common in Belgrade during the post-WWII period because of the rural exodus, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, *divlja izgradnja* (wild construction) was developed through two processes: illegally constructing on land without building permission or not following building codes, and developing shacks on unbuilt public plots. While the second phenomenon was used as a legal loophole to demand decent housing from the public powers, the first was supported by the authorities. Within the Yugoslavian socialism politics of decentralising party decisions and promoting self-management (Grubovic, 2006a), they accorded public funding to develop programmes for guided self-built housing in the peripheries, which failed because of the high price of land.

Belgrade was the city with the highest presence of informal areas, reaching around 10,000 shacks in a population of around 50,000 people during the 1960s. However, other cities, such as Zagreb, Osijek, Sarajevo, Skopje, and Podgorica, also experienced this kind of urban growth (Le Normand, 2014; Tsenkova, 2010), the last one occurring especially after the earthquake of 1979 (Potsiou, 2012). The nowadays' development of informal urbanisation areas would have frequently been, in addition to post-socialist economy, a consequence of inheriting these pre-existent social dynamics and legal frameworks (Grubovic, 2006b).

In the former Czechoslovakia, although some small makeshift settlements existed in the 19th century (Drnek, 2017), during the 1920s, *nouzové kolonie* (emergency colonies) were self-constructed by poor and working classes on rented lands in the periphery of Prague as a response to the housing crisis. In some cases, the shacks were done in areas destined to be allotment gardens. In other cases, the plots were selected for their low prices, usually on land with steep slopes, risk of flooding, proximity to polluting industries, or without water, electricity, or public infrastructures. By 1930, around 25,000 people lived in these kinds of areas erected during the night, which would soon constitute the *red belt* of the Czech capital.

This phenomenon would also have happened in middle-size Czech cities such as Brno, Ostrava, Pilsen, Kladno, Mladá Boleslav, Teplice, and Děčín (Viktorínová, 2010).

In our historical research, we found accounts of the Prague situation. The conference proceedings of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning indicate that the housing crisis had been started by renewing the Prague city centre before WWI, a process that led the working classes to move towards the periphery and create new peripheral shack areas.

*C'est ainsi que soit par spéculation consciente, soit par confiance innocente elles sont venues augmenter les rangs de ceux qui habitent mal dans diverses colonies d'habitation provisoires, de vrais taudis. C'est pourquoi il a été nécessaire que la commune elle-même bâtit des maisons d'habitant dans lesquelles elle installe les habitants pauvres de nombreuses colonies défectueuses* (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 33)



Photo 4. Nouzové kolonie in Prague.

Source: Moravian Library of Brno, Světozor magazine, 13 July 1933.

Although initially the authorities developed clearance politics, the 1929 crisis led to regularisation politics, which resulted in the management of the areas through long-term land leases and the provision of public services (Drnek, 2017). However, in the 1950s, the socialist authorities started to develop slum-clearance and rehousing programmes, progressively reducing these areas over the following decades. However, some of the original informal urbanisation areas appear to still exist today, blocked by complex ownership situations (Viktorínová, 2010).

In the former USSR, historiography describes the existence of informal urbanisation areas in both industrial areas and capital cities. Concerning the first, although self-construction was supported by cooperatives starting in 1922 (Harris, 1999), defective, makeshift areas known as *zemlyanki* were developed at the end of the 1920s in industrial areas in Siberia (Pugnot Lambert, 2018). Decades later during the 1960s and 1970s, despite the important efforts to find a definitive resolution of the housing problem by constructing social housing, rural emigration to the industrial and mining cities of western Siberia led to the development of illegal areas known as *somostroy* (Burstev, 2014; Stas, 2017). This phenomenon culminated in the prohibition of “non-typical temporary housing” in 1968, resulting in rehousing operations and the demolition of the areas (Stas, 2017).

Thomas M. Bohn (2014) has described the emergence of *samovol'noe stroitel'stvo* (unauthorised construction activity) in Minsk, distinguishing two subtypes: the “illegal construction of wooden housing settlements in the outskirts of the city” and the “erection and rental of temporary huts on one’s own property”, the last which is known as *vremianka* (Bohn, 2014). Developed mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, both kinds of shacks were considered *trushchoby* (slums). Rural migration exceeded the capacity of the enterprises to provide shelters and provoked a housing crisis, requiring migrants to self-build precarious, temporary shacks in empty areas. However, not all the shelters were self-constructed; the author describes how Roma populations built and commercialised that kind of shelters. The peak of the phenomenon seems to have arrived between 1955 and 1958, with 1,160 shacks and 5,024 people living on them (Bohn, 2008). Although the public powers initially led policies of slum clearance and rehousing, the redevelopment of informal areas caused them to temporarily tolerate it, while they produced more public housing. The last areas were demolished in the 1980s.

In Riga, although no contemporary historiographical sources have been identified that describe informal urbanisation, historical sources show that slum areas existed in some parts of the periphery during the 1920s, being demolished step by step by the public powers (International Housing Association, 1935).

In Romania, I. Florea and M. Dumitriu (2017) have described the history of squatting in Bucharest, explaining that land squatting practices existed between the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The church would have frequently tolerated the illegal occupation of its empty peripheral plots, supported their regularisation at city council, and demanded land rents for such consolidated housing. The production of these kinds of urban fragments, known as *mahalale*, would have been confronted by various urban regulations and spatial planning unsuccessfully until the arrival of the socialist regime in 1945. Our historical research found a text by C. Sfintescu, director of the Technical Service of Bucharest, where he showed that in 1930 informal urbanisation was quickly growing in the periphery of that city because of industrial development and the rural exodus.

*They are humble shelters scattered over uncultivated fields with one or two "rooms", rarely three, built by the occupants themselves, who do not have the means to use the materials necessary for a good construction nor the workers capable of putting them to use. There are no access roads, and of course, there is no construction work [ . . . ] brick houses are rarely built; the roof is made of sheet metal, but more often of bituminous cardboard. [ . . . ] They are located where the city ends* (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 131).

In the same text, the author asserted that if all the informal houses built that year were located on a single street, it would reach a length of 21 km (Ibid 1931, pp. 131–132).

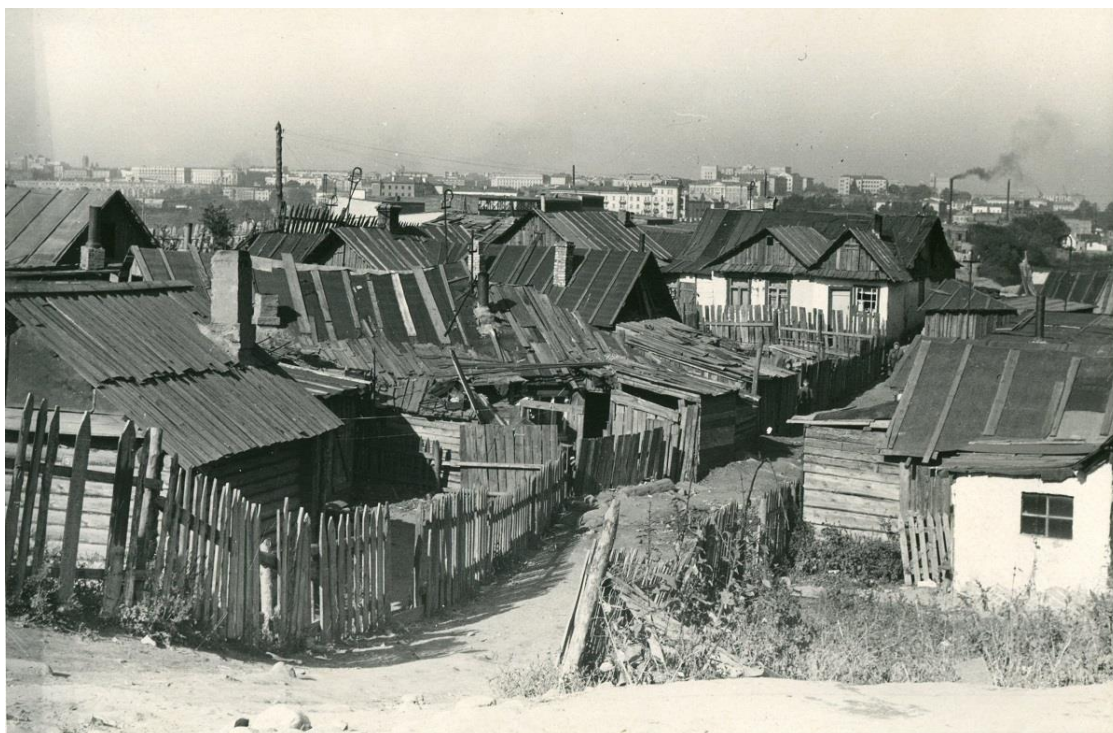


Photo 5. Trushchoby in Minsk.

Source: Belarusian State Archives of Scientific and Technical Documentation

After WWII, the resettlement of these areas became a priority of the Rumanian Communist Party. The authorities developed large slum-clearance operations during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in Bucharest, rehousing their populations in public states as a part of a policy of “normalization” of the Roma people and their habitat (Băncescu & Calciu, 2014). However, the forced sedentarisation politics carried out by the socialist authorities did not fully avoid the development of informal areas without permission, many of whose remain still today (Suditu & Vâlceanu, 2013).

B. Kováts (2020a) has discussed the existence of self-building housing practices in Hungary since 1921 until present day, including the socialist period. However, although a quantitative sociological approach was used, the absence of a clear analysis of what the different quantitative sources intended by informal urbanisation and the lack of a qualitative approach with descriptions about the areas’ characteristics and what practices led them to rise does not allow us to compare it with the rest of the historiography. Our historical research supports the existence of informal areas, through the statement from the Hungarian delegate to the 1931

International Federation of Housing and Town Planning conference, in which he declared that in Budapest, “*Par suite de la guerre et des terribles ravages de la période d’après-guerre des cabanes et des hangars furent utilisés comme logements sans autorisation et quelquefois il y en eut de grands groups*” (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 109).

In Poland, although we have not found historiographical accounts of informal urbanisation, our historical research indicates that some similar processes would have happened at least during the 1920s. Despite the difficulty of finding historiographical accounts about this historical fact, it is probable that some kind of historical account describes these episodes in Polish cities.

The existence of “*post-war barrack districts in many cities, mainly in the suburbs*” (International Housing Association, 1935, pp. 163–165) were tolerated because of the enormous housing crisis generated by WWII, the population displacements of the time, and the absence of public funding to tackle the situation. Accordingly, the public powers would have temporarily avoided slum-clearance operations, as “*any demolition would have increased the difficulties of the very classes most in need*” (Ibid 1935, pp. 163–165). Although the book *La question de l’habitation urbaine en Pologne*, an early work of the subsequently famous sociologist Jan Strzelecki (1936), could provide historical details about this situation, the current Covid-19 pandemic and the time limit of this academic exercise require us to postpone this larger analysis of the identified bibliography.

## Southern Europe

The southern European countries are the best known part of the region to have had informal areas in their cities. Perhaps this is because of the little time that has passed between since their prevalence in the region’s main cities, the existence of a consistent local, historical bibliography about the topic, and the development of an Anglo-Saxon historiography that considers spontaneous urban growth to be a characteristic of the area (Leontidou, 1986, 1990). Although both the historical bibliography and the historiography of the subject is enormous, we will attempt to summarise it here.

In Portugal, informal urbanisation, which was identified as early as the end of the 19th century, consisted of concentrations of unhealthy housing inside private plots in the peripheries (Zilhão, 2014), the so-called *Ilhas* in Porto, and *Patios* in Lisbon (Teixeira, 1992, 2018). Around the 1920s and 1930s, barrack settlements began to appear in the periphery of Lisbon (Lavandeira Castela, 2011). In that city, this phenomenon accelerated in the 1950s, giving rise to the *bairros clandestinos*, and continued to grow in the 1960s, 1970s, and after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. The reason Teresa Salgueiro gave for the emergence of these areas was in large part the rigidity of state urban planning (Salgueiro, 1972a), which has been considered by several different authors to date (Lavandeira Castela, 2011; Loureiro de Matos, 1990). In the 1970s, informal urbanisation was responsible for almost 40% of total portuguese housing production, leading to informal developments in both Lisbon and Porto (Loureiro de Matos, 1989, 1990) Setubal, Braga (Lobo, 1986), and Évora (Santos, 2008) and contributing to the historical-economic processes of capital accumulation, social segregation (Mendes, 2008), and social stigmatisation (1998; Crozat, 1998, 2004; 2017). At present, informal urbanisation spaces in Portugal are called by their legal meaning, AUGI (Urban Areas of Illegal Genese), which are grouping processes of illegal urbanisation inherited from previous decades and irregular allotment processes that still occur in the periphery of Lisbon (Raposo, 2010).



Photo 6. Bairro das Minhocas, 1938–40.

Source: Arquivo Camara Municipal de Lisboa, fondo Eduardo Portugal, cota ALB000001 a ALB000103 PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/003/ALB/001, p. 397.

The historical continuity of the phenomenon and its persistence today has led to an abundance of texts in which history and contemporaneity are mixed. Some classic texts, which were made without an empirical historical perspective (DGOT, 1989; Ferreira, 1984; Rodrigues, 1989; Salgueiro, 1972a; Soares, 1984), are used as the main sources in most of the recent research on this topic that has the objective of putting in context urban planning and renewal operations currently in progress (Branco Jorge, 2010; Carvalho Teixeira, 2008; Junqueira Antunes, 2011; Morais Baptista, 2001). Other recent works employ a deeper historical perspective to highlight the evolution of the regulatory framework of urban planning and the successive regularisation processes carried out to date (Dias Rodrigues, 2011; Vermelho Bica, 2017) and to explain the illegal occupants' personal micro-stories and their role in the spatial development of these areas (Ascensão, 2015),

Despite the abundance of Portuguese texts that explain, at least partially, the beginning and the development of the phenomenon, purely historical and empirical research with this purpose seem to be scarce (Lavandeira Castela, 2011; Teixeira, 1992). To obtain more detailed knowledge of the academic works about Portuguese informal urbanisation, we refer to the extensive "Bibliografia sobre territórios de génese ilegal em Portugal" (GESTUAL, n.d.).

In Italy, the historiography describes the historical development of *baracche*, self-built precarious dwellings in empty spaces of the consolidated city and in the periphery, which were the product of both countryside–city immigration and renovation operations in Rome carried out at the beginning of the 20th century (Villani, 2012). These were strongly stigmatised spaces, and during the dictatorship of Mussolini a good part of them were demolished and



their populations relocated to *borgate*, social housing areas of poor constructive quality (Bartolini, 2014; Villani, 2012); the same term of those social housing states would be taken afterwards to identify further process of informal urbanisation. In our historical research, we have found several pieces of information about the development of those areas during the 1930s. The research of the International Housing Association was very clearly used for advertising purposes, showing the “achievements” of the Mussolini regime, which, encouraging the development of cheap housing supported by the state, would have permitted to “definitely solve” the informal housing problem,

*Through these building activities, the so-called “Ragged Settlements” were able to be done away with; they had arisen on the fringes of the towns after the war and sheltered many poor families who could not afford proper dwellings. Thus we may maintain that the problem of the reconditioning of dwellings in Italy is no longer as disquieting as it formerly was; in fact it is already being adequately and definitely solved (International Housing Association, 1935, pp. 179–180).*

From the same viewpoint, the account of Virgilio Testa, General Secretary of the Istituto Nazionale d’Urbanistica in Rome, described that before the arrival of the regime, shacks known as *baracche*, developed throughout the periphery of the main Italian cities.

*Ces bicoques constituent un privilège douloureux des grandes villes, car elles ne se rencontrent pas dans les petits centres si ce n’est comme conséquence de quelque désastre, ou d’un tremblement de terre. Elles surgirent très nombreuses à Rome et à Milan, dans les premières années de l’après-guerre, à cause de la crise des logements, qui obligea un grand nombre de familles à chercher des abris temporaires, et de l’immigration de la foule des paysans désirant de passer du travail des champs à celui de l’usine. Dans l’impossibilité de trouver un logement régulier, ces immigrés finissaient par s’arranger dans la banlieue des abris et des refuges, auxquels d’autres s’ajoutèrent par la suite en formant véritables villages. [. . .]*

*Tout contrôle sérieux sur l’activité des constructions a fait défaut : on a permis ou toléré que dans certaines zones, d’importante moindre au point de vue du trafic, les maisons fussent bâties sans aucun principe sérieusement étudié, de façon à former des amas de constructions serrées les unes contre les autres, dans des conditions déplorables au point de vue de l’hygiène, des quartiers entiers d’un aspect primitif que le progrès en extension des constructions a fini par enclaver dans la ville, où ils constituent un véritable milieu d’infection (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, pp. 110–117).*

Testa considered the existing *baracche* in the city to be an inheritance of previous administrative impotence that had permitted the development of 5,000 shacks in Rome and 500 in Milan. To address the issue, the Italian regime would have stop uncontrolled urbanisation, not only for sanitary reasons but to contain urban unemployment and maintain the workforce in rural Italy. The text, after showing the various “social measures” enhanced by the Mussolini regime, went on to describe the destruction of the informal areas. The authorities demolished the neighbourhoods to renew integrally urban fragments that did not conform to urban planning, starting from the areas closest to the centre. However, despite their advertising purposes, the Italian management of the situation was far from being controlled and would continue into the next decades. Testa considered that although some irregular housing remained, the spaces in the vicinity had been cleared, probably for reputational reasons.



Photo 7. Via Marescalchi, Milan, 1950s.  
Source: MUFOCO, Fondo Federico Pantellini.

At the end of WWII, despite codes that institutionalised urban planning on a national scale—*Legge Urbanistica Nazionale de 1942* (Cerasoli, 2009)—peripheral subdivisions of agricultural land without public infrastructures were produced, on which both rural immigrants and evicted populations settled, being “expelled” by the city’s real estate market. These subdivisions were fundamentally problematised in the 1950s and 1960s (Clementi, 1981) and tackled through various plans, such as the *Regulatory Plan of Rome of 1965* and the *General Regulatory Plan of 1976*, which introduced infrastructures and public services in the areas. The regional *Lazio Law of 1980* delineated the illegal areas and allowed interventions on them leading to their reclassification, and culminating in the *Condono Edilicio Law of 1985*, which allowed the regularisation of informal areas (Cerasoli, 2009).

Planning operations and the pressure of the real estate sector transformed these areas, replacing informal housing with blocks of flats and converting them into formal, medium-density neighbourhoods (Kreibich, 2000). The *abussivismo*, the transgression of urban

regulation, transformed in the 1970s from a necessary *abusivismo* to a speculative one, in which regulations were violated to build spaces for the middle and upper classes (Clementi, 1981; Maccaglia, 2009). In contrast with this dynamic, today Rome would be leading to the redevelopment of informal urbanisations in precarious conditions, given the influx of immigrants and refugees (Agostini, 2011). In Italy, the main historical work on informal urbanisation is the encyclopaedic “La metropoli spontanea, il caso di Roma” (Clementi & Perego, 1983), a compendium of articles by different authors about these phenomena around the world, in Italy, and in Rome.

In Greece, urbanisation aside from institutional urban planning has been studied as a longue-durée dynamic of Athens city growth from the 19th century to the present (Leontidou, 1990), being popularly known as *ānarhi dōmisi* (anarchic building) and administratively known as *afthēreto* (arbitrary building) (Terzi, n.d.). The self-construction of housing in subdivided lands by popular and middle classes, and the construction of barracks by populations without resources in public lands, seem to be a historical constant in that city (Platon, 2014), especially during the 1920s after the Greco–Turkish War and during the rural–urban migration from the 1950s to the 1970s. During this last period, A. Romanos made several fieldwork inquiries (Romanos, 1970; Romanos, 1969; Romanos & Herzberg, 1968) that showed how inhabitants bypassed the law in a system that seemed designed to tolerate such practices and later legalise them, creating various belts of regularised urban growth quickly overtaken by new informal urbanisation processes. The historical presence of the phenomenon has led to their lecture as an expression of a Mediterranean, popular city culture, based on the subversion of the norm, being related to equivalent processes developed in Barcelona, Lisbon, and Rome (Leontidou, 1990; Platon, 2014) and in the cities of the Maghreb (Pace, 2002).

This culturalist perspective clashes with other reasons based on the inability of urban planning and the Greek state to offer cheap housing and effective regulation of urban growth (Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 1998; Polyzos & Minetos, 2007; Potsiou & Ioannidis, 2006). An example of this inability of a “weak state” is the urban development of Thessaloniki. The city was subject to an explosive arrival of refugees after the war with Turkey throughout the 1920s, and population growth exceeded the capacity planned by the public administration. That crisis led to a disorderly growth of poor allotments, illegal land occupations, and self-construction of precarious dwellings in vacant lots and ruins and attached to the historic city walls (Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 1998).

In Spain, the accounts of informal urbanisation are abundant and show the existence of the phenomenon during the entire 20th century, mainly in Madrid and Barcelona.

In Madrid, historiography has revealed the unplanned land subdivision of the city periphery, the so-called *extrarradio*, from the second half of the 19th century, and into the first decades of the 20th century, despite not accomplishing the urban regulations (Vorms, 2012). Whilst these areas and shanty towns had remained around the city centre (Vicente Albarrán, 2011), the metropolisation process led to the development of deprived, unplanned settlements beyond the municipal boundaries of the city during the 1920s (Sierra Álvarez, 2018). Such unplanned suburbanisation processes continued after the Spanish Civil War around the previous shack areas (Mancha, 2018; Manzano Gómez, 2021a in preparation; Orellana, 1991), despite the development of urban planning frameworks (Sambricio, 2003b) and specific regulations to illegalise informal urbanisation development (Manzano Gómez & Castrillo Romón, 2019; Matesanz & Belmessous, 2014). The problematisation and management of the

emerging phenomenon (Vorms, 2013) led the authorities to develop social housing programmes (Sambricio, 1999) that did not achieve in absorbing the increasing rural migration to the city. The growth of post-war informal areas generally happened through peripheral land subdivision and illegal housing construction in areas known as *casas bajas* (Burbano, 2015), through diverse kinds of unofficial agreements (Montes Mieza et al., 1976a). -The process reached its peak during the 1950s and continued until the 1980s, when big social housing operations, such as the Plan Barrios en Remodelación, permitted resettlement and led to the demolition of most parts of the *chabolas* (Villasante et al., 1989). However, the lowest strata of the popular classes and especially the Roma populations remained excluded from the rehousing operations because of the impossibility of affording the prices (Aguilera, 2015). Starting in the 1960s, a big new shanty town was developed on squatted public lands, the Cañada Real Galiana (Franchini, 1988), the last big *chabolas'* neighbourhood remaining today in Madrid (Aguilera, 2015, 2019; Álvarez Agüí, 2017; Gonick, 2015; Parellada, 2015).



Photo 8. Chabolas del Puente de Praga, Madrid, 1955.  
Source: Archivo Regional de Madrid, Fondo Santos Yubero.

In Barcelona, the phenomenon of *barraquismo*, described as existing since the beginning of the 20th century (Iglesias & Oyón, 2012), led to the self-construction of shanty towns on beaches and hills (Tatjer et al., 2008), maybe to a bigger extent than in Madrid. After the Spanish Civil War, the process continued and was accompanied by illegal housing that developed on peripheral semi-rural lands (Busquets, 1976; Busquets, 1976; Solà-Morales, 1973; Solà-Morales et al., 1978; Solà-Morales et al., 1974). This process gave rise to various neighbourhoods (Camino et al., 2011; Marrani, 2015; Roura et al., 2007) that were sometimes regularised and still remain today.

In addition to these cities, historiographical accounts have been found showing similar processes in regional capital cities such as Bilbao (López Simón, 2016), Seville (Torres

Gutiérrez, 2011), Alicante (Dualde Viñeta, 1987), Zaragoza (Borobio Enciso, 1980), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Delgado Aguiar, 2007), and Valladolid (Begines Ramirez, 1973).

### **Diverse processes or a single one? Institutional and analytical definitions of informal urbanisation**

Within the urban studies discipline, there exists long-lasting polemics about the use of *slums* as a common word for a large number of urban processes with local specificities (Arabindoo, 2011; Guilbert, 2007; Rao, 2006), and the UN-Habitat has shown some equivalent terms in other languages (UN-Habitat, 2003) recognising the impossibility of finding a unitary definition of the term. These difficulties have led some academics to consider it impossible to develop a comparative historiography about the subject (Mazarro, 2016).

As we have seen, the research on informal urbanisation in Europe has been the subject of a large number of local, fragmented inquiries, most carried out in local languages from different disciplinary viewpoints. Using these sources to develop a comparative historiography is problematic because it is difficult to understand the multilingual sources of the European babel. Comparing processes with different names, local meanings, and continuous historical evolutions and transfers can lead to historical misunderstandings (Coudroy de Lille, 2006).<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the question of the difficulty of comparing the different manifestations of informal urbanisation in Europe is not new. In 1931, during the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning of Berlin, one of the goals of the meeting was to discuss the need to establish a general definition of what was at that time called “defective housing”. However, among the participants there was a controversy that seems to continue today. The Czechoslovakian delegate for the conference, Ladislav Prochazka, declared that he considered impossible to find a universal definition of the phenomenon.

*I agree with the General Reporter that it is absolutely necessary to have legal means to abolish slums but should like to add that it is very difficult to establish such a law. If tenants are to be evicted because their dwellings are unhealthy it is necessary to define these conditions very exactly. I do not find such an exact definition in the reports presented to the Congress [ . . . ]. Furthermore, the definition of a defective dwelling cannot apply to all countries alike; local conditions have to be considered, and standards change. The definition of a defective dwelling should be worked out very carefully for each country and a law could only be proposed in those countries where inspection of dwellings and other social measures are provided. In every city a register should be kept of such unfit dwellings and this should serve as a basis for taking action (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 42).*

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<sup>7</sup> A lexical analysis and comparison of the words used to characterise *informal urbanisation* throughout Europe would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Although it would be an interesting project, it would require the collaboration of academics from each of the languages employed to define the local informal urbanisation processes. Equivalent processes have been done by other authors defining words around the city (Topalov et al., 2010), the urban peripheries (Harris & Vorms, 2017) or the informality (Ledeneva, 2018).

Indeed, the same argument was supported in the 1931 International Federation of Housing and Town Planning by the German doctor Laura Turnau, considering it *“impossible to have a definition of defective housing that is always applicable”* (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 53).

Despite the historical and present polemics about the definition of informal urbanisation, their historical re-emergence as a concept and a problem indicates its intuitive existence. Our position is to recognise the heterogeneity of informal urbanisation manifestations while advocating for its unitary existence as an analytical concept.

On one hand, the processes and morphologies of informal urbanisation are strongly influenced by the local context. Current research has revealed a heterogeneity of informal housing forms not only between countries but between cities of the same state (Guilbert, 2020). Elements such as the precariousness, urban shape, and architecture of the shacks depended on extremely variable elements, such as the existing legal frameworks and its field application, the land ownership structure, local building techniques, and, of course, the spatial culture of its inhabitants. On the other hand other elements, such as the use of poor materials, reduced surface of the shacks and social marginality, are common elements that seem to characterise a “survival architecture” (Friedman, 2003) through different spaces and times. As already mentioned, we propose to borrow Weber’s concept of the “ideal type” to assume the intuitive delimitation of this concept and its recognition as an analytical concept without a link to precise legal definitions or statistical averages.

However, our historiographical sources and fieldwork lead us to discuss the existence of at least two subphenomena in the historical expressions of European informal urbanisation.

On one hand, most parts of the makeshift areas found in this inquiry consisted of deprived allotments on unurbanised peripheral lands. A consequence of commercialising agricultural lands on the edge of the city, this kind of urban growth would have been the most frequent before the development of contemporary urban planning, and would have exploded in most parts of Europe during the first decades of the 20th century in spite of urban planning attempts to avoid it.

The morphology resulting from this kind of informal urban growth would have inherited the footprint of the land ownership structure. As every owner would develop its plot separately, ensembles of housing areas would have the previous borders of the bare lands as their limits. Although this simple kind of urban operation existed and still exists in private operations of housing development—typically formed by single-store housing areas with gardens, its cheapest version with small plots and short streets without squares, pavement, or infrastructures was the matrix of most of the informal urbanisation areas. Whilst most of these areas would initially be formed by small shacks surrounded by small orchards, the subdivision of the already inhabited small plots would give rise to ultra-dense neighbourhoods. In the biggest areas like this, optimising spaces and reducing uncommercialisable areas lead to its development over orthogonal street patterns.

On the other hand, some informal spaces were developed as a consequence of the free occupation and self-construction of shacks on empty lands. Typically, these kinds of urban fragments formed non-straight street patterns consequence of micro-social dynamics under-researched by the European historiography, producing an “organic” typology.

However, as we will see in the cases of Madrid and Paris, those two urban typologies were not absolutely separate, and existed various kinds of arrangements situated between both of them, expressing “*tous les tons entre spéculation et entraide, entre solidarité et exploitation*” (Levy-Vroelant, 2000 :13).

### **An attempt at periodisation: The 1920s and 1960s informal urbanisation characteristics throughout Europe**

As we have observed during the historiographical analysis, there seemed to be two peaks of informal urbanisation development and problematisation during the 20th century in most of the European countries: the first occurred during the 1920s and the second during the 1960s. The extent of the bibliographical review allows us to compare patterns of informal urbanisation history in the different countries during both periods. Accordingly, in this chapter we will shortly discuss the findings of the existing historiography about the causes of the phenomenon, land ownership in the areas, the public powers problematisation of the informal urbanisation, and the strategies authorities employed to resolve the issue.

During the 1920s, as we will see, the development of informal urbanisation seemed to be connected by various pan-European, historical phenomena. Many historiographical sources link the housing shortage to WWI, which would have triggered enormous destructions throughout the continent and provoked migrations, worsening the housing deficits in many areas (Florea & Dumitriu, 2016; Hauer & Krammer, 2019; Urban, 2013; Viktorínová, 2010; Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018). The development of mass transit led to a movement of those seeking to live in fresh air near nature as a way to prevent disease contagion (Fourcaut, 2000; Hardy & Ward, 1984), undoubtedly influenced by the acute impact of epidemic and endemic diseases in the capital cities. These factors seemed to cause, in most countries of the region, the self-development of housing solutions in the unurbanised peripheries of the continent. As we have seen through the historiography, most of the areas were developed outside urban regulations but within property rights, being built as “temporary” housing solutions through legal contracts on rented lands and rent-to-buy agreements in Stockholm, London, Paris, Berlin, Prague, and Madrid (Deland, 2001; Hardy & Ward, 1984; Hobbs, 2012; Hovanessian, 2001; Lillo, 2005; Urban, 2013; Viktorínová, 2010; Vorms, 2012). Additionally, although less frequent, some authors have described the existence of squatting areas at that time in the far periphery of London and in Vienna, Belgrade, and Barcelona (Hardy & Ward, 1984; Hauer & Krammer, 2019; Tatjer & Larrea, 2011; Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018). During this period, informal urbanisation areas seemed to be an important mechanism of urban growth in most parts of Europe, being especially acute in central countries such as Germany, Austria, and France.

The main concerns of the public powers against informal urbanisation at that time, as described by the existing historiography, were the local political organisation and risk of unrest by influence of the Soviet revolution (Fourcaut, 2000; Hauer & Krammer, 2019; Viktorínová, 2010; Vorms, 2012), hygienic threats regarding the spread of epidemics (Urban, 2013; Vorms, 2012; Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018), the blockage of “legitimate” urban projects developed by the public powers (Granier, 2017; Hobbs, 2012; Urban, 2013; Vuksanović-Macura & Macura, 2018), the risk of increased deviant social behaviour (Cannon, 2015; Hardy

& Ward, 1984; Urban, 2013), and the ugliness and impact on the rural landscapes (Hardy & Ward, 1984).

On the other side, our historical research of transnational conferences shows that during the 1920s the main explicit concerns about informal urbanisation among the transnational networks and forums were of a sanitary nature. Since the late 19th century, influenced by confusing biological theories, people perceived cities as anti-natural spaces that provoked both physical and psychiatric problems. The scientific racism had, as a counterpart, the degenerationist theory (Luckin, 2006), according to which the race could decay from environmental factors such as bad housing conditions (Mazumdar, 1980) facilitating the spread of epidemic diseases. Such racially based explanations had connections with the ensemble of the social life; racial decay explained the prevalence of deviant behaviours” such as robbery, prostitution, and crime (Morel, 1857), in specific areas of the city, and also other “social diseases” such as political unrest (Plumed Domingo & Rey González, 2002).<sup>8</sup>

Although in most European countries eugenic programmes and armed conflicts were used as a tool for “race improvement”, eradicating slum areas to regenerate the racial quality of the working classes was looked upon as an urgent task to improve physical and social hygiene (Garside, 1988). This racial dimension of European urban planning seems to have been generally neglected, and in informal urbanisation historiography such concerns have been identified in few cases (Manzano Gómez, 2021b in preparation; Urban, 2013).

As will be shown in the cases of Madrid and Paris, racial and degenerationist fears were also the main explicit claims against informal urbanisation areas. This dimension, however, does not exclude the existence of economic and cultural concerns against such areas. The sanitary discourse was very evidently used to support real estate strategies and classist fears.

Although the historiography shows that in a few cases the development of social housing was used to rehouse informal urbanisation dwellers, such as in Paris, Vienna, and Rome (J.-L. Cohen, 1992; Gruber, 1991; Villani, 2012), the solution to informal urbanisation during the 1920s was in most of the countries to regularise and supply the existing areas with public services step by step, a process described in the cases of Stockholm, Paris, London, Vienna, Athens, Berlin, Prague, and Madrid (Deland, 2001; Fourcaut, 2000; Hardy & Ward, 1984; Hauer & Krammer, 2019; Leontidou, 1990; Urban, 2013; Viktorínová, 2010; Vorms, 2012). This strategy, as we will see, was supported in international forums on the subject.

However, beyond the specific informal urbanisation problem, urban regulations attempted to illegalise the further construction of informal shelters and to create the conditions of an ordered urban growth in the peripheries, far peripheries, and countryside. Although many authors describe in their local contexts how informal urbanisation development was tightly linked to the birth of urban planning (Deland, 2001; Fourcaut, 1989a, 2000; Hardy & Ward, 1984; Vorms, 2012), none of them has discussed the global and relatively synchronous development of urban planning as a reaction to informal urbanisation, a hypothesis that our historiographical analysis supports.

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<sup>8</sup> It is well known that the ideas of racial improvement culminated in Europe with the genocide of the population suspected to possess signs of racial decay, such as leftism, homosexuality, “inferior” ethnicity, etc. Although this history is well known, the historical use of space to regenerate deviant behaviours does not seem to be fully explored.



If the 1920s historiography about informal urbanisation shows relatively similar processes and institutional answers through Europe, the accounts about the 1960s also show some homogeneity.

On one hand, the consequences of the war during this second period were less evident, being omitted in many cases from historiographical lectures. Most of the authors considered the situation to be consequence of the rural exodus of the 1950s (Burbano, 2015; Alberto. Clementi & Perego, 1983; Lavandeira Castela, 2011; Le Normand, 2014; Leontidou, 1990; A. G. Romanos, 1969), a process that seemed to affect mainly Mediterranean and eastern countries and was related to the mechanisation of agricultural activity. Only the French cases of informal urbanisation have been attributed to the industrialisation process. However, although the existing historiography does not pay much attention to it, most of the populations that contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon in France came from the Mediterranean area, being equally affected by the agricultural technological transition.

On the other side, the same phenomena seemed to evolve throughout the continent. Whilst during the 1920s most of the informal urbanisation areas were developed on rented or bought lands, during the 1960s self-built houses were developed on squatted lands in many cities of Europe, such as Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon, Belgrade, and Minsk (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016; Bohn, 2008; Alberto. Clementi & Perego, 1983; David, 2002; Le Normand, 2014; Montes Mieza et al., 1976b; Salgueiro, 1972b; Santelli & Herpin, 2018; Sayad & Dupuy, 1995; Valenzuela Rubio, 1975). Agricultural land subdivision become harder, or at least less evident, being developed through hidden agreements between inhabitants and landowners in cities such as Paris, Stockholm, Barcelona, and Madrid (Burbano, 2015; Solà-Morales et al., 1974; Vall, 2018; Volovitch-Tavares, 1995).

The problematisation of informal urbanisation also seemed to change, although it maintained strong similarities. During the 1960s, the authorities' main concern was the shameful impression that these areas projected about their political regime, a fear shared by capitalist and socialist governments in Paris, Madrid, and Belgrade (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016; Byrnes, 2013; David, 2002; Le Normand, 2014; Manzano Gómez & Castrillo Romón, 2019; Matesanz & Belmessous, 2014; Stas, 2017). In addition to that, the main concern in the capitalist area was the control of populations with the risk of social uprising, due to the de-colonial wars in France and far-right dictatorships in Spain and Greece (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016; Burbano, 2015; Collet, 2019; de Barros, 2012; Leontidou, 1990; Tatjer & Larrea, 2011). Finally, the question of the effect of housing on the shape of inhabitants' social behaviour seemed to motivate public action in various cities, with representations and modus operandi clearly based on racist representations, apparently related to previous historical periods. The historiography shows this in the cases of Paris, Berlin, and Madrid (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016; De Barros, 2012; Urban, 2013).

If during the 1920s, the answer to informal urbanisation areas was, to a large extent, to regularise and prohibit new development during the 1960s the historiography shows the prevalence of slum clearance and relocation in social housing states throughout the entire continent. This was the case in Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Belgrade, and Minsk (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016; Bohn, 2008; David, 2002; Le Normand, 2014; Sambricio, 1999; Urban, 2013). However, some accounts also show the regularisation of informal urbanisation areas in Lisbon, Barcelona, Rome, and Athens (Bartolini, 2014; Kreibich, 2000; Lavandeira Castela, 2011; Romanos, 1969; Mercedes Tatjer & Larrea, 2011).

In addition to all these changes, the same geography of the phenomenon evolved. Whilst in the 1920s most of the informal housing areas were developed in western and central countries—the very core of the capitalism— most of the areas were developed in southern and eastern countries by the 1960s. This situation would reveal, as shown in previous works (Manzano 2021, forthcoming) and also discussed in the sociological literature (Kováts, 2020b), a historical displacement of the informal urban growth processes from the centre to the periphery of the capitalist world system. The beginning of the end of such areas in Europe during the 1960s seemed synchronical to an explosion of this kind of space on the global south. Indeed, accelerated urbanisation was historically understood in regions such as Latin America, as a consequence of their increasing economic dependence on the core of the capitalist system (Cardoso & Faletto, 1978; Dos Santos, 1972; Quijano, 1977).

Contemporary sociological theory has pointed out the historical differences between western and southern Europe as a result of de-commodifying the housing market in the first area, that is, because of the redistributive state-led processes restricting exposure to the capitalist market (Allen et al., 2008). Developing social housing in western Europe seemed to permit the “absorption” of the phenomenon, whilst urban growth in southern Europe would have continued to rely mainly on the private sector, reproducing the social inequalities and class segregation of the urban population, as happened during the 1920s. However, these differences would have been deeply rooted in macro-economic dynamics, a consequence of world-system polarisation. As B. Kováts (2020b) has recently stated using a quantitative approach, this “world system” analysis could explain informal urbanisation’s disappearance from the core of the continent and its relegation to the countries constituting the semi-periphery of the world system—the Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. The historical research shown in this thesis under process of publication (Manzano Gómez, 2022 in publication) supports the thesis of a “peripheralisation” of informal urbanisation through historical, qualitative work. The economic core of Europe would have developed welfare policies, eradicating the informal areas and providing adequate social housing solutions to avoid their re-emergence. Contrastingly, in the southern and eastern countries the phenomenon remained much longer despite the policies developed to prohibit it, as a result of a lack of a developed welfare state. In central and eastern Europe, the countries of the area could have remained under a semi-peripheral economic position, lacking of social policies after socialism, and remaining with informal areas despite public efforts to solve the housing problem (Kováts, 2020a).

The thesis of a “peripheralisation” of informal urbanisation could also explain the progression of the phenomenon throughout the global south during the second half of the century. Although establishing quantitative comparisons is highly problematic due to the different methods the different public administrations used, the dimension of the informal housing phenomenon did not seem so demographically different in northern and southern countries during the first half of the century. For instance, it is estimated that 75,000 people were living in *bidonvilles* in Paris in 1966 (Gastaut, 2004). In 1945, internal documents of the Madrid public powers quantified approximately 150,000 inhabitants in informal areas of the periphery (Archivo Regional de Madrid, 137043/17). In 1950, the population of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro was estimated to be 169,000 (Fessler Vaz & Berenstein Jacques, 2003), and in Mumbai, approximately 260,000 people were living in slums in 1956 (Zhang, 2018).

In any case, during the second half of the century, at the same time the phenomenon disappeared from northern Europe, it exploded in the global south.<sup>9</sup> The increasing globalisation of the world economy, transferring the low-wage productive activities to the southern countries had as a counterpart the development of a “geography of privilege” in the global north (Wallerstein, 1988), which could have caused the phenomenon to continue in the south and disappear in the north. Although these interlinked perspectives were explored by “dependency theories” during the 1960s and 1970s, applying them to explain the phenomenon of informal urbanisation in Europe is new, as no comparative work has previously discussed the evolution and chronologies of that phenomenon in the continent.

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<sup>9</sup> The already mentioned research project “La Ville Informelle au XXe Siècle”, coordinated by the French academic Charlotte Vorms, will probably permit to discuss in detail, with a large empirical work, the differential demographical and administrative evolution between northern and southern informal urbanisation phenomenon.

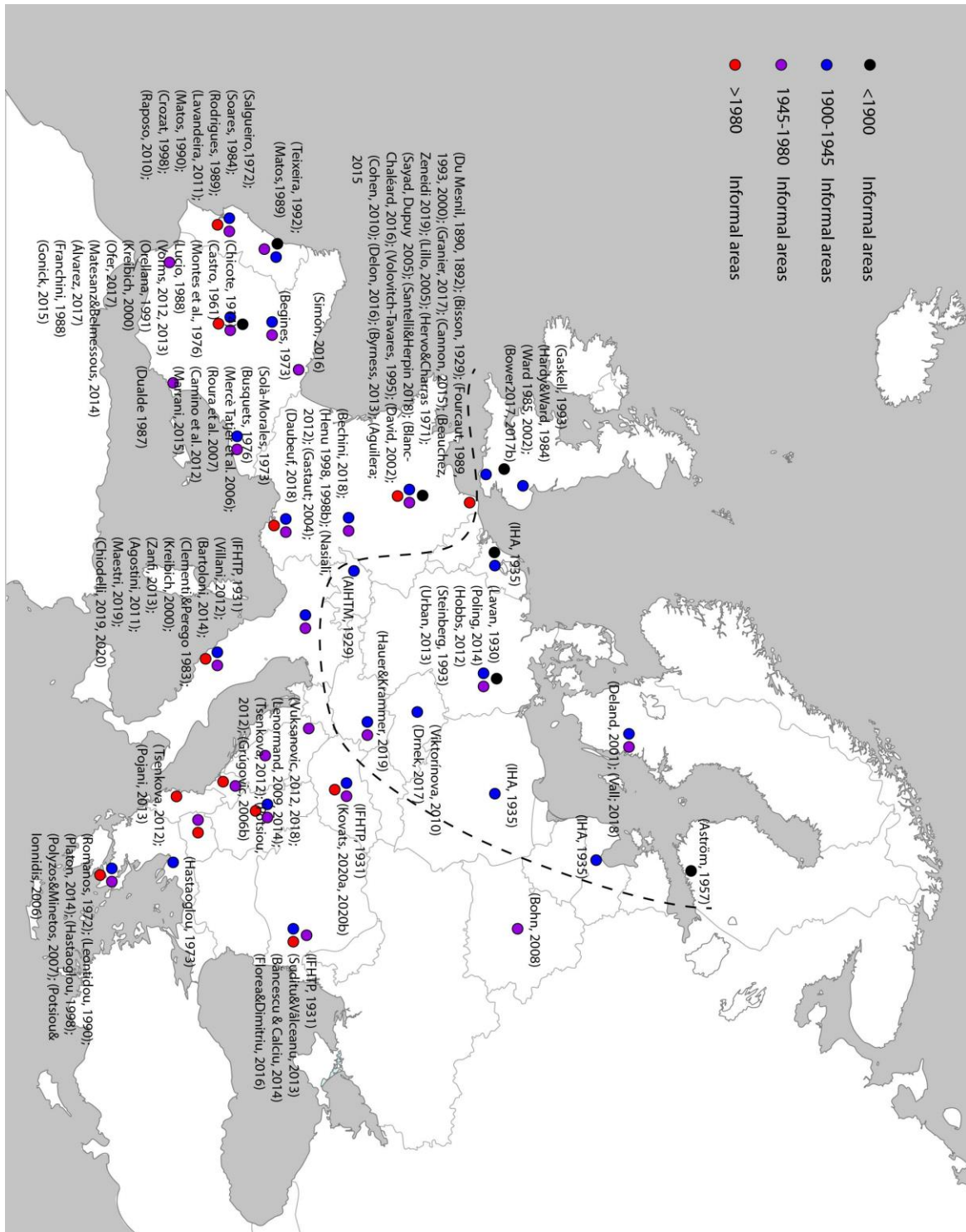


Illustration 2. Cartography summarising the found literature concerning informal urban growth processes in Europe. The black dashed line indicates the post-WWII disappearance of the phenomenon in western and northern Europe. Source: the author.

# FIRST CHAPTER: MADRID

## THE UNREGULATED DEVELOPMENT OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING AREAS

To understand the origins of informal urbanisation, it is necessary to make a short inquiry into the modes of substandard housing development before the 20th century. In Madrid, before that time, various kinds of deprived housing areas arose beyond state power. However, although it will be shown that these areas were problematic because of their poor social character, it was only at the end of the 19th century, in a context of increasing modernisation and sanitary risks, that this kind of urbanisation process began to be considered a threat because of its poor material conditions. The growing problem would be tackled by developing the first hygiene regulations at the end of the century, provoking the prohibition of the most precarious houses in Madrid. However, the new rules did not prevent the existence of these areas, but led to their transformation through the precarisation of the material and juridical conditions of their development, and to the exposition to frequent evictions throughout the following decades.

Throughout the next pages, early precedents of 20th-century informal urbanisation will be shown, along with some of the steps that led to their problematisation. In addition, their characteristics and representation in Madrid at the end of the 19th century will be analysed.

### The uncontrolled arrabales and the defective production of houses in Madrid

Going back to the origins of substandard urbanisation seems to be an impossible task. Although the scope of the research in this thesis begins during the 19th century, when the public powers started to problematise the housing areas because of their poor quality, different episodes of spontaneous development had already happened during the old regime, despite the various regulations in place to control it. Providing a short introduction to these previous stages of substandard urbanisation will permit us to discuss the novelty of the process that would emerge and to understand the differences between the classical mechanisms of space discipline and the 19th-century modern devices of surveyance.

In the 16th century, land occupations had already occurred in the *arrabales*, the housing areas beyond the city limits. In such areas, *edificaciones ligeras, provisionales, and humildes* were growing on land that was property of the municipal council (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990, p. 49). This process led to the development of a city wall and the prohibition of building any house beyond the legal perimeter of the city, as the area was becoming, “*apuesto acomodado para unas personas y gentes vagamundas y de mal vivir, en ocasión para cometerse y encubrirse muchos delitos* (Ibid 1990, p. 50)”. The city walls built in 1625, which greatly extended the city limits, would impede new processes of informal urban growth in the periphery beyond them, but inside the barely controlled *intra-muros* space it continued (Ibid 1990).

Although throughout the 17th century construction in Madrid required licences, plan provisions for façades, and construction reports, the building activity inside the plots remained

unregulated. The architect in chief of the city complained that the laws were not effective because construction without demanding alignment permits was common practice (León Peralta, 1930, p. 32). Accordingly, new attempts to restrict unauthorised urban growth persisted and led to new regulations in 1612, 1638, and 1641 (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990). During the 18th century, the situation seemed to remain relatively unchanged, both from a regulatory point of view and regarding the development of substandard housing areas. Although in general terms the urbanism of the time was understood as a beautification of urban space through the construction of large monumental buildings and the regulation of façades, large improvements occurred in the urbanisation of the existing city and provision of sewer systems (Goitia Cruz, 2015).

The first half of 19th century in Madrid seemed to be in continuity with the urban regulations of the last century, despite modernisation and the general consciousness of the need for new legal frameworks (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990). In 1790, 1805, 1820, 1828, 1833, and 1842, the city council did not succeed to approve new *ordenanzas* (by-laws) to manage the increasing city expansion (Bassols Coma, 1973).

The historiography has identified that at this time, when the city started to increase its urban growth, substandard urban growth processes existed in the new *arrabales*. These areas spread beyond the city walls, which had remained in place since the 16th century, and started to grow in the north (Barrio de los Tejares<sup>10</sup>) and in the south (Arrabal de Peñuelas). In those areas, in the 1830s, one-storey houses were built with mud, without permits from the authorities (Vicente Albarrán, 2011), providing large profits to the landowners (Pallol Trigueros, 2011). These areas would become known as *chozas*. The term, which initially referred to a form of peasant housing consisting of small rural constructions of vegetal materials, was introduced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Nomenclator de Población (Luque Revuelto & Pulido Jurado, 2014), a census that provided information about the number and kind of houses. Although those substandard houses were initially close to the poor rural housing, they would evolve; some decades later, as will be shown, the term *chozas* in Madrid would indicate improvised shacks built with waste materials, unrelated to any vernacular architecture.

In 1846, a national law compelled the development of Planos Geométricos de Poblaciones, based in the equivalent French alignment law of 1807, obligating the predefinition of the streets to be developed in the city, but it was scarcely applied (Anguita Cantero, 1998). In the same year, a corpus of *ordenanzas* in Madrid (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990) was approved, defining the requirements for building permits, establishing the relationship between street width and maximum building height, and establishing the crafts and factories whose installation would be legal only in the *arrabales*.

The approbation of those building regulations could mark the transition from an “ancient regime” of building control based on the personal criteria of the architect in chief to a new systematised and bureaucratised rational apparatus of building construction. Although in previous periods the popular illegalities (Lascoumes, 1996) seemed to be usual and frequently tolerated by public servants, new administrative paradigms during the second half of the 19th century would permit an increase of both the regulations and the surveyance of their accomplishment.

<sup>10</sup> The *tejares* (brick and tile factories) were one of the few industries in the city at that time. The area would change its name throughout the urbanisation process, corresponding to the current neighbourhood of Chamartin.

## From arrabales to the extrarradio and from covachas to chozas

During the second half of the 19th century, Madrid's growth began to provoke increasing urban segregation (Vicente, 2008). While the historic centre had remained a relatively mixed space in social terms, the new peripheries would give rise to socio-spatial and cultural differentiation, creating a veritable cartography of morality (Vicente Albarrán, 2016a) by differentiating the noble areas from the poorer neighbourhoods. In parallel, the need to plan an extension of Madrid started to emerge to manage suburbanisation and the social stratification associated with it.

An example of this new need can be found in the work of Mesonero Romanos, a famous and politically influential writer in the city. In his work *Proyecto de Mejoras Generales de Madrid* (1846), he stated that although large *arrabales* still did not exist at that time in Madrid, the periphery beyond city limits was a valuable urban space for the working-classes in other cities.

*Cuando ya la parte más infeliz del vecindarios, desterrada del centro por las clases acomodadas, y refluyendo naturalmente a las extremidades del radio, se había agrupado en arrabales numerosos e importantes burgos... (...). Pero en Madrid todavía no estamos en este caso. Ni existen semejantes arrabales, ni vemos convenientemente aprovechado el espacio que hoy encierra en su recinto* (R. de M. Romanos, 1846, p. 10).

Romanos reported that the city council was working on new by-laws (*Ordenanzas de Construcción y de Policía Urbana*) and on the development of an extension plan (*Plan General de Madrid*) that might ensure that the “unhappy populations” that had to live in the outskirts would find good conditions and ventilation in their houses with cheap rent. Romanos thought that it was too soon to plan a big city extension, but he proposed the creation of five new *arrabales* where, in addition to housing for “*artesanos y gente de escasos medios*”, industrial buildings classified as “*peligrosos o incomodos*” would be placed.<sup>11</sup>

In a book chapter written in 1847, “*Sobre ampliación de Madrid*”, the same author mentioned the contemporary demolition of miserable *covachas* (housing resembling caves) and their replacement with “beautiful houses” within the city-centre. The text, which included a notice about the city expansion that the authorities working on Madrid urbanism asked for, impelled the development of a broader process to renovate inside city limits. This process had to transform a huge number of streets,

*Compuestas de corrales y solares, casas de aldea y de un solo piso, mezquinas y ruinosas, inhabitadas unas y otras encerrando en su recinto a las clases más miserables, a los oficios más incómodos, que en poblaciones grandes ocupan regularmente los arrabales* (M. Romanos, 1905, pp. 170–171).

In fact, the author anticipated the expulsion of the popular classes from the city centre to the outskirts that would occur just after in Paris and would be imitated in most continental capital cities, fuelled by the cholera pandemics that were ravaging the continent at that time.

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that such terms are the same as those used by French and Spanish legislation. Bassols (Bassols Coma, 1973) also remarks on the lexical similarity between the Spanish Plan General de Alineaciones discussed at the time and the French Plan General d'Alignements.



Shortly after, the public authorities started to regulate the urban growth beyond the Madrid city walls. Although the control was less strict than in the city centre, the historiography shows that in both the northern and southern *arrabales*, building permits started to be demanded. The permits for façades and alignments of new buildings had to be delivered to the authorities, and this process facilitated the arrival of professional developers and the development of allotments for the popular classes (Pallol Trigueros, 2011; Vicente Albarrán, 2011). In the northern outskirts, starting in 1853, the landowners organised a Junta de Propietarios (owner's board) to decide the alignments and squares of the new areas, demanding that the authorities eradicated the large *chozas* areas to improve the status of the neighbourhood (Diez de Baldeon, 1983). In the south, at the same time, the Madrid authorities attempted to redress unplanned urban growth, approved some building rules and imposed alignments for the area (Vicente Albarrán, 2011).

During this time, substandard housing areas started to be problematised not only because of their social strata but because of their housing conditions. As stated in a text about the northern *arrabal*, in addition to putting the rest of the area at risk of fire, *chozas* were insalubrious because of their lack of ventilation, floor tiles, smoke vents, were usually overcrowded with several families (between eighteen and twenty-four people), and presented a big risk of “promiscuity” and “immorality”. The author demanded the development of by-laws, asking for the prohibition of subrental schemes that were the basis of their development.

*Si con arreglo a la ordenanza municipal no se consintiera en estas pocilgas más personas que las que permiten los cuarenta pies superficiales por cada una, no podrían exigir los propietarios el exorbitante arriendo que sacan de los cabezaleros<sup>12</sup>, a quienes (el ayuntamiento) consiente los subarriendos sin limitación alguna, y con semejante tráfico descuidan mejorar los edificios, seguros de que la reedificación no les producirá una ganancia tan usurera* (Su Ermitaño 1852 in Diez de Baldeon, 1983, p. 267).

In 1860, an *ensanche* plan for Madrid was approved by the central government as an attempt to provide a planned, coherent city expansion. However, it soon revealed its limits, from both an administrative and geographical viewpoint.

This plan requested a large surface for a grid of public streets and private plots. The limits were very clear geometrically and were supposed to be lined by a trench, for fiscal and policy purposes. The orthogonal alignment of the periphery was completed by state law in 1864, allowing the production of *ordenanzas* for this specific area (Coudroy de Lille, 2005). The plan approved originally was intended to be followed by the development of other *ordenanzas* for the *extrarradio*, the area beyond the *ensanche* still under municipal management, avoiding any construction that would not respect them (Vorms, 2012).

In 1876, a Ley de Ensanche allowed the existence of different *ordenanzas* for the four different areas of Madrid: *casco antiguo*, *ensanche*, *extensión*, and *exterior*. In this law, it was also stated that it might be determined “*la extensión de la zona próxima del ensanche dentro de la cual no se puede construir ninguna clase de edificaciones*” and “*las reglas a que deben someterse las construcciones que se hagan fuera de la población del interior y del ensanche*” (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990, p. 233).

<sup>12</sup> Although the word refers to an old judicial Spanish figure, being accordingly of hard translation, the *cabazaleros* seemed to be some kind of commercial intermediaries.



Illustration 3. Plan of Madrid Ensanche, draft project of Carlos María de Castro, 1857.

Source: Memoria de Madrid

However, the law that should have regulated the area was never enacted. In the following years, different institutional efforts of specific *ordenanzas* to regulate the *extrarradio* would be developed without success: 1888, 1902, 1902 and 1906. As will be shown, the area would grow without clear regulation until the 1920s.

From the very beginning of the *ensanche* development, an a-legal process of poor housing construction started beyond the planned space. Charlotte Vorms, in her book *Batisseurs de banlieues* (2012), has made an extraordinary analysis of one of these areas, La Prosperidad, in which the first populations started to build in the periphery as early as 1862. Because of land subdivisions and commercial arrangements with the landowners, the first inhabitants self-built their houses in rented-to-buy plots. Theoretically unregulated, the supervision of the building process by the public powers resulted in different arrangements to adapt the regulations and produce ad hoc administrative practices to permit the construction in an area where it was not yet illegal to build. For instance, although in the rest of the city building permits and provisions for plans were compulsory, in the case study of La Prosperidad the self-built houses were

regularised and the new ones required only the signature of a maestro de obras without plans, as the municipal authorities considered the constructions to be of small scale and the area had no public services (Vorms, 2012). In addition, from the 1870s onwards, the public powers included a clause in building permits in which it became legal to demolish houses without expropriation costs to develop the planned *ensanche* of the area later on. Due to these arrangements, the *extrarradio* started to be composed of various precarious housing areas, which were subject to different administrative requirements and legal interpretations demanded by the different city council architects responsible for the *extrarradio* (Vorms, 2012, p. Ibid). Apparently, this process gave rise to different street patterns in the area (A. Fernandez de los Ríos, 1876).

This process of suburbanisation, developed in an area that was supposed to remain empty but where construction had been permitted, became increasingly problematised. In 1876, Fernandez de los Ríos, journalist and liberal politician, described the *arrabales* shaped by *casas bajas*<sup>13</sup>, in his opinion taking the same form as the city growth of Madrid in the 10th century.

*Casuchos indignos, colocados “ad libitum”, sin plan, sin concierto, en barrancos y en cercos, ajenos a toda explanación y a toda alineación, formando grupos irregulares y haciendo imposible toda mejora sucesiva, porque lo que hoy es fácil habiendo un plan previo es . . . imposible después que la propiedad vaya aumentando sus derechos* (A. Fernandez de los Ríos, 1876, p. 730).

Whilst the author thought that the city needed to plan its extension, he criticised the Castro plan for cutting *“la prolongación natural de las arterias del Madrid actual . . . sin más explicación que el capricho pueril de convertir el ensanche en un tablero de damas”* (Ibid 1876, p. 730).

The author offered descriptions of the existing *arrabales*. According to him, the Arrabal de Yererías, to the south of the *ensanche* was a *“meseta de casas y cementerios construidos en malas condiciones”*, whose demolition had been proposed by Castro in his project without effect. Nearby, the neighbourhood of Peñuelas, although being the object of improvements in 1869 with the intent to *“regularizar las rasantes”*, was still in a very bad condition. Compared to these existing *arrabales*, the new neighbourhoods of the *extrarradio* were very diverse. The author described La Prosperidad as having the most chaotic street pattern, whilst another nearby *extrarradio* neighbourhood, La Guindalera, was mostly *“well ordered”* (Ibid 1876).

In the south-east of the city, beyond the city limits, Puente de Vallecas had started to grow, yet the planned space inside Madrid, Barrio de Pacífico, was still not developed. As Fernandez de los Ríos stated, *“no habiéndose llevado a cabo la calle proyectada para acercarle al centro, y permaneciendo aislado de él como estaba, nada tiene de extraño que siga estacionado sin desarrollo en estos años”* (A. Fernandez de los Ríos, 1876, p. 741).

In another book, *El futuro Madrid* (1868), the same author considered that although demolitions were generally undesirable, those which liberated land to build new, healthier, and *“more beautiful”* houses should be carried out, not only for aesthetic and sanitary reasons but for economic profit: *“los solares, desnudos de casas y limpios de escombros, . . . tienen ya por eso sólo el doble de valor que tenían cuando estaban en pié las construcciones que los ocupaban* (Fernandez de los Ríos, 1868, p. 88). The allegation was made by defending the

<sup>13</sup> This term would be used widely during the next century to qualify the self-constructed housing areas without permit.

example of the French capital, the object of the Haussmann transformations. “*Si Paris se ha saneado, si el término medio de vida va siendo gradualmente más elevado, ¿a qué se debe? A las demoliciones que han abierto las calles a la acción del aire*” (Ibid 1868, p. 88). The author would advocate for a “replacement” of the “defective” city for a healthier one, ignoring the population displacement that the Haussmann transformations were provoking in Paris. Indeed, at that time, the existence of substandard urban growth started to be denounced for the “bad image” it projected of the Spanish capital city.

*Los viajeros de media España, todos los que llegan a la Estación del Mediodía, se encuentran al salir de ella, por vía de antesala de la capital, con un muladar, una alcantarilla de aguas sucias, y un cerro encarnado y descarnado, sobre el cual se hallan apiñadas muchas chozas, indignas de la aldea más atroz de la península* (Boletín Oficial del Ayuntamiento, 1869 in Diez de Baldeon, 1983, p. 1007).

During the second half of the 19th century, substandard neighbourhoods were increasingly problematised not only as a major sanitary problem but as moral and symbolic threats. However, hygienism did not penetrate urban regulations until very late in the century (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990). Whilst in the second half of the 19th century different law projects, such as the Ley Posada Herrera, tried to incorporate insalubrity as a key factor for triggering housing demolitions, the eventual expropriation law of 1879 was designed to facilitate the city-centre urban renewal, *reforma interior* (Bassols Coma, 1973, p. 364), not specifically to demolish peripheral substandard housing areas.

However, the climate of denunciation and the demands to eradicate those kinds of spaces continued to grow. In works such as *La mortalidad en Madrid* (Álvaro, 1882), *Lo que debe ser Madrid* (Salazar, 1892), and *El Pauperismo* (Arenal, 1897), different authors appealed both for the production of new *ordenanzas* that would order the expansion of the city and the destruction of the existing “miserable” housing areas. The first one proposed the demolition of the “*casas mezquinas que casi en su totalidad forman algunas calles de los barrios extremos*” (1882, p. 12) in order to reduce the mortality of the city, and the second one asked for regulations that could improve the hygiene and ventilation of houses and urban areas. The third source denounced rent extraction of “*covachas y zaquizamies*”, historic names for shanty towns and unhealthy attics. Although the solution might have been more regulation, this last author complained that no public intervention was being carried out “*hasta que parece un peligro*”, and when it did happen, the public powers did not have the capacity to intervene in the defective areas: “*en caso de epidemia o de temor de ella, tal vez alguna comisión reconoce cierto número de habitaciones, y o no las declara inhabitables por no malquistarse con los propietarios*” and “*porque no puede desalojarse a los miserables sin darlos mejor albergue, y no está preparado*” (1897, p. 15). To address this lack of solutions, C. Arenal proposed that philanthropic societies produce hygienic houses, allowing the existence of empty houses, something that would lead the working classes to select the best ones and abandon substandard areas, an argument also discussed in the French context.<sup>14</sup>

On the contrary, the question of reducing the offer of unhealthy, cheap housing solutions without providing alternatives remained controversial. One of the architects who intervened in

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that when Arenal cited the punctual demolition of shanty towns, she unequivocally referred to them as tenancies, something that would be largely discussed in the French context, as the liberal thinking in that country considered the right to live in substandard conditions should be respected.

the first Congreso Nacional de Arquitectos in 1881 thought that if the urban poor were prohibited from inhabiting unhealthy attics in the consolidated city, they would have no other solution than building “*barriadas de chozas en el interior de las manzanas del ensanche, adonde con arreglo a las ordenanzas, no tiene intervención el Municipio*” (Álvarez Capra 1881, in Díez de Baldeon, 1983, p. 815). The same architect insinuated that the attic landowners were obtaining profits of 3–4% of their investments, whilst the *chozas* landowners, ignoring the most basic hygienic conditions, were obtaining interest of 25% because of the low costs.

The development of substandard housing areas was a growing business. In the context of increasing migration to the cities and industrialisation, peripheral lands without any public infrastructure would be used to build rental shacks as a cheap and profitable way to extract rent from a growing urban poor population.

### The construction of substandard housing as a public problem at the end of the 19th century

Although throughout the 19th century substandard urban growth had been increasingly denounced for its economic, sanitary, and reputational problems, during the 1890s those spaces seemed to emerge as an urgent public problem. This idea was supported by the medical, psychiatric, and anthropological bodies and caused the systematic construction of accounts, mainly in the literature and press, describing substandard urban spaces as major societal threats.

At the end of the 19th century, the poorly built environment was increasingly perceived all around Europe as instigator of not only discomfort but physiological and psychological problems (Luckin, 2006). Degeneration theory, inspired by Lamarck’s pre-Darwinian ideas on evolution and articulated by the French psychiatrist Bénédict Morel (1857), warned against the ability of built environments to induce a degeneration of the working class, that would introduce some form of stigma to their bodies and provoke physical and moral pathologies transmissible to future generations (Caponi, 2018). This theory was refined by the Italian anthropologist C. Lombroso (1876), who indicated that the existence of acquired or inherited stigmas could be found in deviant populations, and used biological reasons to explain the tendency of some individuals towards thievery, prostitution, homosexuality, or crime. The prevalence of these social diseases was related to an “urban residuum” (Garside, 1988; Mazumdar, 1980), an inheritable degeneration that impeded self-control and led individuals to be “feeble-minded”, making European populations descend to “inferior” stages of the human being, such as the colonial populations and, beyond that, animals.

In Spain, ideas linking urban poverty to physical and moral degeneration had already existed at the beginning of the 19th century, based on Rousseau’s thinking about the corruption of the human being by modern civilisation. However, from the 1880s onwards, those biologically determinist racial theories had a big impact on medical and anthropological thinking in Spain. At that time, criminal anthropologist Rafael Salillas (1898) and social medicine authors F. Caro and P. Hauser (1884) used those theoretical frameworks to comment on the degeneration of the Spanish popular classes (Campos Marín, 1998). During the 1890s, degenerationism surpassed the intellectual milieu and became very popular (Maristany, 1984). Although it was initially defended by conservative hygienists and social reformers, it also deeply permeated, as

in the rest of Europe, socialist and anarchist thinking. In those movements, degeneration was a consequence of capitalist exploitation that caused unhealthy lifestyles and living conditions and required a social revolution and new “naturalist” ways of life to reverse it (Girón, 1999).

In this context, journalists with different political viewpoints started to visit the areas and denounce the way of living of the substandard spaces, the *barrios bajos*, creating stigmatising representations grounded on deep societal fears (Vicente Albarrán, 2014, 2016a, 2016b), frequently justified by degenerationist points of view. Maybe the most infamous substandard housing area appearing in the press at that time was Las Injurias,<sup>15</sup> which was a group of shacks situated on the left side of the Toledo bridge.

The earliest journal article identified through our research that highlighted the area as a public problem dates back to 1895, when a journalist for the progressive journal *El Liberal* visited the area, describing it as a combination of “*callecitas paralelas, de casas iguales, bajas, chicas, más bajas todavía que el nivel de la calle –como que para entrar en ellas hay que descender unos peldaños. –Esas habitaciones no tienen más que una puerta y no tienen ventanas y constan solo de una pieza, de dos a lo sumo*”.<sup>16</sup>

The small size of the houses was not the only sign of precariousness; the walls and roofs were made from cardboard and the floors were made of compacted earth. Only three or four latrines were available for the whole neighbourhood, and there was no water supply or pavement on the streets. Although the origin of the area was unclear, some of the inhabitants declared to have moved there fourteen years earlier, in 1881, and some others would have been born there.

The journalist described the presence of poor families moving there with some furniture and showed the way of life of the tenants.

*Después de pasar toda la calle, registramos todas las casas, iguales, tan iguales, que en viendo una puede decirse que se han visto todas. Un espacio de tres o cuatro metros en cuadro . . . en un rincón un fogoncillo con un respiradero estrecho para el humo. En el invierno viven en este espacio tres, cuatro, ocho personas, que apenas caben y que hacen del cuarto una cama, porque casi todos duermen juntos en el suelo. En el verano la vida se hace en medio de la calle y es mejor. En este día de mi visita las diez o doce calles de que se compone el barrio están ocupadas en la misma forma, por todo el vecindario que duerme al aire libre. Solo en dos o tres casas quedan algunos que se hallan enfermos.*

Whilst the overcrowding was noted as probably the worst problem of the area, the descriptions revealed an interiorisation of a gaze, at the same time exoticising and miserabilist, in which scientific ideas about the return to previous phases of evolution were suggested through the descriptions of the inhabitants. In the same newspaper article, the journalist, having opened a door and entered, remarked on the animalistic behaviour of the inhabitants.

*Contesta el hombre con gruñidos . . . y de fila en fila van alzándose cuerpos de hombres y de chicos medio en cueros, atezados, flacos . . . las mujeres, sin belleza, asoman por las*

<sup>15</sup> The most accurate English translation would be “The Slanders”.

<sup>16</sup> *El Liberal*. 25 July 1895. Cómo viven los pobres. El barrio de las Injurias.

*extremidades del camastro las piernas y los brazos desnudos . . . los chicos, de todas las edades . . . de todas las razas, gruñen y chillan; los hombres, con el sello del embrutecimiento, de la anulación moral, nos miran y se callan.*<sup>17</sup>

The differential character of the place was highlighted in references about exceptional management of the area. The text asserted that the public service workers, such as sweepers and police officers, did not enter the neighbourhood, making Las Injurias some kind of “protectorate” that remained outside the common law of the municipality and central government. The perspective, consistent with a colonial context in which poverty was identified with primitivism, also led the public powers not to provide public lighting, urbanisation, police or hygiene measures. The “only effective authority” on site was, according to the journalist, the land manager, which demanded “20, 25, or 30 cents” without any engagement or bond, probably every week, depending on the size of the houses.



Photo 9. Las Injurias neighbourhood.  
Source: El País, 8 September 1906.

At that time, the only hygiene regulations were the 1877 Ley Municipal, which included requirements regarding “higiene del vecindario” (neighbourhood hygiene), in addition to other subjects, and the 1892 *ordenanzas*, but the sanitary regulations in both were scarce. The *ordenanzas* included initially chapters about building requirements, but they were cancelled on 30 July 1893 due to the pressure of landowners and city council members (Ezquiaga Dominguez, 1990, p. 361).

Although the *laissez-faire* predominated in the building activity, some technological standards started to be compulsory in new houses, such as the use of plumbing traps in all buildings connected to the municipal sewer system, approved in 1889, the establishment of a minimum ceiling height of 2.8 m, approved in 1893, and the obligation to brush with the water and

<sup>17</sup> *El Liberal*. 25 July 1895. Cómo viven los pobres. El barrio de las Injurias.

sewer system when available, regulated in 1898. However, at that time, specific rules against substandard housing did not seem to exist, nor did specific survey devices.

Despite criticism in the press, Las Injurias and other already existing unhealthy areas such as Las Cambronerías (Buhigas Jimenez, 2019, p. 407) were tolerated by the urbanistic authorities during the 19th century, and the absence of police reports probably means that they were just legal.

However, at the turn of the century, survey institutions were created to control city growth and identify unhealthy areas. In 1898, the Junta Técnica de Salubridad e Higiene was created in Madrid, with the purpose of supervising the accomplishments of hygienic regulations (Rueda Laffond, 1998). The committee, composed of architects, was supposed to visit the houses, certify their sanitary conditions, and place a plaque on the façades to show which were hygienic and which were not. The purpose was that “*en modo alguno, sea alquilada, ni habitada, ninguna finca de nueva construcción o que haya sufrido reforma esencial, sin que la Junta técnica de Salubridad é Higiene, haya certificado que reúne las condiciones de habitabilidad necesarias*” (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1908, p. 6). Although the Junta had processed 9,667 improvement dossiers by 1904, the press denounced their malfunction; 2,356 houses had received an approval plaque despite having connections to cesspits (which transmitted diseases and frequently overflowed and flooded the streets) and being in buildings where the landlords usually disconnected the water to save money (*El Globo*, 24 January 1909). As will be shown, the hygiene rules that had become compulsory at that time were not being met.

In December 1900, two Republican city councillors of Madrid, Domingo Perez del Val and José Bartolomé Baeza, asked that Las Injurias be declared in an “estado de ruina” and thus demolished,<sup>18</sup> using that legal term. Two years later, on 8 August 1902, the municipal council discussed the demolition of the area<sup>19</sup>, and on 16 December, the press reported a decision of the recently constituted Junta de Sanidad of the municipality that prescribed its demolition.<sup>20</sup> However, as we will show, the demolition would be contested by a judicial process that took several years,<sup>21</sup> and although it was finally demolished, a new substandard housing area would re-emerge in the same space few later.

In a time in which housing was still not affected by minimum housing standards, the limits were not clear between working-class legal houses in *arrabales* and the *extrarradio* and the highly stigmatised attempt to demolish the *covachas* and *chozas*. The *extrarradio* houses, as described by Charlotte Vorms, were precarious, although they had been erected on legal land subdivisions, which were generally purchased. However, in the following years, planning and housing regulations would be reinforced, giving rise to a stronger dissociation between legal and illegal habitats, and permitting the systematic demolition of the most precarious housing areas, the *chozas*.

<sup>18</sup> *El Liberal*, 14 August 1915.

<sup>19</sup> *El País*, 9 August 1902.

<sup>20</sup> *El País*, 16 December 1902.

<sup>21</sup> AVM 17-33-81. Expediente promovido por denuncia de la casa nº 11 del Cristo de las Injurias. Denuncias. Negociado de Obras.



# THE REGULATION AND PROHIBITION OF INFORMAL URBANISATION IN MADRID: THE 1900s–1920s

At the beginning of the 20th century, Madrid transitioned from having unregulated development of substandard housing areas to restricting them and developing a general urban planning framework. During this regulatory change, normative production led to the emergence of some informal phenomena and to spatial governance strategies to deal with them.

The first hygiene standards led to an illegalisation of the insalubrious housing areas inside Madrid. Probably as a consequence of this, an already existent poor housing solution, the *chozas*, became still more precarious, and was continually problematised, demolished, and reconstructed during the first decades of the 20th century.

In addition, the working classes became increasingly concentrated in legal, under-equipped private streets in a fringe of the periphery: the *extrarradio*. The public powers tolerated the situation, and while they discussed future scenarios for the area, they developed specific “exception regulations” to permit and precarise the housing developments on it.

Finally, substandard urban growth spread beyond the Madrid city limits, towards the unregulated peripheral towns surrounding the city. The phenomenon was tolerated and even facilitated by the Madrid City Council, and the state handled it by developing national laws prohibiting substandard housing areas throughout the entire national territory and requiring the development of urban planning. The new laws, together with the lack of effective resources to equip the periphery, prefigured a new kind of urban growth: the construction of clandestine, informal areas that after the Spanish Civil War would be known as *chabolismo*.

## Madrid, the European “capital of death” at the turn of the century: Urban degeneration, deviant neighbourhoods, and the control of pathological spaces

During the first decades of the 20th century, the Madrid periphery experienced a large increase in population, growing from around 540,000 inhabitants in 1900 to more than 952,000 in 1930.<sup>22</sup> This increase, which overwhelmed the existing urban regulations, happened in a context in which infrastructures such as water and sewer systems and gas, and electricity supply, became inherent to the urban experience (Rodríguez Martín, 2015). The overflow of the public powers capacity to drive the urbanisation process and to warrant some minimal living conditions, fuelled an emerging social contestation that drove the working classes to come together in order to fight for social rights and neighbourhood improvements (Hernández Quero & De Miguel Salanova, 2018).

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<sup>22</sup> INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística): Alteraciones de los municipios en los censos de población desde 1842.

During the first decades of the 20th century, the precarious housing areas of Madrid became increasingly perceived as a threat. The racial science of eugenics, which developed in the United Kingdom and quickly expanded throughout the continent (Ternon, 2005), seemed to have an ally in the parallel eradication of the pathological urban space. Living in respectable environments was supposed to reverse the degeneration process (Mazumdar, 1980) and even respected urban theorist as Patrick Geddes, identifying the city as a sociological and morphological body to be healed, stated that “degenerated” people suffered their decline as a consequence of the urban environment in which they lived (Topalov & Magri, 1987, p. 430). To reverse this effect, developing the first urban planning regulations to create healthy garden-city housing areas would improve the “performance” of the working classes (Ibid 1987).

In Spain, the loss of the last American and Asian colonies in 1898 provoked the rise of so-called regenerationism,<sup>23</sup> a reaction against the decline of the empire, which seemed to be in part consequence of the degeneration of the Spanish race and its capacity to fight (Torrebadella Flix, 2014). In this context, controlling the housing areas inhabited by “degenerated” populations became a public powers’ priority. Most of the narratives we found about defective areas at that time show them not only as spaces of poverty but as the “den” where unadapted elements of the society take refuge and where physical disorder leads to mental disorder and crime. In 1901, the book *La mala vida en Madrid: estudio psico-sociológico con dibujos y fotograbados del natural* (Bernaldo de Quirós & Llanas Aguilaniedo, 1901), inspired by the degenerationist anthropology of Lombroso, described the marginal populations of Madrid and the places they lived. Relating social behaviour to the characteristics of the spaces inhabited by their inhabitants, the book also provides us with descriptions of the “way of life” of Las Injurias neighbourhood.

*Reina allí, como el medio es completamente homogéneo, una extrema simpatía, que de los mutuos servicios diarios pasa a la abnegación muchas veces, sin que nadie crea por esto hacer nada de particular ni cumplir deber alguno. La conciencia de que pertenecen a una misma especie les mantiene en una perfecta solidaridad, para producir la cual no entra ninguna clase de vínculos mecánicos. El grupo social se descompone y compone continuamente, dada la condición nómada de sus elementos celulares y, con todo, ofrece siempre la misma cohesión fuerte que hace de él un albergue seguro de malhechores* (Quirós & Llanas Aguilaniedo, 1901, p. 117).

The population was characterised as primitivist, and the solidarity of its members not as a value but as a sign of animalism. Press publications also remarked on these aspects in other areas. A 1902 article about Las Cambroneras from the liberal journal *La Correspondencia de España* pointed out that the absence of hygiene in the some parts of the city’s periphery allowed people to live “*en un estado de independencia parecida al de las tribus que merodean lejos de todo centro de civilización, sin escuelas que eduquen, sin nada, en fin, que indique cultura*”<sup>24</sup>. Another article from 1904 explained how in Madrid there existed “*barriadas enteras cuyas casas más parecen cuevas para que en ellas aniden animales dañinos que moradas de hombres*”.<sup>25</sup> “Scientific racism”, prevalent until WWII, not only hierarchically organised populations conforming to the physical appearance attributing poverty to biological

<sup>23</sup> *Regeneracionismo* in Spanish.

<sup>24</sup> *Heraldo de Madrid*, 27 February 1902

<sup>25</sup> *La Correspondencia de España*, 15 October 1904

inferiority, but justified violence towards these inferior “others” both in colonial contexts and on European land. To deal with the problem, the authorities put forth efforts to improve the housing areas, which were justified as a civilising racial enterprise.<sup>26</sup>

Another text, a press article that appeared on 7 September 1906 in the journal *El Globo*, also remarked upon the solidarity of the members of Las Injurias as a threat to social order. Believing that the space needed the study of “sociologists”, the journalist considered that for the inhabitants, private property was “a myth”, and that Las Injurias became “*un albergue de malhechores*” precisely because of “*solidarity in the way of acting and thinking*”<sup>27</sup> of their inhabitants. For the journalist, as for other contemporary observers from the “normal” city, the populations of such areas would be problematic because of their cohesion and disrespect of the private property. Or, in other words, the deviance assigned to the community was a consequence of their threat against the “social relations of production” (Spitzer, p. 642).

The authorities’ tolerance of illegal spaces such as Las Injurias, Las Cambroneras, and other similar areas could be partially explained by the convenience of letting the social threats concentrate in segregated, defined, and easily surveyed spaces. In 1901, Quirós described how, when the Las Injurias populations returned to their houses at night, the police made frequent visits to their hideouts. On 7 September 1906, after a visit to the neighbourhood, *El Globo* published a description of the area, and mentioned that “*alguien que huye atraviesa precipitadamente el campo y se refugia en el primer cuarto que encuentra*” fleeing from the police that wandered around the neighbourhood.

This perspective is in line with a containment management strategy of deviant populations (Spitzer, 1975). That strategy would reduce the costs of survey by keeping the populations geographically segregated: “*instead of classifying and handling problem populations in terms of specific expenses that they create, these groups are loosely administered as a homogeneous class who can be ignored or managed passively as long as they remain in their place*” (Spitzer, 1975, p. 679).

In the same *El Globo* text from 1906, the inhabitants, in addition to being considered thieves, were known for their outrageous morality:

*Las mujeres pertenecían al grupo de encubridoras, santeras y antiguas y modernas concurrentes en el mercado del vicio. [. . .] A esto hay que añadir las frecuentes juergas y bailoteos que diariamente tenían efecto en las Injurias. Los bailes agarraos los califica gráficamente Salillas de bailes de cópula. Tal es el desenfreno y obscenidades que envolvían las fiestas populares en la barriada de las Injurias.*<sup>28</sup>

As we have seen, Las Injurias, Las Cambroneras, and many other *chozas* areas were moral threats at the beginning of the 20th century; the stigmatisation the public sphere exerted led to the poor urban areas being represented as deviant spaces. However, the degenerationist perspective was based not only on ideas about the behaviour of the poor and working-classes, but on the sanitary problems of their neighbourhoods.

<sup>26</sup> As an example, at a conference of the Spanish Society of Hygiene in 1910, minister Jose Canalejas argued that “*el trato frecuente con los desvalidos me ha hecho ver con qué deplorable resignación soportan la casa insalubre, el hogar homicida, el taller amenazador y peligroso. [. . .] Colaborarán en gran medida a la obra de regeneración de la raza los que, presentando incesantemente a los ojos del pueblo las excelencias de la vida higiénica, susciten en ellos el imperioso afán de disfrutarla.*”

<sup>27</sup> *El Globo*, 7 September 1906

<sup>28</sup> *El Globo*, 7 September 1906

The book *Mortalidad de Madrid comparada con la de las demás capitales de Europa* (Lasbennes, 1912) described how the old city of Madrid, although terribly unhealthy, had been perceived in a more optimistic way because of the absence of knowledge about illness transmission. However, scientific advancement about contagious illness would completely change the public perception of risks related to housing insalubrity by the end of the 19th century.

Madrid was, in the first decades of the 20th century, known in Spain and internationally as *la ciudad de la muerte* (Revenga, 1901). The spread of illness, frequent during the 19th century, continued after the turn of the century. In the first decade of 1900, tuberculosis killed an average of 1,500 people per year in the city, measles 300 to 400, and typhus around 200. In 1903 and 1904, both smallpox and typhus epidemics spread through Madrid and re-emerged in 1909, killing around 1,000 people. Both illnesses, imported from “Hungarian tribes” (probably Roma populations), spread through the popular classes because of poor sanitary conditions and were occasionally transmitted to the higher classes. The previously cited *Mortalidad de Madrid comparada con la de las demás capitales de Europa*, award-winning book by the Spanish Society of Hygiene, believed that the contagion happened mainly “entre individuos que tienen tal horror al agua que casi ni para beber la usan” and re-emerged in Madrid because of the abundance of “mendigos, golfos y transumantes” (Lasbennes, 1912, p. 16).

The famous work of the doctor P. Hauser, *Madrid bajo el punto de vista medico-social* (1902), described the absence of sewer systems in several areas. The Ensanche Sur, where Las Injurias and other substandard spaces were located, received the detritus of the city sewer system of the whole city centre, and in Chamberi and Fuencarral, cesspools developed as a substitute for the non-existent public sewer system. The Guindalera and Prosperidad *extrarradio* areas lacked water sanitation and were surrounded by garbage.

The poor hygienic conditions did not exist only in the periphery. Hauser recognised that, despite these infrastructures being compulsory in the inner city, some streets of the *ensanches* still lacked them. However, the periphery presented a major risk; in the absence of water supply, the houses used wells both to evacuate and obtain water. Because the phreatic zone of entire parts of the city was contaminated, a big risk of disease transmission existed, especially that of cholera, that ravaged Madrid in several waves throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The urban poor were then a threat not only regarding abstract notions such as race and the nation but because of their possibility to transmit diseases in the urban environment, as can be understood from the words of Dr Hauser:

*Esta casa parece un verdadero antro de seres humanos degradados, de los cuales muchos se hallan en falta con la autoridad judicial. Casas de esta índole se hallan diseminadas en las calles próximas a la calle de Toledo. [. . .] Los individuos que allí se albergan pueden, en casos dados, ser los vehículos de transmisores de gérmenes a todos los distritos de la ciudad* (Hauser, 1902, pp. 322–329).

Any deviant behaviour was believed to influence the populations at a medical level. Integrating within the academic disciplines the ideas of physical and social hygiene, the degenerationist paradigm unified the upper classes’ fears towards spaces, diseases, and the moral behaviour of the urban poor. One decade after the work of Hauser, the highly reputed Dr Chicote stated the following in 1914:

*Aquellas viviendas cuyas causas de insalubridad actúan sobre el organismo de sus habitantes con influencias nocivas y permanentes, deben considerarse como asilo seguro de toda clase de endemias, cuyas emboscadas diezman sin piedad a los desgraciados que as habitan, y como focos de inmoralidad y miseria (Chicote, 1914, p. 22).*

The perspective that social problems were influenced by a pathogenic space was not exclusive to conservative thinking. For instance, José Besteiro, a member of the Socialist Party, adopted the same arguments to demand improvements for the urban poor and working-class housing conditions.

*Hay un problema higiénico en el problema de las viviendas ; hay también un problema moral en el problema de las viviendas, y cuando se trata de conocer las causas de males sociales tan graves como la enfermedad, como la criminalidad, como el alcohólico, como la misma prostitución, hay que buscar la causa de estos males en la naturaleza de las viviendas que habitan las grandes masas obreras (Besteiro Fernandez, 1920).*

The permanent denunciations of the authorities about the sanitary situation in poor neighbourhoods, and the increasing sanitary fears in the context of epidemics led to a development of hygiene norms during the first decades of the 20th century. This was thought as a way to control the substandard areas and their potential to be centres of epidemic and social deviance.

The *Ordenanzas de Salubridad e Higiene*, approved in 1905<sup>29</sup> as an extension of the general *Ordenanzas of Madrid*, were inspired by other contemporary European regulations, notably the Parisian one from 1902<sup>30</sup>. For houses, building permits required natural light, ventilation in each room, a minimum air volume of 25 metres cubed per inhabitant, and flush toilets “*en número y condiciones apropiadas al objeto del edificio*”. They also required the elaboration of detailed plans by architects or master builders with a descriptive memory, and allowed the expropriation by insalubrious housing conditions. Probably inspired by the British regulations and contrasting with the respect of individual rights present in other continental regulations, such as the French one, in Madrid “*la autoridad sanitaria tiene derecho a penetrar en toda vivienda a cualquier hora hábil*” to evaluate housing characteristics and the way in which the inhabitants maintained it. This norm defined *vivienda* in broad terms and permitted substandard constructions to be supervised.

*Se considera bajo el nombre de vivienda, no sólo la casa particular aislada o de alquiler, sino toda construcción emplazadas dentro del recinto de la Villa y que responda a necesidades públicas y particulares. Por tanto . . . todo local habitable aunque no lo sea más que por determinadas horas, quedan sujetos a las disposiciones<sup>31</sup>.*

On 5 October 1908, a new *Bando sobre saneamiento e higiene de las casas de Madrid* raised housing sanitary standards, and members of the Madrid’ Asociación de Propietarios, who considered the public demands excessive, protested (Rueda Laffond, 1998, p. 193).

Another system to control defective housing was the Empadronamiento Sanitario, a census of unhealthy houses, which was clearly inspired by the Cassier Sanitaire of Paris and other similar

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<sup>29</sup> AVM, 24-425-2.

<sup>30</sup> See, in the Paris chapter, *Private streets, “unrecognised neighbourhoods”, and the uselessness of the housing hygiene surveillance*, pp. 182-194.

<sup>31</sup> AVM, 24-425-2.

French housing cadastres developed in Nancy and Orléans. Ordered by the Real Orden de 13 de Julio de 1901 and as a task of the Juntas Municipales de Sanidad, the sanitary cadastre in Madrid was initiated in 1905 with the purpose of classifying the sanitary situation of each single building in the city. Its operation was coordinated with the Beneficencia Municipal, from which ten doctors would be selected, and the Junta Técnica de Salubridad e Higiene, which would develop the questionnaires the inspectors would complete regarding information about the urban environment, sanitation, number of inhabitants, conditions of the interior house, building plans and so on.

This process, however, also seemed to fail. By 1906, 2,500 houses had been visited (Médicos Inspectores Municipales de Salubridad é Higiene, 1906), and in 1910 a journal, *El Monitor Sanitario*, noticed the Empadronamiento Sanitario's was at that moment "in process". However, an internal report of the Junta Técnica de Salubridad e Higiene of 27 January 1913 recognised the following:

*Esta Junta, en 20 de febrero de 1904, tuvo el honor de proponer (...) la formación de un encuadrado sanitario para empadronamiento de las viviendas (...) El que no se haya llevado a cabo este importante servicio por esta Junta (...) obedece a diversos motivos que no han de ponerse de relieve en esta ocasión, siendo la causa de no tener de momento una estadística exacta de todas las casas que por su carencia de Condiciones de higiene y saneamiento, a pesar de ostentar la placa en muchos casos, puedan constituir un peligro para la salud de sus moradores.*<sup>32</sup>

Although the text expressed the non-existence of the *encuadrado* and subsequently mentioned that budgetary problems had made the work of the Junta more difficult, the report indicated that their work had been fruitful and provided a list of "unhealthy houses" in the entire city.<sup>33</sup>

The regulation of unhealthy housing increased substantially on the 12 June 1911 law called Ley de Casas Baratas, the first social housing law in Spain, which also introduced the prohibition of building, hiring, or inhabiting insalubrious houses. Through articles 28–38, the so-called Juntas Locales de Fomento were created to denounce unhealthy houses or groups of houses, forcing either the owners to improve them or the public expropriation of the areas. The law intended the municipality and housing cooperatives to use the obtained lands to develop social housing areas, Casas Baratas.

However, the regulation did not introduce mechanisms that were internationally approved to deal with such problems.

In the second and third Congresos Internacionales de Saneamiento y Salubridad de la Habitación, in Geneva in 1906 and Dresden in 1911, it had been already prescribed that "*al expropiar las fincas insalubres por convenir así al bien común, se haga depreciándolas en razón de su insalubridad mayor o menor, disminuyendo el precio del inmueble en lo que importarían las obras necesarias para hacerlo salubre*". This international procedure, completed in the fourth congress held in Amberes in 1913,<sup>34</sup> was not introduced in the Spanish legislation of

<sup>32</sup> AVM 21-112-95.

<sup>33</sup> The AVM have an enormous record of reports that corresponded to inquiries carried out by the municipal architects and the police to be explored.

<sup>34</sup> "La expropiación de los inmuebles insalubres es una obra de utilidad pública en primer grado, que debe perseguirse no solamente atacando a las manzanas o grupos de casas insalubres, sino también

Casas Baratas.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the expropriation of informal areas was, if not profitable for the owner, at least not a big problem.

In 1912, in a letter to the city council, the gobierno civil reported that in June alone 487 people had died from epidemic diseases, and he asked the municipality to act with the “strongest of severity”. In another letter from 12 July 1912,<sup>36</sup> the Madrid mayor responded to gobierno civil, saying to take extreme measures: “*cuantas medidas sean conducentes a evitar la mortalidad que tuvo tan gran aumento en el pasado mes de junio*”. The same day, a handwritten *circular* (memo) was sent to the tenientes de alcalde that urged them to act according to some disposiciones of chapter 9 of the “Instrucción Sanitaria”. Among other urgent topics such as water, schools, and food supply, the letter asked for surveys of the “*capacidad (de) ventilación y demás condiciones sanitarias de viviendas*” and deployment on them of “*Las precauciones y medidas para evitar enfermedades epidémicas, contagiosas o infecciones*”.

On 3 July 1913, article 12 from another law, a *bando* from the municipality, established that houses which presented a mortality rate higher than the average of Madrid would be evicted. However, the actual influence of the measure seemed limited.

As the press revealed seven years after its approval, the “expropiación por causa de insalubridad pública” was rarely carried out (Gallego, 1920, p. 155), and, as will be shown, shanty towns grew again in Madrid. Although some of the laws developed were ambitious, the working classes’ economic situation obligated part of the society to expend the minimum quantity of money on housing. Discussions frequently occurred about the inability of poor inhabitants to rent or build houses because of the increasing housing standards. As Chicote stated in 1914, the destruction of poor, unsanitary houses was unrealistic because it was impossible for the inhabitants to obtain better shelters: “*tal medida es prácticamente irrealizable, pues se trata de gentes pobrísimas que carecen de medios para alquilar viviendas por económicas que sean*”.

Facing to it, self-constructing small houses in the periphery was not perceived as the worst possibility when compared with the concentration of contagious populations in the overcrowded city centre. In the 1892 *ordenanzas*, living in Madrilenian attics was thought of as a measure to prevent the poor populations from moving to the unhygienic houses in the periphery (Ezquiaga, p. 362). During the first decades of the 20th century, the perspective seemed to change, maybe as a consequence of better understanding contagion mechanisms. As Dr Chicote stated in 1914, the most lethal houses had to be destroyed, improved, or transformed “*al propio tiempo que los tranvías y los trenes eléctricos favorecen la dispersión de los habitantes a las afueras*” (Chicote, 1914, p. 102).

The development of germ theory at the late 19<sup>th</sup> century made the fear of epidemic and endemic diseases more tangible, and it also seemed to provoke a desire for social segregation

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atacando individualmente a los inmuebles insalubres comprendidos entre construcciones sanas : Que es necesario facilitar la ejecución de los trabajos de saneamiento no evaluando los inmuebles expropiados, más que teniendo en cuenta el importe del gasto que supondrían los trabajos necesarios para reponerlo al estado de salubridad ; [. . .] es indispensable proporcionar a los habitantes de los inmuebles expropiados, habitaciones salubres de pequeños alojamientos sobre el emplazamiento de los inmuebles expropiados, o en su inmediata vecindad”. (Compte rendu des travaux du IV Congrès International d’assainissement et salubrité de l’habitation. Amberes, 1913, p. 465, in Gallego 1920, pp. 154–155).

<sup>35</sup> Article 36.

<sup>36</sup> AVM 24-425-2.

to avoid the risk of contagion derived from spatial proximity of the urban poor. The problem was not just the possibility of poor individuals transmitting diseases but of the air breathed in the neighbourhoods contaminating other parts of Madrid. As Dr Hauser stated,

*Si el comunismo es una utopía bajo el punto de vista económico-social, es una verdad, tratándose del aire de los grandes centros de población, pues el aire contaminado en uno o varios distritos por el mefitismo humano, puede servir de vehículo de transmisión de los gérmenes infecciosos que contienen a los restantes de la ciudad, unas veces directa, otras indirectamente”* (Hauser, 1902, p. 330).

Facing the hygienic reforms' lack of efficiency in improving housing standards, the solution would require demolishing and displacing the spaces where the urban poor were concentrated.

### The birth and evolution of 20<sup>th</sup> century Madrid shanty towns

As previously described, the area of Las Injurias had already emerged in the 19th century as a problematic space. As will be shown in the upcoming pages, from 1900s to the 1920s, at the same time that substandard neighbourhoods within Madrid were forbidden, shantytowns rose in empty plots through the city.

The press generally designated these areas as *chozas* or *aduares*. Whilst the term *chozas* had already been used, *aduares* was new and had racist connotations; it referred to the temporary settlements of the nomadic North African populations, a word probably imported to reference the “infra-European” way of life of some Moroccan populations, which were under the Spanish protectorate at that time. Both terms, and still some others,<sup>37</sup> were used to identify groups of miserable houses, often built with recycled materials but sometimes also with adobe or bricks, that had no infrastructure or sanitation systems. Although understanding the social history of these areas remains beyond the scope of this thesis, some written sources refer to them as being populated not only by the urban poor, but also by the lower strata of the working class. In 1928, Federico Lopez Valencia, director of the Sección de Publicidad y Estadística del Instituto de Reformas Sociales and Spanish representative in the International Housing and Town Planning Congress of Paris indicated the following:

*En estas chozas vive una población perteneciente a las clases más pobres de la sociedad, que no cuentan con medios seguros de vida. Hay en ellas algunos obreros con jornal fijo, reducidos a la miseria por su numerosa familia y por enfermedades o accidentes, pero la mayoría son obreros ocasionales, cargadores, vendedores de periódicos, peones, etc., o ejercen industrias de infima clase, como traperos, vendedores de juguetes y baratijas que ellos mismos fabrican, o bien se dedican a actividades que caen dentro del código penal, y son rateros, timadores, estafadores, etc.* (Valencia, 1929, p. 12).

Diverse historical sources show that a relatively large and variable population lived in these kinds of shanty towns. In 1903, the *Atlas Geográfico Ibero Americano* reported that 65,267 buildings of one, two, three, or more floors and 6,645 *albergues* existed in the province of Madrid (Chías y Carbó & Escudé Bartoli, 1903). This category would be used during the subsequent decades to refer to temporary shacks, including rural forms of substandard

<sup>37</sup> Similar terms used were *albergues*, *zahurdas*, and *cabildas*.



habitats. In 1915, the Empadronamiento General de Habitantes reported that 557 shacks existed in Madrid (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1917), although its methodology was not revealed. Most of them were in the east of the city (Plaza de Toros, 262; Guindalera, 58), in the south-east (Gutenberg, nowadays known as Pacífico, 66), and in the south (Gasómetro, 167), with only a few remaining in the north (Vallehermoso, 24). However, only one year earlier, in 1914, the Laboratorio Municipal of Madrid identified some 2,000 *chozas*, which housed around 10,000 people, which was approximately 1.6% of 599,807 inhabitants in 1910 (Chicote, 1914, p. 15).

In 1920, a footnote in a text from the Conferencia Nacional de la Edificación (Ruiz Almansa & Fuentes Martiáñez, 1924, p. 556) indicated that according to “Nomeclator General de España para 1920” statistics, there were 1,337 “*albergues, chozas y construcciones endebles y de caracter temporal*” not included in the general housing statistics.

In 1928, the Spanish delegate to the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, Federico Lopez Valencia, revealed the existence of the following in Spain:

*562,391 albergues, que la estadística oficial no se atreve a clasificar como casas, por carecer de las condiciones más elementales para viviendas y que, sin embargo, sirven de habitación a miles de seres humanos. En el campo, estos albergues suelen ser excavaciones hechas en las laderas de colinas y márgenes de ríos, o cuevas naturales, o refugios contruidos al amparo de rocas salientes o de paredones de edificios derruidos, generalmente castillos e iglesias* (Valencia, 1929, p. 12).

In the same text, the author noted that around 3,000 *chozas* existed in Madrid, and described their characteristics:

*Se levantan generalmente en solares abandonados o a lo largo de los caminos, o adosadas a los muros de cerramiento de grandes fincas, y sus materiales suelen ser piedras y barro, tablones viejos, latas y trapos. Las dimensiones son reducidísimas, pues apenas cabe una persona de pie, y en casi todas la única abertura es la puerta* (Ibid 1929, p. 12).

However, in another text, Lopez Valencia also observed that “*hay en Barcelona 5420 barracas, que albergan 26.130 personas, casi tantas en Madrid, y la mitad en Sevilla*” (Valencia, 1929, p. 28). The reason for this number could be the porous limits between the *chozas* and the worst houses developed in the *extrarradio* of Madrid, which he had also outlined in the paper.

These misunderstandings were common, evidence of the inaccuracy of the statistical approach to the phenomenon. As Dr Chicote stated, those areas,

*Construidas con barro o materiales rebuscados en los rellenos y con latas para formar tejado, están habitadas por familias muy numerosas, cuya existencia no es aventurado suponer conste solamente en las casas de socorro, en los hospitales y en el cementerio, pues es dudoso que la estadística llegue con su empadronamiento hasta esos antros urbanos* (Chicote, 1914, p. 35).

In addition to the difficulties of knowing the actual population of the shanty towns, the officers in charge of the official census apparently did not take the most precarious shacks into account, as they “*limitaban su radio de acción a los domicilios legalmente establecidos*” (Díaz Simón, 2017, p. 147).

Despite the failures of the statistical process, comparing data permits us to state two conclusions: (i) the phenomenon was ongoing during the first decades of the 20th century and

(ii) it was quantitatively important, as the number of people identified by the official census was very likely under estimated.

But how did these areas grow and how did the hygiene laws influence their development?

As has been shown, the *chozas* that emerged during the 19th century were developed legally on private lands linked to the commercial strategies for renting houses to the lowest strata of the population, especially in the *ensanche*, the land surrounding the city centre that had been planned but remained vacant due to speculative processes. At the beginning of the 20th century, the real estate market of informal houses had other cases with similar commercial arrangements, such as the already mentioned Las Cambroneras. That area, described by the press in the beginning of the 20th century as being composed of huts that measured 1.5 metres from roof to floor and had very defective construction: “*El techo, de maderos, deja por sus canalones franco paso a la lluvia, [. . .] las puertas son, casi siempre, unos pedazos de tablas, que se caen de rotas y podridas, puertas que son en la mayoría de viviendas el solo hueco de ventilación*”.<sup>38</sup> The population of around 500 families included *gitanos* and *payos* that lived on different sides of the neighbourhood.<sup>39</sup>

The shacks were rented without the promise of long stays, and were thus appropriate for irregular workers. The charge was 25 cents per day, an amount that was requested each night by a property manager going from door to door. In the case of non-payment, the manager used extrajudicial methods to impose authority or evict the inhabitant, occasionally burning the shacks during the process:<sup>40</sup> “*se ha dado el caso de quemar algunas casas como único medio de desalojamiento*”.<sup>41</sup>



Photo 10. Las Injurias.

Source: El País, 8 September 1906.

<sup>38</sup> *Heraldo de Madrid*, 27 February 1902.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 27 February 1902.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 27 February 1902.

<sup>41</sup> *ABC*, 7 July 1903.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were no doubts about the commercial nature of the shacks, despite their being considered part of an immoral market. In 1904, an article from the conservative *La Correspondencia de España* concerning the shanty towns of Manigua and Bellas Vistas denounced the process of the shacks development.

*Capitalistas sin conciencia construyeron unas lóbregas covachas, [. . .] sin recubrir apenas las paredes con yeso, dejando al descubierto los mal unidos cascotes. [. . .] En el fondo de tales mazmorras habitan seres humanos, y por morar allí, semejantes suyos les cobran un alquiler. Esto es cruel, y de tal conducto no pueden ni deben hacerse solidarias nuestras autoridades.*<sup>42</sup>

However, probably as a consequence of the 1905 Ordenanzas de Higiene, which illegalised substandard housing areas within the municipal limits, the situation changed to some extent. Public narratives about the commercialisation of private lands for the production of shanties became rare and highly controversial.

The area of Las Injurias, according to the administrative records of its demolition, was owned by a woman, Eduvigis Alonso, who delayed the demolition several times by presenting reports of hired architects and claiming it was possible to transform the space to conform to the new laws.<sup>43</sup> In 1906, a press article denounced it as an area composed of fifty poor houses without any kind of hygiene in which around 150 people lived. Most of them were “*obreros y pobres de solemnidad*”<sup>44</sup> which rented the space for 25 cents per day. Another article insisted, as did the 19th century press, that the owners proceeded to evict the inhabitants “*cuando se retrasaba el pago seis días*”.<sup>45</sup>

On the other side, the press started to mention the existence of “arrangements” that implied the payment of a hidden rent in the *chozas* areas developed on private lands.

That seemed to be the case in the Vallehermoso settlement. Located between San Pedro Street and Menéndez Valdes Street in the *ensanche*, the areas were portrayed by the press in 1915 to be occupied by between 120 and 130 families, in huts “*situadas entre edificaciones y varias de ellas al fondo de un estrecho barranco que forma la depresión del terreno, junto a las paredes de las edificaciones donde están adosadas*”.<sup>46</sup> Another article from the same year, in the conservative journal *El Norte de Madrid*, described how landowners managed the area, suggesting that the inhabitants of the shacks paid some kind of rent to them.

*En la de Vallehermoso, hubo por la mañana limpieza general. D. Adolfo, dueño y señor, según parece del terreno, había dado orden de que se limpiase en espera de la visita del Alcalde, al que en efecto esperaban unas cuantas familias moradoras de la cabila. [. . .]*

*En esta cabila tratamos de inquirir lo que hubiera de cierto respecto del abono, al dueño del solar, de dos pesetas al mes por familia, y las personas a quienes preguntamos nos contestaron, con cierto encogimiento sospechoso que, por lo menos a ellas no se les cobraba nada, pero ignoraban si con las demás familias sucedería lo mismo. ¿Nuestra impresión? Pues que cuando el río suena agua lleva.*<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *La Correspondencia de España*, 15 October 1904.

<sup>43</sup> AVM 17-33-81.

<sup>44</sup> *Blanco y Negro*, 8 September 1906.

<sup>45</sup> *El Globo*, 7 September 1906 .

<sup>46</sup> *El Norte de Madrid*, 17 October 1915, Las Cabildas de Vallehermoso.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 17 October 1915.

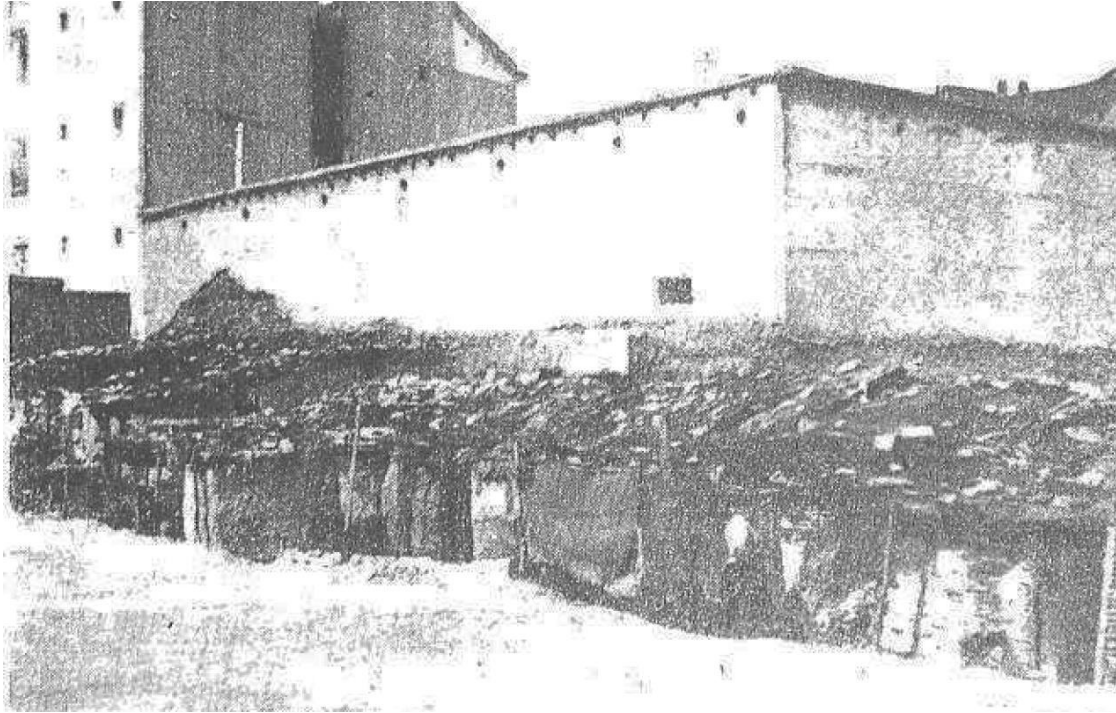


Photo 11. Cabilas de Vallehermoso.  
Source: *El Norte de Madrid*, 17 October 1915.

However, in most of the tales describing the shanty towns, there were no details showing their relationship with the land tenure.

The approval of the 1905 law also seemed to provoke an evolution of the architecture of poor housing areas. Whilst during the first years of the century these shelters were described as being poorly built brick and wood structures, information about the 1910s *chozas* showed a more precarious construction, generally made with recycled materials. For instance, in the Casa de la Higuera, a private plot located behind Galileo Street, the conservative *El Norte de Madrid* revealed the existence of shacks that were,

*Habitadas por gentes de la más humilde condición, si habitar se llama a guarecerse una familia compuesta de cuatro o más individuos en un cubil de poco más de un metro cuadrado . . . La estructura de tales chozas o cubiles no puede ser más económica : con unas cuantas latas de petroleo, unas esteras viejas y unos pedruscos.*<sup>48</sup>

Some years later, a description of the Las Vistillas *chozas*, made by the progressive journal *La Libertad*, reported similar characteristics and indicated that behind Beatriz Galindo Street grew “*un aduar de chozas construídas con esteras y tablas, al modo más africano posible*”.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *El Norte de Madrid*, 3 October 1914, Dice el público...

<sup>49</sup> *La Libertad*, 11 December 1923, Lo que pide el vecindario. Modo de solucionar el problema de la vivienda.



Photo 12. The Alhóndiga area in 1914.  
Source: (Chicote, 1914, p. 14).

In some cases, the *chozas* areas, came to form large neighbourhoods, such as La Alhóndiga. They were built in an area close to Peñuelas, with a much higher quantity of shacks, and their origins are unclear. In 1914, the area had already started to have shack houses that were built with trash materials, as seen in the photographs from Dr Chicote's book (1914, p. 14). One decade later, various press articles showed that the area had some degree of consolidation and densification. The rising neighbourhood, as described by a conservative journal in 1925,<sup>50</sup> was inhabited by poor artisans and workers, basin builders, garbage collectors or charcoal loaders. These kinds of impoverished but not marginal populations which lived there could be exemplified by the life story of Angel Reyes, one of the interviewed inhabitants. He was an elderly worker who resided in Puente de Vallecas, and he had become unemployed and subsequently evicted. To face his declining economic resources, he sold his furniture and bought a *choza* in the settlement for 175 pesetas.

The local real estate market, different from the landowner's managed shack areas, seemed to be self-managed by the inhabitants. A 1925 press article<sup>51</sup> described how Martín Castillo was considered the mayor of the settlement because he carried out a census of the inhabitants, managed the urbanisation process, and collected a fee from the new neighbours who settled on the area. His wife, Cesaria, in addition to helping him, was in charge of centralising and distributing the post to the different neighbours. In the absence of property titles, some kind of legitimisation was required for the emerging housing market. The press noted, for example, the case of a couple that "*había adquirido la propiedad de su casa –sin pasar a inscribirla en el*

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<sup>50</sup> *La Voz*, 23 April 1925.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 23 April 1925.

*Registro<sup>52</sup> pero no por falta de tal trámite menos suya- por treinta y seis duros, fruto de privaciones hasta conseguir ahorrarlos, para convertirse en propietario de su limpia choza<sup>53</sup>.*

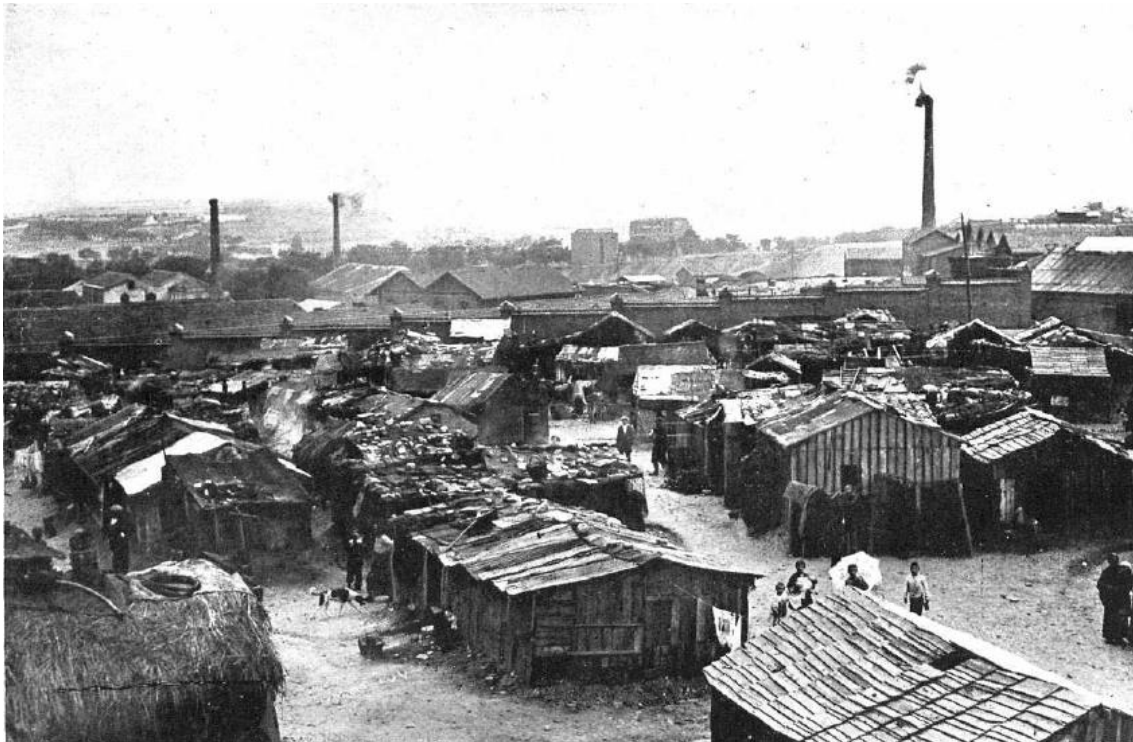


Photo 13. La Alhóndiga area in 1925.  
Source: Mundo Gráfico, 22 April 1925.

Although this subject should be further researched, the absence of legal land titles would require such arrangements in different historical moments in order to secure local, informal real estate markets<sup>54</sup>.

In some cases, the historical sources clearly stated the origin of the areas as a consequence of public land occupation, discarding the possibility of a hidden, temporary commercialisation of the areas by private landowners. An example of this kind of spontaneous urban growth is Colonia Pignatelli, in the area called Ventas today, much farther from the city centre. The neighbourhood was parallel to the Arroyo Abroñigal, an unhealthy stream that demarcated the eastern limit of Madrid at the end of Alcalá Street. The area was made up of defective, one-storey houses built from solid materials. A 1927 article<sup>55</sup> described it as a squatting settlement and described its occupation process.

*Bajo el desnivel que marca el denominado paraje o camino Montserrat se ha formado esta barriada sin orden ni concierto, se han edificado casas, chavolas (sic) y aún verdaderas chozas con alambres, palos y latas viejas, y de esa manera vive un importante núcleo de población*

<sup>52</sup> The text undoubtedly refers to the Registro de la Propiedad, a non-compulsory system of land tenure control permitting the registration of notary reports of a property transaction.

<sup>53</sup> *La Voz*, 23 April 1925.

<sup>54</sup> This aspect would also emerge in the informal post-war areas, the barrios de *chabolas*, through the Asociaciones de Vecinos. Although further diachronic analysis should be undertaken, the emerging collective social structures to organise the space and land tenures could have been a functional adaptation in the cases of land squats and lack of legal land tenure in different contexts.

<sup>55</sup> *La Voz*, 5 October 1927. Diogenes, en el arroyo Abroñigal.

*entre animales domésticos y basura, teniendo enfrente el arroyo . . . que encharca aguas pestilentes con emanaciones irrespirables. Si el hecho es desconsolador por lo que se refiere a la higiene, otros aspectos concurren también que reservamos para mejor ocasión y que tienen extraordinaria importancia para el Municipio como es la detentación de terrenos, ya que allí parece ser que hay fincas sin título alguno de propiedad y otras que han ido ensanchando el terreno colocando hoy unas estacas, mañana unos ladrillos y levantando al siguiente día un muro.*

It is interesting to note that although the precarious informal urbanisation areas at that time were mainly described as *chozas*, the journalist used the term *chavolas*, which would be widely used after the Spanish Civil War to describe the housing areas that arose as a consequence of land occupations. Despite the area was developed occupying public lands, its constructions were not as precarious as those developed in the areas close to the city centre; this difference in the kind of construction could be partially dependent on the risk of eviction. The most central, and those developed on private in lands, would probably have been more prone to be evicted in the short term. Indeed, the Pignatelli area seemed to remain for decades, coinciding with the subsequent *Barrio Sin Permiso*, an informal neighbourhood demolished on 17 July 1955, as were many others that had originated during the 1910s and 1920s.

Contrasting with this “solid” occupation of public lands, the shacks of some plots of the Peñuelas neighbourhood, probably also a consequence of land squats, showed a much higher degree of material precarity. In 1914, Chicote had revealed dispersed shacks built with recycled materials occupying a plot that, some years later in 1924, a press article of the conservative *La Voz*<sup>56</sup> described. The area included two shanty towns in Peñuelas and Ercilla streets. In them, “*ocurre una cosa bien singular, y es que los particulares han invadido terreno del Ayuntamiento*”. For the journalist, the situation seemed to be worse than in 1914, and the shacks were so precarious that they could collapse. Although the land squats were destroyed without any legal problem, as will be shown, the area persisted for at least ten years, which was explained by the journalist using the same arguments that Chicote had expressed years before:

*A la intemperie no se puede dejar radicalmente a la gente. Claro que se va diezmando, y los índices de morbilidad y mortalidad son elevados ; pero seguramente serían más si no tuvieran siquiera un refugio donde guarecerse los días crudos del invierno, agudizándose a todo esto la crisis del trabajo y aumentándose la depauperación de la raza.*<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *La Voz*, 9 November 1927.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 9 November 1927.

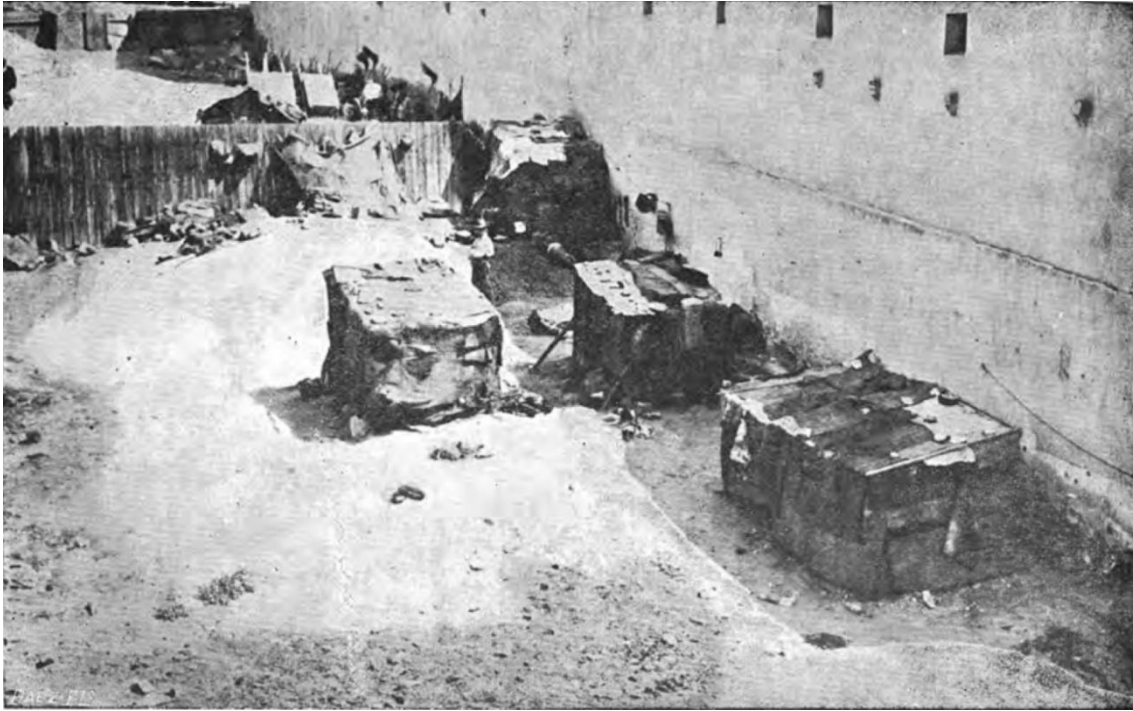


Photo 14. Chozas of Peñuelas in 1914.  
Source: (Chicote, 1914, p. 42).

During the 1910s and 1920s, many other shanty towns arose: Arroyo de Embajadores, Ataulfo Street in the neighbourhood of Moncloa, Magallanes, Meléndez Valdes in Vallehermoso, and so on. In 1928, the already mentioned Federico Lopez Valencia described the dynamics that generally led to the production of these very poor housing areas after decades of hygiene regulations.

*Estas chozas las construyen los mismos que las habitan, pero en las épocas peores de crisis de vivienda sus dueños han llegado a alquilarlas y en otros casos los propietarios de los solares han exigido también cantidades por ocupación del suelo* (Valencia, 1929, p. 12).

The rise of these areas happened even though urban regulations had forbidden it. Although different hygiene campaigns were carried out by the public administrations, as we will see later on, it seems that the development of these areas was somehow tolerated due to the impossibility of some populations to pay rent in “normal” houses and the absence of public housing alternatives.

Despite the relative similarity of the areas and their populations, the historical sources seem to speak about three kinds of shanty towns: those in which the inhabitants rented very defective houses, a consequence of a private production; those in which poor populations built shacks on clandestinely rented lands; and those in which poor populations built shacks on squatted public and private lands. Whilst the first ones had been developing in the 19th century, the last ones happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and showed a higher material precariousness.



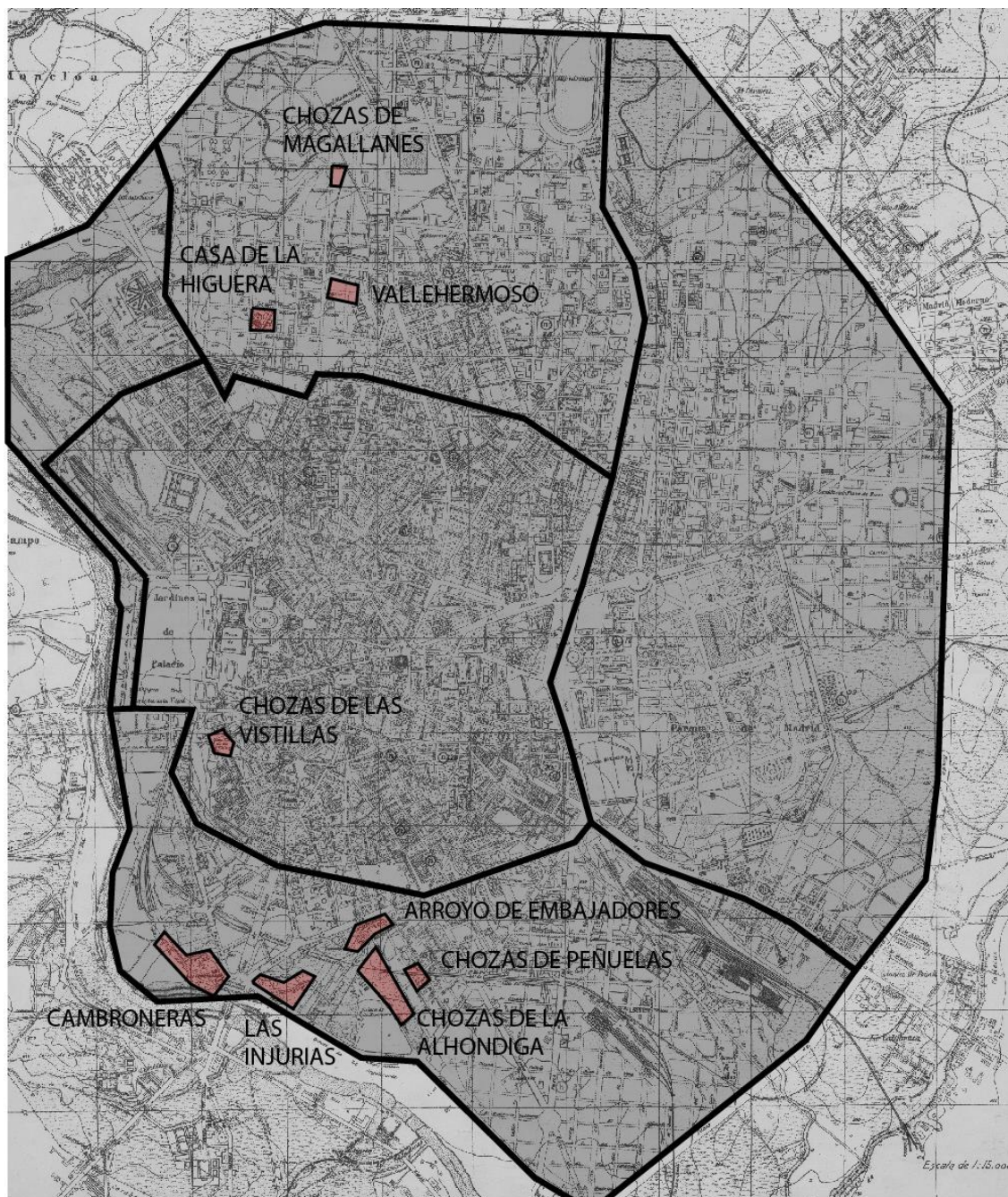


Illustration 4. Cartographical approximation to the geography of the Madrid' Chozas (1900-1930)<sup>58</sup>.

Source: the author, from historical press and Chicote (1914)

It is possible that some kind of evolution of the poor housing production occurred. The emergence of hygiene regulations that made it illegal to rent land for unhealthy shack construction could have led to a restriction of cheap housing. As has been shown, the *chozas* after the 1905 law shared a common element: material precariousness linked to legal insecurity. Whilst during the 19th century the very poor housing areas were legal, the approval of the first hygiene regulations seemed to illegalise them. Although these regulations should

<sup>58</sup> Some areas have not been represented, as it is impossible to identify their names or addresses in the geography of the city. In some cases, the location is approximate.

have impeded the existence of these areas, the lack of housing alternatives seemed to induce its precarious reproduction. Prohibiting the real estate market of miserable houses obligated the urban poor to erect temporary shacks on public and private lands and probably gave rise to hidden land use agreements. The inhabitants, building the cheapest possible shacks, were held back by the constant risk of eviction that, as will be shown in the next pages, would depend only on the variable tolerance of the public powers.

### Evictions, demolitions, and reconstructions

Despite the existing legal framework and the approval of some hygiene regulations, various shantytowns arose in Madrid during the first decades of the 20th century as a consequence of the increasing housing problem. The unacceptable extraction of rents from impoverished populations in *chozas* areas was in some cases used to justify their destruction, despite the absence of any housing alternatives. A press article from a liberal journal, *La Correspondencia de España*, illustrated that point of view in 1904, comparing the Barcelona and Madrid policies towards those spaces.

*Esta tarde ha seguido el derribo de las obras de Paralelo, a presencia de numeroso público. El alcalde ha inspeccionado los trabajos, ordenando actividad. Mientras recorría las calles ha sorprendido en el interior de un solar innumerables barracas hediondas y repugnantes, donde parece increíble que se alberguen familias. Los propietarios cobraban 80 céntimos diarios por cada barraca, siendo inexorables para el cobro. El alcalde considera que esto constituía un delito de atentado contra la salud pública y una explotación de la miseria. Ha ordenado la detención inmediata de tres propietarios, los cuales han sido encerrados en los calabozos de la Casa Consistorial. El pueblo ha vitoreado y aplaudido al alcalde.<sup>59</sup>*

The same article, comparing the initiative of the Barcelona mayor, pushed for the demolition of equivalent Madrilenian shanty towns. In the absence of social housing solutions this proposition, which would result in an important fringe of the city population going without shelter, was again justified to “avoid” exploitation of the working-class.

*Ya que nuestro Municipio no se preocupa del embellecimiento de la población, como el de Barcelona hace, ya que los apuros pecuniarios del Ayuntamiento de Madrid son tales que no permiten sanar del todo los distritos de la capital, una vez que carece de medios para conjurar por propia cuenta la crisis obrera, procure al menos que los hijos del trabajo no sean objeto de tales explotaciones, con perjuicio de su propia existencia. [. . .] La explotación de la miseria es quizá más grande en Madrid que en ninguna otra capital de España, y nadie se ocupa de poner coto al mal: a nadie preocupa que los pobres sean pasto de la voracidad de seres usurarios. [. . .] Las autoridades madrileñas debieran imitar la conducta del alcalde de Barcelona: girar visitas de inspección a esos inmundos barrios, pero personalmente el alcalde y el gobernador, no delegando en nadie, viendo por sus propios ojos toda aquella miseria vilmente explotada, y tomar enérgicas medidas, buscar recursos extraordinarios para que cesen de ser tratados como bestias, honrados hijos del trabajo, cuyo único delito es carecer de recursos para la vida<sup>60</sup>.*

<sup>59</sup> *La Correspondencia de España*, 15 October 1904, A las autoridades. Barrios miserables.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

In spite of these alleged reasons, it seems clear that the concern about the *chozas* was not the well-being of the inhabitants but their ugliness and, generally speaking, their consideration as a source of epidemic diseases. They were described as hygienic and moral threats, so the need to control their social and spatial deviance not only triggered public actions to erase them, but led to the evolution of the already described hygiene laws.

However, it is not possible to know exactly what constituted the limit between the unhealthy, recoverable neighbourhoods and the areas subject to destruction. Although Madrid municipal architects and Juntas Municipales de Sanidad had to survey the unhealthy areas and provide expert verdicts about them,<sup>61</sup> the institutional violence inflicted on some spaces seemed to go well beyond the rational criteria of bureaucracy. The archives show that the demolition of the Injurias area was the subject of a long debate between architects and public servants because the buildings could be easily reformed to fit to the housing standards.<sup>62</sup> The final demolition was probably a consequence of the continuous press denunciations.

On the other hand, the Arroyo de Embajadores demolition records showed that it was done without a visit from the Juntas Municipales de Sanidad. On 9 March 1910, the Teniente de Alcalde of the Inclusa district gave a direct order to erase the area, and on 16 March it was emptied. The only inquiry made was after the eviction, to know if the plot was public or private so that some enclosures could be built to avoid further land occupations.<sup>63</sup>



Photo 15. Shacks in Arroyo de Embajadores.  
Source: (Chicote, 1914, p. 40).

In a context of a “moral panic” (S. Cohen, 2011) that resulted from the prevalence of disease, the press seemed to be a key element in the development of slum-clearance operations. Articles arguing for the necessity to destroy focal points of illness preceded the demolitions of

<sup>61</sup> Art. 377 of the Ordenanzas Municipales of 1892.

<sup>62</sup> AVM 17-33-81.

<sup>63</sup> AVM 18-82-37.

various shanty towns: Las Injurias, Las Cambroneras,<sup>64</sup> Casa de la Higuera,<sup>65</sup> Vallehermoso, and La Alhóndiga. The upper classes' fear of contagion, previously described by F. Engels in his famous *Housing Question* (1873), was present in all of Europe and injected politicians, journalists, and middle-class neighbours of the *chozas* areas with hysteria and the desire to destroy these areas. On 17 October 1915, a press article in the conservative *El Norte de Madrid* expressed the necessity to destroy such spaces, not only because of fear of epidemic illnesses but for "altruism".

*En todos los tonos hemos abogado por la desaparición de las Cabilas de Vallehermoso, por todos los medios hemos intentado llegar a ese fin impuesto, no por nuestro capricho, no por quijotismo nuestro, no por pura vanagloria de triunfar, sino por caridad, por altruismo, por servir los intereses del vecindario de Vallehermoso, los del vecindario de Madrid entero, para cuya salud es una amenaza perenne la existencia de esas cabilas, focos de infección capaces de viciar la atmósfera de toda la provincia.*<sup>66</sup>



Photo 16. *Cabilas* in the Vallehermoso destruction.  
Source: *El Norte de Madrid*, 17 October 1915.

In a context in which germ transmission was understood but antibiotics had not yet been discovered, sunlight and ventilation seemed to be the only factors that reduced diseases such as tuberculosis. The preventive destruction of "anarchic" street patterns and their shacks with scarce windows was considered a hygiene priority.

In addition to fear of epidemics, the risk of fire associated with precarious construction and the absence of water were also pointed out as reasons to accelerate the destruction of these areas. The press reported a fire in the *chozas* of La Alhóndiga in 1924, where fifteen shacks

<sup>64</sup> *ABC*, 7 July 1903.

<sup>65</sup> *El Norte de Madrid*, 3 October 1914, Dice el público...

<sup>66</sup> *El Norte de Madrid*, 17 October 1915, Futura arena del alcalde a los concejales ante los aduares marroquíes de Bellas Vistas.

were destroyed.<sup>67</sup> In 1923, a press article of the cultural magazine *Mundo Gráfico* reported a fire in the Las Vistillas *chozas*.<sup>68</sup>

*Creo que el vecindario madrileño y, sobretodo, el de aquellas barriadas, tiene derecho a vivir con tranquilidad. [. . .] Dos veces se incendiaron las barracas, sin duda por alguna chispa del hornillo de encina, y dos veces los vecinos de la calle de Beatriz Galindo vieron en peligro sus casas y sus ajuares, acudiendo todos a apagar aquellas tablas, entre las que se cobijará seguramente, en no lejano día, algún azote para Madrid, y entonces a toda prisa se llevará a hospitales, a asilos, a dependencias municipales a aquellos desgraciados de quienes se debieron cuidar antes.*



Photo 17. The *chozas* of La Alhóndiga before their eviction.

Source: *Mundo Gráfico*, 22 Abril 1925.

Unlike in the 19th century, when the *laissez-faire* context led to the right to own and inhabit unhealthy shacks, in the first decades of the 20th century the public administration was considered responsible for the shanty town inhabitants. Although the state did not plan the *chozas* development, the authorities were identified as being responsible for any problem that could come from the existence of such areas. This public responsibility also seemed to contribute to the development of “preventive” demolitions.

As an influential media source stated, “*Si llegando el día de la catástrofe las autoridades se encontraran cruzadas de brazos, Mundo Gráfico haría constar su protesta más enérgica, . . .*”

<sup>67</sup> *Heraldo de Madrid*, 16 July 1924.

<sup>68</sup> *Mundo Gráfico*, 9 May 1923, Un foco de infección. Las Vistillas.

*Señor ministro de la Gobernación, señor gobernador civil, señor alcalde y concejales . . . hagan desaparecer esas barracas*".<sup>69</sup>

However, last but not least, the real estate management of these areas could have been a factor not only in the rise of these areas but also in their destruction. Many *chozas* settlements found in the first decades of the 20th century were in the *ensanche* area. This peripheral fringe, as we have seen, was characterised in the second half of 19th century by enormous speculation, letting most of the plots go empty and forcing the development of the city outside its limits: the *extrarradio*. Although the rise of *chozas* areas, as we have said, could have been tolerated by the private landowners as a temporary income and perhaps to justify the absence of building activity, some historical cases illustrate the capacity of real estate to trigger their eviction and destruction when land was needed for more profitable projects. That would have been the case in the eviction of the *chozas* of Magallanes and Vallehermoso, which the historiography has connected with the development of a renovation project led by the architect José Carrasco, which "*era, en realidad, una operación para liberar un suelo que podía ser objeto de una importante actuación inmobiliaria. Concebida por la Urbanizadora Metropolitana (por los hermanos Otamendi, junto con el Banco de Vizcaya)*" (Sambricio, 2003c, p. 247).

In that incident, as in the La Alhóndiga one, the economic cost of the eviction and population rehousing was paid for by the public administration, which claimed the economic refund of the costs of the operation, because of the land price increments that private developers would enjoy after the *chozas* disappearance.<sup>70</sup>

Although different reasons led to the demolition of the *chozas* areas, in some cases the destructions were carried out after infections developed on them. That was the case in the demolition of the *chozas* of La Alhóndiga. In 1925, a scandal broke out there in the southern periphery of Madrid. Some neighbours had died from different smallpox cases, and others had been moved to hospitals. Some of the inhabitants, still ill, were too weak to be carried outside their shacks.<sup>71</sup>

The Madrid civil governor, Mr Semprun, after demanding advertise to the Inspector Municipal de Sanidad, was informed about the high risk of the area suffering new cases of "*viruela hemorrágica y de tifus exentemático*". In the same report, the author, Dr Blanco, stated that "*es tal la miseria que existe en la mencionada barriada, que por muy minuciosas desinfecciones que se hicieran no podrían lograrse satisfactorios resultados*".<sup>72</sup> The solution, forced by a technical point of view, was the urgent destruction of the area. On 26 April 1925, the municipal firemen started to burn down the shacks.

The press pointed out the advertising objective of the operation.<sup>73</sup> The destruction, carried out over several days, called the attention of the press and Madrilenian citizens, who went to the site to see the destruction. Some articles denounced it, stating that if the problem of the houses was strictly sanitary, a large part of Madrid should be demolished.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Mundo Gráfico*, 9 May 1923, Un foco de infección.

<sup>70</sup> *ABC*, 23 July 1925.

<sup>71</sup> *La Voz*, 23 April 1925.

<sup>72</sup> *ABC*, 17 April 1925.

<sup>73</sup> *ABC*, 26 April 1925.

<sup>74</sup> *La Voz*, 23 April 1925.

This event seems to have triggered demolitions even in other still few developed *chozas* areas, such as the five barracks denounced on Lerida Street in the Tetuán municipality, outside the Madrid city limits, for which several levels of the public administration, both the municipalities and the state delegate, were coordinated in order to carry out the destruction.<sup>75</sup>



The destruction of the chozas of La Alhóndiga.

Source: El Sol, 27 Abril 1925.

The physical destruction of the *chozas* areas brought with it, on every occasion, the question of what to do with the evicted populations. In spite of journalists frequently describing the demolitions as positive, some narratives about the *chozas* demolitions showed strong opposition of their inhabitants.

An example would be the demolition of the *chozas* of La Alhóndiga. An article from the progressive journal *El Sol*<sup>76</sup> described the military treatment present on the first day of eviction because of the risk of revolts.

*El conflicto se ha presentado en el día de hoy, que ha sido elegido por las autoridades para proceder al desalojamiento, y en el que los infelices habitantes de las chozas han sido trasladados a un lugar que ni siquiera tiene condiciones de asilo.*

*Desde muy temprano, aún antes de que amaneciera, comenzaron a llegar a los alrededores de la barriada fuerzas de la Guardia Civil y de Vigilancia, que tenían la misión de evitar que se alterara el orden en el caso de que los vecinos de las chozas se resistieran a desalojar las viviendas. En lo alto de un desmonte próximo se situaron algunas parejas de la Guardia Civil ; una sección de guardias de Seguridad, al mando de un capitán y de dos tenientes, acordonaron el lugar ocupado por las chozas, y un escuadrón montado, que también acudió, se distribuyó en parejas por los sitios estratégicos. Con todas estas fuerzas llegó también el comisario del distrito y numerosos agentes de vigilancia [ . . . ]*

*Mientras tanto, fueron levantándose los habitantes de aquellas inmundas chozas, y al salir a la calle y percatarse de que había llegado el momento en que forzosamente tenían que desalojar sus casas, se reunían en corrillos y comentaban con tonos de viva indignación la situación que*

<sup>75</sup> ABC, 25 September 1925.

<sup>76</sup> El Sol, 23 April 1925.

*se les creaba al desahuciarles sin que previamente se hubiera resuelto el problema de facilitarles nueva vivienda.*

Another article from the same journal explained how the remaining neighbours, received the executors of the demolition with “alarm” and “displeas”. Surveyed by the police, the inhabitants couldn’t act in any way against their houses’ destruction. The accounts of the press showed the despair of the inhabitants with regard to the authorities’ violence,

*Se produjo el consiguiente revuelo, y varios grupos de mujeres se reunieron en actitud levantisca [. . .]. Hombres y mujeres presenciaban la operación, entristecidos y dando muestras de gran dolor. Las mujeres lloraban, y algunas fueron víctimas de accidentes nerviosos.<sup>77</sup>*

In that context, the question of the poor people’s right to own informal housing was controversial. As stated by *El Liberal*,

*El relato del desahucio realizado ayer de unas cuantas chozas la barriada plantea una serie de problemas que ni están resueltos ni se resuelven ni acaso se resolverán. [. . .] No deben existir las casas de la Alhóndiga, pero ¿Se puede arrojar al pobre de su casa y atentar contra su libertad, tan respetable como la del potentado, obligándole a cambiar de residencia, y obligándole a perder su propiedad sin indemnización? [. . .] La libertad de los pobres, el respeto a su propiedad, debe estar tan garantida como la propiedad del potentado [. . .], la vivienda higiénica, capaz y asequible a los medios naturales de que el pobre dispone.<sup>78</sup>*

The press discussed the inhabitants’ legitimacy, explaining their working-class condition, instead of the marginality frequently attributed to them, and the ruin of young couples that had invested their savings in the informal houses. The housing problem, which originated from rural migration to big cities and the absence of cheap construction, was the real problem to tackle, not the shacks’ existence: “¿Dónde y cómo han de vivir los pobres? No se construyen casas más que para los ricos. [. . .] El problema de la vivienda, (es) general en las ciudades españolas por el crecimiento de aluvión que las ha proporcionado el pavoroso abandono de los campos”.<sup>79</sup>

The question of what to do with poor populations after destroying the areas was discussed in every demolition and eviction process. Although some social housing programmes that were developed from 1911 on (Castrillo Romón, 2003) permitted demolition processes to be developed, the evictions were hardly coordinated with a solid, long-term policy to improve the housing problem.

*El mismo sr. Rodríguez anunció que dos de las chozas que se han levantado en el campillo de las Vistillas se han derrumbado, y que él, como teniente de alcalde, está dispuesto a no autorizar su reconstrucción. Propone que se edifiquen barracones para recoger la gente que vive en las chozas de Magallanes, la Alhóndiga y las Vistillas, y acabar con esas viviendas indecorosas y antihigiénicas. El alcalde manifestó que este asunto habrá que articularlo con un plan general para acometer el problema de la vivienda.<sup>80</sup>*

Although the press continually pushed for their demolition, the shanty towns were occasionally tolerated because there were no housing alternatives. Regarding the La Alhóndiga

<sup>77</sup> *El Sol*, 27 April 1925.

<sup>78</sup> *El Liberal*, 24 April 1925.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 24 April 1925.

<sup>80</sup> *El Imparcial*, 25 September 1924.



*chozas*, their inhabitants were displaced to a “disinfection park” and then later to the Colonia Benéfica del Trabajo, where they were placed temporarily. However, evictions were commonly understood to bring with them the condition of homelessness. Whilst some journals pleaded for charitable foundations to become involved to care for the evicted populations,<sup>81</sup> others seemed to accept that the public powers disregarded them, considering that “*el motivo de tolerar tales construcciones tal vez será la gran dificultad que existe para encontrar albergue en Madrid*”.<sup>82</sup>

Although in some cases, such as with the *chozas* of Vallehermoso, donations were collected to build some kind of cheap rehousing solution,<sup>83</sup> in the absence of long-term solutions, the authorities frequently developed cheaper solutions than building social housing. A range of temporary alternatives were implemented: moving evicted populations to charity institutions, giving them charity money to help them to find a tenancy, and moving them to their places of origin, as in the case of populations coming from the countryside.<sup>84</sup> Although some journals criticised the cruelty and long-term inefficacy of such solutions, the press generally seemed to approve of it. For instance, an article of the cultural journal *Mundo Gráfico* stated the following:

*Yo no quiero que se expulse a estas gentes como a un perro leproso. [. . .] En las leyes existen remedios para estos casos ; los madrileños que no tengan medio alguno, quédense en Madrid en los asilos correspondientes ; los de fuera, déseles el viaje para algún sitio de procedencia.*<sup>85</sup>

This solution, which fell between charity and clientelism, also helped to maintain public security during the eviction processes. The media described the “gracious pay” of donations authorities made during the demolition processes for which the expelled populations praised the governor,<sup>86</sup> and (fake) promises that guaranteed houses, help, and jobs for all the inhabitants of the demolished shacks.<sup>87</sup>

Although the demolition and eviction processes occurred frequently, the public powers seemed unable to prevent the areas from re-emerging. The key element of this re-emergence seemed to be the absence of cheap social housing programmes and the corresponding eviction system. This appeared to have been the case in the Las Vistillas neighbourhood near Beatriz Galindo Street, which inhabitants developed using self-construction methods with recycled materials after being evicted from an unhealthy guesthouse.<sup>88</sup>

Reproducing informal urbanisation appears to have been a frequent phenomenon. A press article from 1929, written by the progressive journalist José Blanco (Sierra, 2018), identified the presence of “homeless” populations in the Ensanche Sur, the same area of the evicted Las Injurias, La Alhóndiga, and Arroyo de Embajadores *chozas* areas. The journalist, walking at night with an oil lamp, had discovered poor families trying to sleep on the ground until they could move to another informal area beyond the demolished spaces.

<sup>81</sup> *Mundo Gráfico*, 22 April 1925.

<sup>82</sup> *La Libertad*, 11 December 1923, Lo que pide el vecindario. Modo de solucionar el problema de la vivienda.

<sup>83</sup> *El Norte de Madrid*, 17 October 1915.

<sup>84</sup> *ABC*, 17 April 1925.

<sup>85</sup> *Mundo Gráfico*, 9 May 1923, Un foco de infección.

<sup>86</sup> *ABC*, 26 April 1925.

<sup>87</sup> *ABC*, 26 April 1925.

<sup>88</sup> *Mundo Gráfico*, 9 May 1923, Un foco de infección.

*Más allá, paseo adelante, nos hemos parado ante las barracadas de la Alhóndiga, donde existió la miserable población de chozas que destruyó hace tiempo la gasolina municipal. [. . .]*

*Pero no es así. Entre las escombreras, alrededor de montones de cascote y junto a las tapias, el débil foco de nuestra luz portátil va descubriendo verdaderos cuadros de miseria; hombres, mujeres y niños, astrosos todos ellos, inquilinos quizá la mayoría de las destruidas barracas, duermen al raso, revolcándose sobre sus miserables harapos. [. . .]*

*Luego, por la calle del Laurel, bordeando los paredones de la antigua fábrica de Zafra . . . nos aventuramos por la oscura planicie que precede al paseo de la Esperanza. [. . .] Otra vez el foco de nuestra linterna descubre nuevos durmientes. Ahora es una tribu de gitanos que acampa junto a los tapiales. [. . .]*

*Después de pasar bajo el pórtico del antiguo embarcadero, cruzamos el río por el pontón de hierro que da acceso a la barriada de Andalucía [. . .]. También alberga el pontón bajo su entramado de hierro seres que roncan al borde del canal por donde se deslizan mansamente las aguas del Manzanares [. . .]. Nos abstenemos de hacer luz y cruzamos el extenso arenal que linda con el poblado de la carretera, habitado en su mayor parte por gitanos, en la zona de casuchas anti-higiénicas y detestables que se diseminan por la ribera. Una ráfaga de aire trae hasta nuestro olfato un olor nauseabundo de agua estancada y pestilente.<sup>89</sup>*

The demolitions and evictions were unable to solve the *chozas* problem of the first decades of the 20th century. Some sources show that very soon after such operations with no rehousing system, the effect was only to displace poor populations and subsequently give rise to new informal housing areas. However, the public powers kept doing these operations for around 30 years.

Resolving the *chozas* problem would then require not only hygiene rules to avoid substandard construction and temporary solutions but also consistent, holistic policies to improve the quality and extent of city growth. Such measures should include social housing areas and allowing cheap houses to be privately constructed, as stated by the progressive newspaper *El Liberal*.

*Si indispensable es la destrucción de las casas insalubres, más necesario es todavía el proporcionar habitación higiénica a las clases humildes o modestas, que sólo pueden abonar cantidades pequeñísimas por el alquiler. Este problema de índole sanitaria y social, ya que es indiscutible la influencia del albergue insano material y moralmente sobre la mortalidad y sobre la criminalidad, reclama imperiosamente la intervención tutelar del Estado”.<sup>90</sup>*

This answer would be reached by using an instrument that was being developed through Europe: the *trazado de poblaciones*, the Spanish version of a new discipline: urban planning.

<sup>89</sup> *La Voz*, 3 August 1929.

<sup>90</sup> *El Liberal*, 24 April 1925.

## The 1910s extrarradio and the city limits beyond it: Urban growth in Las Californias and Puente de Vallecas

In the previous pages, the Madrid *chozas* have been characterised by using the relatively scarce sources that described these areas. However, these were not the only poor housing areas that grew around Madrid. As Federico Lopez Valencia described in 1928,

*Hay otra clase de viviendas familiares, construídas en los arrabales de las grandes poblaciones, de categoría superior a las chozas, pero con grandes deficiencias sanitarias, faltas de agua y de servicios de saneamiento y edificadas en su mayoría a la ligera, con materiales procedentes de derribos. Las más típicas de estas construcciones son las del extrarradio de Madrid y las barracas de Barcelona [. . .]. Se dedican al alquiler para obreros de escaso jornal, y también hay bastantes habitadas por sus propietarios (Valencia, 1929, p. 13).*

Areas of deprived allotments that were tolerated through “exception regulations” grew in the already mentioned *extrarradio*, and beyond that, in suburban municipalities such as Vallecas. The shortage of urban regulations permitted houses to be built without any minimum quality or sanitation infrastructure.

The 19th century development of private streets allowed the construction of precarious houses on agricultural lands through rent-purchase agreements (Vorms, 2012), and this process was accelerated by the arrival of rural populations. Improved city transport and the previously described impact of epidemic and endemic diseases caused the working classes and urban poor to move towards the periphery. The rise of new urban areas in the periphery of Madrid, a pattern seen in other European capital cities, led new neighbourhoods to develop through agricultural land subdivisions without any public facilities. This new “ville tentaculaire” (Verhaerenm, 1893) not only challenged the diverse aspects of Madrid urban life but exceeded the urban regulations and control systems and obligated the public powers to transform the regulations to create flexible practices. The emergence of the new spaces provoked the beginning of Madrid’s spatially segregated structure as the poor and working classes became increasingly concentrated in the *extrarradio* and, step by step, colonised the rural lands beyond Madrid’s city limits.

Although the development of the Madrid periphery in the beginning of the 20th century has been well documented through the case of study of La Prosperidad by Charlotte Vorms (2012), a comparative analysis between the *extrarradio* and *suburbio* urban regulations and building practices will allow us to discuss the different territorial control state powers exercised and the increasing development of substandard neighbourhoods beyond the city limits.



Photo 18. Tejares de Sixto, Ventas.  
Source: (Chicote, 1914, p. 45).

Whereas at the end of the 19th century the main neighbourhoods in the Madrid *extrarradio* were La Prosperidad and La Guindalera, the whole area started to build up during the first decades of the 20th century. The semi-rural condition of the new substandard houses (Diez de Baldeon, 1983, p. 1046), began to be criticised as being intolerable for the Spanish capital city.

By 1914, the *extrarradio* had more than 50,000 inhabitants in substandard peripheral allotments (Nuñez Granés, 1914), forming unurbanised streets developed by the private sector with minimal or no infrastructure. That same year, in his book *La vivienda insalubre en Madrid*, Dr Chicote presented photographs of the slums and peripheral shanty towns, identifying the problems of the *extrarradio*: defective constructions, narrow streets, and neighbourhoods that became famous for their exposure to epidemic waves. The author noted a difference compared to the *chozas*, as their houses were often constructed because of “some previous project”. Most of them included only a single storey and were usually owned by humble populations. This situation coincides with the studied by Charlotte Vorms in the neighbourhood of La Prosperidad.



Photo 19. Calle de Carlos Rubio, Cuatro Caminos.

Source: (Chicote, 1914, p. 55).

However, beyond the *extrarradio*, new poor and working-class areas were rising. Vallecas, an independent municipality in the south-east of the city at that time, grew from 3,280 inhabitants in 1877 to 19,045 in 1910 (León Peralta, 1930).

To understand the development of informal urbanisation in Madrid, we have analysed the building activity and regulations in two contiguous areas of the growing periphery during the 1910s: Las Californias inside the *extrarradio* and Puente de Vallecas, the contiguous area just beyond the Madrid city limits. Comparing those aspects has allowed us to understand the suburbanisation of Madrid's popular classes, a phenomenon that continued during the subsequent decades.



Illustration 5. Detail from “Plano de Madrid y pueblos colindantes al empezar el siglo XX”, 1900.  
Source: Facundo Cañada Lopez, CSIC Digital.

This area, located in the south-eastern periphery of Madrid, was a conglomerate of small houses and unfinished streets at the turn of the century, as Facundo Cañada’s map shows.<sup>91</sup> Soon after this area was considered not a rural space but a Madrid peripheral annex. It was divided into two parts by Abroñigal stream, which coincided with the Madrid city limits. Las Californias, inside the city, and Puente de Vallecas, outside the city, shared a common working-class character and arose on cheap lands around the stream, at that time a landfill full of detritus. The area initially lacked a water supply and sewer systems, although Las Californias theoretically started to be supplied between 1907 and 1908, when the water companies and the municipality worked together to extend both services (Pinto Crespo et al., 2014). The press condemned the non-operation of these services in the area several times, making the obligation to brunch to such services inscribed in the 1905 Ordenanzas de Higiene non-effective.

<sup>91</sup> In it, the unfinished streets are drawn with discontinuous lines, and the orange represents construction sites.

For Las Californias, the first building found in the archives was a small single-storey brick house that was property of Pedro Blanco Fernandez. It was built 1891 on the Seco Street and signed by the maestro de obras, Esteban Esteban Latorre. The building permit shows a very humble but normally designed house sanctioned by different administrative instances. The taxes were paid and detailed descriptive report and plans were included. However, it warned the following:

*No estando comprendido el terreno de que se trata en la zona del interior de Madrid, ni en la oficial del ensanche, el Ayuntamiento no ha ajustado ni señalado alineaciones ni rasantes, por lo que deberá tener entendido el interesado que la concesión de esta licencia no le da derecho a reclamación ni indemnización alguna si se estableciesen otras alineaciones y rasantes ni por ningún otro concepto. Tampoco da derecho esta licencia a reclamar se lleven a estos lugares el alumbrado, empedrado, alcantarillado, vigilancia municipal y demás servicios dependientes de esta Corporación.*<sup>92</sup>

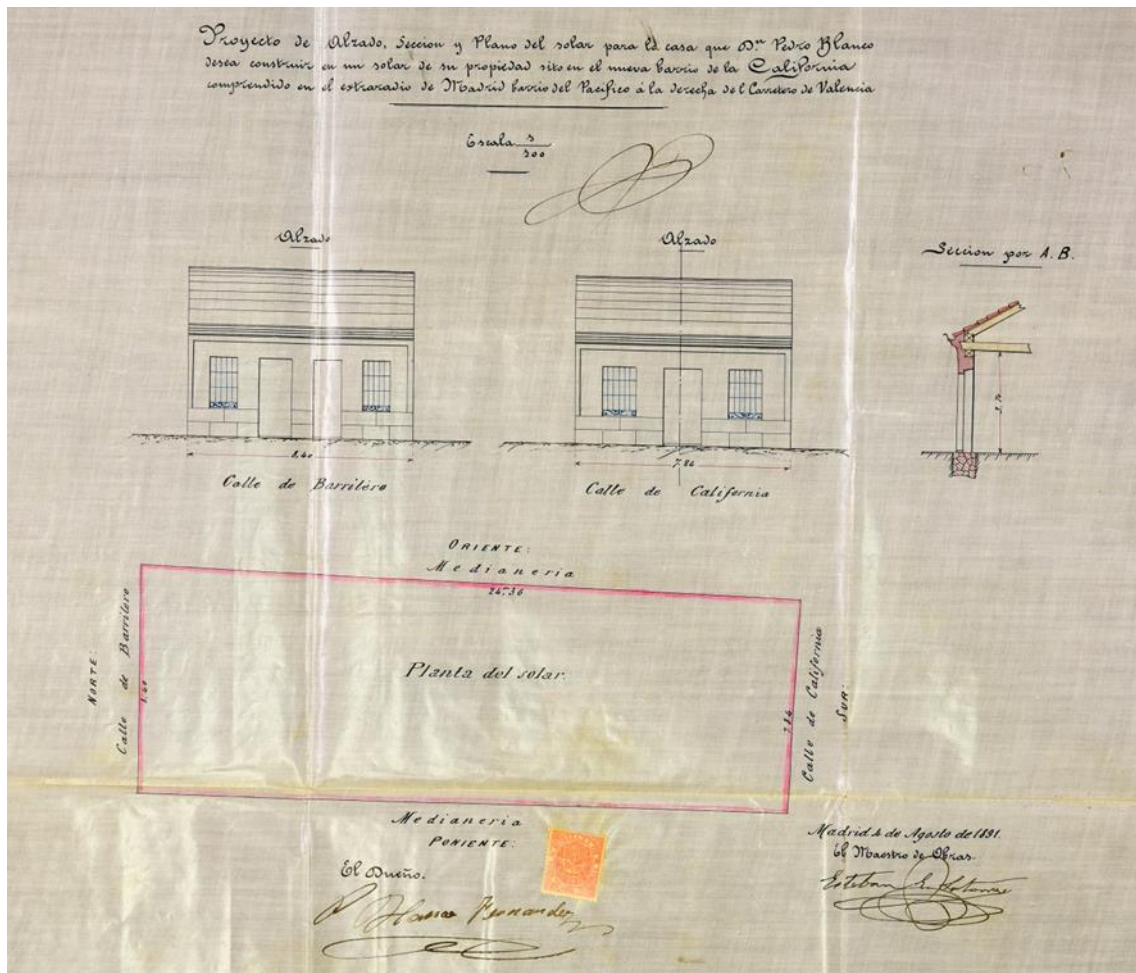


Illustration 6. First building permit on Seco Street. The small house, signed by a maestro de obras, did not detail the interior distribution.

Source: AVM 11-436-29.

<sup>92</sup> AVM 11-436-29.

As has already been explained, the kind of building construction was tolerated but had no rights.

In 1897, a second small house was erected by José Guerrero, and in 1900 a third one by Pedro Guerrero,<sup>93</sup> probably the first inhabitant's brother. After that year, the number of building permits increased quickly and a small neighbourhood formed. The demand in 1905 for a permit to install an "electric machine" seemed to be a turning point; the machine could have served to provide electricity to this quickly growing area. That same year, the first urbanisation demand appeared in the Archivo de la Villa. However, that file has been lost.

Although no information has been found about the initial street development,<sup>94</sup> the successor of Pedro Guerrero began a judicial process in 1945, demanding ownership of the land surrounding the house, that could shed light on the birth of the area. Part of the plot José Guerrero bought in 1891 had been transformed into public streets, Seco Street and California Street, and decades later restitution was demanded for the plots' private owners. This process, based only on property titles without any plan of the initial street, could indicate that the developer marked the street without a technician drawing it. It seems possible that only a verbal agreement existed with the land seller that described using part of the private plots for paths and transferring it to the public powers in the future. This process would have permitted the private developer to bypass the urban regulations.

During the first decades of the 20th century, the urban growth inside the Madrid city limits was regulated by the 1892 *ordenanzas*. Although in the *extrarradio* there were no official alignments, the area's private streets had a compulsory 10-metre minimum width and required permission from the city council and full urbanisation: "*pavements, sewers, hydrants, street lighting, etc*" (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1892, p. 177). However, as we have seen and as the historiography shows (Vorms, 2012), these rules were frequently ignored, both regarding the minimum street width and their infrastructures.

The *ordenanzas* were thought to permit the private sector to develop urban fragments and to facilitate transferring property from the streets to the public powers to ensure the maintenance of public spaces. However, for the municipality to accept this transfer, the streets had to be equivalent to the public ones, fully equipped with infrastructures, and the owners had to pay for their transfer. Accordingly, this process occurred infrequently (Ibid 2012, p. 237) because the developers often had no possessions in the area and the owner-inhabitants were working-class populations with scarce economic resources. An increasing number of "private streets" remained under-equipped and without maintenance.

In 1919, the city council published an edited revision of the 1892 *ordenanzas* in which the municipality,<sup>95</sup> was permitted, as a "*facultad discrecional y nunca como obligación*" to execute public works to improve the "*higiene y saneamiento*" of the private streets. This revision meant that the public powers could improve the substandard areas if necessary. Such an amendment constituted a factual invitation to private developers to continue subdividing rural lands, selling their plots, and making their deprived inhabitants responsible for the

<sup>93</sup> AVM 16-27-33.

<sup>94</sup> The first file about the urbanisation of Seco Street, referred to in the year 1905, with the signature 18-290-82, is missing from the AVM.

<sup>95</sup> The change is due to an amendment of article 820, including an agreement of the City Council from 10 May 1907 (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1919, p. 144).



infrastructure costs. It was known that eventually the public powers would have to expend the money to equip them.

However, comparing the urban regulations with the actual urbanisation process shows that such practices happened routinely a long time before. Charlotte Vorms had already exemplified such practices as being a consequence of influence from La Prosperidad's neighbours in the late 19th century (Vorms, 2012). In Las Californias, the Commission of Urbanism proposed to pave Seco Street urgently,<sup>96</sup> on 14 March 1911. That year, a budget was approved to pave the area with recycled materials piled up on the nearby Santa María de la Cabeza Street.

In 1912, the Madrid councillors again provisionally proposed that Seco and Barrilero streets be paved, both of which were private streets. Although the city council initially proposed use normal paving stones, the Comisión Cuarta (the urban infrastructures department of the municipality) asked to do it reusing waste pavement piled up "*en la misma calle y con la del Paseo de Santa María de la Cabeza*". The work was finally executed two years later, using recycled pavement from another area of the city. These poor materials were crushed and distributed in the area to allow "*el arreglo de las calles Seco y Barriledo, de absoluta necesidad en aquella barriada*".<sup>97</sup>

Las Californias started to be clearly consolidated at that time. In 1913, the opening of a "casa de comidas" was followed by the opening of various food shops. During the next several years, various building permits were demanded, in which the possibility of a demolition without economic compensation was included due to the absence of planning in the area. However, such warnings seemed to soften during the next decades. For instance, a building permit for a housing reform was approved in 1914 when, as will be shown later on, a project for the area had already been approved. The permit documents show how questions about the absence of public planning were ignored on all forms of the local administration, with the exception of a report by Nuñez Granés, who, as director of the Department of Public Streets of the City Council and author of the plan, remembered that,

*Ya se ha dicho en repetidas ocasiones por esta Dirección . . . que sería preciso estuviese hecho el replanteo de las vías de carácter general que contiene el Proyecto de Urbanización del Extrarradio y además de disponer por lo menos de una sección de personal idóneo, que sobre el terreno y a la vista del solar comprobara si estaba o no enclavado dentro de alguna de las vías de carácter general que aparecen en el referido Proyecto.*<sup>98</sup>

Despite the lack of a precise topographical analysis, in the same document Nuñez Granés remembered that the approved building seemed to coincide with a wide avenue that, surrounded by a green belt, was intended to be inaugurated in the next few years. However, the municipality accepted building the plot.

Facing the exceptional case of the Madrid *extrarradio*, where street and house development were not driven by a municipal plan, the nearby peripheral municipality of Vallecas was totally unregulated. Whilst in the *extrarradio* an enormous problem had emerged because of the absence of public alignments, in the increasingly urbanised Vallecas, they simply did not exist,

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<sup>96</sup> AVM 18-288-17.

<sup>97</sup> AVM 19-125-118.

<sup>98</sup> AVM 19-96-30.

and no mechanisms were set up to permit the public powers to decide on street development. The 1892 Ordenanzas Municipales de la Villa de Vallecas considered in article 28 that,

*En la dificultad de establecer un sistema completo de alineación y enrase de las calles y plazas, pero para evitar que el público pueda ser privado del uso de la vía pública en todo o parte, se previene que todo propietario que haya de construir un edificio, pida al Ayuntamiento la correspondiente licencia . . . con objeto de que la Comisión correspondiente presencie el emplazamiento de la nueva finca, y sobretodo, que las fachadas de la vía pública conserven su primitiva alineación.*<sup>99</sup>

The new buildings required, at least theoretically, the signature of a technician and a permit from the local municipality as in the rest of Spain.<sup>100</sup> The position of the new houses in the territory was totally free, requiring only an approximate order in the case of being contiguous to another one, but lacking topographical studies.

In 1918, the Vallecas City Council approved a motion to “llevar a cabo una investigación detenida y en toda minuciosidad de cuantas edificaciones se hallan realizado de un año a esta parte”.<sup>101</sup> However, the problem was not the “anarchic” urban growth pattern but the necessity to obtain economic resources “de los que se encuentra bastante necesitado el Municipio” from houses which had not paid for the building permit. As will be shown, the local working classes found it hard to pay the taxes.



Photo 20. Abroñigal stream, limit between the eastern extrarradio, Ventas and Vallecas, around 1900.  
Source: Fototeca del Patrimonio Histórico, fondo Augusto T. Arcimis, ARC-0525.

<sup>99</sup> AVM 31-108-5.

<sup>100</sup> Real Orden, 23 January 1872.

<sup>101</sup> AVM 31-109-28.

To sum up, starting in the late 19th century, any constructions in the *extrarradio* were subject to demolition from an absence of public planning being detailed in the building permit. Although the *ordenanzas* of Madrid compelled some urbanisation standards, the actual development of the city seemed far from that process, and the public powers adapted their own reglaments to compensate for the lack of urbanisation provoked by the private sector. However, despite the legal precarity and the city council's scarce economic resources, the housing projects seemed to be broadly developed by technicians that required some minimum standards, and the public powers (ignoring their own regulations) permitted some minimum urbanisation benefits.

Facing to it the *suburbio* was extremely unregulated, and the public powers seemed to have little control over the urbanisation process. Although the houses had to be signed off by a technician, as in Madrid, the municipality thought that part of the urbanisation process was being done without permits requiring a fieldwork investigation to see which houses had been registered. The increasing arrival of poor and working-class populations and the existence of cheap agricultural lands facilitated an increasing suburbanisation of poverty. This process was fuelled, as will be shown, by the Madrid public powers' calculated tolerance of the unregulated building activity beyond the city limits.

### The public powers' problematisation of the *extrarradio* and its planning: demolition, beautification, and the setting of a new urban edge

At the beginning of the 20th century, several urbanisation plans, urban laws, and planning ideas had been developed, in addition to the already mentioned hygiene laws, to achieve two objectives: transforming the defective housing areas that had grown, especially in the *extrarradio*, and creating conditions to generate a beautiful urban growth. These measures would prevent unhealthy areas within the inner city and facilitate solutions to combat the already mentioned social diseases.

In 1906, an article from the conservative newspaper *El Correo Español* ironically described the attempts of the Madrid mayor, Alberto Aguilera, to succeed in such a "gigantic enterprise". The approval of the already mentioned 1905 hygiene code would permit "*proceder al derribo de todas las casas que no reúnan las condiciones de higiene que la europeización prescribe. Así, como quien no le da la menor importancia al asunto. [ . . . ] ¿Sabe cuántas casas hay en Madrid que no reúnen condiciones higiénicas?*"<sup>102</sup> The article also mentioned that the goal of the public powers at the time was to transform the deprived neighbourhoods of the periphery into upper-class areas. The mayor proposed that they would make the *aduares* of the *extrarradio* disappear,

*Como las Injurias, las Californias, la China, etc., urbanizando, saneando y convirtiendo en verjeles las afueras de la Corte; rodeará la población de boulevares y la cuajará de esplendidos parques y bien cuidados jardines; derribará todas las casas ruinosas y las que por su emplazamiento sean un obstáculo para la grandiosidad de las plazas y la amplitud de las vías".*<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> *El Correo Español*. 13 August 1906, Cronicas cortas. Musica Celestial.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

As previously explained, the area beyond the planned *ensanche* of Madrid, the *extrarradio*, was supposed to have had a plan with alignments and *ordenanzas* since the 1860s, but a succession of public initiatives were not able to develop it. The *Ensanche Law* of 1876 included the future development of some specific *ordenanzas* for the area, and the Real Orden of 31 August 1888 also ordered the urgent development of “alineamientos y rasantes” for the *extrarradio*, prohibiting any construction on it. That year, as well as in 1891, working groups were established to create a plan for the area, but in both cases the goal was not achieved “por carecer de los elementos necesarios para ello”,<sup>104</sup> that is, because the city council did not provide the economic funds to work on this issue. The 17 September 1896 law again demanded the production of a plan for the area and also the periphery outside the administrative limits of Madrid “en un radio que no exceda de 8 kilómetros a partir desde la Puerta del Sol”.<sup>105</sup> In 1902, the municipality created the Comisión Especial de reforma del suelo y del subsuelo de Madrid and started to make plan for the *extrarradio* with regulations similar to those for the *ensanche*, but again they did not accomplish the goal because of the “carencia de elementos precisos”<sup>106</sup> to achieve it.

Considering these unsupported initiatives, the planning of this area was promoted and carried out by Pedro Nuñez Granés, a key figure of Madrid urban planning in the first decades of 20th century.

As a military engineer and public servant, Nuñez Granés was a defender of using science and new techniques to solve the social question and avoid “violent convulsions” that could provoke the ruin of the nation (Gavira, 1985)—that is, he was a social reformer. Well aware of the demands of the rising peripheral suburbs (Vorms, 2012), Nuñez Granés published several texts from 1906 on denouncing the negligent city growth of Madrid and the need for the public powers to tackle it.

In the report *Vías públicas del interior, ensanche y extrarradio. Memoria relativa a los trabajos efectuados en dichas vías en los años de 1904 y 1905*, he summarised the state of streets in the inner city, planned periphery, and the semi-rural unplanned *extrarradio*, an area in which,

*Cada cual hace vías y construye donde y como quiere. Las licencias para edificar, [. . .] se dan por el Ayuntamiento, sin que existan alineaciones, ni rasantes aprobadas; resultando así autorizadas obras que más adelante pueden ser obstáculos para la formación de un plan de suburbanización racional.*

The book, published by the same municipality, publicly demanded the urgent regulation of the building activity in the area to avoid many kinds of conflicts that would surely compromise the future development of the city. Addressing the uncontrolled, substandard urban growth, a plan for Madrid would help to develop “*Suburbios propios de una capital europea, en vez del cinturón infeccioso que hoy la envenena y ahoga*” (Nuñez Granés, 1906, pp. 30–31). The hygienic concerns and fear of contagions was, as in the case of the *chozas* phenomenon, a key factor for justifying the public intervention in the *extrarradio*.

In 1908, the same author published the book *Ideas generales sobre la urbanización de las grandes urbes*, using the text already presented at the first Congreso de la Asociación Española para el Progreso de las Ciencias. The work defended the need to control private urbanisation in

<sup>104</sup> AVM 66-334-34.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

the peripheries of big cities before the landowners developed their own streets and plots. The “anarchy” of the private initiative without public regulation had consequences, according to the author, that the case already existing in Madrid made easy to forecast:

*Las calles forman un conjunto de edificaciones construídas al azar ... constituyendo, generalmente, inmundas callejuelas [...], en las que las aguas residuarias se detienen despidiendo pestilentes olores [...] con gravísimo perjuicio para la salud, no sólo de los que en ellas habitan, sino también de los que viven en las poblaciones que las referidas vías circundan* (Nuñez Granés, 1908, p. 8).

To deal with the problem, he proposed, in addition to increasing circulations about the urban planning that was happening at that time in Europe (Gavira, 1985), developing a system of *polígonos* whose legacy in the evolution of Spanish planning can be still seen today. Granés proposed the creation of private urban fragments surrounded by public avenues and infrastructures, in which the landowners would coordinate to design a plan and submit it for municipal approval. The landowners would distribute the plots among themselves inside these *polígonos* and transfer the ownership and maintenance of the resulting streets to the public administration.<sup>107</sup>

This system was intended to provide a cheaper city growth compared with the previous *ensanche* development, which was directly financed by the municipality and provoked the ruin of the public administration. This kind of urban development provided much business for the landowners that transformed agricultural areas into urban plots. The process produced immense capital gains—the plot prices increased “one hundred times” (Nuñez Granés, 1908, p. 27)—whilst the urbanisation costs were directly paid by the public administration.

However, the main goal of the new system was, according to the author, possibly improving the “beauty” and “salubrity” of the outskirts. The 1908 report explained how (in the absence of zoning) the character of the streets had a direct impact in the “*suntuosidad o pobreza de la edificación*” that grew around them. Despite the project’s scale and complexity, the engineer did not attempt to plan the city but the streets, which could reflect an intellectual position on the border between 19th-century urbanisation plans and the birth of contemporary urban planning.

On 21 January 1908, Pedro Nuñez Granés wrote a letter to the mayor of Madrid, stating that “*la salubridad y belleza de las grandes urbes, depende, en modo importantísimo, de las buenas condiciones higiénicas y de la hermosura de sus alrededores*”<sup>108</sup> and declaring the urgent necessity of a plan for the *extrarradio*. The text demanded the existing plans for the area, drawing materials, and a small budget to accomplish the work that had been approved on 22 November 1907: a new plan for the *extrarradio*.

In 1909, Nuñez Granés finished the “*Proyecto para la urbanización del Extrarradio*”, publishing two versions with small differences. The books showed an extension plan for the periphery of Madrid, based on a set of monumental, straight avenues that connected the *ensanche* streets with a new peripheral ring, a large boulevard around Madrid forming a green belt to improve the air at the entrance to Madrid. As stated in the prologue written by José Marva, the shape

<sup>107</sup> The development of “*polígonos de urbanización*”, in Madrid, probably influenced to a big extent the Spanish planning history, giving rise to which today are known as “*planes parciales*” in which the private sector has a large protagonism in the design of the urban space.

<sup>108</sup> AVM 66-334-34.

of the new avenues, crossing the existing *extrarradio* neighbourhoods, would help to “*borrar de Madrid esas barriadas interiores que parecen suburbios, y esos suburbios que semejan aduares, dando, en fin, a la capital de España, calidades y apariencias de ciudad Europea*” (Nuñez Granés, 1910a, p. 8).

The new avenues, some with a width of 100 metres, shaped the *polígonos*, reconfigured the city limits, forced a political renegotiation of its boundaries to maintain their design, and, as its essential goal, facilitated the disappearance of poor, “unhealthy” neighbourhoods outside the city limits.

This street network, which had Haussmannian echoes, was justified by the expected large population increase and the hygienic perspective that called for improved air circulation to avoid illness contagions. Granés, who cited mainly French sources, such as Juillerat, explained that each inhabitant in a big city needed a minimum surface of 45 metres squared, and he linked space, hygiene, and beauty: “*Todos los principios de la higiene tienden pues, a que en las grandes urbes haya luz, sol y aire abundantes. [. . .] La belleza . . . de las ciudades, demanda de igual manera que la higiene, la amplitud de sus vías y lugares de esparcimiento*” (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 38).

A report of the municipality from 17 June 1911 described the emergence of the situation, comparing the condition of Madrid with the suburbanisation process in the rest of Europe, with a clear lack of knowledge of the real situation outside Spanish borders.

*El suburbio, lo más hermoso y admirable de Paris, Roma, Bruselas, y tantas otras capitales, en Madrid no existe. El encarecimiento rápido de la zona de Ensanche ha impedido la formación del suburbio urbano, y así las edificaciones en el extrarradio salvo pequeños núcleos muy diseminados y sin comunicación entre sí y de los edificios fabriles, son verdaderos tugurios. Allí no existen calles propiamente dichas, sino pasos de cuatro o cinco metros de ancho.*<sup>109</sup>

The need to eliminate the poor neighbourhoods was in part a question of national prestige. The appearance of the Spanish capital was a forecast of the whole nation. As pathological areas were intended to decay the strength of the “Spanish race”, they might disappear or at least become invisible. This mechanism, as will be shown, also influenced the urban planning of Paris and probably the spatial management of the rest of the European capital cities, partially explaining the lack of knowledge about the European extent of this phenomenon in Spain.

To achieve these ideals, Granés clearly specified that although it would be desirable to conserve part of the existing constructions of the *extrarradio*, it would also be desirable to destroy most of them, because,

*La mayoría de las vías y edificaciones realizadas . . . perpetuaría los defectos que tienen actualmente las vías existentes en el Extrarradio . . . La existencia de las antiguas, mal situadas, dificultará el tránsito, romperá la continuidad, dará lugar a veces a variaciones rapidísimas en las rasantes, y hará, por último, que se formen multitud de ángulos entrantes, que son constantes focos de infección* (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 47).

<sup>109</sup> AVM 66-334-30. Letter 17 June 1911, written by Junta Consultiva del Ayuntamiento.



Illustration 7. Proyecto para la Urbanización del Extrarradio.

Source: (Nuñez Granés, 1910b).

Unlike the *chozas* areas, the *extrarradio* houses were legal. Although from the 19th century on the building permits in the area included clauses warning that, in the event of expropriation, the owners of the constructions were not intended to obtain any compensation. However, despite the Real Orden of 4 September 1902 ratifying it, Nuñez Granés thought that it would not be legal, and required the local administration to compensate for the peripheral renewal, making it urgent to develop a plan that would be hard to implement if they waited too long.

*Estas construcciones originan otro gran daño, pues son más tarde obstáculos, acaso insuperables, para la realización de un plan racional de urbanización, toda vez que las que se hallaren dentro de las superficies que hayan de ocupar las calles que aquel plan determine, tendrán necesariamente que ser expropiadas [ . . . ]. Como quiera que los propietarios realizaron dichas construcciones en virtud de su perfecto derecho, forzoso será a los Municipios indemnizarles en cuantos daños y perjuicios se les irroguen por el trazado de las nuevas calles, pudiendo llegar a veces la cuantía de las expropiaciones que haya necesidad de hacer, la importancia de las obras a realizar, o la de los referidos perjuicios, a imposibilitar o dificultar de manera notable la ejecución de los planes de urbanización aprobados* (Nuñez Granés, 1908, p. 9).

However, Granés believed that renovating the area would be relatively cheap, if the plan was implemented in time, as “*las edificaciones que hoy existen en el Extrarradio, no son en general de importancia, teniendo por consiguiente vida media muy limitada*” and “*será muy pequeño el número de los edificios hoy construidos en el Extrarradio que habrá necesidad de expropiar*” (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 47). He also thought that in cases in which new streets would cross

less defective housing areas, “*atenderemos a su conservación, aunque para ello deba modificarse en parte el trazado que se hubiera proyectado*” (Ibid 1910b, p. 47).

During the internal municipal discussion of the Proyecto del Extrarradio, a report from 27 March 1911 from the Comisión de Fomento expressed their regret for the development of poor neighbourhoods in the periphery that would expel the bourgeois populations that had moved there in the search of a healthy environment. The new poor housing areas seemed to block such “legitimate” city expansion, creating a problem that would be difficult to solve with the tight city budget.

*Madrid crece sin cesar y ya la edificación, no la edificación aislada sino núcleos importantes de edificios en muchos barrios como las Ventas, la Guindalera y la Prosperidad, han precedido a la formación del plano que el año 60 se estimaba ya necesario. [...] Esta parsimonia en el trazado del encauzamiento perfecto o siquiera racional de la misma, a más de contribuir a la creación de barrios insanos, tortuosas callejas y de pobre y destartalado aspecto y de expulsar término buen número de capitalistas que buscan en los inmediatos sitios más adecuado a satisfacer ansias de baratura, campo y aire libre, a más de todo esto, crea un valladar insuperable, dados los modísimos recursos del Ayuntamiento para la apertura ulterior de nuevas arterias, que en tan inusitado retraso ha conseguido ser estudiadas; la realización de alguna de las cuales, esta insuperable dificultad hará completamente imposible* (Núñez Granés, 1920, p. 189).

Núñez Granés’s project, in addition to having many other advantages, would help to destroy such areas. The same report congratulated its author, suggesting new additional paths to increase the extent of the demolitions. The plan exemplified a structural conflict between the city desired by the upper classes and the city developed by the capitalist economic forces,

*Desde el punto D (Canillas) en que el arroyo Abroñigal penetra en nuestro término, hasta la Puerta del Hierro, en el Manzanares, la línea recta que sigue el mencionado paseo tiene tal valentía, que . . . echa abajo parte de la barriada de los Cuatro Caminos [...]. Pero aún haríamos más en este orden de ideas. Este parque-paseo debe, a nuestro entender, continuar por una de las márgenes del río, completando la obra . . . de canalización, y convirtiendo en espléndido paseo lo que hay unos sucios y pobres lavaderos (casetas ?) y hasta basureros, que afean tanto esa parte de Madrid, que por sus condiciones naturales debe ser la más hermosa y la de mayor y más sana frondosidad.<sup>110</sup>*

The informal areas were considered ugly and unhygienic, and renewing them through demolition and rebuilding would liberate enormous economic forces that would improve the periphery. New luxurious neighbourhoods would be built that, somehow, would also improve the former inhabitants’ situation.

Although the project was ratified by the senate on 13 December de 1910, it was not implemented immediately. It required a state law to borrow the immense quantity of money necessary to expropriate the private land and build the system of big avenues. Additionally, it required private owners to coordinate to plan their *polígonos*, a task that would happen only after the public administration had made a precise demarcation of the new streets in the periphery. However, as we will see, this task stalled with the private owners’ interests and the public administration’s resources and logic. The planned city was not imposed on the dynamics of the real one.

<sup>110</sup> AVM 66-334-34. The underlines are transcribed from the original text.



In addition, the *extrarradio* project had a conceptual problem; the establishment of the project limits. Although the planned area ended at the municipal borders, the substandard urbanisation process was already exceeding the city's borders. The necessary reconfiguration of the city limits to adapt to the peripheral avenue, proposed by the Nuñez Granés plan, could permit the Madrid limits to be extended to the semi-rural areas where the urbanisation process was starting to accelerate. The study of an *ensanche* plan ordered in 1896, was supposed to regulate the urbanisation in a maximum radius of 8 kilometres from the Puerta del Sol in a flexible way, taking into account the "*topografía de los alrededores de la capital, ampliando o disminuyendo dicho radio, según exijan las condiciones de aquella*" (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 149). The new plan also opened the opportunity to redefine the city limits, avoiding the "*pueril capricho de una forma geométrica determinada y de dimensiones arbitrarias*",<sup>111</sup> as explained in a letter from the mayor to the commission in charge of studying such a modification.

On 10 December 1910, the senate discussed a legal project that proposed carrying out a study on the "*alienaciones y rasantes*" in the periphery beyond the *extrarradio* plan, and a revision of the *ensanche* law to adapt it to the new planned areas.<sup>112</sup> The discussions of the law were presented in the second edition of Nuñez Granés's project, showing them as an extension of the debates about the control the substandard urbanisation of the *extrarradio*.

Presented to parliament by Alberto Aguilera, the former city mayor, the arguments to extend the city limits were justified by the development beyond the *extrarradio* of, "*una gran corona de suburbios innobles que perjudican a la normalidad de la vida madrileña y que establecen condiciones indignas de la capital de España*" (Nuñez Granés, 1910a, p. 158).

The new areas were developing mainly around the roads arriving to Madrid, such as the road beyond the Ventas bridge in the Canillas municipality, the Bravo Murillo Street continuation through Tetuán, the road continuing the Puente de Toledo through Carabanchel, and the Valencia road inside Vallecas. However, the new areas had no administrative relationship to the city, which provided no funding for medical services, firemen, garbage collectors, or, of course, appropriate urbanisation and sanitation.

In Madrid, this new phenomenon of suburban growth "*a manera de tentáculos*"<sup>113</sup> was attributed to the increasing tramway connections to the inner city, which allowed the peripheral residents to spend most of their time in Madrid. The new areas presented a "hygiene problem" for the nearby municipalities but also threatened Madrid. As Mr Aguilera stated, "*Es vano que el Alcalde de Madrid dicte bandos, por ejemplo, para mejorar las condiciones higiénicas de los alrededores de la población, si los más importantes barrios que circundan no dependen de su autoridad*" (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, pp. 146–161). This quote referred, in fact, to the inefficiency of the *Bando sobre Saneamiento de Viviendas*

<sup>111</sup> AVM 66-334-30. Carta del 10 de Octubre de 1911 de la Presidencia del Ayuntamiento de Madrid a los Diputados de la Comisión nombrada para el estudio del proyecto de Ley sobre ensanche del término municipal de Madrid.

<sup>112</sup> Proposición de Ley del Sr. Aguilera sobre ensanche del término municipal de Madrid (Bassols Coma, 1973, p. 435).

<sup>113</sup> AVM 66-334-30. Carta 17 de junio de 1911, firmada por la Junta Consultiva del Ayuntamiento. The references to "tentacles" undoubtedly originated from the text *Les Villes Tentaculaires* by E. Verhaerenm, which, in 1904, condemned the invasion of the countryside by "corrupt" forms of urban society.

(Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1908), in which the mayor applied several hygienic measures only to “*aquellas fincas comprendidas en el interior y el ensanche, cuyas calles tenga servicios de alcantarillado y dotación de agua.*” In the next session about the same debate, Mr Aguilera remembered the necessity to control the hygienic situation of the Madrid periphery and the suburbs beyond it.

*¿No siente pena al ver que alrededor de Madrid hay algo que le deshonra, algo que le infecta, algo que es preciso destruir y que la autoridad municipal es impotente para llevar su acción a estos efectos interesantísimos de la vida social de Madrid ? Es necesario extender la acción del Ayuntamiento, que será deficiente en ciertos casos, pero que al fin es poderosa, a esos suburbios hasta hacerlos dignos de la capital de España, a la que circundan.*

The problem at that time started to extend not only to the *extrarradio*, a very concrete area of Madrid, but to the broad *suburbio*. In the following decades, this word would earn a negative connotation and be used as synonym for marginality after the Spanish Civil War.

The goal of this hypothetical urban planning of the suburbs was to control the poor areas and thus reduce the inner city’s risk of disease contagion. However, the attempts to subordinate such areas to city control had significant economic costs, as the Conde de Tejada de Valdosera stated during the senate discussion.

*El Ayuntamiento de Madrid va a poseer un espacio de terreno, de gran campo, un extenso término, a cuyos servicios tendrá necesidad de atender, como el de agua, el de luz, urbanización, etcétera. Ahora bien : ¿cómo va a indemnizarse el Ayuntamiento de Madrid del coste de esos servicios ? ¿Es que el Ayuntamiento de Madrid se propone no realizarlos?*

However, as Aguilera stated, the project did not attempt to “absorb” the surrounding areas but rule them by applying the *ensanche* laws to keep them from becoming substandard neighbourhoods.

*La ley no se refiere sólo a la incorporación del término municipal de la capital de España, de esa zona, sino a la aplicación a ese mismo término de los beneficios de la ley de Ensanche. [. . .] No se van a establecer todos los servicios de una vez, sino que se irá poco a poco modificando, ampliando, y mediante la acción del tiempo se podrán ir aplicando los servicios [. . .] Ahora, lo que importa es que esos suburbios infectos que ahogan a Madrid, que perturban su vida, que molestan al vecindario, que son absolutamente antihigiénicos, se modifiquen.*

However, the answer did not satisfy most of the senate members. The experience of the *ensanche*, which still remained mostly empty because of the speculative strategies of their owners, was negative enough for the members to imagine the same scenario happening in the broad periphery. The conservative Senator Tormo argued that, using the “megalomaniac” model of the *ensanche*, the plan would legitimate states of “sweet hopes” for the landowners, increasing the disproportion between the city extension and public infrastructures on it: “*si la actual riqueza municipal no puede alcanzar a esa extensión, en lo que se refiere a luz, servicios de aguas sucias, etc., ponga S.S. en estado de explotación muchos más kilómetros, y el fracaso me parece . . . evidente*”.

Aguilera’s draft bill was not supposed to address the urbanisation needs immediately, but instead enhance some kind of urban “protectorate” over external territories. However, the authorities feared its cost due to the demands of their inhabitants, who would not accept being underserved. As discussed in an internal report of the Junta Consultiva of the city council some months later,

*¿Qué ingresos pueden presumirse dada la pobreza de las tierras de labor y del humilde caserío que circunda a Madrid, que no tiene en su proximidad pueblos ricos, agrícolas e industriales como los que se han agregado a otras poblaciones? Pues con esos ingresos, tendría el Ayuntamiento que atender las demandas de afirmados y aceras, alumbrado, alcantarillas y demás servicios que desde el primero momento se le reclamarían.*<sup>114</sup>

Regarding this risk, another factor seemed to be a warning of the suburbs annexation: the factual impossibility to control them.

As shown in the preceding pages, the public authorities fought against the existence of shanty towns without success although they existed in areas regulated by hygiene and planning rules. As denounced by the conservative Senator Tormo, spatial regulations would not solve the problem.

*Voy a suponer lo que es más, que efectivamente se decretara la agregación de toda esa parte de término o de aquella parte de término que envuelve a Madrid, y es, en cierto modo, una prolongación de Madrid. [. . .] ¿Qué remedio legal existe hoy (existiría mañana al promulgarse esta ley) para evitar, para aminorar, para suprimir esa profusión con que, como hongos venenosos, se va estableciendo aquí y allá un barrio de esos que tienen nombres tan típicos como el de las Injurias, las Cambronerías, etc? Pues que, acaso esa clave de población, esa clase de arrabales indignos ¿Han sido una especialidad de los términos vecinos a Madrid? Pues qué, dentro del término de Madrid ¿No los tenemos también? ¿Qué medios ha podido tener el Ayuntamiento de Madrid y las autoridades para evitarlos dentro de su propio término? [. . .]*

*Solamente por una aplicación dictatorial de las leyes de Sanidad que yo alabo, han podido a veces suprimirse, pero que casi siempre después de suprimidos han renacido como renacen las cenizas al incendio a que se les condenó por medida de salvación pública. No; no podeis evitar que ya el extensísimo perímetro del proyecto de ensanche de la ciudad esté todavía rodeado de esa corona de malos suburbios. No pone remedio este proyecto de ley.*

The Aguilera gave was that the reform would allow for destroying the undesired areas and creating conditions to develop new hygienic neighbourhoods. Aguilera believed that to trigger renewal operations in poor areas it was necessary to facilitate the creation of new houses. The argument, which referred to activating the real estate market and not to social housing alternatives, concluded with the possibilities that the urbanisation plan would facilitate making the periphery beautiful and hygienic.

*¿Pueden derribarse casas, hacerse la Gran Vía, hacerse la otra Gran Vía de Norte a Sur, que tan necesaria es, sin proporcionar viviendas a los que habitan esas calles? ¿Puede producirse la salud del interior sin que esté rodeado Madrid de una arboleda, de algo que modifique las condiciones del ambiente que respira en el interior?*

Aguilera mentioned a fear cited by Dr Hauser years earlier—the possibility that the air, after being breathed by poor individuals, passed into Madrid and transmitted diseases to its wealthier inhabitants. The peripheral green ring Nuñez Granés planned, and the regulation of the close periphery to avoid substandard areas, would “oxygenate” Madrid. The senate approved the project on 13 December 1910.

However, a plan for the suburbs beyond the *extrarradio* was never accomplished (Bassols Coma, 1973). Some months later, the Junta Consultiva del Ayuntamiento considered the

<sup>114</sup> AVM 66-334-30. Carta 17 de junio de 1911, firmada por la Junta Consultiva del Ayuntamiento.

improvement of proper urbanisation beyond the city limits counterproductive because “*el valor que por ese sólo hecho tomasen dichos terrenos, así como por los proyectos de urbanización que se estudiasen y por las ambiciones consecuentes de ese estado de derecho, dificultarían y harían más costosa cualquier expansión de la Villa*”.<sup>115</sup> This increased in the land values consequence of improving the periphery would affect expropriation. In addition, as the *chozas* phenomenon was revealed, the regulations could not impede the development of poor housing areas surrounding Madrid: “*no puede alegarse que por ese procedimiento de la ampliación del término, se alejarían de las proximidades de la Capital esas barriadas pobres e infectas, porque esos efectos tienen otras causas, sociales y principalmente económicas, que lo hacen, por hoy, inevitable*”. In addition, non-intervention in the periphery would obligate the central state powers to become responsible for the problems, making municipal action unnecessary and allowing them to avoid investing in it. The text finished by arguing that “*dicho proyecto no es oportuno y debería impedirse fuera*”. On 15 July 1911, the Fomento Commission of the Municipality (Commission 4<sup>th</sup>), “totally supported” this point of view.

This perspective was maintained during the subsequent years. In 1914, a new draft bill<sup>116</sup> attempted to set up mechanisms to control the suburbs of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, preventing them from being responsible for the provision of public services. In its preamble, the law explained that “*allí donde la acción urbana no llega por limitaciones de la ley y de los ingresos municipales o por cualquier otra causa, se acumulan barriadas inmundas y misérrimas, [. . .] tejiendo una red infecciosa que oprime y contamina las grandes ciudades*”. To tackle that problem, the law proposed establishing zones around the main Spanish cities to ensure that “*nunca, sin intervención del Ayuntamiento, puedan establecerse en lugar próximo y, por lo tanto, con peligro para la salud del vecindario, agrupaciones de viviendas malsanas, industrias insalubres o, en general, cualquier foco de infección*”.<sup>117</sup> However, the law did not reach approval (Bassols Coma, 1973).

In 1916, a new law was drafted. Again in the preamble it was stated that as a consequence of the absence of regulation, poor housing areas in the periphery “*se agrupan . . . sin orden ni concierto alguno, y no obedeciendo, por consiguiente, a los más elementales principios de la higiene, forman núcleos insalubres de vivienda, donde anidan la miseria y la muerte*”.<sup>118</sup> Although the norm facilitated the expropriation and transformation of the *extrarradio*, it did not restrict the development of substandard areas beyond it.

In 1918, in the context of panic from the Spanish Flu in Madrid (Porrás Gallo, 2018), a new draft project was discussed. In addition to supporting the already described *extrarradio* project, the act proposed that the Madrid City Council, together with the Spanish government, establish,

*Con inequívoca claridad la extensión y los límites de la zona lindante con el extrarradio, la cual no podrá en ningún caso tener anchura mayor de dos kilómetros, y en ella no se podrá edificar sino con estricta sujeción a los planos de población que el Ayuntamiento tenga aprobados*

<sup>115</sup> Carta 17 de junio de 1911, firmada por la Junta Consultiva del Ayuntamiento.

<sup>116</sup> *Proyecto de Ley sobre creación y régimen de Zonas Urbanas en las Grandes Poblaciones*, remitido al Congreso el 21 diciembre de 1914 por José Sánchez Guerra.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Proyecto de Ley sobre Urbanización del Extrarradio de Madrid*, presentado el 29 de mayo de 1916 por don Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez.

*bajo las condiciones que como adecuadas se acuerden, y mediante licencia municipal en cada caso.*<sup>119</sup>

The law was intended to complement the peripheral ring which formed a green belt around the city by adding a fringe to set the substandard poor neighbourhoods at a distance and prevent the air breathed by the poor inhabitants of the periphery from entering Madrid.

Accordingly, the process of aggregating the close peripheries of Madrid to form a “Gran Madrid” and develop spatial planning for the suburbs was interrupted. Although controlling the distant periphery was considered necessary for sanitary reasons, it was not economically profitable. The existence of poor neighbourhoods would be tolerated if they remained at a distance from the city centre. Contrary to providing public services to the poor neighbourhoods spreading beyond the city limits, the public powers decided on a cheaper strategy: segregating the growing areas to avoid contaminating Madrid.

As a consequence, while urban growth was increasingly under regulatory pressure, the suburbs quickly started to host substandard areas. Some decades later, an immense belt of informal urbanisations would surround Madrid, substituting the *extrarradio* problem with the *suburbio* problem and establishing an enduring urban structure that still remains today.

### Land management and the possibility of institutionally dissociating lands and housing ownership

The way to obtain and urbanise land in the 1910 Proyecto del Extrarradio was known as the system of *grandes polígonos*. As already explained, through this system the large avenues the public administration developed could be expropriated all at once. This fact allowed the authorities to avoid the error that happened in the *ensanche* area: progressive expropriation that increased private land prices and thus ruined the public budget. At the same time, the authorities, before the development of zoning, could decide which equipment to develop in order to expropriate and reserve the land for it while the prices were still low.

In addition, the landowners had to design “planes de urbanización parciales” in the areas between the new avenues, and they had to design and build the streets using their own capital before transferring them to the public sector. They had one year after the approval of the law to submit their plans, otherwise the public administration would do the design instead and make them pay for it. The system was an evolution from the *ensanche* mechanism in which the lands were directly developed by the public powers and the landowners had only to commercialise the resulting plots without any expense. Contrastingly, the *polígonos* were thought to be an improvement for the public administration and the “common will”, as they obligated the private sector to invest in urban infrastructures.

However, Nuñez Granés’s position on this land development mechanism, the *grandes polígonos*, publicised in his 1908 book and developed in the 1910 project, were going to evolve.

The first edition of the project, which was sent to the municipal and state authorities, concluded by explaining that “*Es perfectamente aplicable a dicha urbanización o suburbanización la legislación de ensanche, contenida en la ley de 26 de Diciembre de 1876*”

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<sup>119</sup> AVM 66-334-33.

(Nuñez Granés, 1910a, pp. 115–116). In the second edition, published some months later, Nuñez Granés reflected on the advantages of an extended, initial expropriation: *“todas las dificultades y cuantos trabajos realizan los empleados del Ensanche para darlas la solución que procede, hubieran podido evitarse adquiriendo previamente todas las parcelas e inmuebles”*.

Although in that edition he continued considering the project as rooted in the *ensanche* laws, an article was written and published in the newspaper *El País* on 28 October 1910, that introduced a question that in subsequent years would become the topic of important discussions:

*Lo propuesto por el Sr. Nuñez Granés, no es, a nuestro juicio, más que un término medio entre la “municipalización del solar”, con lo cual todos los gastos y beneficios son de cuenta del Estado y Municipio, y la ya citada ley de Ensanche para Madrid y Barcelona, que concedió a los propietarios el derecho de conservar todos los solares no incluidos en las calle-plazas, sin que tuvieran que hacer sacrificio pecuniario alguno”* (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 116).

The article stated that under the *grandes polígonos* system the lands would undoubtedly increase in value after expropriation and urbanisation. On one hand, the private landowners would increase the price of the lands to include their urbanisation costs in them; that is, the price of the plots would grow at least *“hasta que adquieran un valor capaz de compensar las expresadas pérdidas”*. On the other hand, developing the avenues would raise the price of the plots. Although the article did not explicitly state it, it implied that the periphery renewal would increase the material value and status and provoke a “beautification” and a gentrification *avant la lettre* of the periphery. It is probable that Nuñez Granés was aware of these consequences, which had been widely tested in the Haussmann interventions in Paris,

In the next book he published in 1912, seemed to totally change the system and objectives of the operation. In the 1910 project, the most important objective seemed to be the development of a “beautiful” and hygienic new periphery. Contrastingly the new system Nuñez Granés presented, without a change in project design, was land expropriation that would allow the control of land price increases, the development of cheap housing, and the transfer of enormous capital gains to the public sector: the municipalisation of the entire *extrarradio*.

His system consisted of expropriating all the *extrarradio* lands with two possibilities—sell them after urbanisation or transfer plots to the private sector through long leaseholds. The second option, according to the author, was the most logical and profitable. The landowners would receive the price for the expropriation of the existing constructions whilst starting to pay rent for the lease of the land, and new buildings in the area would receive ownership permission for 99 years, after which ownership would be transferred to the municipal administration.

In fact, dissociating land ownership from housing construction was already common in the *extrarradio* in the form of rent-to-buy land contracts (Vorms, 2012). This separation permitted houses to be built without the initial investment required to buy the land, and private landowners exploited this mechanism by selling expensive, unsanitary plots. Granés proposed to substitute the private sector in the form of permitting long leaseholds on lands urbanised by the public powers, avoiding the problem of the lack of sanitary infrastructures. This strategy, in addition to generating substantial capital gains, *“tal vez se resolvería, y seguramente por lo menos se mejoraría, el problema madrileño de la vivienda de escaso alquiler”* (Nuñez Granés, 1910a, p. 39; 1910b, p. 46). As will be shown, the landowners directly challenged this municipalisation, as it ruined their commercial strategies.

Nuñez Granés knew that such a system would be hard to implement. When he had proposed the *grandes polígonos* system in the original plan, he did not speak about the possibility of municipalising the whole urban periphery. He had written some paragraphs that explained the benefits of the use of long-term leaseholds<sup>120</sup> but he decided not to propose municipalisation directly because he was aware of the difficulty of getting the plan approved in the event that it explicitly proposed collectivisation of the lands, as explained in a footnote of his 1914 book.

*No propuso el que subscribe, desde luego, este procedimiento para realizar la urbanización que nos ocupa, porque opine que, en general, lo mejor es enemigo de lo bueno, y que así como esta mejora indispensable y urgente podrá, desde luego, realizarse con el procedimiento detallado en la Memoria . . . Teniendo en cuenta la situación financiera de nuestro Ayuntamiento que no le permite, si no se le dota de recursos muy extraordinarios, acometer la empresa de realizar la urbanización del extrarradio por el procedimiento de la municipalización del suelo, por beneficioso que éste sea, me incline entonces al que hemos llamado de los grandes polígonos. [ . . . ] Mas, expuestas ahora ambas soluciones, y sólo circunstancialmente aceptada la segunda, no impide que se lleva a cabo la primera, o sea, la de la municipalización del suelo, si hubiere medios hábiles y legales para ello (Nuñez Granés, 1914, p. 29).*

Despite being “radical”, that kind of public land management was en vogue at that time. Nuñez Granés borrowed the expropriation system from other city-centre urban renewal operations, such the Avenue de l’Opera in Paris and Northumberland Avenue in London. For Granés, putting land maintenance in public hands, as in both of these operations, allowed for making the operations profitable for the private sector and also obtaining capital gains for the municipality. Although the objective of the project was still beautifying the urban landscape, this mechanism also permitted the control of land prices, which would stop the speculation and hypothetically facilitate cheap housing development.<sup>121</sup> The accelerated urban growth ensured that public control of the land would generate immense capital gains in the mid and long term, permitting the use of “*los incalculables aumentos de valor que se producen en los terrenos al convertirse de tierras de labor en solares edificables*” to develop public services and social housing.

Although the engineer considered this the best system, the problem was the large initial investment necessary to carry out the expropriation, which would require a special loan from the central state. By 1916, three systems were being publicly discussed to develop the *extrarradio*: the old *ensanche* system in which the public powers paid for urbanisation costs without receiving capital gains, a variation consisting of *grandes polígonos* in which the costs

<sup>120</sup> “Para terminar esta ya larga Base, habré de decir, que no sólo el Municipio Madrileño debe adquirir los terrenos precisos para las calles, plazas, parques, jardines y juegos al aire libre, sino también – siguiendo en parte el ejemplo dado por algunas ciudades alemanas, entre ellas Francfort, que adquieren alrededor de su recinto, los terrenos que juzgan necesarios para el desarrollo que pueda tener su caserío en un período de veinte años, -debiera comprar los indispensables para construir casas baratas para empleados de corto sueldo y obreros. [ . . . ] Se podría imponer . . . la obligación de construir con arreglo a modelos aprobados y sin que los alquileres pudieran exceder de cierta cantidad. A su vez el Municipio, [ . . . ] debería ceder los terrenos de referencia, por cantidades ínfimas, pagadas anualmente, o bien sin pago alguno y con la sola obligación de revertir a él a los 100 años (o en el plazo que se creyera oportuno) no sólo los terrenos, sino cuanto en ellos se hubiera edificado” (Nuñez Granés, 1910b, p. 46).

<sup>121</sup> For Nuñez Granés, the municipalisation also provided some other positive side effects, such as ordering the urbanisation process in proportion to the plot demand, avoiding the existence of empty plots, and linking the expenses to the urbanisation of large areas that remained unbuilt whilst the private investors could not develop them for speculation.

and capital gains went to the private sector, and the municipalisation of the *extrarradio* in which the public powers paid for urbanisation costs and also received capital gains.

On 29 May 1916, the Ministro de la Gobernación, Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez, presented a law Project to the parliament to finance the *extrarradio* project. On 31 May 1916, the city council ratified the previous agreement on the project from 31 March 1911, and on 15 August 1916, finally, a Real Decreto approving Nuñez Granés's project was published by the official journal *Gaceta de Madrid*.

The preamble of the law justified the plan as follows:

*El rápido y constante crecimiento de la población de Madrid, que determina la formación de extensas barriadas en sus alrededores, la necesidad de higienizar estos poniendo coto a la anarquía que en ellos impera en materia de construcción, productora de males sin cuento; la conveniencia de proporcionar extensas zonas en que la vida urbana pueda desarrollarse en las debidas condiciones, fomentando a la par las riquezas pública y privada, y, por último, el ineludible deber de los poderes del Estado de proporcionar trabajo útil a la multitud de obreros.*<sup>122</sup>

Although the plan seemed to be unstoppable before the summer of 1916, various factors came together to contribute to its stagnation.

The economic component of the project caused a controversy in the parliament. A letter from the gobernador civil on 10 June 1916 explained that Deputy Cierva, the biggest opponent of the plan, had demanded a list of the lands to be expropriated, the owners, and the total cost. He suggested some conflicts of interest existed, obligating to show its economic feasibility to the Comisión de Presupuestos and temporarily blocking the implementation of the plan. Internal municipal reports discussed the difficulty of measuring the lands that Madrid would gain or lose land from the surrounding municipalities, making it impossible to plan the exact price of the operation.<sup>123</sup> The discussion about the plan's economic resources was temporarily stopped in November 1916 (Bassols Coma, 1973, p. 441).

The expropriation system was not yet clear to the public powers. A letter from the Letrado del Gobierno Civil de Madrid, dated 3 November 1916,<sup>124</sup> noted that if law were approved, the government would have three months to decide whether to implement the project by municipalising the *extrarradio* or only expropriating the land from the main avenues. For the first, the city council could expropriate all the lands in a single moment, which would be extremely expensive, or do a step-by-step expropriation "*conforme lo vayan exigiendo las necesidades y el desarrollo de la urbanización en la indicada zona*", a process that would probably provoke vast speculative processes and make land prices rise step by step, as happened in the *ensanche*.

In 1918, a new project incorporating the municipalization of the *extrarradio* substituted the 1916 project and was discussed in parliament<sup>125</sup>. The justification was again the same as in previous periods, although it recognised that the urbanisation process was consolidated.

<sup>122</sup> Proyecto de Ley sobre Urbanización del Extrarradio de Madrid Presentado el 29 de mayo de 1916 por don Joaquín Ruiz Jiménez, Ministro de la Gobernación.

<sup>123</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

<sup>124</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

<sup>125</sup> AVM 66-334-33, Expediente promovido en virtud del proyecto de ley, presentado a las Cortes por el Sr. Ministro de la Gobernación para la urbanización del extrarradio.



*Cada propietario . . . edifica a su arbitrio a la altura natural del terreno y careciendo de los elementos de conducción de aguas y de alcantarillado para los residuos ; que tal vez por estas mismas perjudiciales facilidades y consiguiente baratura de las viviendas y debido también a la reducción de tributos en aquella zona, la edificación y población aumentan considerablemente en la misma ; que los planes de urbanización y saneamiento interior obligan a las clases menos acomodadas a buscar habitación en el extrarradio, creciendo de día en día, progresivamente su ya importante población.*

The main difference from the previous law was that although it also proposed the expropriation of the *extrarradio*, the municipality would share 40% of the capital gains with the original landowners. Owners would receive a title, making them investors in the renewal operation and allowing them to obtain capital gains when the area was urbanised and the plots sold. The idea was that, contrasting with the previous capture of the capital gains for all of society, the public powers would perform a “temporal municipalisation” (Bassols Coma, 1973, p. 442) to urbanise and build the public infrastructures, with the philosophy that “*el aumento de valor que en su día se obtenga se repartirá equitativamente entre el primitivo propietario y el procomún, en la proporción que la justicia y la moral demanden*”.<sup>126</sup>

Although the law had abandoned the idea of a development strategy based on public land management and taking full capital gains, the landowners and some groups inside the city council reacted against the proposition. As will be shown, despite the approval of Nuñez Granés’s plan and the existence of legal frameworks with the capacity to solve the *extrarradio* problem, the status quo would remain.

### Public regulation, private interests, and conflict (1909–1920)

During the evolution of the *extrarradio* project, which occurred between 1909 and 1918, interest groups had different reactions about the lands affected by substandard urbanisation. From the very beginning, the Proyecto del Extrarradio seemed susceptible to pressure from groups that, in order to preserve their capital gains, pushed to maintain the status quo inherited from the lack of public intervention from the 19th-century regulations.

On 27 March 1911, only a few months after the plan was presented, an internal letter asked the Comisión de Fomento to reduce the publicity about the project in order to prevent influencing the development of speculative land strategies.

*La publicidad que ha tenido el proyecto que estudiamos, ha provocado el natural interés de los propietarios. No deben darse a la publicidad noticias que influyen directamente en el aumento de valor de algunos terrenos y en el demérito de otros, cuyos propietarios ya elevan la voz de quejas y forman obstáculos a los proyectos municipales en defensa de los intereses particulares.*<sup>127</sup>

Some months later, on 10 June 1911, another internal document of the city council again asked for discretion in order to avoid pressure from external actors:

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<sup>126</sup> AVM 66-334-33.

<sup>127</sup> AVM 66-334-34.

*Que continúe el estudio del proyecto con gran esmero y austeridad para no dar lugar a que se interpongan intereses ajenos a los municipales, que habría de dificultar la realización de tan amplio plan empleando una prudente reserva hasta el momento mismo de su ejecución.*<sup>128</sup>

However, the influence of landowners and investors in the process of regulating the *extrarradio* was not easy to avoid. As already mentioned, the periphery of Madrid was divided into two geographical areas with very different privileges. On one side, the *ensanche*, the former city extension, had been urbanised and equipped by the public powers. On the other side, the *extrarradio* was growing without any public infrastructure and was in a situation of legal precarity.

The reason for the existence of such difference between zones, in addition to the planning process, was fiscal. When the city was divided into two areas—the interior and the *ensanche*—by the 1860 Ensanche Law, the *extrarradio* was not supposed to be inhabited. Their streets, developed by private actors (Vorms, 2012) had been illegally financed by the public budget of the interior, the city-centre area, which also lacked the financial means to address its own problems of insalubrity. During the discussion of the project in 1910, the Conde de Peñalver stated the following:

*Lo que pasa en el extrarradio es que los vecinos que forman parte de la jurisdicción municipal del Ayuntamiento de Madrid están clamando, porque, siendo vecinos de Madrid, resulta que las casas en algunos sitios son verdaderos aduares. [. . .] Creo que Madrid no será una población uniforme . . . mientras la ley de Ensanche no se modifique fundamentalmente, y la verdadera modificación fundamental es la supresión de las zonas (Nuñez Granés, 1910a, p. 177).*

For the senator, the existence of the different budgets “*hace imposible la normal y regular urbanización de Madrid, porque en unas zonas sobra mucho y en otras falta todo . . . ¿Es que en el proyecto de ley que discutimos se va a eso?*” (Ibid 1910a, p. 177). The absence of territorial redistribution affected more than the *extrarradio*; as Senator Prast explained in the same session, the *ensanche* was also subdivided into different areas with inequalities among them.

*La zona 2ª, que es la que corresponde al barrio de Salamanca, acabará por tener faroles de oro, y en cambio la 1ª y 3ª, pertenecientes al barrio del Sur, están en tal abandono que no hay posibilidad por parte del Ayuntamiento de Madrid de hacer nada en favor suyo, y esto debido a que en la zona 2ª hay cuantiosos ingresos que por la ley de Ensanche debe el Ayuntamiento emplearlos exclusivamente en beneficio de ella (Ibid 1910a, p. 181).*

Salamanca district, which had gradually concentrated the upper classes since the second half of the 19th century (Carballo Barral, 2007; Mas Hernández, 1982), was an island of privilege in part thanks to its differential taxation (Vicente Albarrán, 2016a). Although the law was considered unfair, the established rights, from which the higher classes of Madrid society benefitted, would be hard to remove. As the Marques de Ibarra stated during the discussion of the plan,

*De esos fondos no se podrá nunca disponer . . . sin que venga una ley especial que así lo determine. [. . .] Yo entiendo que no habrá ningún Ministro de la Gobernación que se atreva a presentar esa ley en esa forma, porque esos fondos cuantiosos o no cuantiosos, no son del*

<sup>128</sup> AVM 66-334-34.

*Ayuntamiento, son de la zona, son de los propietarios que los han dado, y nadie tiene absolutamente derecho a ellos como no sea realizando una verdadera expropiación* (1910a, p. lbid 181).

The 1910 plan was approved without substantial changes regarding this subject. Although we do not have much information about the reactions of the inhabitants and landowners from the first years of discussion about the plan, the archives show that during its public display, from 4 March to 15 April 1916, a total of nineteen complaints were made.<sup>129</sup> Most of them were exposed by small landowners asking for indemnities, but some were collective, such as those carried out by “69 propietarios e industriales” of the “barriadas” of Bellas Vistas, Altos, and Puente de Amaniel; the “Asociaciones de Propietarios” of Bellas Vistas, Puente de Segovia, Puente de Toledo, and Puente de Vallecas; and the claims from the Federación de Sociedades del Extrarradio.

The vindications were of very different nature.

Small landowners seemed to demand mainly an indemnification for the lands. Although as has been shown, at the end of the 19th century the municipality had inserted a clause in the building permits that obligated the owners to renounce to any kind of compensation in case of demolition. Nuñez Granés, as well the municipality, publicly believed that this clause was illegal and that the expropriation of already built areas should be reimbursed. Perhaps for that reason, the plan did not seem to generate much opposition by small landowners of the *extrarradio*, as exemplified in a collective claim signed by 61 landowners of Bellas Vistas, Altos, and Puente de Amaniel, an area around the northern *extrarradio* of Cuatro Caminos. In a letter addressed to the municipality, they considered the following:

*Habiendo entendido que le dignísimo Ayuntamiento desea llegar a realizar el grandioso proyecto del Señor Granés, para el ensanche del extrarradio y mejora del pueblo de Madrid, aceptamos desde luego una mejora tan excelente, teniendo en cuenta que al verificarse el mencionado proyecto, el Excmo. Ayuntamiento nos abonará íntegro en moneda corriente el valor de las fincas y terrenos que se expropian al precio que corresponda cuando se efectúen las obras.*<sup>130</sup>

With their signatures, the owners included their addresses, most of which were in poor areas, being rare the cases of individuals who had more than one house or plot. The claim seemed coherent with the popular support for the project that had already been described by the press.

On the other side, different land developers explained their disagreement, such as Ildelfonso Vecino Alejandre, who was representing his mother-in-law Juana Sanchez. He made a claim against one of the planned streets, Conde de Vilches, which would have divided their possessions and made it difficult to build on their land. Their plot was located in the Barrio de la Salud, an area near La Guindalera, which had been developed “*dividiéndolos en manzanas y solares para edificar dejando las correspondientes calles y plazas para el servicio público con arreglo al plano levantado por el arquitecto don Mariano Andrés Avenosa y el maestro de obras ... Esteban Latorre*”. Opposed to this private planning, the claim stated that

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<sup>129</sup> AVM 66-334-36. Expediente promovido a virtud de decreto del Excmo. Sr. Alcalde disponiendo el anuncio al público del Plan General de Urbanización del Extrarradio por término de treinta días. Real decreto de 15 de Agosto de 1916 aprobando el plan de urbanización del Extrarradio.

<sup>130</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

implementing Granés's plan "*no se consigue a juicio del que suscribe ventaja alguna en la alineación y urbanización*",<sup>131</sup> respecting the already privately built streets of the area.

Finally, some Asociaciones de Propietarios del Extrarradio also made claims against the project. This was the case in the statement of Valentín Quiroga y Quiroga, President of the Asociación de Propietarios de Bellas Vistas, who believed that the theoretical possibility to freely expropriate the lands inscribed in the building permits could,

*Determinar la ruina de barriada tan floreciente . . . sus edificaciones modernas han convertido el barrio en uno de los más visitados y agradables del ensanche pero, de aquí en adelante resultarán inútiles los esfuerzos de los Propietarios asociados para continuar obra tan simpática y cultural, puesto que ante el temor de perder su valor, no han de realizar edificaciones tan costosas, como de algunos años a esta parte han venido realizándose.*<sup>132</sup>

The claim concluded by demanding that the plan not be implemented to avoid that "*se perjudiquen los intereses creados, fomentando con esto el desarrollo de los barrios extremos de Madrid, verdaderos pulmones de las clases media y obrera, y únicos donde pueden encontrar la salud e higiene de que carecen las casas baratas de la capital*".

It is possible that the plan's long development process increased the insecurity of suburban development after the 1911 plan approval. Doubts about the future expropriation of plots to develop the avenue system and the possibility of a general expropriation of the area likely decreased the profitability of peripheral land development and disincentivised capitalist investments. This process, could maybe explain the "proletarianisation" of the housing development in *extrarradio* neighbourhoods as La Prosperidad after the 1910s (Vorms, 2012, p. 286). In effect, although this *extrarradio* area had decades earlier been the subject of housing development "professionalisation" and the arrival of middle classes, between the 1910s and 1920s most of the new inhabitants were workers and rural immigrants, 48% of which developed the plots by themselves (Ibid, p. 287).

Although most of the claims against the Proyecto del Extrarradio were related to land expropriation, Nuñez Granés only considered those that referred to the project's urban design because the economic questions should have been handled by the *extrarradio* law that was being debated in parliament.: "*las manifestaciones sobre el modo de indemnizar no son pertinentes en el momento actual en el que, a mi entender, no cabe discutir mas que sobre la conveniencia o no de ejecutar el proyecto y sobre las mejoras que en éste pudieran introducirse*".

At that time (April 1916), three possibilities could still lead to the implementation of the Proyecto del Extrarradio: the *ensanche*, the *grandes polígonos*, and municipalisation.

Some months after the public exhibition, the press reported in June 1916 that the municipalisation plan had the frontal opposition of landowners associations of Madrid, both in inner-city areas and the periphery.<sup>133</sup> The first feared that rental prices would decrease if municipalisation was effective, whilst the second were opposed to impossibility of collecting capital gains over the long term.

<sup>131</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

<sup>132</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

<sup>133</sup> *España*, 29 June 1916 (in Nuñez Granés, 1920).

Although the landowners associations were willing to tolerate the project if it was developed with the *grandes polígonos* system, they preferred, of course, the *ensanche* system, because the private sector would receive all the capital gains and all the urbanisation expenses would be paid for by the public sector. Although there was a consensus among municipal technicians and political figures about the necessity to overcome the errors of the previous *ensanche* regulation, on 1 August 1916, the president of the Federación de Asociaciones del Extrarradio, in a letter to a journal famous for making regenerationist claims,<sup>134</sup> described his demands for the use of the *ensanche* legislation in the *extrarradio*. The text showed the association's support for Nuñez Granés's urban design, considering it urgent to,

*Hacer el replanteo de las vías que contiene dicho proyecto, a fin de que los propietarios sepan dónde pueden construir sin riesgo, y termine el estado anárquico actual, impropio de una población civilizada. Con ello el Ministro no hará más que cumplir lo mandado por el Real decreto aprobatorio del Ensanche de 19 de julio de 1860.*

The owners expressed their need for land use regulations. However, they rejected the expropriation project of Ruiz Jimenez, who “*ni refleja nuestro pensamiento ni satisface nuestras aspiraciones*”. The text also indicated their lobby action; the Federación de Asociaciones del Extrarradio had encouraged the minister and other parliament members to introduce changes to the law under discussion.

In July 1916, the press described on a conference held by Ruiz Jimenez, *extrarradio* law proponent and Ministro de Gobernación, in the Círculo de la Unión Mercantil. In speaking with Madrid real estate investors, he advocated for the “*derribo de todas las viviendas malsanas de los barrios bajos y de gran parte de las del propio centro*”,<sup>135</sup> justifying the role of the state administration after the municipal intervention.

*El Ayuntamiento –hay que reconocerlo sinceramente- ha hecho cuanto ha podido por mejorar la situación del extrarradio y terminar con las míseras viviendas de esa zona. Es evidente que tales callejas y zahurdas no son dignas de la capital de España, y a subsanar esa deficiencia he consagrado mis energías desde la primera vez que fui Alcalde. [. . .] Es urgente aprobar lo que ahora se propone, para terminar con la porquería que rodea a la ciudad.*<sup>136</sup>

The minister supported expropriation as a way to destroy a large extent of the defective periphery.

The graphic magazine *El nuevo Mundo* stated that the final approval of the project would not depend on the minister's strength, prestige, or power but on the project's capacity to reduce the problems of the working classes and revolutionary threats it implied. “*no es por amor a Madrid el apoyo que el Estado presta a este proyecto de mejoramiento de la Villa, ni siquiera por estímulo de los beneficios que ha de reportarle, ni por aumentar el decoro de la capital : es por miedo*”.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, the Socialist Party, which supported the project, believed it would contribute to solving the growing housing problem of the working classes (Vorms, 2012). Julian Besteiro, who some years later would be in charge of urban planning in Madrid, defended the project. He reasoned that some families who ruled the city had made enormous benefits from

<sup>134</sup> *El Debate*, 1 August 1916.

<sup>135</sup> *Nuevo Mundo*, 14 July 1916.

<sup>136</sup> *El País*, 17 June 1916.

<sup>137</sup> *Nuevo Mundo*, 14 July 1916.

gathering lands and increasing rents in the *ensanche*, and they were trying to do the same in the *extrarradio*. The solution was “*que se den por el Estado todas cuantas facilidades sean precisas, para que el Ayuntamiento de Madrid pueda llevar a efecto la municipalización y urbanización del extrarradio de Madrid, incluyendo todos los pueblos limítrofes*”.<sup>138</sup>

In broad terms, the press articles indicated that the workers<sup>139</sup> would be the main beneficiaries of the municipalisation being able to access cheaper lands and housing. Additionally, commerce and industry would benefit from the better living conditions by improving their businesses and having less costs for their establishments in the area.

The 1918 *proyecto de ley* provoked opposition from the Asociación de Federaciones de Propietarios, Vecinos y Comerciantes of the *Extrarradio*. They denounced that the “temporal municipalisation” required expropriation at low costs—the price at which it was bought, sometimes fifty years before, written in the “*escrituras*”—and selling the plots, urbanising the area, and only then paying the owners 40% of the final value.<sup>140</sup> The landowners considered it anti-constitutional because the plots would be offered in public auctions without allowing the right of “*tanteo y retracto*” (pre-emption right), and the final price would only be known at the end of the urbanisation process when it was accomplished.

Combining the interests of both the large landowners and the small plot owners, the Asociación de Federaciones de Propietarios published a counter-project.<sup>141</sup> In it, they made claims against the possibility of expropriating the area. They argued that, as opposed to the *ensanche* owners, the *extrarradio* owners were mainly workers who had self-constructed houses to live in, not to pursue speculative ventures.

*La mayor parte de las fincas son parcelas de terreno en las que a costa de privaciones y sacrificios, muchas veces con el trabajo personal, se ha construido una pequeña vivienda que sirva de albergue, habitada la mayor parte de los casos por el mismo propietario y a veces siendo él mismo un pequeño industrial o comerciante.*<sup>142</sup>

According to the association, the *extrarradio* law should not try to capture the private capital gains; the surplus value of the lands would not correspond to the whole society, as with what happened in the areas developed through public investments, but to the builders, because they had carried out the city growth without any public support. The text seemed on one side to embrace the defence of the working classes and on the other side to use the liberal thinking to defend the private nature of the capital gains. According to the association, the *extrarradio* inhabitants would be “*demasiado modestos, demasiado pobres, demasiado insignificantes, para preocuparse de ellos*”<sup>143</sup>. The association accused the public powers of having paid attention only to the bourgeois areas, abandoning the working classes and their housing problems.

*Los propietarios y vecinos del extrarradio no han recibido auxilio ni protección del Municipio: en nada a contribuido este a su desarrollo: el concepto fundamental de la plus-valía, cual es el de*

<sup>138</sup> *El Sol*, 24 April 1925.

<sup>139</sup> *España*, 29 June 1916 (in Nuñez Granés 1920).

<sup>140</sup> AVM 66-334-33.

<sup>141</sup> AVM 66-334-33. *Observaciones y enmiendas al proyecto de ley de Urbanización del Extrarradio*. Formuladas por La Asociación de Federaciones de Propietarios, Vecinos y Comerciantes de dicha Zona. Madrid, Establecimiento tipográfico de Juan Pérez Torres, 1918.

<sup>142</sup> AVM 66-334-33.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

*que es injusto que el propietario se lucre por consecuencia de las mejoras producidas por las reformas municipales y por el esfuerzo de la colectividad, no reza con ellos; si en algunas zonas tiene agua, ha sido gracias a la iniciativa privada; si han querido calles, han tenido que abrirlas ellos mismos y renunciar totalmente al terreno que ocupaban; hasta hoy no existió el alcantarillado, teniendo que construirse cada uno su pozo negro . . . apenas si algunos privilegiados influyentes podían obtener la limosna de una acera o un farol y casi nunca un empedrado, dejando convertidas las calles en lodazales inmundos.*<sup>144</sup>

As a consequence, “*el aumento de valor que hayan podido experimentar esos terrenos, no ha sido debido al esfuerzo del Municipio ni la acción de la colectividad, sino . . . al esfuerzo de los mismos propietarios, vecinos e industriales*”.

The expropriation of the area was thought to evaluate the indemnifications according to their prices in the Registro de la Propiedad (sometimes inscribed fifty years earlier), and it did not take into account the large quantity of cases in which “*no se haya inscrito la nueva edificación en el Registro . . . o no haya sido objeto de transmisión registrada*”, a situation in which there were “*más del 50 por 100 de los edificios del Extrarradio y la casi totalidad de los aislados en los términos vecinales a que se extiende*”. The absence of ownership titles for the area would lead to no payments being received for the constructions.

Additionally, the public administration’s payments would be effective only after long bureaucratic processes, during which most of the poor owners who had acquired the land through rent-purchase agreements or hypothecs, would go on bankrupt.

The association also claimed that the project and new law would lead to the destruction of not only the areas affected by the new avenues but the totality of the poor houses of the *extrarradio*. As we saw previously, the area had been frequently developed through clauses that kept the neighbourhoods under the permanent threat of housing destruction “*sin indemnización alguna . . . con la restricción y bajo la amenaza de que se derribaría sus propiedades cuando al Ayuntamiento se le antojase*”. This situation, which was considered “*injusta y arbitraria*”, would still be worsened with the new law. The association feared that the expropriated areas would be publicly auctioned, making it possible for any private actor to buy, demolish and renovate them. In addition, the 1918 law excluded from the municipalisation “*aquellas fincas en que lo edificado signifique el décuplo del valor del terreno*”, which meant that,

*Los únicos a quienes el precepto de la ley no alcanza, los únicos que no sólo no sufren perjuicio sino que se beneficiarían, si acaso, con las sucesivas reformas urbanas y a los que el Ayuntamiento no reclama participación en la plusvalía, son los ricos, los propietarios de grandes fincas, los dueños de lujosos hoteles, porque en ellos es únicamente donde el valor de la edificación significa el décuplo del terreno.*<sup>145</sup>

This clause thought to “beautify” the periphery, permitting the rare luxurious buildings to remain and facilitating an increase in the long-term land value. But this, of course, would involve a massive institutionally driven gentrification process that would evict most of the inhabitants from the shelters in the *extrarradio*:

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> AVM 66-334-33. *Observaciones y enmiendas al proyecto de ley de Urbanización del Extrarradio*. Formuladas por La Asociación de Federaciones de Propietarios, Vecinos y Comerciantes de dicha Zona. Madrid, Establecimiento tipográfico de Juan Pérez Torres, 1918.

*La mayor parte de las fincas son parcelas de terreno en las que a costa de privaciones y sacrificios, muchas veces con el trabajo personal, se ha construido una pequeña vivienda que sirva de albergue, habitada la mayor parte de los casos por el mismo propietario y a veces siendo él mismo un pequeño industrial o comerciante. Pues bien, en todos estos casos, el que a tanta costa ha conseguido ese refugio, quedará privado de él y expropiado. [...] ¿Qué necesidad hay de expropiar todos estos pequeños edificios [...]? Los únicos que deben expropiarse son los que constituyan un obstáculo para la urbanización, los enclavados en las calles que vayan a abrirse; pero los que quedan fuera de la zona pública, ¿para qué?*

The Federation de Asociaciones de Propietarios demanded the expropriations be developed through the general law of expropriations of 1879, much more beneficial for the landowners. The Federation accepted avoiding *“la censurable industria de los acaparadores de solares y que se encarezca artificialmente el suelo”* but demanded, among many other vindications, avoiding massive demolitions. Although Nuñez Granés created a draft of the law with minor revisions,<sup>146</sup> the municipality, through the Comisión de Fomento, admitted in a letter from 10 April 1919 that, if the *extrarradio* law were not transformed, it would provoke a fair opposition who *“haría, casi seguramente, que el proyecto de ley de que nos ocupamos, no llegara a ser Ley”*. The municipality considered that the position of the landowners association would provoke a *“ruda oposición en las dos cámaras”* and recognised the following:

*Es también muy de tener en cuenta, que muchas, la generalidad de las fincas que existen en el extrarradio, pertenecen a las clases más humildes, a obreros, y que no sería ni justo ni equitativo desposeerles de ellas, sin esperanza alguna posterior, por cantidad casi seguramente, menor de aquellas que, con mil sacrificios, lograron reunir.<sup>147</sup>*

As we have seen, the plan triggered several reactions. The different positions, influence, and power relationships of these groups attempted to pressure the public powers to maintain the status quo and the *“exception regulations”* of the *extrarradio*.

On one hand, the *ensanche* owners lobbied to maintain their separate budget, avoiding using their taxes to supply the *extrarradio* area, and agreed to its renovation. On the other hand, the Federación de Asociaciones de Propietarios del Extrarradio pushed to avoid being dispossessed of their lands in the name of *“beautifying”* the periphery and asked for an urbanisation model, the *ensanche*, purely financed by the public powers. However, it is difficult to establish clear boundaries between the actors and groups of interest; despite the apparent working-class vindications of the *extrarradio* associations, they were clearly permeated by liberal positions and seemed to be significantly related with the Cámara de la Propiedad, an organisation situated at the very core of the Madrid bourgeoisie. Whilst the *extrarradio* associations made claims against the *ensanche* privileges, they demanded to receive the same privileges. Although it is impossible to evaluate their influence on the legal sphere, the owners' opposition to the plan in both areas could have contributed to the plan's mysterious obstruction by the Madrid public powers.

<sup>146</sup> It is interesting to note that, after reading the demands of the Federación, Nuñez Granés substituted the clause in which he would not expropriate the plots with a land value less than 10% of the building for another formulation: *“Quedan excluidos de las disposiciones de esta Ley . . . los edificios de carácter permanente así terminados, como los que se estén construyendo”*. This phrase shows again that renovating the area involved demolishing the precarious housing.

<sup>147</sup> AVM 72 66-34-33\*, Letter 18 October 1919 to the Comisión 4ª, written by José Corona.



Since the beginning, the technical implementation of the plan had been expected to be a problem. On 16 February 1911, a report from the municipal Comisión de Fomento, considered that, due to the absence of detailed documents about the situation in the *extrarradio*, “*graves son las dificultades con que se ha debido tropezar el Señor Granés al redactar su proyecto y nada de extraño tiene que haya omitido el detalle necesario para formar juicio definitivo sobre la totalidad de un asunto tan complejo*”.<sup>148</sup> Although Nuñez Granés had strongly defended the plan, the large avenues designed throughout the municipal term did not have an easy topographical translation to the real territory of Madrid. The street development needed previous, precise topographical work in which milestones would be placed to refer to and calculate the distances and the new limits of the private properties.

Although on 3 December 1913, Nuñez Granés asked the Ministro de la Gobernación to allow him to start the fieldwork, placing milestones on private lands “*sin que esto prejuzge en nada*<sup>149</sup> *el derecho de propiedad que sobre los terrenos en que se instalen puedan tener sus dueños*”<sup>150</sup>, the *extrarradio* owners had decided already one year earlier to block the future installation of the land miles.

*En la reunión celebrada por los propietarios de las fincas urbanas del Extrarradio, en la Cámara oficial de la Propiedad urbana de Madrid, se tomó el acuerdo siguiente : Que mientras no se apruebe definitivamente el plan de urbanización del Extrarradio de Madrid, que es aspiración general de los propietarios, no tienen éstos inconveniente en que se hagan los trabajos necesarios para la determinación gráfica de las alineaciones proyectadas, sin que para ello sea preciso la colocación de hitos, cuya instalación pudiera prejuzgar cuestiones de carácter civil, que afectan a la propiedad privada.*<sup>151</sup>

From a legal point of view, the project presented difficulties. On 28 September 1916, a letter from the Comisión de Fomento to Nuñez Granés revealed significant doubts about the possibility of implementing the project. Because of the absence of precise alignments, they did not know how to deal with the position of the buildings to be developed. Additional doubts existed about the possibility of placing the milestones in the case that the landowners rejected facilitating the process, and it was thought that they might ask for economic indemnities before allowing the topographers to enter their property. The commission did not know how much time would be necessary to draw the location of the avenues precisely, making it impossible to know how many workers and what budget would be required to accomplish their construction.

On 9 October 1916, Nuñez Granés answered the commission, detailing a point-by-point response to their doubts; each new demand for a building permit would be answered by the work of the topographers who, after visiting the place, would establish if the plot to be built coincided with the future streets, and thus permit the public powers to concede or deny the permit. The landowners would be obligated to facilitate the topographers’ work and the milestones would be placed without any economic compensation. Nuñez Granés announced that with three workgroups, the plan should be drawn for the terrain in approximately one year. However, a report from the Letrado Consistorial Decano, the legal authority of the

<sup>148</sup> AVM 66-334-34.

<sup>149</sup> The underline has been copied from the original manuscript.

<sup>150</sup> AVM 66-334-31. Expediente a moción de la Comisión especial para que se interese del Ministro de la Gobernación se le autorice para la colocación de hitos para marcar las vías municipales.

<sup>151</sup> *El Correo Español*, 19 December 1912.

municipality, rejected Nuñez Granés's position. According to him, the landowners should permit the public topographers to work the municipality, but the municipality could not legally delay or reject building permits waiting for the correct alignments to be established, and the landowners could not be prohibited building on their properties before being expropriated. The Comisión de Fomento assumed these legal opinions, making the implementation of the project much more difficult.

The city council bureaucracy also blocked the situation. On 12 December 1916, Largo Caballero, a socialist city councillor in the Madrid municipality, expressed in a report that *"consignadas 10.000 pesetas en el presupuesto vigente para comenzar el replanteo y aprobado el proyecto desde este verano, no se ha hecho absolutamente nada"*. Weeks later, on 31 January 1917, Nuñez Granés himself complained in a letter that it had been impossible to place the milestones to trace the streets *"por carecer de ellos y de los elementos necesarios para efectuar los trabajos que dicha operación requiere"*. The text provided a budget and a list of the employees required to carry out the task. Months later, on the 30 of March, Nuñez Granés again addressed the same budget to the municipality, explaining that with such resources the fieldwork could be completed in one year.

However, something was not functioning in the Comisión de Fomento, which was in charge of financing Nuñez Granés's department. On 17 April 1917, a letter was sent to Nuñez Granés asking him to formulate a list of employees for the fieldwork and a budget. The answer, of course, was that this list had been already sent on the 30 of March.

In the later sessions of the Comisión de Fomento on the 24 of May, 2 of June, 6 of June, and 14 of June, the commission agreed literally to "let the plan's file pass over the desk", without even starting to discuss the project's needs (which were urgent). At the same time, building permits continued being granted, exponentially increasing the cost of future expropriations.

Finally, in the session of 21 June 1917, the commission decided that the fieldwork and all other tasks related to the project would be made. However, the task would be done by municipal employees on overtime, and a future discussion would be held to decide the list of employees. The tasks related to implementing the project—perhaps the most important municipal subject at that time—would be done by rearranging employees' agendas, without recruiting a new workforce: *"La distribución del tiempo para el cometido de cada uno, será : trabajo de campo – de 5 y media de la mañana a las 9 de la misma- servicio de oficina, de 9 y media de la mañana a dos de la tarde- servicio de oficina o de campo, de seis a ocho de la noche"*.

On 11 August 1917, more the one year after the ratification of the project and six years after its municipal approval, the work to establish the alignments started, and it did not seem easy; Nuñez Granés asked the municipality in a letter provide a document for the workers that obligated the landowners to allow them to work.

In this context, the work advanced much slower than planned. On 10 July 1918, Nuñez Granés send a letter notifying of the achievement of *"algo más de la mitad del total y la parte más difícil del mismo por referirse a las Zonas Norte y Nordeste en que hay más edificaciones y el terreno es más accidentado"*. Although he had declared that the process would be finished in one year, Nuñez Granés defended that if he did not achieve it, it was because *"en el tiempo transcurrido desde la aprobación del proyecto, se han hecho obras y modificaciones en el terreno que obligan a hacer, no el replanteo, sino el estudio completo de las vías afectadas por ellas"*. Despite the increasing obstacles to achieving the task, the text concluded that "no

*obstante lo expuesto estimo que los trabajos de replanteo podrán terminarse, aún reduciendo el personal a las dos brigadas que han dado más rendimiento, en 10 u 11 meses”.*

The archives about the project development conserve two other letters from Nuñez Granés. One, sent on 30 July 1919, one year later, proposed to temporarily stop the activities to avoid working in excessive heat. The other letter, from 27 December 1919, announced that he had stopped the fieldwork *“hasta que se consigan medios económicos para proseguirlas”*.<sup>152</sup> No further evidence of any activity related to the plan’s field implementation has been found.

The project was apparently blocked not only by parliament and in the field by the landowners but also by bureaucratic barriers from the city council. The municipal commission in charge of facilitating Nuñez Granés’s work seemed to do as much as possible to stop it or at least delay it.

As has already been explained, Nuñez Granés had not initially proposed the municipalisation of the *extrarradio* but, after 1912, he advocated for that system, which he considered to be advantageous. However, he had already feared that it would be possible only *“si se cuenta con recursos suficientes para llevarle á cabo y con las necesarias energías para oponerse á las impurezas de la realidad, a las avaricias y a las concupiscencias, que podrían llegar á imposibilitar la adquisición de los terrenos enclavados en el extrarradio”*. From 1908 on, he used the expression, “impurezas de la realidad”, to refer the invisible use of power of the private interests. Although it is possible that the delays in implementing the plan partially originated in administrative negligence, or as we will see by the internal conflicts around planning ideas, it is probable that the “impurezas de la realidad” that Nuñez Granés mysteriously cited in most of his works acted against the *extrarradio* plan. As noted by Carmen Gavira (1985), the municipality was subject to pressure by the landowners, an oligarchic power that influenced all levels of the public administration, both by well-connected individuals and by collective institutions such as the Liga de Propietarios de Madrid. As we have seen, this lobby, as well as that of the Federación de Asociaciones de Propietarios del Extrarradio, was extremely active during the plan discussions with the explicit purpose of influencing municipal decisions.

Despite the city council approving the project on 31 March 1911 and the Real Decreto del Ministerio de la Gobernación approving the plan on 16 August 1916, Nuñez Granés’s plan and the attempt to publicly control land speculation and capital gains were not implemented. Meanwhile, the *extrarradio* and the *suburbio* continued growing.

### **The birth of urban planning as an answer to the housing problem**

As we already explained, implementing the Proyecto del Extrarradio, which opened up the possibility of municipalising urban land, was subject to pressure from the landowners and obstructions from its own municipality and remained temporarily blocked from 27 December 1919.

Some months earlier, the Comisión de Fomento of Madrid wrote a report on 10 April 1919 that explained that the approved plan needed important changes. The project had been developed ten years before, and although detailed projects existed for the main avenues,

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<sup>152</sup> AVM 66-334-36.

there were still no projects for the other components, such as secondary streets, open spaces, and parks that could compose the secondary *polígonos*. In the absence of detailed plans, there were also no projects for the public infrastructure of the new areas, such as the water supply and sewer system. Furthermore, the public powers had not decided on the placement of the public equipment.

In this context, the Comisión de Fomento questioned the urban model that had inspired Nuñez Granés's project, and that was still being discussed in parliament. The commission proposed transforming the project into a new "ruralist" vision that would create in the periphery small houses for poor populations and cottages for the middle classes wanting a calmer environment. The *extrarradio* project might reproduce a growing trend: the garden city.

*El tipo de urbanización que preferentemente deberá adoptarse en el Extrarradio, o sea el de "Ciudad jardín", . . . ha de responder a su verdadera finalidad, que no debe ser otra que la de crear el barrio vividero por excelencia, no sólo para las clases modestas, . . . sino para una inmensa mayoría del vecindario, cuando cada día más el vivir agitado y el inevitable hacinamiento de las construcciones del interior produzcan una tendencia centrífuga que se observa en todas las grandes capitales del mundo, por virtud de la cual un gran número de sus habitantes buscan su vivienda en los suburbio, en condiciones higiénicas y en más estrecho contacto con la naturaleza.*<sup>153</sup>

This new urban model contrasted with the street pattern of Nuñez Granés's project. The wide avenues, based in the Haussmann urbanism, were generally associated to dense and high-rise collective housing buildings. Such model, at a time of accelerated modernity, seemed already outdated, facing the new "city garden" as the best solution to face the pathological consequences of the dense street patterns.

*Sería imperdonable que el Extrarradio no pasase de ser otra cosa que una ampliación del Ensanche, que a su vez en nada se diferencia del Interior, sin otra ventaja sobre estas zonas urbanas que la mayor anchura de sus calles ; pero con iguales defectos de higiene física y moral que los que caracterizan a las abominables colmenas humanas que llamamos casas de alquiler (...) La preocupación de ahora para cuantos piensan en estos problemas, podría decirse que tiene al « ruralismo », a aproximar en lo posible la vivienda urbana a la del campo, reglamentando con el mayor rigor los espacios descubiertos, creando nuevos parques y jardines, limitando por razones de higiene las alturas excesivas de los edificios, que sólo en países atrasados y por espíritus superficiales estiman el colmo del progreso urbano.*<sup>154</sup>

To address this concern, within the Comisión de Fomento, José Corona signed off on a report about the *extrarradio* on 18 October 1919. In it, there was a reminder that the owners had generally accepted the "big avenue" system, that the elevation of the buildings had already been set in the *ordenanzas* for the *extrarradio*, and that the system of *polígonos* could function.<sup>155</sup> The internal design of the *polígonos* had not yet been drawn because the 1916 and 1918 projects of law were not approved. The document supported Nuñez Granés's Proyecto del Extrarradio and suggested the introduction of an *ordenanza* asking to leave at least one-third of each plot of the *extrarradio* unconstructed in order to produce a less dense urban

<sup>153</sup> AVM 66-334-33.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> The document, written by Anton y Dominguez Ayerdi and Nuñez Granés, mentions the project, but it has not been located.

form. The report also asked for faster municipal equipment planning for the plan and the streets and infrastructure of the *polígonos*. The text did not see any contradiction between the garden city and the Nuñez Granés plan, concluding that “*entiende esta ponencia que el extrarradio debe ser todo él ciudad jardín*”. On 10 March 1920, the Comisión de Fomento accepted that viewpoint and the city council approved the Ley del Extrarradio.

The same year, Julian Besteiro, leader of the Socialist Party, held a conference about the housing problem underlying the need for urban land socialisation, in order to plan the city growth only by searching for the common will and to overcome using land for speculative purposes (Besteiro Fernandez, 1920). In his speech, the housing problem in Madrid was closely related to the absence of city growth regulation. On one hand, the speculation of empty land, which was massive in the *ensanche*, resulted from landowners’ expectations to sell or build at a higher price once the land was fully developed. This attempt brought with it a general stagnation of the area, penalising early investors, who would sell houses in deserted areas.

On the other hand, the lack of regulations about the area’s future density favoured speculation:

*Si las leyes permiten que los caseros eleven todo lo que quieran sus fincas, construyan casas de cinco, de seis, de más pisos, y las subdividan en cuartos pequeños sin tener nada en cuenta las condiciones e higiene, esas rentas producen una renta mayor y elevan el precio de los solares colindantes, formando un círculo vicioso con la anterior tendencia especulativa* (Besteiro Fernandez, 1920, p. 8).

Not having regulations for plot development tended to maximise the expectation of future density and delayed housing construction, so that it could be done with the higher prices and rise when the area was already consolidated.<sup>156</sup>

The politician believed that the press generally attributed the housing crisis to the expensive building materials and workforce, giving the sense that nobody was responsible for it. In contrast, he also pointed out that land speculation and insufficient regulations were not blamed for the housing problem because these issues had direct political causes. Besteiro offered two solutions to the housing problem: the development of social housing rents and the urbanisation and regulation of city growth in the periphery, for which the Nuñez Granés project of municipalisation could be a good solution.

However, shortly after, the project faced a crisis. On 28 January 1922, the mayor proposed a *ponencia*, a formal discussion about the *extrarradio* problem for the municipal technicians about the Nuñez Granés project. The discussions, published in a booklet, expressed the critics of the Madrid municipal architects who, radically embracing the urban planning modernity, considered the Proyecto del Extrarradio to be too old. The first phrase of the first paragraph, published in 1923, was significant regarding the new viewpoints legitimised by the international rise of town planning “science”:

*El plan para la urbanización del Extrarradio del Sr. Nuñez Granés debe sufrir radicales ampliaciones y modificaciones si ha de adaptarse a las reglas y principios establecidos modernamente en todos los países para el planeamiento y extensión de las grandes poblaciones* (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, p. 8).

<sup>156</sup> Or, maybe, to build temporary, precarious tenements to minimise the demolition costs.

The text explained that since 1909, when the project was designed, the techniques for managing the city extension had crucially advanced. In addition, the system of *grandes polígonos* was denounced as a fiasco. Although the plan asked the state to establish the main avenues and the private sector the space between them, “*los particulares no han ejercido la acción que se les atribuí; tampoco el Estado*” (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, p. 5)

The project was also denounced for the rigidity of its design, inherited from the 19th-century drawing areas in which the street grid did not adapt to the terrain, as happened in the southern part of the *ensanche*. The space between the avenues Acacias, Embajadores, Canal, and Yererías, crossed by the Arroyo de Embajadores, had remained undeveloped. The area’s street pattern made it difficult to construct basements for high buildings, and the lack of building activity led to the development of shanty towns in the empty plots.

Furthermore, the municipal architects noted that, as in the case of the *ensanche*, the Nuñez Granés grid and its enormous avenues was to include dense, collective houses with a height of 25 metres. In contrast, the *extrarradio* situation was perceived from a new perspective. The neighbourhoods formed by small, self-developed houses were indicators of the popular desire for space, and despite its “spontaneity”, they showed some collective intelligence.

*La vida se va por otros caminos sin previo estudio, sin reglas ni ordenanzas escritas, obedeciendo a un instinto natural y económico sin más cortapisas que las que señalan el camino a todos los pueblos. Madrid ha tomado otras direcciones. Salpicados en el exterior se han formado núcleos de población sin preparación de conjunto, siguiendo la marcha que la topografía del terreno le ordenaba, colocándose en los puntos estratégicos que los medios de comunicación establecidos y los caminos preexistentes le señalaban, formándose a su alrededor y amparo verdaderos poblados, cuya existencia podrá mejorarse, pero hay que respetar aprovechando sus enseñanzas* (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, pp. 8–9).

According to the municipal architects, the urban growth of the *extrarradio* had some logic; it happened “*donde encuentra economía en el solar y en la edificación por no necesitar grandes desmontes ni terraplenes que dificulten la cimentación, donde existe tráfico por estar en las rutas de los pueblos próximos y existen medios de transporte*”. The text indicated how the social groups tended to create clusters as “*acción natural e impulsiva en las aglomeraciones urbanas*” in an analysis surprisingly similar to the concepts of the Chicago School that characterised the natural disposition of city communities in the beginning of the 1920s.

The municipal architects thought that the new extension plan should take this process into account and, facing the demolition and beautification of the periphery proposed by Nuñez Granés, they proposed to maintain the existing *extrarradio* and improve it step by step.

For the authors of the *ponencia*, the new plan might focus not only on hygiene and city beautification but on motivating social renovation.<sup>157</sup> Whilst in previous times the scarce urban growth would have been managed by *ensanches*, the emergence of modernity required planning for the city as a whole, “*teniendo en cuenta todos los factores y elementos que la integran*”. The text provided an overview of the urban planning systems developed in Germany and Belgium and under the 1919 French law that will be explained in the next chapter, remembering that “*una de las razones que obligó al Gobierno a emprender la construcción de*

<sup>157</sup> The text paraphrased Mr Pierre Bourdeix, Director of Works of the la Ville d’Armentieres, from an article published in the French journal *La Construction Moderne*.

*casas necesitadas por Inglaterra . . . era la determinación de evitar en lo futuro el crecimiento desordenado de arrabales*". Using the 1916 Nueva York zoning law as a model, the municipal architects advocated for going beyond simple street design and determine the future land uses as the new main tool to manage city expansion.

*La palabra "sistema" aplicada a urbanizaciones, que se refería en general a una forma de trazado . . . debe actualmente tener la significación propia de conjunto de reglas o principios para la ejecución de la ciudad, comprendiendo no sólo las expresiones del plano, sino las diferentes ordenanzas de cada grupo o Zona que modernamente forman parte tan importante del proyecto general* (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, p. 19).

Regarding planning of the *extrarradio*, the text had some inconsistencies. It claimed that urban planning might embrace the complexity of unplanned city growth, but it also considered that the method to design the city might be the same *"que para el planeamiento de un edificio determinado, o sea estudio general de su objeto y factores que le determinan*. Although this exercise would involve simplifying the factors leading to unplanned city growth, the text affirmed its aims to embrace the true complexity of the city beyond the top-down design.

*Los factores que debe apreciar un conjunto en moderno planeamiento de ciudades son, con juicio general, absolutamente todos los que intervienen en la vida del ciudadano; en la vida de relación con los demás, en la de las agrupaciones que ellos forman, y en la vida del conjunto de estas agrupaciones"* (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, p. 21).

Finally, the municipal architects selected a short list of factors to consider when making the plan. Although the text included a long list of international examples in which zoning was the new paradigm, the authors seemed to confuse this urban planning tool with others such as rent control, which was carried out in Madrid starting in 1918, and that avoiding the working-class evictions, was somehow preserving the functional areas of the city.

The text melted a defence of the "natural" areas in which the populations lived, with a defence of zoning as a way to preserve local communities. Again, a very clear coincidence with the ideas that Robert Burgess or Ezra Park would discuss around 1925, giving rise to the so-called Chicago School of urban sociology. The text mixed the defence of the "natural" areas that the populations occupied in the city with a defence of zoning as a way to preserve those communities.

*Ante todo, debemos hacer observar, que lo mismo que se ha hecho en toda la población donde se ha implementado el sistema, creemos que para la definición o determinación de grupos o zonas deben conservarse las características iniciadas por principio natural en las partes existentes* (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, p. 21).

The development of these ideas in Madrid before than in Chicago could indicate that some of these ideas circulated in the urban planning field before its entrance into the sociological field. From viewpoint of the 1922 city planners in Madrid, zoning was a way to fight the phenomenon that today we call gentrification. As the text indicated,

*Por efecto del aumento de salarios y sueldos, muchas familias han satisfecho necesidades de expansión antes atendidas; los aumentos de negocios, de servicios públicos y de capital flotante, han dado lugar al establecimiento de gran número de Bancos; en pocos años se han derribado cuatro casas en la calle de Alcalá para construir tres Bancos, otros han ocupado la situación anterior del comercio; este comercio se traslada a otro sitio forzando el factor*

*económico, y los cuartos bajos se convierten en tiendas; no siendo éstas suficientes, se instalan en entresuelos y pisos altos, suprimiendo viviendas.*

*A su vez, los servicios públicos no caben en los edificios ministeriales y se alquilan pisos enteros para instalar Direcciones, Institutos, etc., etc. También se aumentan los lugares de distracción y esparcimiento, y se construyen salas de fiestas, cines, teatros, suprimiendo comercios y viviendas. Este desplazamiento sucesivo va aumentando también sucesivamente los precios, por necesidad de subsistencia, dando a las casas de gran parte de Madrid, un valor muy superior al de su destino de vivienda (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, pp. 35–36).*

In addition to suggesting that insalubrious periphery be rehabilitated and zoning be implemented, the text proposed that new areas of cheap housing be developed, surrounded by green areas and relying on the city centre for public infrastructure. These satellite cities would benefit from the cheap prices of agricultural land, create healthy new areas quickly without dealing with the complex *extrarradio* issue, and allow for a general decrease in land prices. This strategy was again endorsed by the success of similar international experiences.

*En todas las naciones se ha presentado el mismo caso. [. . .] En Inglaterra, Canadá, los Estados Unidos y en los concursos para la extensión de París y Lille (1920), se ha seguido el mismo procedimiento. Se han prolongado las vías férreas y medios de comunicación existentes, y se han creado otras nuevas hasta los límites de extensión. En esos límites se han adquirido extensas cantidades de terreno valorizándose mutuamente los dos elementos, y facilitando la creación de nuevas barriadas apartadas, que sirven no solamente para el mejoramiento higiénico de sus habitantes, sino como barrios satélites y reguladores de la aglomeración urbana [. . .]. La solución están en esos poblados "satélites" donde no existirán los agobios torturantes, y resuelta la traslación al punto de trabajo, mediante las líneas rápidas de comunicación, la vida familiar se podrá desarrollar más fácil, higiénica y económica. De igual manera se beneficiará la clase jornalera, que por otras causas, hacinamiento, falta de higiene, tiene las mismas necesidades y puede satisfacerlas de igual manera (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, pp. 23–36).*

The municipal architects advocated for zoning the north and south-east areas of Madrid's metropolitan periphery into working-class housing. They made this decision because of the already existing growth of such spaces in Hortaleza and Puente de Vallecas, the good transport connections, the water supply, and the existence of big agricultural areas, all of which made cheap expropriation possible. As B. Fernández Águeda (2017) has noted, the "intensification" of the already existing land uses was one of the initial goals of zoning. The text ended with tentative plans for these future zones (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, pp. 63–65).

The authors of the *ponencia* thought that implementing the Proyecto del Extrarradio, which was different from the satellite city model, would facilitate speculation because of the expectation of future expropriations and the possibility of developing tall buildings, which would, in turn, justify high land prices. The project, once passed the possibility of an early expropriation of the lands, was thought to reproduce the dynamics of the *ensanche*. In addition, the rigid limits of the project and the lack of suburban planning would not prevent the existing problem—defective urban periphery—from re-emerging beyond the plan's borders. This problem was noted as already in process, having resulted from the lack of zoning and subsequent land speculation:

*Una superficie determinada por líneas fijas . . . sin usos ni servicios definidos, produce evidentemente en cuanto su población se inicia, una creación de valores ficticios que llegan a*



*detenerla y una formación de poblados situados fuera de aquellas líneas, donde ya no rigen ni preceptos higiénicos ni reglas de urbanización alguna [ . . . ]. La edificación, sin utilizar muchos sitios del Ensanche y del Extrarradio, se ha salido fuera del término, siguiendo los medios favorables, constituyendo barriadas dentro de otros términos que son extensiones de Madrid, y existen, exclusivamente, por la influencia de la capital y de ella viven (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923, pp. 9–28).*

The document finished with proposing to abandon the Proyecto del Extrarradio and develop a new, modern Plan General de Extensión de Madrid. In the subsequent months, the technicians of the Madrid City Council split into two conflicting groups: the architects advocated for the development of a new plan and the engineers rejected losing all the work already done and pressed for continuing with the Nuñez Granés plan. This controversy culminated on 22 December 1922 during a highly influential public debate between Pedro Nuñez Granés and Pablo Aranda, in which both presented their points of view about the *extrarradio* planning.

The first speaker, Granés, expressed the misunderstandings about the situation, reviewing the main phases of the urbanisation of the *extrarradio*. In 1916, the government had approved the project by Real Decreto, and in 1919, the city council technicians supported the idea and the city council approved a project of Ordenanzas Municipales for the area. However, such by-laws “*se aprobaron, mas no se pusieron en vigor, lo que hace que en el Extrarradio siga la anarquía en cuanto a la construcción hace referencia*” (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 7). Additionally, he challenged the critics of the *polígonos*, arguing that this system was only applying the laws of the private streets existing in the 1892 *ordenanzas*. He claimed that it had not been completed because the Ordenanzas of the Extrarradio had not come into effect. Nuñez Granés considered the low-rise urbanisation inspired by the garden city to be compatible with his plan, and he demanded urgent achievement for the work already done, opened to a flexible system of urbanisation inside the *polígonos*.

Opposed to Nuñez Granés was Pablo Aranda, an architect. He defended the theory of the municipal architects, expressing that the Proyecto del Extrarradio was not a project but an outdated urbanisation plan, which he considered a drawing of streets. According to him, the project, which indicated only the main avenues, had been a fiasco. The system obligated the landowners to perform tasks with high economic and technical difficulties and the public administration to obtain funds it did not have to manage land commercialisation. The big avenues, thought to be magnificent, and their tall collective houses of 25 metres did not fit the 1920s reality of the area.

*La mayoría de los que viven en el Extrarradio son familias molestas, muchas de ellas se han hecho las casas por sus propias manos ; son obreros, son gentes que tratan de independizarse del proletariado, que van a buscar la salud de sus hijos y la economía y a establecer un pequeño trabajo o industria, salvo algunas fincas de bastante importancia, pero que no hay que considerar porque constituyen una excepción, y los ricos que tienen facilidad de buscar a cualquier precio las comodidades que necesitan ; pero si el Extrarradio es para la gente modesta y humilde ¿cómo ni para qué necesita calles tan espléndidas [ . . . ]? (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 25).*

Different from the model of big avenues surrounded by a park-belt, Aranda proposed using fast roads to connect the rising towns in the suburbs with the inner city and to adapt the streets and road to shape to Madrid’s hilly topography, whereas Nuñez Granés’s avenues could only be made with embankments and land levelling. In the *extrarradio* plan, various

streets would have to be built as railways, using lateral trenches to correct the terrain hills, which would generate an enormous expense to the public administration and make it very hard to privately develop the plots. In addition, the plots would need to be built over filled areas or on artificial slopes, also creating massive costs due to their deep foundations. This problem was well known because it had already happened in the Ensanche Sur where were situated the previously described areas of Las Injurias and the *chozas* of La Alhóndiga.

Additionally, the *extrarradio* development increased the number of houses in the area from 2,000 in 1909 to approximately 10,000 in 1922. This fact, would lead to significant expropriation costs if the plan continued proposing that the new avenues were plotted by destroying the working-class areas. As has been already described, the clauses of the *extrarradio* building permits that allowed freely expropriating the houses without economical compensation were commonly considered illegal.

*¿Dónde habrá una calle de las proyectadas en donde no se tropiece con un centenar de esas casas que hay que expropiar y pagar? [. . .] Lo que Madrid necesita son viviendas [. . .]. No existen éstas en número suficiente para las necesidades del vecindario ; hacen falta viviendas modestas, sencillas, aunque con todas las condiciones apetecibles de salubridad para las clases medias y trabajadoras que no pueden pagar alquileres superiores a sus modestos medios de vida. Yo creo que este es el problema de Madrid y de todo el mundo* (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 27).

Aranda thought that urbanisation in the past was about street design, in which the private sector developed the city, often in a defective way. In contrast, by the 1920s, urban planning could produce, as already expressed in the *ponencia* by the municipal architects, “*un orden dispositivo, que es una afirmación del orden social*”. The main purpose of this new order was the organisation of housing production: “*La urbanización tiene que hacerse prácticamente para facilitar el aumento de edificaciones, y no puede limitarse a un trazado para que tenga únicamente sobre el papel un aspecto más o menos espléndido*” (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 28).

The post-war context in which similar housing problems emerged throughout Europe demanded new solutions. The municipal architects of Madrid considered the garden city to be the best possible solution. As Aranda declared, the objective of a new plan was that the 3,000 or more families that were living in a “*manera infecta . . . en plazo breve puedan disfrutar de una casita modesta con un trozo de jardín rodeada de sol y con la higiene y salubridad necesarias*”, based on the British planning frameworks, leading to the development of “*manzanas rodeadas de jardines con un corral para criar animales domésticos y una parte destinada a huerta, con cuyos productos se economiza en el gasto diario de alimentación*” (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 30). This new urban planning was considered to be a tool to develop cheap and healthy social housing areas, improving the already existing housing stock and the way of life of the Madrid *extrarradio*. Achieving a healthy, low-density housing pattern would be possible through the use of “*reservas de espacios libres*”, obligating open spaces to be maintained between the houses. Furthermore, using the “*ley de zonas*” could impede “*perturbations*” in the development of the housing areas.

*Si proponemos un sitio lejano donde se puede adquirir un terreno barato y no tenemos el mandato de la zona y la seguridad de que allí no se va a poner una fábrica que dé un valor mayor del que corresponde a la ciudad como vivienda, perturbando el desarrollo de ésta, no adelantaremos nada [. . .]. Dejemos que las zonas industriales se establezcan y desarrollen en*

*los sitios convenientes donde el acceso al ferrocarril sea fácil . . . pues no hay razón para que estén diseminadas y tengan que atravesar todo Madrid, cuando podrían circunscribirse a una zona donde con mayor economía pudiera resolverse todo el problema maquinista o industrial de la ciudad (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 31).*

Aranda claimed to use the ideas the new town planning, discussed in London in 1911, or in Belgium in 1920 embracing the ideas of “land zoning” and “garden-city”, and competitions as the carried out in 1919 in Paris that proposed to develop “satellite-cities” in the periphery. To do something similar in Madrid, he proposed to approve a Plan General that would be created over a short period but implemented step by step. The objective would be, as the municipal architects had already proposed, the quick development of satellite cities in cheap peripheral lands, connecting them through mass transport.

*Con nuestra propuesta se comienza a operar sobre terrenos de labor, . . . de un coste de nueve décimas de céntimo por pie cuadrado, calculando a 400 o 500 pesetas la fanega de tierra, como precio medio. La obra de instalación de calles se reduce al mínimo, por adaptar la urbanización al terreno, y no existe expropiación de construcciones. [. . .] No hay que hacer más que el estudio del trazado de vías y parcelación. De modo, que se pueden poner en práctica en un plazo breve de meses, los elementos técnicos para construir tres barriadas que contengan cada una, unas mil casas, con capacidad suficiente para albergar hasta unos 15.000 habitantes (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, p. 34).*

Compared to the development of satellite-cities, the complexity of the Proyecto del Extrarradio had enormous planning and administrative problems, making it too difficult to be implemented and delaying any possibility to solve the housing problem.

*En el proyecto antiguo del Extrarradio, falta hacer un estudio de los polígonos y de las calles secundarias, falta la parcelación, las rasantes y los desagües, y hay que estudiar esas parcelas, porque algunas tienen 33.000 metros cuadrados, otras 40.000, y eso requiere un trabajo ímprobo . . . porque dada su estructura, precisa un estudio completo de la valorización de las edificaciones que hay que expropiar y hacer las tasaciones correspondientes. Se necesita para los dos casos una legislación adecuada (Nuñez Granés & Aranda, 1923, pp. 33–34).*

Pablo Aranda exposed the potential for the development of satellite cities with cheap housing areas to regulate the housing prices in the whole city. He also considered that zonification could control the speculation in the peripheral agricultural zones and avoid their transformation into substandard neighbourhoods.

Although Nuñez Granés’s project and its failed municipalisation of the periphery were still under discussion, some months later, on 13 September 1923, a political coup established the Primo de Rivera dictatorship suddenly changed the situation. On 19 November 1923, the city council presented a motion to provide a solution for the *extrarradio* urbanisation. Describing the failure of the 1916 and 1918 bills, the text declared that the landowners of the *extrarradio* had not been able to make plans for the *polígonos*, resulting in a consequence that,

*Los males que trataban de cortarse con el Real decreto de 1916, han adquirido proporciones aterradoras, pues hoy existen en el Extrarradio más de 5000 edificios, albergando una población que excede de 160.000 almas, la que vive en condiciones de inferioridad muy marcadas, desde diversos punto de vista y especialmente desde el sanitario (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1924, p. 3).*

The reason, other than the “anarchic” street patterns, was the absence of infrastructure resulting from an absence of economic investment. As explained earlier, the inhabitants of the *ensanche*, an area that regrouped an important part of the Madrid bourgeoisie, rejected sharing their budget with the *extrarradio*, whose urbanisation projects were financed only by the budgets of the Interior.

*Cuántas obras de urbanización ha sido absolutamente imprescindible al Municipio ejecutar en el Extrarradio, se han llevado a cabo con cargo al presupuesto del Interior, por cuyo motivo la urbanización hasta ahora realizada, sólo afecta a una parte relativamente reducida de dicha zona y es en realidad rudimentaria, no mereciendo siquiera tal calificación la llevada a cabo por algunos particulares, propietarios de fincas o terrenos en el Extrarradio* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1924, p. 3).

To solve the problem, the municipality decided to accept an old claim from the Federación de Asociaciones de Propietarios; Madrid would finally assimilate the *extrarradio* to the *ensanche*, abandoning the idea of municipalisation which the left continued demanding to solve the housing crisis (Unión General de Trabajadores, 1924). The proposition finally tackled the absence of funds to improve the *extrarradio* streets. The area would become part of the *ensanche* and share its budget with some of the most privileged neighbourhoods of the city, and the owners of the *extrarradio* would be excluded from paying taxes for their plots and buildings until they were equipped with public infrastructure.<sup>158</sup> Although Madrid was finally compelled to improve its working-class neighbourhoods, after this moment the problem of the *extrarradio* would become the problem of substandard housing in the municipalities surrounding Madrid.

*No puede tampoco descuidarse el estudio del plan general de extensión de Madrid, ya que el desenvolvimiento progresivo de la capital de la nación y la necesidad de edificar sobre el terreno de poco coste, va empujando la construcción más allá del Extrarradio, formándose núcleos bastante densos que están desarrollándose con los mismos defectos que la citada zona de Extrarradio* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1924, p. 3).

The Estatuto Municipal, a law published in 1924, set the limits of the *ensanches* at the municipal borders, solidifying the extension of the *extrarradio* arrangement towards the suburbs. On the other side its main urban planning tool, the Reglamento de Obras, Servicios y Bienes Municipales, made urban planning development compulsory in any urban area of more than 10,000 inhabitants or with a big population increase, thereby obligating most municipalities surrounding Madrid to follow the plan. In addition, it required a minimal plot size of 200 metres squared to build a house in the municipalities surrounding any city (art. 7) in a clear attempt to avoid the reproduction of substandard urbanisation beyond the city borders.

The Real Decreto 9 de Agosto de 1923, “Condiciones higiénicas de las viviendas y prescripciones técnicosanitarias para *ensanche* y reforma interior de las poblaciones”, compelled the country to adopt various minimum housing standards, requiring them to be included in the *ordenanzas* of the municipalities developing urban plans as a consequence of the already cited Reglamento de Obras y Servicios. This text also demanded the creation of a

<sup>158</sup> The text considered that to pay taxes, the areas should have at least two of the municipal services that characterise urbanisation: street levelling, pavement, sewer systems, water, and lighting.

Registro Sanitario de Viviendas, qualifying houses by three categories: buildings in a good state, buildings that could be improved, and unhealthy buildings to be demolished.

The collection of these norms made substandard housing construction illegal regardless their location.

After this Real Decreto, a new master plan, the Plan General de Extensión de Madrid, started to be developed to incorporate the new regulations and plan the suburban urban growth. In 1926, a “Memoria del Plan General de Extensión” was published as a first step for the making of a general plan, in which it was zoned the north of the city. In that part of the periphery, housing areas “*desordenadas . . . faltas de imprescindibles servicios municipales y defectuosas en general*” could be conserved and improved when possible to produce a slow transformation of the space. The massive demolitions planned during previous times had been substituted with the demand of minimum urban and housing standards, and the consequent slow substitution of the unhealthy areas with new “normal” ones. The conclusions of the 1926 plan asked for, as Nuñez Granés had since 1910, the development of a Ley General de la Urbanización to facilitate the annexation of the surrounding municipalities. However, this plan was never effectively applied.

Although the new procedures seemed to be on the path to ending up with the unhealthy, poor housing, a celebrated book, awarded by the city council of Madrid in 1926, still considered the destruction of the defective periphery a solution, as the “*tache d’huile*” city growth pattern was a hygienic threat to be corrected through the rising urban planning.

*Una de dos, o se planea la urbanización y ensanche derribando las construcciones pobres y mal emplazadas, que son casi todas, cosa costosísima por la enorme cantidad de riqueza que habría que destruir, aparte de que al quedar sin vivienda miles de personas se plantearía otro problema cardinal de alojamientos que agravaría en términos casi insolubles la actual crisis de la habitación, o bien se respeta en conjunto lo construido aplicando un criterio de máxima benevolencia, en cuyo caso la obra sería menos costosa, pero su eficacia sanitaria muy discutible, y desde luego imperfecta. Además, el procedimiento recomendable no es agrupar y crecer núcleos dispersos, favoreciendo la aparición de ciudades monstruosas; la solución está en segregar y espaciar. [ . . ]*

*Las que, apreciadas sus deplorables condiciones sanitarias, se las considere inhabitables, deberá decretarse su derribo aplicando la ley de expropiación forzosa [ . . ]. Todo ello mediante la aplicación de un plan previamente madurado y desarrollado por etapas sucesivas, pues no debe olvidarse que un desalojamiento fulminante, dado el crecido número de casas sin condiciones higiénicas, daría lugar a un conflicto por falta de nuevas viviendas difícil de conjurar (Bravo Ramirez & Peralta, 1926).*

The development of the far periphery through satellite cities and the avoidance of informal urban growth were reconsidered in later projects. In 1929, a big international competition, won by the Hispano-German team of architects Secundino Zuazo and Herman Jansen, was intended to inspire a master plan to be completed in 1931 that had to intervene in the rising suburbs beyond the city limits and that remained to a large extent unapplied (Fernández Águeda, 2016). New Ordenanzas Municipales were elaborated in 1935 without coming into effect. Although it remains only a hypothesis, it is possible that providing infrastructures to the deprived suburban neighbourhoods was not yet an objective of the political powers of Madrid, who silently blocked their development, as seemed to happen with the Nuñez Granés project. This group of initiatives was finally planned to be put into action through the Besteiro plan

during the Spanish Civil War (Sambricio, 2003a), but it was never implemented because of the war.

Although these plans did not immediately influence urban growth, some of their elements were inherited from the first plan implemented in Madrid during the Francoist dictatorship, the Bidagor plan approved in 1946. Created with the objective to develop satellite cities in Madrid, the progressive development of the private transportation, mainly buses, had changed the accessibility to the periphery. New illegal areas started to rise in empty spaces, precisely those zoned by the plan as agricultural, fuelling the development of informal neighbourhoods that frequently grew in “tache d’huile” from pre-war informal settlements. Although this history will be left to future researches, in the next pages it will be shown how these spaces, which would eventually become large informal areas, arose in the context of lack of control of the pre-war urban regulations.

### The 1920s extrarradio and the rise of suburbio marginal

During the failed implementation of the Madrid peripheral planning, populations continued to arrive to Madrid. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Spanish industrialisation grew rapidly (Carreras, 1990), at the same time that Madrid consolidated its position as a financial and industrial centre. In this context, the working class emerged in the city as a sociological and political subject (Candela Soto, 1997; García Delgado, 1989; Otero Carvajal & Bahamonde Magro, 1989; Vicente, 2015), while rural-urban immigration multiplied. The Madrid population increased from 584,117 inhabitants in 1910 to 794,924 in 1927, and the surrounding municipalities grew from 68,954 in 1910 to 151,011 in 1925. The reasons, parallel across the whole continent, seemed to be the “*éxodo del campesino a la ciudad, la falta de trabajo en los campos y la mayor retribución de éste en la capital, la crisis económica y otros fenómenos sociales consecuencia de la post-guerra*” (León Peralta, 1930).

By 1919, the rental prices in the city were rising outrageously<sup>159</sup> and, in 1920, the number of substandard streets in the *extrarradio* exceeded the number in the *ensanche*. Various causes seemed to converge. Professional developers in the “normal” city mainly produced expensive houses for the middle and high classes, neglecting the production of cheap housing for the popular classes. In addition, the urban renewal operations of the city centre, Gran Vía, expelled the humble populations, and the Spanish social housing law, Ley de Casas Baratas, began in 1911 and mainly served to host the middle classes (Castrillo Romón, 2003). In the context in which the legal extension of the city, the *ensanche*, was still dedicated to land speculation, the self-development of insalubrious houses in the unurbanised peripheries remained the only “cheap” possibility, as stated the journal *La Construcción Moderna*:

*Hay acaparadores de solares, y bastaría leer una estadística de venta de terrenos en los últimos años para convencerse de ello. [ . . . ] En Madrid existen seis o siete familias de grandes fortunas que poseen en casi su totalidad los terrenos urbanizados de la zona del ensanche, y estos grandes propietarios, que no sienten el agobio del dinero, dejan pasar los años y hacen los oídos de mercader a cuantas proposiciones de venta se les formulan, seguros de que sin ningún esfuerzo, tan sólo con un poco de calma, han de realizar fabulosas ganancias. [ . . . ] Por eso se edifica más en el Extrarradio [ . . . ]*

<sup>159</sup> *Heraldo de Madrid*, Monday, 13 October 1919.

*Todo cuanto se edifica en Madrid es del tipo de 35 duros, sin que se contruya una sola casa de 20. Y como en las obras de derribo de la Gran Vía desaparecieron 199 fincas, en cada una de las cuales vivían quince familias, y estos inmuebles eran de los tipos de 10, 15 y 20 duros, ha surgido el irresoluble problema de la vivienda, que sólo se resuelve en Madrid con grave riesgo de la salud pública.*<sup>160</sup>

At the same time, the building sector experienced its biggest crisis since 1922. During the previous decade, building activity had decreased as a result of WWI; building materials became hard to import and the construction costs increased. The situation in Spain, as well as in other European countries, was tackled by a rent control law, the Bugallal Decree, in 1920. This tool, initially conceived for a length of one and a half years, was subsequently renewed, as the deregulation of the sector was supposed to provoke an enormous wave of evictions. If the regulation allowed reducing the costs of living whilst the incomes of the working class improved (Artola Blanco, 2012), historical sources mention that it disincentivated cheap housing construction even more, provoking an immense housing shortage (Peralta, 1926), a trend that seemed to remain throughout the entire decade.

*El capital invertido en la edificación de vivienda barata, a más de ser inversión azarosa en estos tiempos, no produce un interés remunerador. Por eso hoy no se construyen más que casas caras y de altos alquileres, cuya existencia para nada influye la crisis de la habitación* (León Peralta, 1930, pp. 35–36).

In that context, the building permits inside the city limits of Madrid decreased from around 300 per year before the 1920s to 120 in 1922, and, according to the press, the professional building activity concentrated on villas designed in the years before the crisis for high-class populations.<sup>161</sup> Half of the new building permits corresponded to “*modestísimas fincas del Extrarradio*”, in which the low prices were achieved through the low land price, at the cost of poor or non-existent infrastructures, and frequently through the housing self-construction using very cheap building materials. As a consequence of the crisis, the development of poor houses on unequipped lands increased their spread through the periphery. A journalist from *La Construcción Moderna* stated the following in 1922:

*El hacinamiento aumenta, las aglomeraciones de chozas y cuevas van envolviendo las grandes urbes. [. . .] Lo poco que se construye se escoge generalmente el llamado Extrarradio, donde se carece de servicios municipales y hasta de alineaciones y rasantes, condiciones en las cuales no puede haber viviendas higiénicas; espanta darse una vuelta por los alrededores de Madrid y observar de cerca el cuadro repugnante que ofrece.*<sup>162</sup>

The absence of public urbanisation in the periphery of Madrid led to the existence of more than 10,000 estates in the *extrarradio* in 1922 that were in “deplorables condiciones”<sup>163</sup>, increasing the extent of substandard neighbourhoods of the previous decades.

*Entre 14 barrios de los 100 en que se divide Madrid absorben el 70 por cien de los edificios ocupados por una a diez personas en toda la Corte. Son precisamente esos barrios los que se caracterizan, o bien por edificaciones pequeñas, distribuidas anárquicamente, o bien, y esto es peor, por aglomeraciones de casuchas [. . .]. Así ocurre en el barrio de la Plaza de Toros, con las*

<sup>160</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, 30 November 1920.

<sup>161</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, 15 January 1923. La construcción en Madrid durante el año 1922.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

*casas de los tejares y de la Elipa; así en el barrio del Gasómetro, con las chozas de la Alhóndiga, así en el barrio de Bellas Vistas, con sus covachas de traperos; así en el barrio de San Isidro, con las zahurdas alrededor de los cementerios del barrio de las Cambronerías; así en el de Gutenberg, con los tejares de Molina y las casas del camino de Vicálvaro; así en los del Marqués de Comillas y Santa María de la Cabeza (León Peralta, 1930, p. 31).*

By 1924, the *extrarradio* hosted more than 160,000 people,<sup>164</sup> most without public infrastructures, which had not only become the social norm in Madrid but a legal requirement. At that time, although the cholera, smallpox, and influenza epidemics had already passed, transmissible diseases such as tuberculosis and typhus were still raving the periphery, populated mostly by the working classes, living in substandard houses and shacks. As A. Peralta noted in a book edited and awarded by the Madrid City Council in 1926, areas of the *extrarradio*, such as Plaza de Toros, Moncloa, and Bellas vistas had mortality rates three to four times higher than those of wealthy city-centre areas, resulting from the informal housing developed in those spaces (Peralta, 1926).

*Parecerían enormes diferencias entre los barrios que se destacan por su salubridad y aquellos otros en que la mortalidad acusa cifras tan elevadas . . . pero . . . conociendo cuales son los barrios influidos por la existencia de chozas, tejares, secaderos de pieles, acequias, etc, etc, ¿extrañaría a nadie la diferencia que se acusa? (1926, p. 43).*

Indeed, although the pathological perspectives towards the urban poor based on racial degenerationist perspectives had started to be rejected by the intellectual milieu, the imagined capacity of the urban space to induce all kinds of social problems remained in the public sphere. A. Peralta, who had identified informal housing in the periphery as the major sanitary problem of Madrid, explained the pathological influence of the poor housing conditions in childhood: “*la casa insuficiente y mísera . . . es la incubación de generaciones enfermizas y depauperadas*” (Ibid 1926, p. 43) and assumed that it incited alcoholism among the parents, inducing “*enfermedades y degeneración de los seres engendrados bajo ese estado anormal*” (Ibid 1926, p. 43). Fifty years later, this supposed degeneration induced by housing was still associated with the Lambrosian perspectives of criminal behaviour as a consequence of racial degeneration. The families living in unhealthy houses were intended to fall into a cult of crime and unrest, and the pathological influence of overcrowding provoked within the families that “*los apetitos carnales se despiertan, la moral se relaja, el pudor se embota y los pecados más horribles se consuman. Claro es que la joven que desde niña se educó en ese ambiente, ni le asusta ni le ofende la prostitución*” (Ibid 1926, p. 43).

Finally, the influence of housing on the working classes also had political consequences.

*La amargura y malestar perenne del que vive muriendo va elaborando un estado crónico de rebeldía contra todo lo instituido . . . y convertido en elemento activo de descontento social, es fecunda semilla pronta a germinar en la asonada, en el motín o en la revuelta social (Ibid 1926, p. 43).*

This situation, as in the first years of the century, was a threat to the race, morals, and fate of country and it presented sanitary risks to the privileged spaces of the city. Another awarded book by the same author, *El problema intersanitario de Madrid y sus pueblos limítrofes*, discussed the necessity to regenerate “*la raza que se depaupera en viviendas*” through urban planning, adopting the garden city model. Within this context, the informal periphery of the

<sup>164</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, 30 January 1924. La urbanización del extrarradio de Madrid.



city, which “provoked” decay among the inhabitants, remained problematic for the same sanitary reasons as decades before.

*En los barrios pobres se incuban viveros de microbios, que después reparten los pobres por las calles lujosas [. . .]. La cintura de la villa coronada es un nido de miseria moral y de miseria física. Más que barrios de una capital, parecen aduares provisionales de tribus errantes misérrimas (León Peralta, 1930, p. 43).*

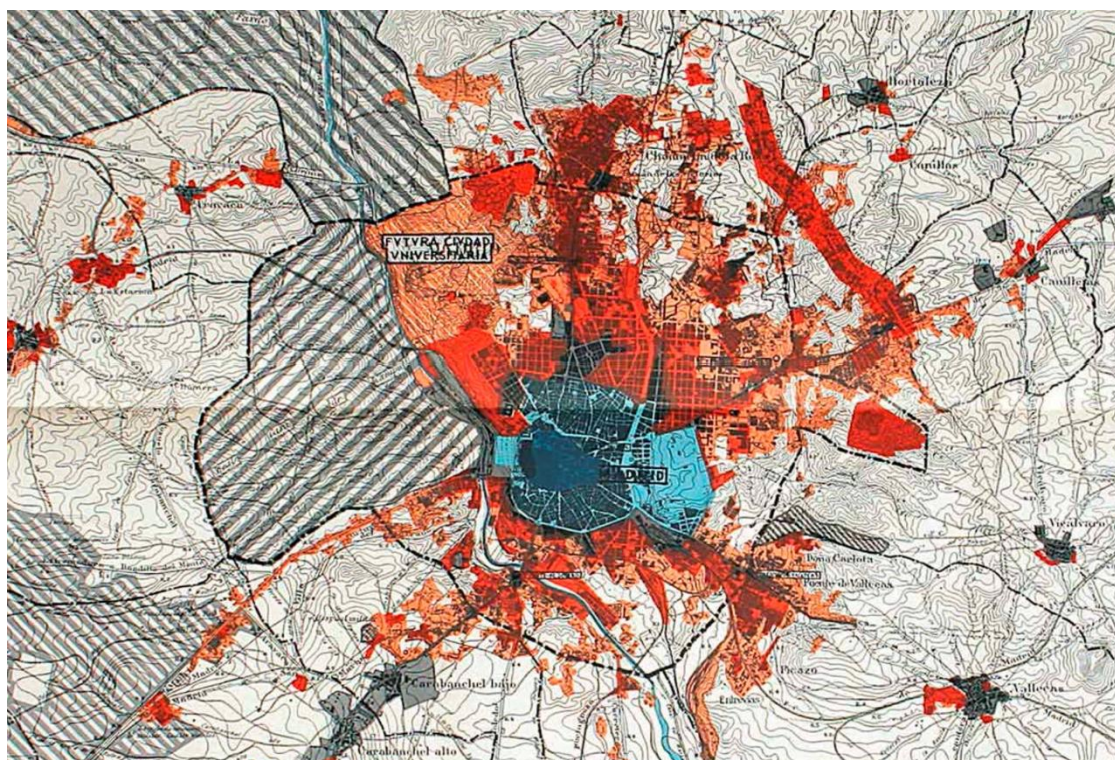


Illustration 8. City evolution. In orange, the suburban growth between 1910 and 1925.

Source: Información sobre la Ciudad, Memoria de Madrid.

However, despite these concerns, the housing crisis worsened and the private development of agricultural areas, transforming cheap rural lands into unequipped urban plots for building was facilitated by articles 815–827 of the Ordenanzas Municipales (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1919). Although in the Nuñez Granés project, officially approved but not implemented, such developments were supposed to be transferred to the municipality and be equipped with public services, this did not seem to happen on a large scale. Although publicly investing in such areas became legal after a modification in the *ordenanzas* of Madrid was carried out in 1907, there were little funds to improve them, so the new *extrarradio* neighbourhoods seemed to show higher levels of precarity in the late 1920s than in the 1910s. By 1929, contemporary historiography counted 55,000 unhealthy houses in Madrid *extrarradio* (Sambricio, 2003b). Although, as denounced in 1920 by Julian Besteiro (1920), the only institutional research about the poor housing conditions at the time was Dr Chicote’s inquiry carried out in 1914, investigations by the press and specifically the fieldwork carried out by the journalist Luis Blanco in the late 1920s (Sierra, 2018) revealed the situation on the periphery. His articles described the enormous quantity of *extrarradio* and *suburbio* neighbourhoods resulting from dividing land into plots without infrastructure. By 1929, the work *Información*

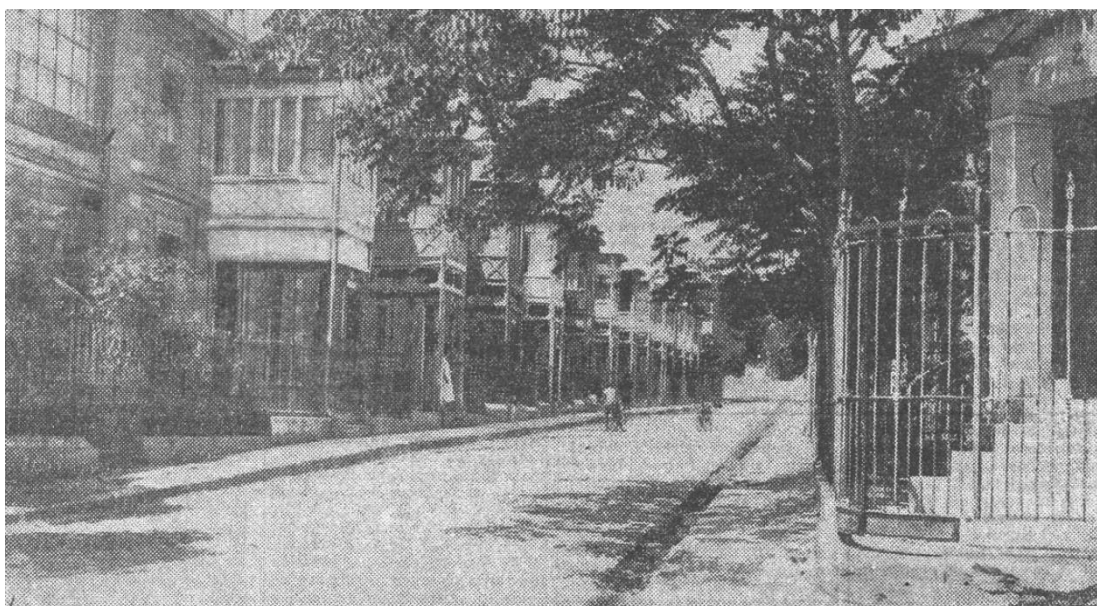
sobre la Ciudad (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1929), elaborated by the city council to guide the urban planning competition of the same year, described the *extrarradio* as an area where,

*Los acuerdos de vecinos constituían bases únicas de alienaciones y rasantes and where los servicios urbanos en general eran instalados por los mismos propietarios del núcleo en formación [ . . . ]. Las vías son angostas, con trazados incomprensibles, y sin los indispensables servicios de pavimentación, desagües ni alumbrado* (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1929, p. 28).

In the absence of public spatial planning, the neighbourhoods' infrastructure depended on the capacity of the inhabitants to invest or self-build the water supply, sanitation, electricity, and pavements. This absence of redistribution provoked different levels of urbanisation. Although rare, some areas upgraded their infrastructure to a "normal" level, as for instance in Madrid Moderno, a middle-class single-family housing area, known as *barriada de hotelitos*, in north-west Madrid.

The neighbourhood was developed, initially built as a private area with "*alcantarillas bien construidas, tomas de agua para su higiene, jardines para su recreo, plazoletas para su embellecimiento, etcétera*", according to an article from the progressive journal *La Voz* "*sin pedir urbanismo municipal, sin intervención de los servicios públicos*".<sup>165</sup> Although some services remained insufficient from the beginning, such as the street pavement, some others were solved by the private sector, such as the water supply.

*Construidos los primeros hoteles de esta barriada por un señor particular, carecían de agua, y como en estas condiciones no era muy atractiva la oferta en venta, discurrió abrir las calles por su cuenta y riesgo ; instaló cañerías hasta el Canalillo, que pasa por la parte alta de la ciudad, y, seguramente, con anuencia del Canal tomó el agua para dotar los hoteles. Los dueños de terrenos que esto vieron lo imitaron; enchufaron sus cañerías al hacer las construcciones y se proveyeron a su placer por donde y como quisieron. [ . . . ] Los vecinos pagan, y no al ayuntamiento, sino a un señor particular, un impuesto de cañerías y otro de canalones –y no hay unas ni otros- y dependen de ellos y no de las autoridades competentes para los permisos de agua.*



<sup>165</sup> *La Voz*, 1 June 1927.

Photo 21. Madrid Moderno. Source: *La Voz*, 1 June 1927.

However, contemporary observers considered that from the various thousands of houses of the *extrarradio* in the 1920s, only a few dozen were in an appropriate hygienic state (León Peralta, 1930, p. 34).

Although the previous example corresponded to a middle-class neighbourhood, most of the areas seemed to be developed by the poorest populations remaining in very precarious situations, as in the case of Barrio de Bilbao in the east of Madrid. The area, whose name came from being developed by the Compañía Bilbaína, transformed rural lands that cost 200 “pesetas la fanega” for private urban plots without equipment commercialised by 12,000 pesetas the same surface, meaning a profit of 6000%. The streets were built with poor materials and had no proper pavements or public lightning. Water from Madrid was not supplied, although afterwards water and electricity were bought to the nearby area of Ciudad Lineal.<sup>166</sup>

Whilst most of the historical documents considered the 1920s *extrarradio* neighbourhoods to be predominantly composed of self-built houses erected on rent-to-buy lands, some accounts also showed examples of tenancies in which not only the urbanisation but the building construction had been driven by big landowners. This was the case of Alejandro Sanchez Street, which was shaped by “*largos patios, o mas bien callejones, compuestos cada uno de ellos de unas veinte viviendas de planta baja [ . . . ]. Casi todos estos callejones pertenecen a un mismo propietario, y el alquiler . . . oscila entre tres y seis duros mensuales*”.<sup>167</sup>



Photo 22. A typical 1920s *extrarradio* neighbourhood, Santa María, Carabanchel Bajo.  
Source: *La Voz*, 23 February 1929.

<sup>166</sup> *La Voz*, 7 December 1929. Aduares vivos junto a la mansion de los muertos.

<sup>167</sup> *La Voz*, 20 January 1927. Los que viven buscando estaño en el Barrio de las Latas.

Although most of the accounts showed areas, in spite of their poorness, as developed with solid materials, a part of the *extrarradio* neighbourhoods showed extremely high levels of precarity, close to the already described *chozas* phenomenon. An example of such an area was the Barrio de las Latas. According to a research of the journalist Luis Blanco for the newspaper *La Voz*, the area, located just past the municipal boundaries of Carabanchel, received its name for the “*grandes montones de botes, cacharros y envases de dicha materia que se hallan depositados entre vertederos y tugurios*”. The press attested that “*de aquellos enormes montones de latas y vasijas de deshecho sale uno de los medios de vida que (the inhabitants) tienen para su sostenimiento, pues sometidas al fuego, extraen de ellas el estaño, que luego venden a bajo precio*”.<sup>168</sup>

As the article stated, the existence of many cans in the neighbourhood was from the profession of the inhabitants, who lived by collecting urban waste, especially cans. This practice, which was apparently frequent, could explain not only the origins of that term in Spain (Barrio de las Latas) but other terms that would refer to similar kinds of very poor neighbourhoods, such as the *bairros de lata* in Portugal or the *bidonvilles* in France.

*No es éste el único barrio del mismo nombre y trazas que existe ; otros por el estilo hemos visto también en nuestras andanzas por los alrededores de Madrid . . . otro campamento de traperos denominado también barrio de las Latas, situado en las proximidades de la Carolina, , en la carretera de Andalucía. [. . .] Todos ellos ofrecen el mismo aspecto de suciedad y abandono y repugnante miseria.”*<sup>169</sup>

The area, like many other *extrarradio* neighbourhoods, included houses made of very poor and recycled materials such as pieces of rubble and adobe, was surrounded by landfills, and lacked of any kind of public infrastructure.



Photo 23. La Carolina.  
Source: *La Voz*, 21 July 1927.

The photographs of that areas and stories from the press, compared at times the situation in the *extrarradio* with the *chozas* phenomena:

*Por lo que respecta a la (calle) de Barrafón, [. . .] viene a parar a una hondanada próxima a unos vertederos y taponada por un grupo de covachas que nada tienen que envidiar a las de Magallanes y a las no menos célebres de Méndez Alvaro y de la Alhóndiga.”*<sup>170</sup>

Despite of the difference of materials used, most of these areas had common problems because of their irregular development. The *extrarradio* periphery lacked not only correct

<sup>168</sup> *La Voz*, 20 October 1927. Los que viven buscando estaño en el Barrio de las Latas.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid* 20 October 1927.

<sup>170</sup> *La Voz*, 17 March 1928.

urbanisation but an absence of public services, such as garbage collection, police, and schools. To face those problems, local popular associations emerged, asking for their rights and attempting to influence the public powers action.

*Por lo que hace a la parte que se extiende desde el puente de Segovia hasta los Carabancheles, los vecinos de dichas barriadas, conscientes de sus derechos, se han constituido en sociedades por barrios, constituyendo la Federación de Propietarios y Vecinos del paseo de Extremadura y limítrofes.*<sup>171</sup>

However, such Asociaciones de Propietarios, which fought for their neighbourhoods' improvement, apparently also contributed to the denunciation and demolition of the poorest areas close to their properties because of sanitary reasons, as previously seen in the case of the *chozas* areas.

*La Sociedad de Vecinos incoó en tiempo en que presidía el Ayuntamiento el señor conde de Vallengano –un expediente, que fue informado por la Junta de Sanidad y por el arquitecto municipal de la Sección, y ya entonces se propuso la demolición, que, a pesar del tiempo transcurrido y de las reiteradas peticiones hechas en este sentido a las autoridades municipales por los moradores de la barriada, no ha tenido lugar. En la actualidad se está tramitando otro nuevo expediente a petición de la Sociedad de Vecinos, y según nuestras noticias se halla a informe de la Junta de Sanidad, caso extraño si se tiene en cuenta que ésta ya había informado anteriormente.*<sup>172</sup>

These associations, which had already appeared as important factors during the discussions and blockage of the periphery municipalisation, were not composed only by small owners. An example seemed to be the Barriada de San Antonio, an area of “anarchic” growth which, in addition to lacking street connections and pavement, had problems with the water supply. In that area, this service was owned by “un particular, de donde resulta que los demás propietarios, si quieren disfrutar de ello, tienen que pagar la acometida en las condiciones que se les exige, que de ordinario son bien excesivas.” Although the press article describing the neighbourhoods did not give many details, it suggested that some big owners would exercise their dominance on the associations, bringing them to exploit the need for infrastructure.

*En todos estos sitios existen sociedades de Propietarios y vecinos encargados de velar por la prosperidad y mejora de la colonia; pero todos ellos se ven obligados a depender del mayor terrateniente, que es el que, en definitiva, impuso su voluntad, creando una especie de feudo, y por eso mismo sería conveniente que el Municipio extendiera su acción tutelar a las afueras de Madrid que pertenecen a la capital.*<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *La Voz*, 9 March 1928.

<sup>172</sup> *La Voz*, 17 March 1928.

<sup>173</sup> *La Voz*, 14 January 1928.



Photo 24. Barrio del Ciego, Ventas.  
Source: *La Voz*, 6 January 1928.

In the 1926, in the “Memoria del Plan General de Extensión”, the municipal technicians made an urbanistic diagnosis of the northern *extrarradio* and its main neighbourhoods (Madrid Moderno, La Guindalera, La Prosperidad, and Cuatro Caminos) in which they described that the streets had “entre 6,50 y 8 metros, entre las que pueden señalarse como excepción alguna de 10 o 12 metros” (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1926, p. 50). That meant that most of them had been developed illegally because the 1892 *ordenanzas* established a 10-metre minimum width for the streets.

The text indicated that the solution could not be that which was proposed by Nuñez Granés, the demolition of the *extrarradio*, but “la conservación de los grupos que se consideren aceptables, con carácter transitorio, para su transformación lenta” (Ibid 1926, p. 74), mainly for economic reasons. The city council did not have the funds to expropriate the whole area, and there would be a large evicted population. To address this issue, transformations and investments would be facilitated to improve the hygienic situation of the houses whilst the public powers supplied the areas with public services.

However, the same text reported an issue that, as we have seen, had been imagined as a future repetition of the *extrarradio* problem: the rise of the *suburbio* beyond the city limits. The urbanists observed that the new area, as in the *extrarradio*, had narrow streets without sufficient sunlight and houses lacking water supply and sewer systems, making them worse from a hygienic point of view than the previously built ones (Ibid 1926, p. 50).

As previously explained, the question of expanding the Madrid city limits had been controversial during the 1910s due to the high cost of equipping the periphery with public infrastructures. As a consequence, the surrounding municipalities had been financially abandoned and therefore unable to provide public services to the deluge of rural immigrants and displaced city-centre populations. During the 1910s and 1920s, the spaces beyond the city limits of Madrid quickly became populated by diverse substandard neighbourhoods, forming

the new geography of the popular classes. At the same time, inside the Madrid municipal borders, the state of the *extrarradio* was being improved step by step.

The position of the Madrid municipality in the 1910s against the provision of services in the *suburbio*, discussed when Nuñez Granés's plan was supposed to totally transform the *extrarradio*, had been justified by the costs. However, there seemed to be an additional concern; if the *extrarradio* was finally renovated through the original plan, it would become a middle- and upper-class area, making it necessary to develop a new space where the displaced popular classes live. The new working-class territory would be the suburban municipalities and, as we have seen, various regulations were designed to tolerate developing cheap, unserved neighbourhoods in the suburbs and to set up new areas at distance from the Madrid city borders for sanitary reasons.

The municipality's position would remain unchanged during the next decades, as explained in a press article from the liberal journal *El Sol*, in 1933. While discussing the pros and cons of the annexation of the suburbs, the so-called Gran Madrid, the journalist summarised the opinions of the city council technicians. Integrating the new periphery into Madrid would require higher urban standards and the provision of public services would provoke an increase in land values in the area. Accordingly, "*la influencia favorable de la anexión se notaría, en primer término, en donde no debiera advertirse; en la vivienda insalubre. La masa obrera que la habita padecería los efectos de una carestía inmotivada*".<sup>174</sup> Because of the absence of social housing alternatives for the working classes, the only possibility was to maintain the status quo in the metropolis and permit the development of a substandard periphery, considering that any attempt to dignify it would provoke its elitization.

In addition, the same press article reported the lack of economic resources and the few economical rents available in the suburbio: "*los municipios objeto de la anexión no aportan con ella más que confusión, desorganización y muchos aduar*". Last but not least, the annexation would provoke a change in the political power of the city, as the inclusion of the popular classes in the electoral census would balance municipal and national elections towards a prevalence of left-wing parties.

As shown in the cases of Las Californias and Puente de Vallecas, the evolution of the urban fabric in the further periphery, the *suburbio* depended on different regulations and bureaucratic practices, a situation that announced a differential evolution on both sides of the city's border. However, how had these differences shaped the displacement of informal urbanisation towards the periphery and how had they provoked the rise of the *suburbio marginal*?

During the 1920s, Las Californias area was consolidated as a neighbourhood. The opening of an eatery in 1913<sup>175</sup> and the appearance of electrical installations and several food shops during the 1920s demonstrate the area's development. At the same time, the new building permits did not seem to show the previous legal uncertainty. A building permit from late 1922, signed off by the architect Severiano Sanchez Ballesta, did not refer to the lack of planning of the area and its future transformation. The unplanned *extrarradio* growth had been assumed by the public powers, even before Nuñez Granés's plan was officially abandoned, and the area started to be less precarious. However, a press article from a progressive journal claimed that despite

<sup>174</sup> *El Sol*, 19 January 1932, Opiniones técnicas acerca de la anexión de los pueblos inmediatos a Madrid.

<sup>175</sup> AVM 18-237-73.

the progressive solution of the *extrarradio* problem, “*es inexcusable pensar que, saneada la tercera zona de Madrid, persistirá la cintura de asfixia, que seguirán constituyendo las barriadas más destacadas y pobladas de los pueblos inmediatos*”.<sup>176</sup>

However, the area still lacked public services. In 1923, a press article<sup>177</sup> denounced the absence of water supply and sewer systems in the area. Using wells as a substitute for the sewer system had been prohibited since 1922 in Madrid, as much of the population used that solution, facilitating the propagation of epidemic diseases throughout the phreatic zone. However, many illegally remained during the subsequent years, especially in the *extrarradio* (Huertas, 2002, p. 276), to deal with the lack of sanitation. That seemed to be the case of Las Californias, where a 1927 journal article criticised the lack of supply water and ruined sewer system: “*el respiradero de la alcantarilla (was) hundido y la boca de entrada obturada por enormes piedras*”.<sup>178</sup> As the journalist stated, only three drinking fountains existed in the area, which had permanent queues. The inhabitants of the even more deprived Puente de Vallecas walked to obtain water and produced long queues all day, making it hard for everybody to obtain water. The article also noted the poor quality of the houses, the lack of public school, and the defective pavement, which created a lot of mud and made it impossible to move. Some months later, another article continued reporting on the *extrarradio* problem. A neighbour of Las Californias criticised that whilst the population of the *extrarradio* were second-class citizens, “*los que tenemos la desdicha de habitar en el límite no llegamos a alcanzar siquiera esa clasificación, ni creemos que la haya a propósito para designar el estado de completo abandono en que nos encontramos*”.<sup>179</sup>

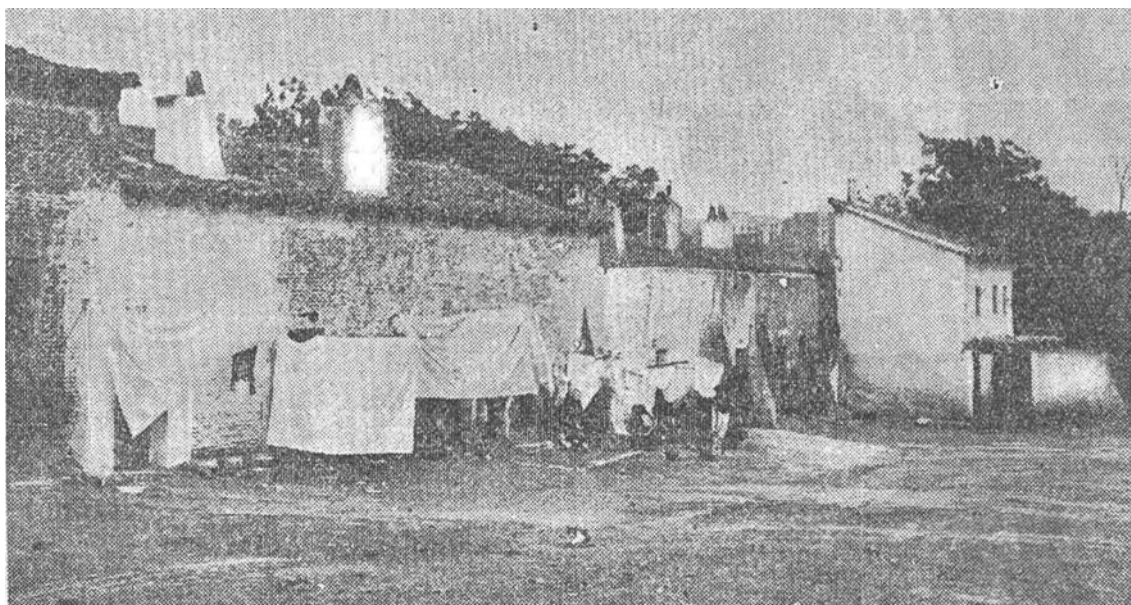


Photo 25. Un rincón del barrio de la California.  
Source: *La Voz*, 25 May 1927.

<sup>176</sup> *La Voz*, 31 December 1925.

<sup>177</sup> *La Libertad*, 5 May 1923, Lo que pide el vecindario.

<sup>178</sup> *La Voz*, 25 May 1927, Desde la Plaza del Progreso al barrio de la California.

<sup>179</sup> *La Voz*, 5 October 1927, Diogenes, en el arroyo Abroñigal.



In 1932, Councillor Saborit demanded public investment in the public urbanisation of the area. On 19 April, the city council agreed to install, using recycled materials gathered from renovating other city streets, “servicios de pavimentación en calles particulares, como lo son las de la zona extrarradial, por ser hoy intransitables”.<sup>180</sup> However, the Tax Office Commission (Comisión de Hacienda) remembered that the inhabitants did not have the right to demand any public administration favours, as the area had been developed by private actors and public spatial planning for it did not yet exist.

Apparently, the measure was not implemented, because in 1933 a new demand from the Madrid Councillors Saborit and Muiño asked for the full urbanisation of all the streets of Las Californias, which were “en un estado de abandono verdaderamente lamentable, toda vez que se encuentra sin los servicios urbanos correspondientes”, and they considered that in the neighbourhood “solamente habita gente de modesta condición”.<sup>181</sup>

The area, as with the rest of the *extrarradio*, was no longer under the threat of demolition and was being improved step by step through public investments. Years later, in 1934, a press article<sup>182</sup> denounced that, except in some small areas, most of the construction in the *extrarradio* continued being designed randomly by the initiative of private developers. In those areas were built extremely small houses with poor materials and buildings, but also buildings that were too high for the width of the streets and lacked sewer systems. The authors concluded that an identical description could have been stated two decades before. The same article considered the following:

*Mientras el Ayuntamiento no emprenda una política territorial, que impida los indebidos lucros de la plusvalía, el Extrarradio se irá cada vez más lejos del casco madrileño [. . .]. La población tiende a invadir los términos municipales vecinos. Varias veces se ha hablado de una anexión de esos Municipios, para poder plan definitivo. Las ventajas que así se podrían lograr se alcanzarían igualmente con un convenio o federación de los municipios, exclusivamente para los fines urbanizadores, evitándose el aumento de impuestos que para los vecinos de los pueblos próximos supondría la anexión a Municipio madrileño, uno de los de mayor carga fiscal”.*<sup>183</sup>

As everybody had predicted, the *extrarradio* problem became the *suburbio* problem. But how did the local urban regulations and institutional practices permit development beyond the Madrid city limits?

In Puente de Vallecas, the population continued rising quickly, increasing from 28,240 in 1920 to 40,099 in 1925 (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1929). As has been already shown, during the 1910s the building and urban regulations in the area were practically non-existent. However, the approval of the Real Decreto 9 de Agosto de 1923 and the 1924 Reglamento de Obras y Servicios requiring rewriting of the Ordenanzas Municipales, which were approved on 18

<sup>180</sup> AVM 31-30-26. 1932, presupuesto instruido por el Concejal Saborit para la habilitación de un crédito de 300.000 pesetas para la pavimentación de algunas de las calles del Extrarradio.

<sup>181</sup> AVM 19-297\*-31.

<sup>182</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, 15 August 1934. Acaban de aprobarse las Ordenanzas de la construcción en el extrarradio de Madrid.

<sup>183</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, *ibid.*

September 1924 and became more restrictive concerning the self-development of cheap housing areas.<sup>184</sup>

The new *ordenanzas* made it obligatory to accomplish some minimal standards to approve a building permit. Although the national laws made it compulsory to approve a master plan in Vallecas, due to its size and high demographic growth, the local regulations did not reference this future spatial regulation, and no archival trace of a local master plan has been found. In fact, a press article from 1930 showed that this law had been useless in requiring spatial plans and peripheral growth control systems to be developed.

*La falta absoluta de medios coercitivos o de organizaciones sanitarias que debidamente constituídas se ocupasen de hacer cumplir lo ordenado, ha sido la causa de que puedan contarse con los dedos de una mano los Municipios españoles que han abordado este problema.*<sup>185</sup>

In Vallecas, and perhaps in other municipalities around Madrid, street development based on the unrestricted activity of private developers continued. Different from the free placement of streets and houses of the previous period, after the 1924 Ordenanzas of Vallecas, opening a new street required a public permit, which allowed the public powers to supervise the area in order to modify its proposed alignments. However, no archival trace has been found of this process, indicating that perhaps it did not happen frequently. The new *ordenanzas* obligated private developers to generically build infrastructures “*adoptando como tipos los de la vía pública donde tenga la entrada principal*” (art. 224), the same rule used in previous decades in the *extrarradio* that had very poor results. Additionally, the private landowners could transfer the streets to the municipality after paying for future maintenance, and requiring to be fully equipped. As with the 19th-century Madrid *ordenanzas*, this process provoked the perennisation of private, unequipped streets. Despite the more than probable substandard housing development and the absence of public infrastructures, the houses were required to have water supply and sewer systems.

In 1925, a press article described the Abroñigal stream, which separated Madrid from Puente de Vallecas, as a hostile zone “*con depósitos de inmundicias o con barrancadas donde toda transgresión a las ordenanzas municipales encuentra campo propicio*”. As described in the article, most of the streets in Puente de Vallecas were unurbanised, and only the road that crossed it, Carretera de Valencia, and some avenues were paved. The area still lacked sewer systems, and the water supply, which was always scarce, was provided by an intermediary between the Madrid water supplier, Canal de Isabel II, and the neighbours, who receive high economic commission. The press stated ironically that “*verdad es que el Puente de Vallecas podría tener el agua del Canal ; pero no es menos cierto que el concesionario de la del canalillo cobra por metro cúbico y día 130 pesetas al año, unas cien pesetas más que lo que cuesta el agua buena de Madrid*”.<sup>186</sup> The lack of public services provoked the dependence of informal urbanisation areas on the private sector.

From that time, the archives show a large number of individual demands for connecting to the sewer system and collective claims asking for public lighting and pavements on their streets.<sup>187</sup> The different offers from the neighbourhoods proposing to pay for part of the implementation

<sup>184</sup> AVM 31-108-5.

<sup>185</sup> *La Construcción Moderna*, 15 May 1930, no. 9.

<sup>186</sup> *La Voz*, 26 December 1925. Hacia la gran capital. Hay que anexionar a Madrid el Puente de Vallecas.

<sup>187</sup> AVM 31-234-2.

of public services show the lack of regulations and consolidated institutional procedures for the urbanisation process. For instance, in a letter from 12 April 1927, the inhabitants of San Jose Street proposed that the city council urbanise the road and the neighbours pay for the sewers and pavements on the sides. The text closed with stating that *“quizá de esto serviría para animar a los señores Propietarios de otras calles que se encuentran en parecidas condiciones, de este modo se podría ir hurbanizando (sic) la población, que buena falta le hace”*.<sup>188</sup> The public powers accepted the proposition, and the municipal architect, Joaquín Sainz de los Terreros, coordinated the public and private work.

The absence of intervention by the public powers in the urbanisation process and the move towards a state-driven urbanisation not only led to attempts of the Vallecas plotowners to tackle the public absence through their investment in street infrastructures, but triggered their collective action to demand improvements. Another letter to the city council, signed by the Unión de Vecinos Barrio de Picazo asked for building materials; the neighbours wanted to self-construct a mixed-sex school and believed that the public powers should contribute to this because it was a beneficial for the community.

The lack or regulation of urban growth also led to some major problems in Puente de Vallecas. On 15 January 1927, an inhabitant of Fernando Giraldez Street complained about the decision of another neighbour to change the street levels in front of his house. He was putting the other houses at risk because the changes caused that the street frequently flooded, making them fear that *“las aguas llegarían a inundar nuestras viviendas con grave peligro de la salud”*.<sup>189</sup> The municipal architect’s answer was to excavate two ditches at the sides of the street for a water run-off.

However, the lack of building control sometimes led to more difficult problems. On 10 December 1926, some residents of Avelino Fernandez de la Poza Street in Entrevias wrote to the Vallecas City Council, claiming to feel *“constantemente amenazados, de que cualquier de borrasca o tormenta, nuestros queridos hijos mueran ahogados.”* The reason was that houses were located on both sides of a ravine, and a house had been built in the middle of it that interrupted the watercourse during storms. The letter from the residents at risk stated that on more than one occasion, in the middle of a storm, they had to *“abandonar con nuestros hijos nuestras humildes viviendas por entrar en hellas (sic) por puertas y ventanas, el agua atorrentes (sic)”*.<sup>190</sup> They asked for the ravine to be unblocked, but the answer the municipal architect some two months later after visiting the place did not provide a solution. According to the architect, the location of the housing group was too close to the ravine, making impossible to help the inhabitants. The area remained and became an immense informal neighbourhood after the Spanish Civil War, known as Entrevias.

However, had these constructions been approved by the public powers? How did the public powers tolerate them, considering the problems they presented? As has been shown, some years earlier the building activity seemed totally free. However, the arrival of new regulations should have led to identifying housing areas for demolition that had not possibility of improvement.

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<sup>188</sup> AVM 31-234-2.

<sup>189</sup> AVM 31-234-2.

<sup>190</sup> AVM 31-234-2.

The regulations were, as in the case of the *chozas* phenomenon, hard to apply without social housing alternatives. In a letter from 12 January 1927, many neighbourhoods of the *Barriadas de la Mesa de Margen* and *Picazo* showed their fears about the possibility of the new regulations being applied to their houses. The shelters, built on rent-to-buy plots still not fully acquired, had been built three and four years before, without any visits from the public powers. Although the letter specified that no houses in the area had received a building permit, the neighbours confirmed to have paid their housing taxes to the city council. They feared that, in case they had to present plans of the houses for validation, “*el Sr. Arquitecto Municipal . . . nos obligaría hacer obra sobre diferentes aspectos o tendría que ordenar su inmediato derribo*”.

The neighbours asked to “*dejarnos exentos de pagar plano, ya que en esa época no se ha exigido a casi nadie de los que por aquí hayan edificado y que al sacarlo nos costará por lo menos 65 pesetas sin provecho alguno por el Ayuntamiento y con grave perjuicio para nosotros*”.<sup>191</sup>

The text showed that the housing development after the development of the new *ordenanzas*, which was quite similar to that from in the *extrarradio* decades before, continued escaping to a large extent from the public powers control and the demanding building permits was too expensive for the poorest.

The answer from the public powers on 5 February 1927 was to accept the inhabitants demands, urging them to go to the city council freely to regularise their situation.

It is difficult to understand the true control over the houses built without building permits, and the documents about the legally built ones are incomplete. From the hundreds of building permits found in the archives,<sup>192</sup> only one of them—a high collective building—was illustrated with plans. Most of the others were handwritten on simple paper on which the *maestro de obra* was not detailed and the plans, although frequently mentioned, did not appear. The problem could be a simple question of missing files, and maybe the plans were separated from the building permits and then lost. Another possibility is that, as in the case of the neighbours of *Picazo*, the local public powers giving permits without plans.

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<sup>191</sup> AVM 31-234-2.

<sup>192</sup> AVM 31-309-3.



Illustration 9. The Madrid south-east periphery in 1929.

1) The ensanche neighbourhood of Pacífico, 2) Las Californias, and 3) Puente de Vallecas.

Source: Geoportal, Vuelo area Información sobre la Ciudad 1929.

Further research should investigate how the arrival of contemporary urban planning affected the urbanisation process in the area. The files corresponding to 1927 that were found in the archives reveal a substantial tolerance towards the informal housing development that ignored the laws to avoid setting off massive evictions. Although some subsequent letters of the municipal architect from 1931<sup>193</sup> show the rigidity of the municipal control, who demanded improvements in substandard houses that lacked bathrooms, had roofing problems, or were at risk of ruin, and threatened the possibility of big fines, it is probable that the deprived populations, who constituted most of the housing owners, overlooked or did not address such threats.

<sup>193</sup> AVM 31-384-1.

In a 1930 book about the urban growth and sanitary problems of the *suburbio* portrayed the new housing areas as chaotic, absurd, and arbitrary. The text described the area's houses as,

*Construídas con adobe o ladrillo, amontonando o socavando en parte un desmonte y cubiertas con latas y trozos de esteras, y fijándonos en las mejores, o sean las hechas de fábrica, nos encontramos las más veces con una o dos piezas, sin cubicación ni aireación suficiente para el matrimonio, los hijos y quizás algún animal doméstico que en repugnante promiscuidad duermen en ella, haciendo de la parte anterior de la vivienda un vertedero permanente de basuras, y de la posterior letrina al aire libre, juntamente con el corral* (León Peralta, 1930, pp. 35–36).

However, for the author, such kind of urban growth could not be avoided because reforming it would require “*derribar la casi totalidad*” (León Peralta, 1930, pp. 35–36) and the small municipalities of the periphery could not afford the cost of urbanising them properly.

After the Spanish Civil War, when Vallecas was finally integrated into Madrid, the area quickly became a problem. The Bidagor plan, the first master plan effectively implemented in Madrid, zoned the area as agricultural, considering the substandard areas from the previous period to be *fuera de ordenación*, out of the urban regulations. This decision was made with the purpose of impeding its development and forcing its eventual demolition in the long term. However, hundreds of thousands of new inhabitants arrived to the area and build shacks in the empty spaces, frequently surrounding the neighbourhoods which, as has been shown, emerged illegally and were tolerated during the 1920s.

As the aerial photograph shows, the Madrid *extrarradio* and the further suburbs were developed through totally different morphologies from the *ensanche*, the “normal”, planned city. Although examining this subject is beyond the scope of this thesis, most of the street patterns and houses built as a result of regularising the informal areas remained throughout the 20th century. Despite the development of rehousing operations between the 1950s to the 1980s, this old, unplanned urban fabric still forms the Madrid periphery today.

# SECOND CHAPTER: PARIS

## THE UNREGULATED DEVELOPMENT OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING AREAS

In Paris, as in Madrid, humble, peripheral housing areas have existed since secular times. Although different governmental initiatives attempted to control suburban building processes, the focus seemed to be dominating the populations of the periphery without attempting to avoid substandard housing conditions. Only at the end of the 19th century, in a context marked by epidemic diseases, social upheaval, modernisation, and accelerated urban growth, did the precariousness of the poor and working-class areas become a problem. Accordingly, the first systematic housing control methods were implemented, based on combining surveyance institutions and specific regulations against substandard housing. However, whilst this system of control provoked the selective destruction of some informal areas, it soon became clear that it could not sufficiently restrict the phenomenon. Although the increasing development of building standards during the second half of the century led to prohibit living in the most precarious states, there were no procedures designed to control or impede the development of new substandard areas; they could only be demolished once constructed.

Throughout the next pages, there will be a brief discussion of the historical precedents of 20th-century substandard urbanisation, its development mechanisms and characteristics, its problematisation, and the rise and inefficiency of the hygienic surveyance devices developed to control it.

### The problem of the *faubourgs*' uncontrolled urbanisation

As with the case study of Madrid, although we intend to discuss the popular urban growth from the second half of the 19th century onwards, illustrating the previous stages of poor housing control makes it possible to establish the differences between the classical mechanisms of space discipline and the modern devices that emerged to systematically control popular housing development.

In Paris, controlling the peripheral growth of the *faubourgs*, the urban space beyond the city limits, was an ongoing issue before the 19th century that triggered various unsuccessful attempts to prohibit and control their development. Although the main French urbanistic tool, the *alignements*, had been developed to delimitate and preserve the public streets facing private housing construction (Harouel, 1977; Laisney & Koltirine, 1986), and the engineers drew alignment plans from Versailles for city councils around the country, this norm did not permit directing peripheral urban growth and lead to some unsuccessful initiatives to control it.

For instance, between 1724 and 1729, Jean Beausire et Jean-Baptiste Agustin, master of the Chambre de Bâtiments de Paris, undertook a population census and detailed plan, house by house, of the *faubourgs*. The plan served to establish the limits of the city seeking to contain the urban growth (Carvais, 2010). In the outskirts, a royal order led to posting stone panels



that marked the city boundaries, to control building houses beyond them to stop peripheral urban growth (Pronteau, 1978). However, this regulation was also unable to control the phenomenon, and the new areas “invaded” by housing construction were then legalised and integrated into the city by the declaration of 16 May 1765 (Poussou, 1996). Some days before, on 27 February 1765, a new royal law prohibited constructing houses outside the city limits and along the road borders. The alignment permits for inside the city would not be given without a payment in order to avoid clandestine construction (Harouel, 1977).

About two decades later on 10 April 1783, the *Déclaration du Roi sur les alignements et ouvertures des rues de Paris* established that buildings with façades facing the streets required construction permits. However, developing housing on private roads (*lotissements*) or in closed areas remained unregulated (Laisney & Koltirine, 1986). This principle would allow new forms of substandard housing to grow throughout the 19th century.

The ensemble of laws trying to control city growth gave rise to eleven laws from the beginning of the 16th century until the French Revolution (Bastié, 1964).<sup>194</sup> Although the city limits were repeatedly expanded in order to absorb the new *faubourgs* and include them within city regulations, new areas continued to emerge throughout the period (Bisson, 1929). In 1788, Louis Sebastian Mercier described the deviant population of the illegally developed areas:

*C'est dans ces habitations éloignées du mouvement central de la Ville que se cachent les hommes ruinés, les misanthropes, les alchimistes, les maniaques [. . .]. La police craint de pousser à bout cette populace: on la ménage parce qu'elle est capable de se porter aux plus grands excès* (Mercier 1782 in Merriman, 1991, p. 77).

Whilst fully understanding the control of the Paris' *faubourgs* during the “ancient regime” would require additional research, Mercier's words exemplify the logics behind their spatial management. The state lacked the capacity to avoid the development of the popular peripheries, and decided only to manage it. Despite the development of regulations, the popular classes fell into illegality in a routine manner—by building houses and developing activities in forbidden areas. The law transgressions did not seem to face systematic punishment; the authorities answer to them was the ongoing approval of barely implemented royal regulations.

In the face of this situation, the new order after the French Revolution seemed to involve the institutionalisation and execution of more systematic urban growth control systems (Laisney & Koltirine, 1986), a process maybe related to the transition from a punitive to a disciplinary paradigm (Foucault, 2004b) and the progressive development of institutional devices of control of illegality (Lascoumes, 1996).

At that time, the method for regulating city growth in Paris continued to be the *alignements* (the limits between public and private spaces to be respected to form the streets) and the police *ordenances* (the by-laws regulating diverse aspects of city life). However, city growth was largely undefined in spatial terms; if the alignment plan had not specifically defined an area, it could be built freely. The land values and real estate market determined the character of the city growth.

<sup>194</sup> The author considered the different laws approved in 1548, 1627, 1672, 1674, 1724, 1726, 1728, 1765, 1766, 1778, and 1781. It would be interesting to study the reasons behind such normative production and the eventual descriptions of the forbidden construction process.

This model would be generalised to all of France. The law of 16 September 1807 required a *plan d'alignement* to be established for any town with more than 2,000 inhabitants. In 1809, a systematic plan of this kind was developed for Paris that allowed not only retracing the existing streets but establishing minimum standards, creating a hierarchy of streets and a compulsory minimum width of 6 metres for the residential streets (Laisney & Koltirine, 1986, p. 18).

Additionally, on 15 October 1810 the *Décret impérial relatif aux Manufactures et Ateliers qui répandent une odeur insalubre ou incommode* was approved. This law regulated the location of industries depending on their insalubrity, obligating the most polluting factories to be developed in the periphery, beyond the Paris administrative limits.<sup>195</sup> As a result, while industries moved to suburban areas, the workforce moved along with them to spaces with very few building restrictions. In addition, suburban development would be facilitated by the end of the *bornage* (the interdiction of building beyond the city limits) in 1824.

Consequently, urbanisation continued with little control beyond the Fermiers Généraux city wall, leading small municipalities such as La Villette, La Chapelle, and Batignolles to attract industries and increase in size and population. At the same time, the industrialisation process converted Saint-Denis into one of the major industrial sites in Europe throughout the 19th century (Natacha Lillo, 2001). The area attracted an enormous flow of migration, increasing from 3,955 inhabitants in 1800 to 13,688 in 1851 and then to 60,808 in 1900.<sup>196</sup> During the first decades of the century, this urbanisation process was regulated locally through the Plan Général d'Alignements de Saint-Denis, approved in 1812. This action also established a minimum street width of 6 metres and prescribed corrective operations for the consolidated street pattern, briefly describing the state of the existing buildings related to the approved street design.<sup>197</sup>

Before the 1860s the urbanisation of the Paris periphery took form through three main subprocesses, according to Poussou (1996): the spontaneous development of housing areas on individual plots, particularly along main suburban roads; the development of new private streets; and the development of upper-class allotments led by capitalist investors for speculative purposes. While the last process was coordinated with an *architecte-voyer* (municipal architect), the other forms of housing development seemed to become a problem for the public powers, because of both the lack of order of their street pattern and the difficulties the areas presented to controlling the poor “nomadic” populations that increasingly inhabited them (Ibid 1996).

To sum up, whilst during the “ancient regime” the control of urban growth was weak, new regulations increasingly controlled the shape and characteristics of public streets inside Paris, facilitating the process of suburbanisation of industries and poor neighbourhoods during the first half of the 19th century. The increasing problematisation of popular spaces during the subsequent decades would lead to the necessity to develop new housing control measures and extend their geographical scope. As will be shown, the new tools were intended to survey the domestic space not only to control the characteristics of the housing areas, but to influence the way of life of the popular classes.

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<sup>195</sup> Décret organique du 15 octobre 1810. AMSD 1 O 350.

<sup>196</sup> Sources: Ldh/EHESS/Cassini.

<sup>197</sup> AMSD 1 O 350.

## The “dangerous classes” and the rise of hygienic urban control

During the 19th century, the public powers started to view popular housing as a problem, and they created the first procedures specifically for restricting the development of poor housing areas.

Such problematisation was fundamentally based on sanitary reasons because the deprived neighbourhoods were perceived as focal points of disease. During the 19th century, the cholera pandemic affected Paris, with 19,000 casualties in 1832 (Zancarini-Fournel, 2016) and a similar number in 1849 (Mée, 1998), whilst endemic diseases such as tuberculosis ravaged the city centre. Although some medical professionals (the contagionists) believed that such illnesses came from some kind of invisible germ transmitted person-to-person, a large sector of the medical body defended the miasmatic theory. According to this idea, the corruption of air was the origin of these diseases, which were transmitted to the rest of the city through air circulation. In the first case, the solution was to establish quarantines, resulting in major economic damage. According to the second idea, the solution was to destroy or segregate the *foyers d'infection* (houses of foci of disease transmission), allowing for more economically profitable operations (Mée, 1998), such as transforming the poorest areas of the city into hygienic ones. Although John Snow's medical topographies of London in 1854 and Robert Koch's discovery of the cholera bacillus in 1882 refuted the miasmatic theory, most of the bourgeoisie and political classes continued attributing the high mortality of the poor neighbourhoods to the physical existence of *foyers d'infection* rather than considering the general living conditions of the poor to be the main cause of the problem (Fijalkow, 2000).

On the other hand, the substandard housing areas became associated with the rising crime rates in Paris. The growing peripheral neighbourhoods were looked at as refuge for the homeless, foreigners, and individuals fleeing from the jurisdiction of the Paris police (Merriman, 1991). Having been the subject of massive media attention, the perception of criminality reached a peak in the winter of 1826 to 1827. This media attention had provoked a perception of hopelessness, of “*authority without straight and surveillance*” (Chevalier, 1958, pp. 196–197) over the new peripheries. The city police had no jurisdiction over the small towns around Paris, which were equipped with a commissary only if they had more than 5,000 inhabitants (Merriman, 1991).

The political situation also contributed to the perception among the upper classes that the rising areas posed a threat. The *faubourgs* had played a central role in the unrest and triumph of the French Revolution (Ibid 1991). The liberal revolutions, which spread throughout Europe from the 1820s, including the *révolution de juillet* in 1830, and the 1848 revolution, increasingly expressed the popular classes' social antagonism and their frustration towards the monarchical restoration. The new suburban areas were not only a shelter for the working classes but a socialisation space where strikers and picketers could organise their actions without police surveillance (Ibid 1991).

Although the informal periphery was not signalled as a focus of the sanitary problem, given its low density, good air circulation, and probably also because of the low profitability to be gained from renewing it, the perceptions linking poverty, violence, disease, and political unrest

seemed to forge a common representation against the growing poor neighbourhoods.<sup>198</sup> The existence of unhealthy housing was connected to the vicious behaviour of the popular classes; in the absence of good housing, the men were impelled to leave their families and go to the pubs, setting them on a path to alcoholism, prostitution, and political engagement and therefore provoking the dissolution of families and threatening the whole social system.<sup>199</sup> Introducing hygiene into those neighbourhoods would help to fight against most of the societal problems, changing not just the materiality of the big cities but their very soul. As the famous doctor Villermé stated, the new discipline could,

*Par son association à la philosophie et à la législation exercer un grande influence sur la marche de l'esprit humain . . . les fautes et les crimes sont des maladies de la Société qu'il faut travailler à guérir" (Villermé 1829 in Mée 1998:390).*

Accordingly, a new set of laws was put into place to regulate housing development, with the purpose of avoiding disease and also disciplining the urban populations. In 1848, whilst cholera was spreading throughout Europe, a new *ordonnance*<sup>200</sup> established in Paris made it obligatory to include sewer systems in houses through *tuyaux ou couvettes* to avoid the sewage and rainwater remaining in the courtyards and to set up a minimal volume for rooms (14 metres squared) to avoid "air corruption". On the other hand, the Société Centrale d'Architectes, an organisation of French architects, criticised such soft measures, proposing stronger minimal standards for housing production in their publication *Des Logements Insalubres* (Quérière, 1857).

In 1850,<sup>201</sup> the Loi Melun was approved, and this measure against unhealthy housing created a surveyance institution (the hygiene committees) that would visit the poor houses and report which ones could be repaired and which were not fit for human habitat. The municipal authorities could then demand that the landlords improve the houses (in the first case) or evict the inhabitants (in the second case), prohibiting further habitation.

The actions of these hygiene committees had limited impact, as they only had jurisdiction over rented houses. Because the liberal right to the free use of property prevailed over the common will, the commission members might not bother the owners intimacy, and the owners had the right to live in bad conditions and become ill. Facing to it, the lack of hygienic conditions was considered a commercial fraud in the cases of tenancies and, accordingly, could be punished (Shapiro, 1985).

However, the tenants seemed to resist visits by the hygiene commissions and had few reasons to denounce their house as insalubrious. After the visit, the house could be declared unfit for living, provoking eviction. Additionally, in a very tense real estate market, any housing improvements would have probably led to an increase in tenancy price (Kalff, 2016).

Ultimately, the commissions could not avoid the housing construction. Their role was only to supervise and order the houses be improved, evicted, or destroyed. Frequently, they had to wait for a defective house to be fully constructed in order to act against it. From the 1860s onwards, the hygiene commissions asked in their reports to set out "*specifications for the*

<sup>198</sup> As we will see, most of these representations were employed in the defective housing areas of the 1920s and 1960s. Many remain today, despite the medical and economic evolution of the European countries.

<sup>199</sup> At the end of the century, cinemas would appear as new spaces of perversion.

<sup>200</sup> Loi 20 novembre 1848.

<sup>201</sup> Loi du 13 avril 1850 relative à l'assainissement des logements insalubres.

construction and to establish the inspection of finished houses” (Shapiro, 1985, p. 26). In addition, the development of hygiene committees seemed to be done only in Paris and a few other cities, as their creation was not compulsory.

Despite such dysfunction, the Loi Melun had begun the history of popular housing control and would strongly influence the urbanism of Paris in the subsequent decades. Article 13 allowed the demolition of areas in the event that the causes of the insalubrity were exterior—that is, concerning the whole neighbourhood. In such cases, the public powers could sell the land after outlining new street alignments. With both the 1841 law of *expropriation pour cause d'utilité publique* and the 1852 *décret relatif aux rues de Paris*, it became possible to destroy housing areas for their insalubrity, which was an arbitrary concept without a legal definition<sup>202</sup> (Fijalkow, 2000). This law made it possible to enlarge expropriations to allow the “*suppression d'anciennes voies publiques jugées inutiles*” and the development of new *constructions salubres* (Ibid 2000, p. 8)

These kinds of transformations were permitted after the designation of Haussmann as Préfet de la Seine in 1853. The transformation of Paris was based on developing new streets to “aerate” the urban fabric and demolishing entire neighbourhoods and reconstructing them with denser bourgeois collective houses.

The process, which permitted the landowners and developers to earn enormous capital gains, could have provoked the displacement of around 350,000 people from the city centre to the periphery, including evictions and the rent increases that happened during the urban renewal<sup>203</sup> (Merriman, 1991). The process was accelerated by complaints by the petit bourgeoisie about insalubrity, which highlighted undesired buildings as a way to reinforce the increasing value of the Paris city centre (Shapiro, 1985).

Many historical sources link the massive expulsion of working-class tenants of the Haussmann city-centre renovation to the defective urban growth in the *faubourgs*. As the famous reformist Doctor Du Mesnil stated,

*À Paris il est vrai que, depuis un certain nombre d'années, un mouvement d'émigration considérable s'est produit du centre à la périphérie de la ville [. . .]. Les malheureux, chassés de leurs abris par les grands travaux, ont retrouvé pour les exploiter dans l'ancienne banlieue parisienne, sinon les mêmes hommes, du moins le même esprit de lucre insatiable* (Du Mesnil, 1890, pp. 22–23).

In 1881, the social reformer D'Haussonville explained the existence of a new belt of substandard housing areas around Paris, between the former *boulevards extérieurs* (the avenues forming a ring around the city) and the new city walls. For him, the city-centre urban renewal had only displaced the misery instead of ending it.

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<sup>202</sup> The only paragraph of the 1850 law that attempted to define insalubrity was Article 1: “*sont réputés insalubres les logements qui se trouvent dans des conditions de nature à nuire la vie ou à la santé des habitants*”.

<sup>203</sup> That process, apparently, would have been unexpected for the public authorities. As Merriman (1991) expressed, Haussmann shared the classical liberal thinking in which increasing housing offers would automatically lead to a reduction in housing prices.

*En assainissant les quartiers pauvres du vieux Paris, on n'a donc pas plus supprimé la misère (au reste on n'a jamais eu cette prétention) [. . .] On l'a seulement éloignée de nos regards (D'Haussonville, 1881, p. 828).*

The increasing rise of poor and working-class housing areas in the periphery led to a new norm in 1855<sup>204</sup> in which Haussmann impelled the mayors of the *faubourgs* not to allow new streets to be developed if they were too narrow (Bisson, 1929, p. 14). In this law, he described the chaotic process of allotment in the periphery.

*Les principes qui doivent présider à la formation des rues nouvelles, (...) sont généralement perdues de vue. Les auteurs des projets, ne consultant que leur propre intérêt et ne tenant aucune compte de celui de la circulation, proposent souvent de donner à ces voies, des largeurs insuffisantes et des directions qui leurs rendent peu utiles et qui souvent compromettent l'exécution d'entreprises désirables. [. . .] Avant que leurs offres soient agréées, ils se hâtent de vendre le terrain en bordure, des constructions s'élevaient rapidement sur ces terrains sans alignement et sans nivellement arrêtés; et lorsque l'administration supérieure impose, pour condition de classement, que la rue aura plus de largeur ou que son tracé sera rectifié, on lui répond qu'il n'est plus possible de rien changer au projet, en sorte qu'elle est placée dans l'alternative ou d'accepter un état des choses défectueux ou de rejeter la proposition (Lavan, 1930, p. 9).*

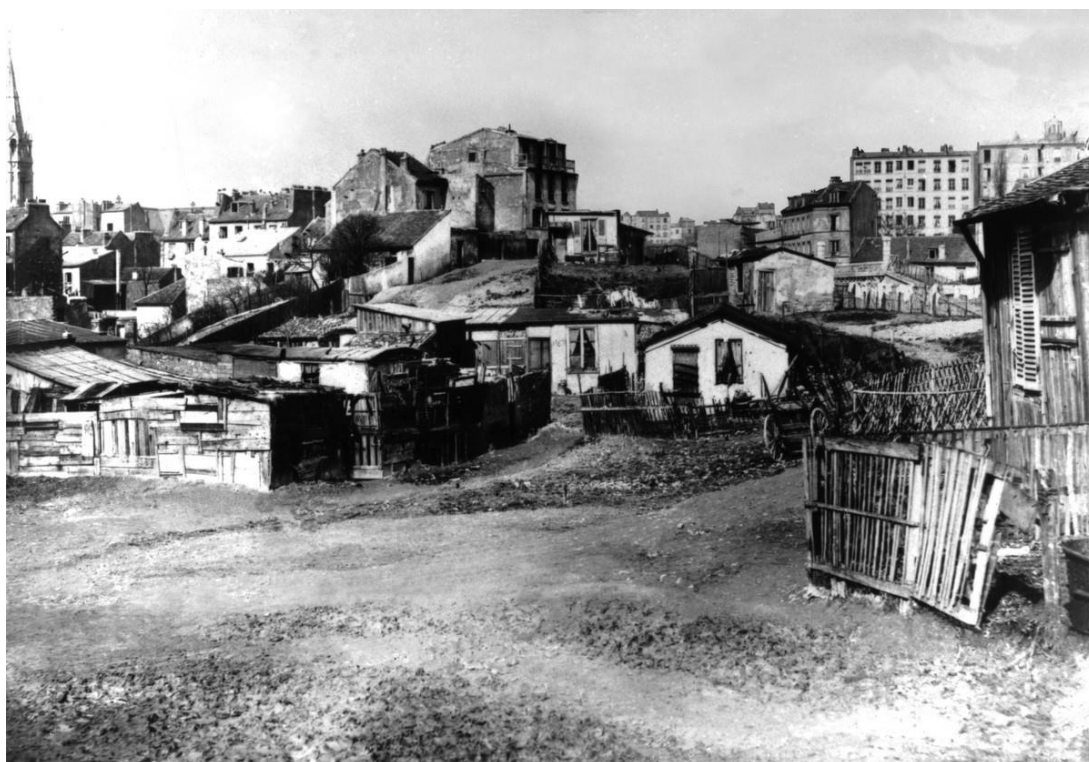


Photo 26. Rue Champlain, XXe arrondissement, Paris, 1876–1878.  
Source: Charles Marville, Musée Carnavalet, Histoire Paris.

Additionally, although the displacement of the popular classes “alleviated” some of the concerns of the bourgeoisie about the spatial proximity of the working classes and reduced the

<sup>204</sup> Circulaire du 20 décembre 1855.

capacity for social uprisings to attack the power centres, it worsened the police control over them. As Haussmann stated, Paris seemed,

*Imperfectly controlled: the population envelops the city with a wild belt that escapes the urban police in the general sense of the word". The city is surrounded by a compact belt of suburbs, delivered to more than twenty different administrations, built at random, covered by an inextricable network of narrow and tortuous public roads, alleys and impasses where nomadic populations accumulate with prodigious speed without any real link with the ground and without effective surveillance (Merriman, 1991, p. 289).*

Therefore, the public powers' answer to the rising *faubourgs*, as in previous stages of urban growth in Paris, was their absorption into the city. In 1860, the public authorities approved the inclusion of the surrounding municipalities into the new city limits. The government initially rejected integrating the poor eastern *faubourgs* into Paris to avoid the large expenses needed to improve these areas (Faure, 2020). In fact, in 1861, the imperial government described the disgraceful new streets of the *faubourgs* to justify their annexation into Paris.

*Sortez du Paris actuel et pénétrez dans ce nouveau Paris qui l'enveloppe, le presse et n'en est séparé que par l'épaisseur du mur de l'octroi. [. . .] Vous êtes arrivés, presque sans transition, en face d'une immense agglomération de rues sans but, de ruelles et d'impasses choquantes, de groupes d'habitations entassées comme au hasard. L'état de la voie publique y est défectueux ; plus du tiers de la surface des rues n'est ni pavé ni empierré. Les égouts, l'éclairage, la distribution des eaux, l'arrosage sont imparfaits (Henri Sellier, 1921, p. 31).<sup>205</sup>*

Despite the declared urbanistic reasons for doing so, the need to manage the poor and working-class spaces in a socially explosive context seemed to be a fundamental factor. The development of the Commune de Paris in 1870 could have been triggered, to a large extent, by the inhabitants of such areas (Merriman, 1991), although these security reasons had been put into question (Faure, 2020). The annexation seemed to lead to an important effort to provide the area with public infrastructure, improving the water supply and developing a humble urbanisation in the area (Ibid 2020). In addition, the Parisian Hygiene Commissions started to survey the newly integrated territories. Whilst including the new areas in the city led to a significant augmentation in the number of denunciations (Kalff, 2016), specific research need to be done to know to what extent the denunciations were specifically about the shacks, and how they influenced the evolution of the phenomenon in the area.

In any case, the *faubourgs* started during the second half of the 19th century through a process of integration and an apparent reduction of substandard housing areas. The developers' preference to build bourgeois housing, the scarcity of terrain, the increasing urban and housing infrastructures such as water, gas, electricity (Bastié, 1964, p. 189), and the demolition of working-class shelters (Lévy-Vroelant, 1999) all made the popular real estate market shrink inside Paris. At the same time, between 1886 and 1911, the population of the Seine *banlieue* (the towns surrounding Paris) increased 101.9% (Henri Sellier, 1921), whilst inside the city limits the population rose 56% (Topalov, 1987).

During the last decades of 19th century, the new periphery seemed to be developed mainly through allotments, known as *lotissements*. This kind of urban growth process was characterised by the existence of agents who subdivided and commercialised rural plots as urban, generating a substantial revalorisation of the land price. They established private plots,

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<sup>205</sup> The text remained unreferenced in the original text.

designed and paved the roads, and asked for public approval for the disposition and dimensions of the new streets. The public sector collaborated, transferring the urbanisation process to the private sector and supporting it with public loans, in some cases giving subventions for the work or the plots to be developed (Topalov, 1987). The mobilisation of private capital allowed a large increase in this kind of urban development, giving rise mainly to villas and leisure areas for the upper classes (Bastié, 1964; Fourcaut, 2000; Tournier, 2018) but also to poor allotments.

These poor allotments consisted of the subdivision of rural lands and their commercialisation into building plots without basic infrastructures. Opening new streets on a plot of land led not only to the development of buildings on it but to the increasing processes of land subdivision, plot commercialisation, and speculation in the surrounding areas. The streets planned by the land developer were sometimes transferred to the public sector (Gaudin, 1989), but, as will be shown, they frequently remained in the hands of the new inhabitants and lacked maintenance and improvements.

In a context of accelerated urbanisation, spontaneous urban growth presented sanitary and security risks, and it also increasingly affected the dynamics of the land market and real estate investments.

Although the law of 5 April 1884 obligated the small municipalities to establish alignment and levelling plans, the local administrations had few tools to prevent poor areas from surfacing, and they could not provide a stable framework for the real estate investments. The spontaneous development of the lands could produce a dramatic fall in the surrounding land value through the “free” development of real estate operations. An unplanned process such as the development of a poor neighbourhood, the installation of a polluting industry (Bastié, 1964), or the expropriation of a terrain by a public powers operation (Lemesle, 2003) could ruin a well-designed investment.

At the same time, the public sector was frequently obligated to pay very high capital sums for the expropriation and demolition of areas that had already been built, in place of “planning” where they would be placed and acquiring them before any construction was built. Consequently, the public powers expended enormous sums in expropriations, and investors and private developers tended to wait for an area to be consolidated before building their plot, freezing the land market and inducing speculation. To cope with uncertainty, private real estate developers had to develop complicated personal arrangements with the local political authorities to secure the investments, bordering between cooperation and corruption (Lemesle, 2003).

In Saint-Denis, as in the rest of the country, the main planning tools were the Plans Généraux d’Alignements, used to determine the precise shape of the main streets and roads. Although different plans had been established or corrected in 1812, 1832, 1837, 1841, and 1845, no plan seemed to have been drafted during the second half of the 19th century. However, the law of 5 April 1884 did not require obtaining any building permits for the so-called private streets. Therefore, when the suburbanisation process was widening in Saint-Denis, as in other industrial towns of the Paris region, the area became increasingly populated through informal areas composed of private streets and shacks. The setting of any minimum standard for private streets would not happen until the laws of 15 February and 22 July 1912. After the arrival of the chemical industry in 1822 and the installation of glass industries, Saint-Denis would see *“immeubles de brique qui viennent de surgir du sol; paquets de pavillons sans âme,*



*alignés le fond des axes de communication; cabanes construites en matériaux de rebut, couvertes de tôles de zinc ou de carton bitumé”* (Brunet p. 22 in Natacha Lillo, 2001).

By the end of the century, the existing legal framework still assigned the street development to private actors. The modernisation of the last decades of the 19th century, which led to an increased use of public supplies, sewerage systems, and light infrastructures, started to generate a growing gap between the public streets provided with urban infrastructures and the private streets without them.<sup>206</sup> However, within a liberal economic paradigm, the state was not supposed to intervene or correct these dysfunctionalities. In 1865 and 1888, two laws were approved to allow the creation of *syndicats de propriétaires*, landowners associations with the purpose of supplying urban services to the private streets of *villes et faubourgs, bourgs, villages et hamoux* and of any *amélioration ayant un caractère d'intérêt public*.<sup>207</sup> The laws helped the landowners to associate among themselves in order to finance street improvement, which required transferring them to the public powers. Such laws were created within the predominant common sense of that time; the landowners were usually fortunate, and the poor inhabitants lived in rental schemes in the city centre. The law ignored the actual urban growth, in which the upper-class neighbourhoods enjoyed self-financed services and the poorest ones could not afford them.

The increasing modernisation of the city made it necessary to create new means to increase coordination between public services and private action (Cottureau, 1969). However, the increasing territorial inequalities resulting from a self-regulated market-driven urban growth could not be addressed without a public intervention to distribute urban infrastructures to areas where their inhabitants could not afford them. At the beginning of the 20th century, new urban regulations tackled this ensemble of problems which resulted from the lack of regulating urban expansion. This new method was called urban planning.

### **The development and eradication of 19th-century substandard urbanisation within the Paris administrative limits**

During the last decades of the 19th century, the press and hygiene experts described different kinds of substandard housing development in the Paris *faubourgs*. Throughout the next pages, the genesis of these spaces and their treatment by the public powers will be discussed.

The emergence of some of the substandard areas seemed to be a consequence of different housing exclusion processes linked to speculation. The working classes were increasingly rejected as tenants because of income instability, which could not guarantee regular rent payments (Shapiro, 1985). In addition, mainly during the housing crises throughout the decade of the 1880s, landlords did not accept families or couples with children as tenants (Ibid 1985). Some members of the popular classes were expelled because of the city-centre renovations, accompanying the movement of industries to the periphery, and they were not supplied by the private developers in charge of city growth (Gaillard, 1997). This process drove them to self-develop small shacks on cheap land in the periphery. One of the first accounts about the rise of

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<sup>206</sup> The approval of the law “tout-à-l’égout” on 19 July 1894 and the equipment of the already existing areas would have increasingly contrasted with the newly developed substandard neighbourhoods.

<sup>207</sup> Loi ayant pour objet de modifier la loi du 21 juin 1865 sur les associations syndicales.

these areas was given in 1855 by the scientist, journalist, and socialist militant V. Meunier, who described the construction process of one of these areas in the Rue Delambre:

*En quelques semaines, un village entier . . . est sorti de terre. Ce qu'on peut prendre à la lettre, la boue, ramassée sur les lieux mêmes, en formant pour une bonne part la matière première. Sur la place que recouvre tel amas de débris, contre lesquelles vous trévouchez aujourd'hui, une maison construite de ces débris eux-mêmes s'élèvera demain. La partie la plus ardue de l'opération, ce n'était pas la bâtisse mais la réunion des matériaux de construction [. . .]. On peut voir en ce moment tous les degrés d'évolution que ces constructions parcourent depuis l'état d'ordures jusqu'à l'état d'achèvement. [. . .] De cet étrange amas, s'élève, çà et là, un tuyau de poêle qui atteste, de la part des habitants, la prétention de se procurer l'agrément d'une température supportable (Meunier, 1855, pp. 429–430).*

The process appeared to be spontaneous; poor populations arrived to empty plots and built temporary shacks, initially with mud and free, recycled materials, sometimes evolving to more solid kinds of construction<sup>208</sup>. The author described that despite the apparent “lack of control” that led to the rise of this neighbourhood, the situation would have been known and permitted as he had seen the police surveying the area and taking a census of the inhabitants. Therefore, the occupation of empty lands should have been tolerated by the landowners.

*A qui est-il ce sol hospitalier? Au premier occupant, paraît-il. Qui eût pensé que, dans cette capitale, un moyen aussi primitif de s'instituer propriétaire fût encore en vigueur? Les loyers sont hors prix [. . .]. Le terrain est, m'a-t-on dit, la propriété des hospices, qui l'abandonnent provisoirement à ces malades d'un genre nouveau et épidémique. -Une non-monnaie chronique est leur maladie, dont ils mourront! (Meunier, 1855, pp. 429–430).*

A similar spontaneous land occupation was described in a different location also in 1855; the case of the infamous Cité Doré, described in the “*Notice administrative, historique et municipale du XIII arrondissement de la Ville de Paris*” (1860) by M. Doré, the son of the landowner where the neighbourhood have been built. In his account, the area, known as Château de Bellevue, was a popular place before 1818 for *faubourg* residents to meet and attend cabarets. With the extension of the city limits, these activities moved abroad, and M. Doré bought the abandoned area and built a garden of 12,000 metres squared. In 1848, a group of 1,500 workers arrived to repair the nearby railway station road. After breaking down the walls that protected the plot, they began to enter frequently to rest in the area.

*Quelques-uns de ces hommes manifestèrent au propriétaire des lieux, l'idée de diviser son parc en petites portions et de les louer, pour bâtir, à des ouvriers pouvant ainsi devenir propriétaires de leur habitation, si ce n'était du fonds. Ces idées d'une part, de l'autre la difficulté pour M. Doré père de rétablir son parc dans son état primitif, l'engagèrent à tracer des rues sur la plus grande partie de son terrain, à le diviser et à le louer par petites portions avec faculté de bâtir avec un bail sous-seing privé de 20 à 25 ans, contenant cette clause définitive: A la fin du bail, le preneur pourra reprendre ses constructions et matériaux, si mieux il n'aime les céder au propriétaire du sol ou faire un nouveau bail (Doré 1860; in Bourneville, 1882, pp. 4–5).*

The rent was proportional to the quantity of land and, in a few years, the space was completely rented. The narrative, which probably omitted some details, does not allow us to

<sup>208</sup> Equivalent processes of incremental housing are studied in today's informal areas, which involves the progressive improvement of houses throughout the years, depending on the inhabitants' resources and the evolution of their family needs.

understand how the negotiations really began. Was it only his own entrepreneurial initiative that organised the settlement? Or were the workers already “camping” there when Mr Doré confronted the possibility of tackling a judicial process to force them out? Was the commercialisation of the lands provoked by the future inhabitants or was it planned by the landowner and explained in that way to justify the operation?

Counterintuitively, most of the existing accounts describe the process as borne by private initiative, frequently with an accord of a poor entrepreneur and a landowner, and not by a spontaneous land squat. The areas originated with scarce regulation, allowing the existence of a legal real estate market of cheap—and very poor—houses. The description made by the hygienist D’Haussonville was explicit about the substandard housing rental market.

*Généralement les maisons de ces cités, de ces passages, de ces impasses se sont élevées peu à peu sur des terrains vagues et le propriétaire du sol n'est pas le même que le propriétaire des maisons. Ce dernier est presque toujours un principal locataire qui, après avoir loué le terrain pour une période d'années assez longues, l'est couvert de constructions à un étage, bâties sur le sol même, moitié en planches et moitié en plâtras. Il les loue, non pas au terme ni même au mois, mais à la semaine, au prix exorbitant de 2 fr. 50 par semaine pour une seule chambre, ce qui fait 140 francs par an. Il tire ainsi de son argent un intérêt annuel de 25 pour 100, et, comme il se fait toujours payer d'avance, il n'est exposé à aucune perte. [. . .] Ajoutons que, si le propriétaire avait la faiblesse de laisser occuper gratuitement ces masures pendant un temps indéfini, elles ne tarderaient pas à devenir un repaire que la sécurité publique rendrait nécessaire de fermer. L'expérience en a été faite dans une cité située à Clignacourt et elle a été concluante (D’Haussonville, 1881, p. 840)*

Most of the sources reveal the commercial beginnings of some of these spaces, which were developed by individuals facing the intuitive, spontaneous dynamics of land occupation that today are frequently assumed as the origin of this kind of spaces. The same commercial procedure happened in the 8 Avenue de Choisy, where a main tenant of a piece of land set up a small “mobile barrack”, used as a wine shop, and allowed poor populations to build barracks on the plot for a small sum of money, around 12 francs per month. Annexed to it, he also sub-rented a *garnie* (furnished barrack) to two people. On the plot, which had no paths, there were other shacks whose owners paid rent to the principal tenant. One of the shacks was an ex-mobile structure (a chariot without wheels) inhabited by street performers,<sup>209</sup> and the others were wooden barracks built with bituminous cardboard, with nothing for a floor more than compacted land. The sanitation consisted of a hole in the ground (Du Mesnil, 1890). At 21 Boulevard de la Gare, another area formed a denser neighbourhood that included two lines of shacks around a private “street” 3 metres in width. The tenants rented each shelter weekly. The houses had been built directly on compressed land and included a central drain which collected pluvial and sewage waters, and they had broken windows covered with tarpaulin or metal sheets. Du Mesnil reported that the hygienic commission decided to act against only the humidity of the walls.

M. Chevalier, cited in a book by Du Mesnil, also revealed the existence of a 5-hectare field close to the previous area, between the *Batailles* and *Lonchamps* barriers. Initially rented for 5,000 francs and after subdivided, it was rented in plots to “miserable populations” producing 22,460 francs (Du Mesnil, 1895). The doctor described many other examples with similar building characteristics in areas criticised for having garbage, bad smells, cohabitation with

<sup>209</sup> The original French word, *saltimbanques*, could also allude to Central European Roma populations.

animals, and so on. In all these cases, the same development strategy was used; the landowner had rented a plot to a main tenant, who in turn sub-rented the land to other tenants who built barracks and sometimes sub-rented again to other tenants. Although cheaper than the rest of the city areas, this kind of settlement seemed to be extremely rentable to their owners, who made back the money they had invested in the shacks within a few months.

Whilst most parts of the historical sources showed the point of view of a social elite composed of social reformers and wealthy suburban explorers, some rare press accounts provided a look into the genesis of the substandard areas from the point of view of their inhabitants. That was the case in an interview with one of the inhabitants of the Cité des Kroumurs, carried out by a journalist in the newspaper *Le Temps* in 1882. The neighbourhood, 150 metres long and 30 metres wide, was close to the already transformed Cité Doré in the Place Pinel. It had appeared on a plot rented by an entrepreneur to the Assistance Publique, the charity service, that had then been sub-rented to deprived populations who built barracks on it. In the interview, an elderly shoemaker explained the reasons that led him to build a barrack.

*Savez-vous, messieurs, que le moindre loyer coute aujourd'hui 300 francs et que, quand on est de vieux bonshommes comme ma pauvre vieille que voilà et moi, on ne peut plus gagner grand-chose et que c'est lourd à payer 300 francs? Savez-vous encore que, pour ceux qui sont plus jeunes, ce n'est pas beaucoup plus facile; si on a trois ou quatre enfants, les propriétaires ne veulent pas louer, ça fait trop de bruit et ça détériore toujours un peu la maison. [. . .] Ici nous avons plus cette angoisse du loyer, On nous donnait le terrain à 60 centimes le mètre, ce qui me faisait, pour moi, 15 fr. par trimestre à payer. [. . .] J'avais loué un terrain l'année dernière, et cette maisonnette, je l'ai bâtie moi-même, quand j'avais une heure dans la semaine, et le dimanche toute la journée j'y venais travailler. Nous sommes presque tous des gens de la campagne, et ça nous faisait plaisir de construire quelque chose qui ressemblait aux maisons de chez nous.*<sup>210</sup>

The same interview described the building process of the shack, showing a much less dramatic situation than the tales of social reformers, and approached the construction of his substandard housing as routine self-building activities and aspirations of the working classes of the time. The inhabitant, despite having erected his house on rented land, did not expect to be evicted in the short term, so he improved it step by step and rejected the miserabilist and stigmatising perspectives propagated about the inhabitants of the area.

*Voyez, nous ne sommes pas encore aussi bêtes qu'on veut bien le dire; nous avons tourné nos fenêtres vers le midi, et si nous n'avons pas de plancher, nous avons fait un bon sol de gravats et de plâtre. Regardez si c'est sec. [. . .] C'était mon rêve d'avoir un plancher. Si on m'avait donné le temps, j'en aurais fait un. Sitôt que ma maison a été couverte, je suis venu m'y installer, et peu à peu, je l'achevais; j'ai crépi les murs, et il y a quelques jours que j'ai achevé le plafond. N'est-ce pas déjà gentil, tel que c'est ? [. . .] Nous sommes, pour la plupart, de petits ouvriers, des marchands des quatre saisons, de petits employés. [. . .] Nous étions en location, c'est vrai; mais on sait ce que ce c'est: il y a ces locations qui durent toujours, et nous comptons un peu la-dessus*<sup>211</sup>.

<sup>210</sup> *Le Temps*. 23 February 1895. Le Cité des Kroumurs.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

Some decades later, another infamous space, the Cité Foucault, was also the object of journalist visits. In the book *Les rois du ruisseau* by G. Renault (1900), which was based on fieldwork research, inhabitants of the settlement were interviewed, and they explained its development. According to this account, a woman, Ms Foucault, after working for several years in a big publishing firm, decided to invest her savings in a land with that kind of substandard construction, directly managing the rent obtention. One of the inhabitants said that “*les industriels qui nous logent, gagnent davantage sur nous, en proportion, qu'un propriétaire de l'avenue de l'Opéra gagne sur ses locataires*” (Renault, 1900, p. 28).

The sources indicated a general trend of commercialising unurbanised land for shack construction. As already discussed, despite the emergence of apparently spontaneous areas, the land ownership was far from being uncontrolled by the landowners. Although some areas, such as the Rue Delambre ou la Cite Doré, seemed to emerge from land occupations, they quickly became mediated by rental relationships. However, most of the substandard areas were clearly developed by landowners or rental “entrepreneurs”.



Photo 27. Cité Millet.  
Source: (Hamon, 1901).

Regarding the genesis of these spaces, the historical sources also showed their problematisation from very different perspectives, permitting us to nuance the general perceptions of the time by the accounts of some direct observations to these areas.

As it has already been explained, from a sanitary point of view, the small size of the barracks made those areas seem suspicious of corrupting the air and provoking disease and vitiated spirits among the inhabitants. In the famous book *L'habitation du pauvre*, the doctor O. Du Mesnil solemnly declared that “*la justice et l'hygiène nous commandent de faire disparaître ces cloaques immondes, où la santé s'altère en même temps que l'esprit se pervertit*” (Du Mesnil, 1890, p. 14). However, at that time such developments did not seem to be perceived as the main sanitary risk. Initiatives such as the *cassier sanitaire*, a building census to “scientifically” establish the defective housing areas of Paris and renovating them (Fijalkow, 1991) seemed to largely ignore this kind of peripheral substandard neighbourhood.

For instance, during the controversy that involved the Cité Doré, the idea was defended that the workers built small barracks and vegetable gardens that permitted the inhabitants to

breathe “good air and in big quantity”, which meant that they were “salubres et hygiéniques dans la plus grande acception de ces mots” (Ibid 1882, p. 5). Indeed, in the case of the Cité Doré, he explained that, “en 1849, alors que le choléra faisait de si grands ravages dans la ville de Paris, dépeuplait des maisons tout entières dans la rue Mouffetard, à peine si l'on constata un cas mortel parmi les habitants de la cité Doré” (Ibid 1882, p. 5).

The same argument was defended by the politician O. D’Haussonville, who stated that the subsequent cholera epidemics in 1873 had largely impacted the city centre of Paris but not so much the substandard areas in the periphery.

*Les XIXe et XXe arrondissements, où nous avons rencontré tant de misère, ont été moins frappés, sans doute parce que la population y vit plus au large, et le XIIIe qui est cependant le plus pauvre de Paris, mais où une population peu nombreuse est disséminée sur une vaste étendue de terrain, n’a compté qu’un nombre insignifiant de décès* (D’Haussonville, 1881, p. 843).

Despite the very negative view of some of the members of the hygiene commission, these self-help areas were frequently tolerated as an acceptable solution, as they provided habitats in open spaces with enough air and sun and allowed the working classes to embrace the liberal values of ownership. As Privat d’Anglemont proposed,

*Dans un siècle où l’on parle tant de moralisation des masses que dans le notre, où l’on est prêt à tout entreprendre, nous conseillons aux hopitals qui possèdent, comme on le sait, tant de terrains vagues dans les faubourgs, terrains qui ne leur rapportent rien ou presque rien, d’essayer une colonisation semblable à celle qui s’est faite à la Cité Doré* (Privat d’Anglemont; in Doré, 1860, p. 8).

In addition, as has been already shown, the territorial control devices at that time were insufficient not only in controlling the shacks’ development and surveying them after construction but in demanding big transformations. As O. D’Haussonville claimed, concerning the Commission de Logements Insalubres de Paris,

*En réalité, que peut-elle? Faire exécuter par le propriétaire quelques travaux de nettoyage ou d’assainissement pour assurer l’écoulement des eaux ménagères; faire décider la substitution de tel système à tel autre dans l’installation des cabinets privés [. . .]; parfois faire agrandir une loge de concierge ou démolir une soupenne dont le cube d’air est insuffisant, et puis c’est tout. Quant à la grande mesure d’interdiction de louer pour cause de santé publique, il est infiniment rare qu’on y ait recours. [. . .] L’exécution de ces décisions est souvent paralysée par la mauvaise volonté des propriétaires, [. . .] qui préfèrent en fin de compte, se laisser condamner à une amende illusoire, plutôt que de se résigner à des travaux onéreux* (D’Haussonville, 1881, p. 344).

Housing experts and social reformers continued demanding the necessity to eradicate these areas, although this view was not unanimous. The press, in their visits, occasionally showed a more balanced narrative, avoiding, however, contradicting the “common sense” of the time that considered those spaces as inhuman and requiring demolition. The very stigmatising tales about these areas probably expressed the deep social distance between the bourgeois “explorers” of the new periphery and the real life of these settlements<sup>212</sup> more than the actual situation of many in these areas (Ratcliffe, 1991). This bias became especially clear when

<sup>212</sup> This bias is still frequent in contemporary discourses about informal areas (Pearlman, 1978).

comparing Du Mesnil's tales about the Cité Des Kroumurs, but it probably also influenced the representations about other substandard housing areas, as the hesitations of the journalist Hamon revealed,

*Chacun voulut nous montrer son intérieur: Ce n'est pas riche, mais ce n'est pas trop mal; ce n'est pas de la pierre de taille, mais ça n'en est moins chaud. [. . .] Le rapport a peut-être en effet noirci le tableau; à côté de baraques inhabitables et immondes, il y a quelques constructions qui, au milieu de leur jardinet, ont beaucoup moins mauvaise apparence. Cependant, dans son ensemble, la cité des Kroumurs n'est pas défendable.*<sup>213</sup>

*Toutes les cités, cependant, ne sont point aussi primitives. Quelques-unes, comme la cité Baudricourt, sont presque gaies avec les plantes grimpantes qui enguirlandent leur pauvreté et les pots de fleurs qui masquent les fenêtres. Certains même . . . sont propres et respirent l'aisance d'ouvriers rangés. [. . .] Ici se place la question de l'Hygiène avec un grand H. Ces habitations sont-elles malsaines et peuvent-elles provoquer des épidémies? (Hamon, 1901, p. 721).*

The demands to eradicate these spaces were justified not only by sanitary concerns. These spaces were frequently constituted by marginal, racialised communities, such as Polish, Jewish, or Roma bohemians, and contemporary observers of these spaces permitted the excluded populations to gather and develop distinctive communities: "Placés à l'un des derniers échelons de l'échelle sociale, ils se sentent méprisés de l'homme correct; [. . .] ils se groupent par tribus, par cités, [. . .] sans contrôle de gens dégoûtés ni colère de propriétaires indignés" (Hamon, 1901, p. 717).

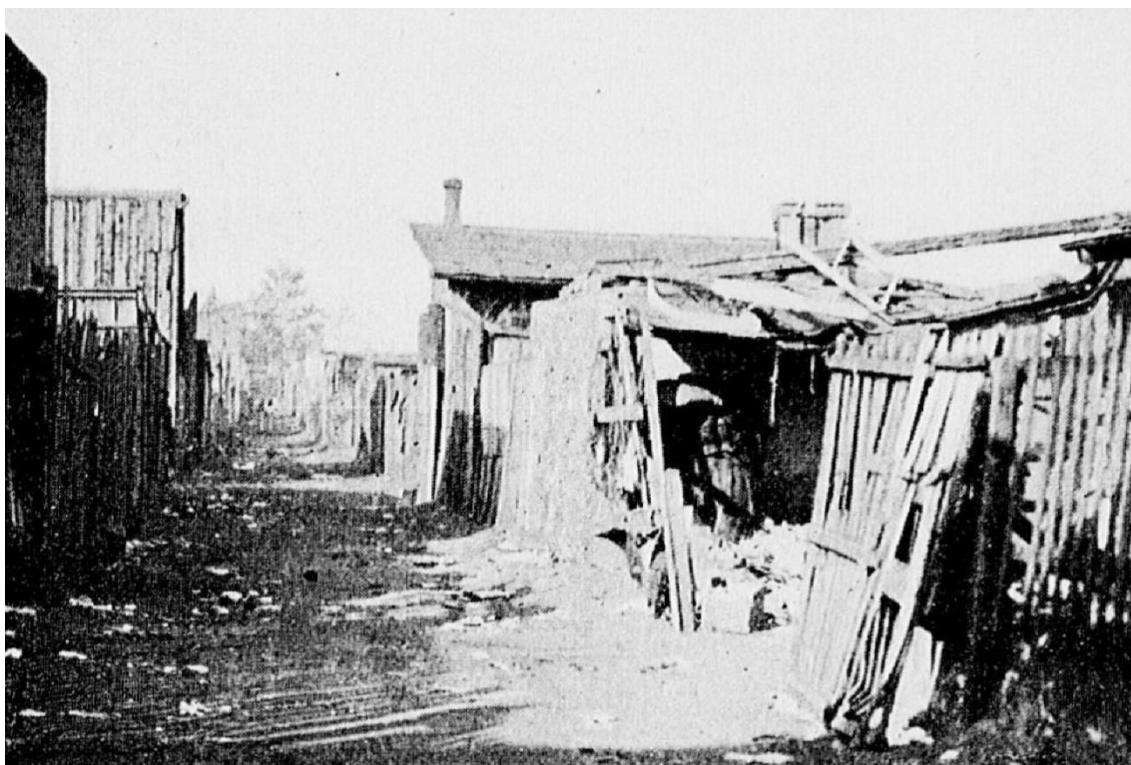


Photo 28. Cité Millet, Grande Rue.  
Source: (Hamon, 1901, p. 713).

<sup>213</sup> *Le Temps*. 23 February 1895. Le Cité des Kroumurs.

Whilst several historical texts identified these areas as being inhabited by sub-proletarian populations such as ragpickers, some historical censuses, such as the one developed in the Cité Doré, showed that despite prevalent perceptions, the area was mainly inhabited by working-class populations.<sup>214</sup>

However, beyond the sanitary concerns there were many others. As M. Doré ironically explained about the inhabitants of the areas surrounding the Cité Doré, it was not enough that the houses solved the inhabitants' housing problems and had no nearby cholera infections; it was necessary that the housing area "*ne choque pas le regard délicat et artistique de vois voisins*" (Ibid 1882, p. 5). The presence of substandard housing areas would be considered an abomination that needed to be eradicated, regardless of the needs of the inhabitants. In 1852, the mayor of the nearby town Ivry-Sur-Seine, reported the Cité Doré to the hygiene commission. Although different official visits were accomplished without clear advice about the area and the barracks were legal and paid ownership taxes, in 1853 the *architecte-voyer* of the 12th district denounced the existence of twenty-one buildings close to an important road, whose plans had not been delivered to the city supervision. Despite being inside a closed area and therefore outside the 1852 law, the municipality required technical documents of these constructions to be delivered. The inhabitants, unable to provide them, decided to transfer their contracts to private speculators in most cases, who legally erected *garnis* (rental houses), quickly creating a dense, consolidated slum of buildings between two and five storeys (Doré, 1860).

Another big issue concerning the substandard areas was, of course, the evictions. On the one hand, one of the participants involved in the precarious rental schemes often decided to use the clauses that, legally inscribed in the contracts, permitted terminating the agreements and dispossessing their inhabitants. As D'Haussonville stated,

*Lorsqu'au but d'une vingtaine d'années, le principal locataire voit son bail expirer, il se retire avec une aisance assez ronde, abandonnant pour une légère plus-value ses constructions au propriétaire. Celui-ci, ne voulant point continuer ce triste commerce, les fait démolir et expulse du coup une centaine de familles qui vont promener leur misère ailleurs. Ces familles, prévenues d'avance, attendent jusqu'au dernier moment pour se trouver un logis dans l'espérance vague qu'n les laissera là pour rien et se font mettre sur le pavé. On s'émeut alors, on se récrie contre l'inhumanité du propriétaire, contre l'imprévoyance de l'assistance publique, sans s'informer si on ne se trouve pas en présence (ainsi que cela est arrivé tout récemment) d'un droit parfaitement légitime qu'une inertie calculée voudrait tenir en échec* (1881, p. 840).

Although during the second half of 19th century authorities and hygienists had intense debates about housing, at that time no public intervention had been instituted at that time to compensate the inhabitants for the eradication of their houses. As Shapiro (1985) stated, the inhabitants of those areas were most interested in avoiding the surveyance of the public powers within their neighbourhoods.

*On nous met à la porte, dit-il, la seule grâce qu'on nous fasse est de nous accorder jusqu'au moins d'octobre pour nous pourvoir. D'indemnité, personne n'en parle, et personne ne s'occupe non plus de savoir comment nous nous logerons [ . . . ]. J'ai mis mes économies là-dedans; pas grand chose, mais enfin c'était tout ce que j'avais. Vous savez bien que tout s'achète à Paris,*

<sup>214</sup> See annexes, p.313, Cité Doré.



*même les plâtras. Il y en a ici qui ont dépensé encore plus que moi. Là, à côté, il y a un maçon qui a acheté des moellons: il a mis plus de 1.200 francs dans sa maison. Et tout ça est perdu. A la porte! Quittez tout. Nous sommes de braves gens, il n'y avait jamais de bruit ici. Pourquoi agit-on comme ça envers nous? Il nous semble qu'on nous doit quelque chose. L'expulsion nous ruine; comment nous relogerons-nous? On nous fait une injustice. [. . .] des messieurs qui griffonnent leurs papiers dans les bureaux ne le soupçonnent même pas. Un trait de plume, et voilà cent cinquante pauvres diables sur le pavé [. . .]. Voilà comment on ensauvage le peuple.*

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Furthermore, strong evidence exists about the antagonism that public action induced in the inhabitants of these areas. In a visit of the Cité Millet led by G. Hamon, after having been impeded from taking a photograph of the area by a group of people who believed that he could have been sent by the Prefecture de Police, explained,

*Depuis longtemps l'on veut nous supprimer [. . .] et l'on cherche par tous les moyens à nous faire passer pour des gens ignobles, sales et dangereux pour la santé publique. L'hygieniste, comme le capitaliste, est notre adversaire. Les uns nous disent que nos logements sont malsains, nous sommes aussi bien portants qu'eux. Il nous plait à nous d'habiter dans des maisonnettes bâties à notre guise (Hamon, 1901, p. 723).*

The criminalisation and eviction of poor populations would have fuelled the politicisation of working-class populations. These strong positions contrast with some of the perceptions still-existing today of the phenomenon of informal housing as an expression of the marginality and social anomie of their inhabitants (Chevalier, 1958; Ratcliffe, 1991).

To sum up, the extensive accounts from the second half of the 19th century about informal housing areas inside Paris reveal the lack of efficiency of the territorial control devices, which could only be put into action once the spaces were built and publicly highlighted. Furthermore, the abundance of references about those spaces invites interrogating the geography and historical evolution of these areas.

In 1855, the earliest account of an informal area was described in the press by V. Meunier, which was about the Rue Delambre. Five years later, in 1860, the case of the Cité Doré was reported. Two decades later, the space still existed, probably already transformed, and other *cités*, such as the Cité Gand, Cité Philippe, and Cité du Tarn, were also identified as barrack areas. All of them were situated in the 19th and 20th *arrondissement*, which he considered largely composed of “*des cités, des passages, des impasses, qui sont le véritable refuge de la misère*” (D'Haussonville, 1881, p. 840).

Nine years later, Doctor Du Mesnil, secretary of the Commission Consultative d'Hygiène, described various barrack areas that had existed since the 1880s, which still included the Cité Doré and also the Avenue de Choisy, Boulevard de la Gare, Château des Rentiers, Rue Jonas, Passage d'Ivry, Rue des Hospices, Rue de la Pointe d'Ivry, Rue Baudricourt, and the Clos Macquart (Du Mesnil, 1890). Contrasting with the previous tales, all these areas were located in the south-eastern periphery of the city.

Eleven years later, the journalist G. Hamon provided a new description of the heteroclite *campements* existing in Paris. Some of them had already been identified fifty years earlier, such as the Rue Delambre and the Petit Pologne, and others thirty years before, such as the

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<sup>215</sup> *Le Temps*. 23 February 1895. Le Cité des Kroumirs.

Clos Macquart. In addition, new spaces were also cited, including Rue Sainte, le petit Mazas, and the Cité Foucault (Hamon, 1901). Although, as shown in the map below, many seemed to be concentrated in the south-east of the city, this over-representation is due to the abundance of data provided by Dr Du Mesnil, who seemed to work preferentially in this area. Further research would require identifying the current locations of these disappeared areas.

In addition to these references, and without precise temporal indication, historical photographs allow us to identify areas of informal urbanisation around Rue Champlain, in the 20th arrondissement, and in the so-called Maquis Montmartre, in the 18th arrondissement. Although, as shown in the map below, many seemed to be concentrated in the south-east of the city, this over-representation is due to the abundance of data provided by Dr Du Mesnil, who seemed to work preferentially in the 13eme arrondissement. Probably, other areas of the city hosted an equivalent proportion of cités.

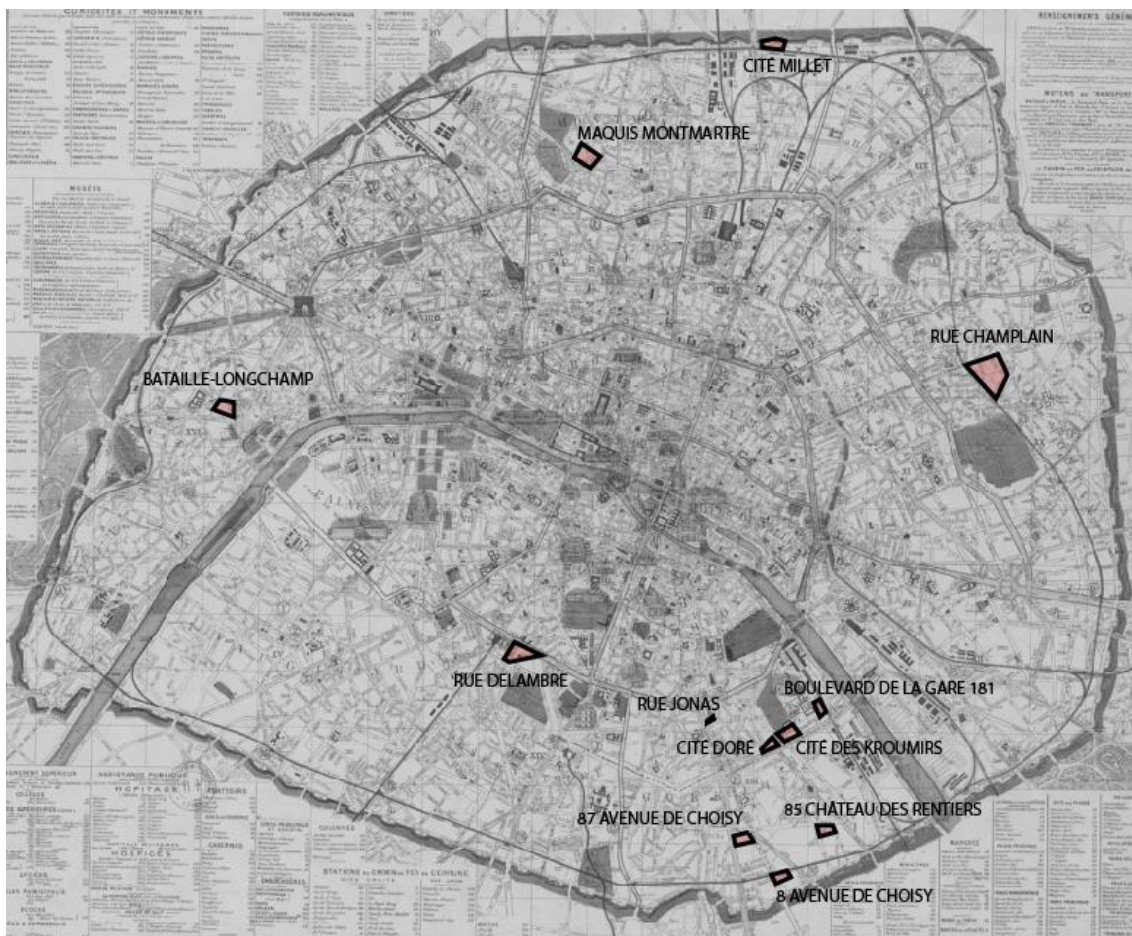


Illustration 10. Cartographical approximation to the geography of the Paris' Cités (1850-1900)<sup>216</sup>

Source: the author, from (Du Mesnil, 1890; Hamon, 1901; Meunier, 1855; Renault, 1900).

Whilst calculating the inhabitants of these areas was methodologically impossible, O. D'Haussonville attempted to do it in 1881, proposing that about 39,000 inhabitants living in

<sup>216</sup> Many of the sources indicated have not been represented, as it was impossible to identify their names or addresses in the geography of the city. In some cases, the location is approximate.

the tenancies paid rents of less than 200 francs within the Paris city limits (D'Haussonville, 1881, p. 847). However, this quantity would probably include at the same time the inhabitants of city-centre slums and peripheral shack areas. The author also described the extension of the phenomenon beyond the city limits, mentioning its extension to the *banlieue* (the Paris suburbs) and particularly in Saint-Denis:

*La misère gagne en effet dans la banlieue et y fait en quelque sorte la tache d'huile. Elle s'est installée d'abord dans la plaine Saint-Denis, cette plaine hideuse et empestée, justement chère aux descriptions des naturalistes, avec ses chemins de gravats semés de tessons de bouteilles, ses jardins de légumes arrosés de purin, ses tas de fumier et ses linges sales suspendues à de cordes.* (D'Haussonville, 1881, p. 828).

In this municipality, the first account we found about barrack housing dates from October 1865, ten years after the first Parisian account. In that year, a report noted that on the road from Stains to Gonesse, a barrack known as *chateau des allouettes* (castle of matches), had been improved. “L'eau du ciel n'y pénètre plus, le sol est carrelé, il y a du papier de tenture et un locataire propre. On dit d'ailleurs qu'elle (the barrack) sera très prochainement abattue. [. . .] Elle paraît maintenant pouvoir être habitée sans danger”.<sup>217</sup>

However, the earliest account found about a whole substandard housing area appeared on 6 February 1889 when the city council discussed a popular petition asking for the installation of a public fountain outside the city, on the road between Saint-Denis and the town of Pierrefitte. The municipality hesitated to satisfy the demand. Despite city council's promise to provide water to all the neighbourhoods of the municipality, this investment was considered by the authorities useless in such a precarious space. The arrangement used to build the area seemed similar to the already described in the Paris *faubourgs*. As one of the councillors mentioned,

*Tous les terrains, je crois, sur lesquels sont construites les baraques de la route de Pierrefitte appartiennent à l'hospice. Ils ont été loués comme terrains de culture et non pour y élever des constructions. Tous les locataires ont des baux, et s'il plaisait à l'administration d'en prendre possession, il faudrait démolir.*<sup>218</sup>

Although during the discussion nobody specified the number of inhabitants, there were approximately five hundred petitioners. Finally, the city council made the decision to build a fountain but only provide water a limited number of hours per day.

The discussion revealed different facts. On the one hand, as in the already discussed Parisian cases, the areas emerged on rented lands, interestingly again, owned by public charity services. Although further research should clarify this topic, it is possible that these institutions allowed the existence of these spaces to “support” the impoverished populations, earning money instead of hosting them. On the other hand, it is also interesting to note that, as we will see later on, the public powers considered it useless to provide public services to such precarious areas. The situation was tolerated, but the inhabitants' rights were ignored.

Finally, at that moment, the existence of barrack areas without sanitation seemed banal to the city councillors, who did not mention any intervention of a hypothetical local hygiene

<sup>217</sup> Archive Municipal de Saint-Denis (AMSD), CT 1200.

<sup>218</sup> Intervention of M. Gabier, Conseil Municipal de Saint-Denis séance du 6 février 1889.

committees, although a regional hygiene commission of Paris, *Commission d'Hygiène de la Préfecture de la Seine*, was intended to act in the *banlieue*.<sup>219</sup>

The focus of the regional hygiene commissions, as in the case of Paris, did not seem to be the substandard peripheral areas. Despite frequent citations, the key reason to destroy such spaces did not seem at that moment to be the sanitary threats; the semi-rural, poor built areas posed a minor risk compared with the unhealthy city-centre slums. However, the modernisation of public infrastructures in Paris in the 19th century—such as the obligatory use of the “tout-à-l’égout” in consolidated areas—and the beginning of the metropolitisation process and its subsequent migration of poor populations to the municipalities surrounding Paris would, step by step, change the focus from “problem territories” from the city centre to the growing *banlieue*.

The existence of substandard areas in 19th century seemed to obey to an economic logic of rental exploitation of the lowest strata of the working classes and precarisation of their property rights. The land contracts, with a delay after which the area would be in the hands of the landowners, led to the constructors of the barracks to make them from very cheap materials and not improve them. The defectiveness of these areas was a consequence of not only the incapacity of the population to invest in the houses but of the fragility of their right to stay.

At this point in the research clear narratives of land squats, understood as an opposition to the landowners’ rights, have not been found. Instead, a large number of historical sources show how informal areas emerged as a real estate market, driven by landowners, and specialised in the extraction of temporary incomes from low-rent populations. The legality of these practices in an unregulated market could explain the explicit accounts of their functioning at that time. The Parisian development of substandard housing areas during the second half of the 19th century seemed to be consequence of rational, speculative strategies of the landowners to obtain income from vacant lands.

Although the hygiene committees actions to control the areas were scarce, the demolition or transformation of various neighbourhoods, probably also influenced by the urban growth and the revalorisation of the lands, led some of the lowest strata of the working classes to migrate and rebuild poor shelters in the *banlieue*, provoking as its first stage an enormous belt of defective housing areas around the city walls of Paris, the *Zone*.

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<sup>219</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP), DB art. 438, Service de l’inspection Sanitaire à Paris et dans les Communes du ressort de la Préfecture de Paris (1895).

# THE REGULATION AND PROHIBITION OF INFORMAL URBANISATION IN THE PARIS REGION 1900s–1930s

During the first decades of the 20th century, the control of substandard housing development took a step forward by generalising housing survey methods through the development of *bureaux hygiene* and implementing a bureaucratic tool to review housing quickly before construction: the building permit.

However, the public powers maintained a space outside the scope of this new control device—the *Zone*—where it was legal to build extremely precarious shacks. The poor and working-class populations started to be concentrated in this outlying land beyond the city limits, ruled under some “exception regulations” but permanently threatened by its future demolition.

At the same time suburbanisation was advancing in the *banlieue*, in the peripheral towns around Paris there were scarce hygiene measures and few building restrictions. The area’s urban growth led to the progressive development of unequipped private streets, where the working classes acquired plots and developed substandard houses, remaining without infrastructure for decades.

However, in the 1920s a “flood” of modest populations started to settle in the distant areas of the Paris periphery in a process that provoked a social scandal. The lack of geographical limits of this “new” urban problem led to the prohibition of developing substandard allotments for housing purposes, known as *lotissements défectueux*, across the French territory. This process was tackled by the development of urban regulations put in place to avoid the process and with the birth of contemporary urban planning.

The prohibition of these areas and the implementation of the first master plan in the Paris region caused new substandard housing areas to develop by bypassing legality through opaque methods, such as hidden commercial agreements and clandestine shack construction. This transformation of substandard urban growth seemed to continue after WWII, leading to the infamous development of even more precarious areas: the *bidonvilles*.

## **La Zone: The development of a legal substandard housing area and its influence on the birth of Paris regional planning**

During the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the integration of the old *faubourgs* into Paris was followed by a movement of the lowest strata of the working classes to the cheap periphery, leading to the development of an enormous belt of substandard neighbourhoods around Paris: the *Zone*. Although the archival research developed in this thesis did not obtain enough sources on this subject, the decisive importance of this area cannot be avoided in a text dedicated to tracing the origins and evolution of the substandard urbanisation processes in the Paris region and its relationship with the birth of urban planning.

Accordingly, the emergence and institutional control of the *Zone* will be briefly described mainly using secondary sources and specifically the work of Anne Granier (2017), *La Zone et les zoniers de Paris, approches spatiales d'une marge urbaine (1912-1946)*.



Photo 29. Zone Kremlin Bicêtre, 1913.  
Source: Agence Rol, Gallica.

The *Zone* got its name from the “Zone non-aedificandi” of the Paris city walls. In 1841, despite the general European trend of demolishing city walls, Paris started the construction of a new *enceinte* surrounding the city. Although the ramparts required an empty area around it for military reasons, the legislators decided not to expropriate but to legally reduce the private use of land in this area. Facing the absence of expropriation or indemnities, the landowners started to engage in the cheap commercialisation of their plots before the future application of the “non-aedificandi” clause, effectively implemented in 1851. Although in 1840 most of the *Zone* was used as agricultural land, during the city wall construction the process of substandard urban development emerged as it was still possible to build legally, and the poor Paris populations and lower strata of the Paris’ working classes started to develop cheap housing in the area (Granier, 2017). However, this kind of substandard city growth in areas under military domain was not new in France; the historiography has shown equivalent processes in other cities during the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>220</sup> Further research would be required to understand how the French Army obtained funding through housing land use.

<sup>220</sup> In Brive, from the 17th century the army decided to finance the maintenance of the city walls by renting the glacié area for small constructions. During the French Revolution “some private individuals built houses without authorization and in an anarchic way on these acquired spaces” (Chavent, 2003, p. 60). In 18th-century Grenoble, a quite similar phenomenon happened. In spite of not following local urban laws and municipal decisions, the army decided to rent the glaze lands. In a context of general

In 1853,<sup>221</sup> a new rule was approved to condition the land use in the area. The width of the “Zone non-aedificandi” was extended from 250 metres to 974 metres, overlapping with already built towns. As Granier pointed out, such regulations, which affected parts of all the municipalities surrounding Paris, were explicitly thought to make the suburbanisation beyond the city-walls more difficult. As a part of the new regulations, the “Zone non-aedificandi” was subdivided into three zones with different norms, the second one having strong building restrictions, where any house would be demolished in case of military need. In this “zone” it was only permitted to build with poor materials, such as wood and earth, to facilitate dismantling. The constructions could be destroyed without any indemnification if military authorities decided to do so (Granier, 2017).

Consequently, the barrack housing constructions in the area became legal and the pace of construction increased, especially after the annexation of the *faubourgs* to Paris in 1860 and the establishment of the fiscal frontier of Paris, the *octroi*,<sup>222</sup> beyond the city wall. Including the *faubourgs* inside Paris implied bigger taxes on all basic products imported into the area, leading to higher prices of food and most materials used by artisans and industries. The continual destruction of cheap houses inside the Paris city centre, leading to a process of gentrification *avant-la-lettre*, frequent abuse by the Paris landlords (*vautours*), and the waves of epidemics of the city, caused the popular classes to move towards the semi-rural periphery. In a monograph about the way of life of the ragpickers described at the turn of the century,

*Forcés d'abandonner le faubourg Saint-Marceau et la rue Sainte-Marguerite, en plus grand nombre que jamais, le chiffonniers franchirent les fortifications, allèrent rejoindre ceux qui habitaient déjà dans les terrains vagues* (Renault, 1900, pp. 25–26).

Although the area was eventually identified as a space for the popular classes, romanticised for its “picturesque” urban and social landscape and its fraternity, the *Zone*, was generally seen as negative. The control of the population movement due to the new walls and *octroi* led social groups with legal problems, such as immigrants, politically subversive individuals, and other deviant populations identified as *classes dangereuses* (Chevalier, 1958), to move beyond it. As D’Haussonville explained in 1881,

*Cette première ceinture de misère qui environne l'ancien Paris sera bientôt enveloppée elle-même par une seconde qui envahira toute la portion de la banlieue contigüe au mur d'enceinte. [. . .] Vienne, ce qu'à Dieu ne plaise, une nouvelle épopée parisienne, comme celle de la commune, et ces villages de la banlieue disputeront certainement à Belleville et à Montmartre l'honneur d'y jouer un rôle, de même que Belleville et Montmartre ont enlevé le sceptre de la révolution au quartier Saint Merri et au faubourg Saint-Antoine, devenus presque des quartiers bourgeois. Sans insister sur ce noir pronostic, on peut dire cependant qu'il y a dans l'existence de cette population flottante, misérable, aigrie, qui vient se grossir de tout le rebut, de tout le vomissement de Paris, un sujet de préoccupation constante pour l'autorité publique, à la surveillance de laquelle elle échappe, et que cette préoccupation devra un jour ou l'autre gagner aussi la charité* (D’Haussonville, 1881, p. 829).

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overcrowding, individuals started to build unauthorised houses and gardens in the area. The process remained unsolved until the demolition and reconstruction of the city walls in the 19th century, when these areas were absorbed by the city (Borrel, 2010).

<sup>221</sup> Décret 10 aout 1853, modifying the dispositions of the laws in 1791 and 1794.

<sup>222</sup> The fiscal distinction between Paris and its periphery was not eliminated until 1942.

As already presented in the introduction and in the Madrid case study, the defective housing areas started to be problematised during the last decades of the 19th century for their risk to socially corrupt the working classes. These fears were “scientifically” founded on the psychiatric, biological, and racial theories of that time and connected the concepts of illness, social and racial decay, and revolutionary risk. Therefore, controlling the housing development of the poor and working classes was considered a task of “social hygiene” which could help to solve most of the social problems of France. At a conference, Dr Grasset, president of the Alliance d’Hygiène Sociale stated,

*Si nous combattons les logements insalubres, ce n’est pas seulement pour qu’il y ait moins d’odeurs pestilentielles dans certains quartiers, mais pour enseigner au peuple que la propreté est une vertu et pour l’aider à posséder cette qualité morale, source de beaucoup d’autres. [. . .] Les épidémies, la tuberculose, l’alcoolisme, l’insalubrité des logements... et leur hideux cortège, la mortalité infantile, la déchéance physique et morale, la dépopulation, l’humiliation et la défaite! (Grasset, 1905, p. 23).*

The working classes were thought to require the active intervention of the state to monitor and “correct” them; the development of healthy housing was a way to strengthen the race during a time in which the dominant perceptions about social problems were related with the increasing support for eugenics. As has been already discussed, the medical field at that time pointed out the link between defective housing and its effect on corrupting individuals.

In this context, the *Zone* was stigmatised as a criminal space for its connection with the metropolitan emergence of phenomena such as crime, prostitution, syndicalism, and anarchist terrorism, attributing to it most of the representations constructed to disqualify the Paris “Commune”. The always-present defeat of the French troops increased the fear of a “social degeneration” of the French race caused by spaces such as the *Zone* (Charvet, 2012). The landowners of the area also contributed to these negative perspectives with the purpose of inducing the public powers to trigger an urban renewal operation that would increase the land-value of the area (Cannon, 2017).

From 1882 onwards, the low efficacy of the city walls led the public powers to debate demolishing them and deregulating the space as a military area, fuelling the landowners’ expectations of future expropriation of the houses and accelerating urban growth and land speculation in the *Zone*. However, several interests seemed to converge in maintaining the *Zone* as a space with “exception regulations”. Although the military authorities were supposed to control the building activity, they also participated in the revalorisation of the land, selling plots for building purposes. A 1819 law allowed *polygons d’exception* (exception polygons) to be constructed if their owners accepted that they could be demolished without indemnification (Granier, 2017). At the same time, the Syndicats de Zoniers, with connections to the French senate, advocated against building control (Vilanova, 2017). In addition, maintaining the city walls was defended as a border; due to the degenerative role of the cities, it was argued that such a barrier would avoid city growth and its pernicious effects on the whole society (Charvet, 2012).

Finally, the area became the main alternative for the working classes excluded from the Paris rental market, which had become increasingly selective and rejected families with young children (Voldman, 2016). A number of the *Zone* inhabitants seemed to arrive to the area after being rejected from the cheapest collective housing solutions inside Paris, the *hotels meublés* (Granier, 2017, p. 253).



In 1901, a regulation defined a range of light constructions to be legally built in the *Zone*.<sup>223</sup> Article 10 permitted the construction of,

*Baraques en bois à simple rez-de-chaussée, d'une superficie de 20m2 montées ou non sur socle en maçonnerie de 0m25 de hauteur et de 0m50 d'épaisseur, couvertes en bois, en tôle ou en carton bitumé et sans cheminée en maçonnerie, à raison d'une baraque par propriété ou par partie de propriété d'au moins 5 areas entourée de clôtures à claire-voie et régulièrement louée; ces baraques devront toujours être tenus à 2 mètres au moins des clôtures.*

Additionally, Articles 11 and 14 also made legal “*les tentes en toiles et les abris légers en toile sur carcasses légères en bois*” and “*le stationnement . . . des voitures montées sur leurs roues*” (Granier, 2017, pp. 56–57). Such norms explain the development of barrack areas and the scarcity of houses built with solid materials.

As Granier shows, although some regulations were ignored by the inhabitants of the *Zone*—such as the prohibition of taking off the wheels of the caravans—others strongly influenced the local housing typologies, such as the maximum surface area of 20 square metres per construction. According to the rule, most of the houses seemed to be composed of barracks smaller than this requirement spread through the plot and used as rooms, warehouses, toilets, and so on.

The *Zone* problem seemed to trigger the birth of urban planning in France. The need to regulate city growth was not only important in developing infrastructures or in reserving lands for public equipment—it could impede the rise of new substandard areas.

On 1 July 1908, a law, *concernant les fortifications de la Ville de Paris et les espaces libres de l'agglomération parisienne*, was approved that proposed the development of a Commission Supérieure d'Aménagement de la Agglomération Parisienne (Guelton, 2009). In 1912, along with different public administrations, the military power agreed to suppress the city walls, expropriate the area for the city for a cost of 100 million francs, and the use of the land as green belt surrounding the city; the military powers would keep 25 hectares of land. Although the arrival of WWI delayed the process, the military technology improvements made it clear that the city walls had become obsolete.

In that context, the discussion of transforming the *Zone* took a step forward. The future of the area provoked a greater discussion about the evolution of the periphery in a context of accelerated growth. In 1910, the Paris councillor L. Dasset stated that annexing the *Zone* could provoke the same phenomenon of the 1859 *faubourgs* integration into Paris, the displacement of the substandard housing phenomenon beyond the city limits (Caselle, 2012).

On 26 June 1911, the Paris City Council approved a commission to study the future extension of the city, formed by fifty members, many of them members of the Musée Social, such as J. Siegfried, G. Bontoit-Lévy, E. Hénard, and L. Bonnier. Although their work ended in 1913 without achieving any concrete, immediate projects, the control of the *Zone* and its substandard urbanisation triggered the first reflections of what the future of Paris regional planning would be. As the commission stated, it was necessary “*rechercher comment l'extension de Paris pourrait s'effectuer, non au gré du hasard, des circonstances ou des intérêts*”

<sup>223</sup> Decret 13 July 1901.

*particuliers, mais d'après un plan méthodique et harmonieux*" (Dausset, 1913, pp. 425–426 in Caselle 2012).

In 1919, the ideas of the 1911 commission gave rise to an international competition for a *Plan d'Aménagement, d'Embellissement et d'Extension* in which plans for Paris, the *Zone*, and the periphery were requested (Fernández Águeda, 2016). These ideas would be taken up again by the Comité Supérieur d'Aménagement et d'Organisation de la Région Parisienne as a way to transform the new substandard areas that emerged beyond the *Zone* (Fourcaut, 1989a), bringing about the first contemporary Paris regional plan during the 1930s.



Photo 30. Zone' family.

Source : BNF / Gallica, La zone à la Porte de Clignancourt. Agence Meurisse. 1928.

At that time, perceptions of the *Zone* had evolved. As J. Cannon has shown (2017), in the interwar period the *Zone* became a dangerous space of reproduction of the *bolchevique virus*. The inhabitants, under risk of eviction since the 1912 expropriation law, seemed to become increasingly politicised. As Henri Sellier indicated in 1912, in the event that the “*Zone non-aedificandi*” was deregulated and became an area with full building rights, most of the inhabitants would lose their houses due to clauses in their contracts that allowed the landowners to expulse the inhabitants without indemnification at any moment (Granier, 2017, p. 99). Although the *Zone* had been looked at as a “*lumpen*” space by both right and left French political actors (Beauchez & Zeneidi, 2019), the rise of political activity in the area led to denouncing the risk of the emergence of a *Zone rouge*, equivalent to the infamous *banlieue rouge*, a belt of leftist municipalities around Paris in power since municipal elections of 1919 (E Bellanger & Mischi, 2013). In this context, the regulations evolved to transform the space and deactivate it as a threat. The same year, 1919, a new law prohibited housing construction in

the area for the first time,<sup>224</sup> and a competition for the Paris extension asked for proposals to renew the *Zone* (Fernández Águeda, 2016).

However, despite the 1919 prohibition, the *Zone* continued growing. As Granier (2017) indicated, the Préfecture counted 25,047 people living in the area in some 3,000 constructions in 1911; by 1913 the population had grown to 28,887 and then to around 42,400 in 1926.

In 1930, the *Zone* definitely became part of Paris, which started the expropriation process of the area. The legal framework developed for the quick eradication and eviction of the *Zone* was also used in other slum areas: the Paris city centre and unhealthy neighbourhoods in Marseille.<sup>225</sup> The expropriation archives revealed by Granier's research, permit knowing details about the characteristics, land ownership structure, and development strategies of the area other substandard areas of the periphery would share.

According to Granier, the land ownership structure was very diverse. On one hand, 55% of the *Zone* surface was in the hands of 200 landowners, some members of the high aristocracy among them, largely a consequence of inheritances. On the other hand, 20% of the area was in the hands of small landowners of plots of less than 1000 metres squared. In her research, using expropriation documents from the late 1930s, Granier counted 2,650 small landowners, of which only 694 inhabited their own plot. Additionally, she found 2,290 files of rental, most of which consisted of the hiring out of the land to erect shacks on it. Finally, Granier found only 265 files corresponding to "free" tenancies and squats. The last ones, as we will show, happened mainly through the occupation of empty barracks during the expropriation process. These data reveal that the *Zone*, as well as most of the substandard areas detailed in the next pages, were far from being squatter settlements.

The inhabitants were often French populations that, in many cases, arrived as tenants and ended up owning not only the house but the land. In some of the cases Granier found, the plots were subdivided and rented to family members, who in turn built their own houses around the original one. In contrast, Granier stated that the administrative reports frequently alluded to the houses small landowners built only for rental purposes. Such kinds of buildings seemed to be generally linear and subdivided into several houses in a typology reminiscent of the *hotels garnis* of other parts of the city. The houses of the inhabitant-landowners frequently surpassed the 20-metres-squared legal limit and were usually built from solid materials, showing that part of the population ignored the 1901 law and improved their houses.<sup>226</sup>

Moreover, the big landowners usually developed the areas in a different way, equivalent to those already seen in the 19th-century *cités* and that, as will be shown, were also developed in Saint-Denis; the landowners delegated land and conflict management to a main tenant, who then rented the right to build barracks. While the main tenants paid very cheap prices, the barracks sub-renters could pay up to five times the price of the main tenant (Granier, 2017). In some cases, the barracks used for that location were "inherited" after the tenants who constructed them left the plot, passing them to the landowner, who then rented them at a

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<sup>224</sup> Loi 19 April 1919.

<sup>225</sup> Archives Nationales de France (ANF), 19950237\_43.

<sup>226</sup> As Granier shows, the question of the date of the house construction used to be controversial, as the oldest houses, from before 1852, had the legal right to be constructed without restrictions and were subject to a full expropriation. However, it is possible that some inhabitants decided to invest in their houses without the possibility of being expropriated, saw it as a too distant a possibility, or just did not know the changing legal conditions of the area.

higher price. This mechanism would be similar to the commercial development of substandard areas during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that which was carried in equivalent spaces in Saint-Denis, as will be discussed.

Finally, although less frequent, the *Zone* hosted operations of speculative real estate societies that bought lands expecting the disappearance of the non-aedificandi regulation and, meanwhile, decided to commercialise them for housing purposes (Granier, 2017). In that context, the creation of a submarket of renting barracks was common, and not only for the big landowners; a large part of the barracks owners had more than one construction.

To sum up, the urban morphology was not “chaotic” but instead an expression of overlapping urban fragments—plots—with different internal logic depending on the practices and commercial strategies of their owners to permit the barrack construction inside them. The spaces resulting from these dynamics used to be linear fragments of shacks around a single path and interrupted by small agricultural areas. This typology, as will be shown, was also frequent in Saint-Denis and in other areas of the Paris region, known as *impasses*. Indeed, perhaps because of the economy of space, very similar spatial configurations have been identified in substandard areas of Porto (Teixeira, 2018) and London (Gaskell, 1990).



Photo 31. *Zone*'s street.

Source : BNF / Gallica, La zone à la Porte de Clignancourt. Agence Meurisse. 1928.

Ending the *Zone* was achieved by the public powers through expropriation. In 1930, the city of Paris definitively obtained the land. In 1931, although in some areas of the *Zone* the population was still growing, the expropriations reduced the population from 34,000 in 1931 to 25,000 in 1939. However, even during the expropriation process, the public powers did not arrive to impede the housing construction. Although before the building prohibition a big part of the inhabitants had respected the maximum size of 20 metres squared, Granier noted that after 1919 the authorities seemed to be unable to control the shacks' construction.

The municipality opted to not recognise the new shacks, avoiding paying the indemnifications to the owners. While offering Habitations Bon Marché (social housing areas, known as HBM) to the *Zone*' inhabitants had been a frequent subject of discussion and announced as a solution for the area, very few inhabitants were finally rehoused to social states (Granier, 2017).

This fact seemed to be caused by a variety of reasons. There was an immense demand, and some social groups were privileged to move to the houses first, such as war-disabled individuals or city-centre residents evicted in slum-clearance operations. In addition, the cost of the HBM houses was too high, and it was not allowed for the *Zone* inhabitants to rent smaller areas than the standards the social housing managers set as healthy. Evidently, the social housing system, which was based on collective housing areas, did not allow incremental improvement of the houses, as in the *Zone*. Finally, the HBM social housing areas were not considered to be adapted to the "mentality" and way of life of the *Zone* residents. A citation from the *architecte-voyer-in-chief* showed a strategy to "reduce" their population risks through their spatial scattering. This approach, contrary to concentrating them in one place to control them, seemed to guide the rehousing processes: "*Il paraîtrait préférable de disséminer [les zoniers] en des points judicieusement choisis, de façon à les mêler un peu plus à la population courante, et les rééduquer ainsi*" (Granier, 2017, pp. 459–460).

Whilst the land and barracks owners received normal indemnification for their properties, most of the tenants received a grant from the municipality, between four and eight times the price of the monthly location, and were then simply evicted (Granier, 2017). Perhaps as a consequence, empty barracks were squatted during the expropriation process, giving rise to an illegal market managed by the *marchands de sommeil* (sleep merchants), who searched for tenants and opened and rented the shacks that had not yet been demolished. The vulnerability of the illegal tenants resulted in organised intermediaries coercing and exploiting them, a process also evident in the land squats in the Saint-Denis cases that will be discussed later.<sup>227</sup>

Meanwhile, keeping the populations in bad conditions because of the slowness of the expropriation and clearance process became a scandal, and it obligated the public powers to provide the area with provisional infrastructures, such as water supply. They installed springs and developed gas, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures in the main areas near the periphery. However, they did not allow the *Zone* inhabitants to access the new services.

Although further research should be done to understand the particularities of each area of the *Zone*, the book *Âmes en plein vent* (De La Hamonnaye, 1938), identified by J. Cannon (2017),

<sup>227</sup> Such dynamics are also evident in contemporary squatting processes (Manzano Gómez, 2015). The immanence of this kind of processes would require further research.

revealed that the Saint-Denis area of the *Zone* was especially poor and inhabited by Spanish and French anarchists (De La Hamonnaye, 1938, p. 48). As will be shown, many of the substandard areas of Saint-Denis were inhabited by Spanish populations at that time. The documentary and book *El honor de las Injurias* (García Alix, 2007) showed how the Spanish anarchist Felipe Sandoval, born in the Las Injurias shanty town in Madrid, migrated to Saint-Denis and returned to Madrid to play an important and disgraceful role in the Spanish Civil War. Whilst the works of N. Lillo (2005; 2001) have identified the pendular migrant movements between Spain and the substandard areas of Paris, further research should investigate whether the anarchist thinking played a part in the development and management of those popular spaces in both cities.

To summarise, the *Zone* concentrated the urban poor in a peripheral fringe that the public powers controlled with diverse “exception regulations”. The area was composed of a conglomerate of shacks and agricultural gardens in a complex net of private streets that gave rise to building areas without accomplishing the general housing regulations approved by the public powers in 1902 that, as we will see, set up minimal housing standards affecting Paris and the towns surrounding it. Contrastingly, in the *Zone* shacks without sanitation were legal, and the streets remained unpaved without public infrastructures.

Although the shacks that made up the area were built in part without following the law, the area’s development was mainly done under the light of law and with the tolerance of the public powers. The perspectives of the time, considering it a territory of crime, degeneration, and unrest, do not fit with the archival data and the historiographical accounts built from them. Although the area would seem to be an enormous squatting settlement from today’s perspective, it was mainly done respecting private property. The shacks of the *Zone* were mostly built under legal contracts, and only in its last stages, when housing in the area had become illegal and the land was expropriated, did the emptied shanties give rise to the illegal real estate market of housing squats.

The *Zone* ceased to exist during WWII, when the population of the area declined dramatically under the Vichy regime, as around 20,000 people were evicted. Although the destination of this group remains largely unknown and should be further researched, the disappearance of the *Zone* could have been linked to both the development of HBM housing states resulting from the Loi Loucheur in 1934, and the displacement to concentration camps of an unknown part of their inhabitants during the war. Developing these solutions seemed to be a continuation of racist perspectives; detaining deviant populations in camps, which exacerbated in the 1940s, was a French appendix to the “final solution” of Nazi Germany (Peschanski, 2013), and facilitated the destruction of the *Zone*. The few populations that remained in the area after WWII were rehoused, and the lands were transformed into the nowadays’ Paris peripheral highway.

### **Private streets, “unrecognised neighbourhoods”, and the uselessness of the housing hygiene surveillance**

The suburbanisation process brought about not only the development of a big belt of substandard areas in the close periphery of the city—the *Zone*—but a substantial disaggregation of urban space through the periphery (Álvarez Mora, 1996), which in the case of

Paris led to the production of new substandard housing areas in the rural municipalities of the Seine department.

As has been shown, from the second half of the 19th century, Saint-Denis became one of the main industrial municipalities of the Paris region, attracting an enormous quantity of working-class populations. Although during this time no new alignment plans were created to organise the urbanisation process, in 1900 it was approved a “*plan général d’alignements nouveaux dans la ville tout entière*” to determine the shape and levelling of streets in the existing areas and new peripheries.<sup>228</sup> This plan, in addition to improving the “beauty, hygiene, and healthiness” of the city, would allow modifying the street pattern and improving it “*sans entrainer de gros frais d’expropriation*”.<sup>229</sup>

Although the alignment plans were conceived to preserve and improve the public space, facilitating the street traffic and the arrival of sunlight to the houses, it did not permit controlling the characteristics of the space beyond the façades.

The alignment laws for Paris were supplemented by the décret 26 March 1852 that permitted the expropriation of any street considered “unhealthy”. Although the laws were not truly effective, as has been shown, they were supposed to control the hygiene of Paris neighbourhoods, contributing to to sanitise the inner city by demolishing and expulsing the working classes from it. Although a large number of towns surrounding Paris approved similar rules, including Saint-Denis on 23 February 1859<sup>230</sup> (Dejamme, 1887), the alignment permits were compulsory only for public streets, permitting an un-regulated urban growth on private streets.

In these areas, as has been studied in other French cities (Gaudin, 1985), there were no alignments but a minimum street width, and the land developers had to build pavements and sanitary infrastructures to transfer them to the public sector in order to be maintained by public funds. In some cases, the public administration bought land on private streets, and in other cases the private owners transferred it freely or for an economical sum to pay a compensation for future maintenance with public expenses. However, the private development of streets, known as *lotissements*, often led to a lack of investment in basic infrastructures, and as a consequence such areas quickly accumulated the most unhygienic of houses. In these cases, the municipality was obligated to invest heavily after the transfers, and the working-class owners often could not pay for it. To avoid this process, the public powers of some cities, such as Nancy, created rules forbidding the transfer of substandard private streets to the public authorities and obligating them to be closed to the ends of the streets (Gaudin, 1985, pp. 27–28).

At the end of the 19th century, the Congrès Internationaux d’Hygiène had demanded stricter street norms that integrated the need for direct sunlight in the houses. The recurrent epidemics linked to the bad conditions of the working classes drove hygienic “social control” measures to be developed to avoid the risk of contagion for the whole society. Concerning the spatial development of the cities, the goal became to surpass the traditional concerns of the

<sup>228</sup> The plan was signed by the local surveyor A. Godot, who, as we will see, would also design most of the substandard areas of the city.

<sup>229</sup> AMSD, Bulletin Municipal 27 April 1900. Confection d’un plan general d’alignement. Rapport.

<sup>230</sup> In Paris region 11, municipalities of the Seine demanded and approved the application of the 1852 decree, such as Neuilly, Puteaux, Clichy, Saint-Ouen, Boulogne, and others.

alignments laws (the division between public and private lands) to try to influence the way of life of the working classes through the characteristics of their housing development.

As A. L. Shapiro stated (1985) since the end of the 19th century the lack of effective sanitary control devices had been criticised as it only acted once the unhealthy housing areas had been developed. For instance, in 1889, a bill presented by the radical socialist Édouard Lockroy demanded that a plan be sent to a hygiene inspector for new constructions, as “*il est plus facile et moins coûteux d’empêcher de créer des foyers insalubres que de les faire en suite disparaître*”.<sup>231</sup> The project mentioned that this kind of control system was already implemented in other cities such as Brussels, Leeds, and New York. In 1900, P. Strauss, a senator from the radical party, demanded sanitary control for the constructions before development, expressing that this administrative innovation was already happening in many countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Sweden, Hungary, and Italy.

*Partout, à l'étranger, [. . .] la loi donne moyen d'imposer "préventivement" aux propriétaires et constructeurs des conditions de salubrité déterminées. Le permis de bâtir ne doit pas être une simple formalité, mais une garantie réelle. Il est indispensable, si l'on veut épargner à nos héritiers les embarras actuels, de rendre salubres toutes les maisons nouvelles. Aucune précaution de ce genre n'est possible avec la législation actuelle* (Strauss, 1900, p. 1929).

In 1902, the new *Loi relative à la protection de la santé publique* required for the first time a systematic review of new houses by the public powers. The law was created as a tool to fight the spread of epidemics, and it required a local Bureau d’Hygiène<sup>232</sup> be organised and a *règlement sanitaire* be approved in all municipalities of more of 20,000 inhabitants. Among other sanitary obligations, the law indicated that following be fixed:

*Les prescriptions destinées à assurer la salubrité des maisons et de leur dépendances, des voies privées, closes ou non à leurs extrémités, [. . .] et d'autres agglomérations quelle qu'en soit la nature, notamment les prescriptions relatives à l'alimentation en eau potable ou à l'évacuation des matières usées.*

Article 11, which focused on the fight against the poor, unhealthy areas, established that *dans les agglomérations de 20.000 habitants et au-dessus, aucune habitation ne peut être construite sans un permis du maire constatant que, dans le projet que lui a été soumis, les conditions de salubrité prescrites par le règlement sanitaire . . . sont observées.*

In other words, the new law established the building permit in France to fight against uncontrolled urbanisation and its “sanitary threats”. Concerning the existing built areas, the new *bureaux d’hygiene* was tasked with supervising and classifying the unhealthiest houses. In the event that an employee considered an area not to be complying with the *règlement d’hygiene*, the mayor, or the hygiene committee had two possibilities. They could decide to improve the building, being possible to be done by the municipality if the owner rejected it. The second option, if no constructive solution was possible, was to declare it “unfit for habitation”, making its use illegal. The law permitted the development of perimeters of unhealthy areas to expropriate. However, the high cost of this practice seemed to reserve it

<sup>231</sup> APP, DB art. 438. Proposition de loi, relative à l’assainissement des logements et habitations insalubres. *Session extraordinaire 1889, par Édouard Lockroy.*

<sup>232</sup> Such office would complement in the local sphere the already existing *Conseils Départementaux d’Hygiene*, developed by the law 10 August 1871.



for city-centre, high-density slum areas where high capital gains were also possible. On the other hand, the law also permitted sanctions for noncompliance. The owner of an unhealthy house could be punished by the penal code, and a construction without a building permit was subject to a fine of between 16 and 500 francs. However, as will be shown, the landowners established contracts that avoided any responsibility for building activity on their plots, and such sanctions did not seem to be applied to the poor builders of survival shacks.

After the law was approved, the problematisation of defective areas led to further regulatory steps in Saint-Denis. On 23 March 1903, the municipal council set the compulsory minimum street width at 10 metres. However, as will be shown, this norm seemed to be ignored frequently by the land developers. In addition, a local Bureau d'Hygiène was established and a new local hygiene code was approved.

While the Saint-Denis Municipal Chamber was discussing this regulation in 1906,<sup>233</sup> the question of the unhealthy conditions of private streets emerged because of a misunderstanding that revealed the nature and functionality of the future building permit. A local councillor, M. Schmidt, proposed to make it compulsory to obtain a permit to build a house on a private street, yet the 1902 law from which the local code emerged had already included this requirement. The councillor claimed that without comparable standards for public and private streets, *“dans cinquante ans, il y aura encore dans certaines voies de vieilles baraques”* in Saint-Denis. Addressing the comment, his colleague M. Walter answered that poor housing was impossible to avoid, and the only real possibility was to prohibit houses without a proper latrine. Contrastingly, M. Schmidt thought that demanding building permits for private streets would allow controlling the hygienic conditions of the poorest houses without needing to visit them. His explanation constituted a clear statement of the reasons that led such permits to be established at the beginning of the 20th century, after several decades of inefficient housing surveillance by hygiene committees that visited houses only once built, and that could not prevent their construction. M. Schmidt stated the following,

*Une personne qui est chez elle peut construire comme elle veut, or, ce que je désire, c'est qu'elle fournisse des plans, afin que sous prétexte qu'il s'agit d'une voie privée, elle n'établisse pas des chambres avec plafonds de deux mètres vingt. Si cette personne n'est pas sensé de demander l'autorisation de construire, vous ne pourrez-vous rendre compte des conditions dans lesquelles la construction aura été faite.*<sup>234</sup>

Although his colleagues from the chamber reminded M. Schmidt that laws already existed to require building with certain minimal conditions, the councillor claimed that, in the case of not following the regulations, the only possibility was to demolish the houses. Although other councillors considered demolition to be a perfectly valid possibility, the confrontation of both positions made it evident that demolishing and evicting poor populations had a much higher material and political cost than trying to avoid the construction to begin with.

This controversy revealed the change the 19th-century urbanistic paradigm was facing; the public powers needed to control not only the shape of new houses, establishing their position (alignment) and appearance (façades), but their interior characteristics through a highly efficient bureaucratic system. While the task of controlling the houses' characteristics by

<sup>233</sup> Bulletin Municipal de Saint-Denis 1906, 9 January 1906: *Approbation de l'arrêté portant règlement sanitaire pour l'application de la loi 15 février 1902 sur la santé publique*. A first version of the code had been discussed on 20 April 1905.

<sup>234</sup> Bulletin municipal de la ville de Saint-Denis 1906, pp. 10–11. AMSD 3 D 8 / 20.

visiting them was slow and made it difficult to inspect the interior, the new procedure allowed supervision through the systematic revision of plans, a system that was supposed to prevent the construction of substandard houses and thus prevent lifestyles considered unhygienic.

In 1908, the hygiene commission of the Saint-Denis *arrondissement* asked a well-known doctor, M. Hellet, to study the causes of high mortality in 1901, 1902, and 1903 in the twelve municipalities of that area. In the analysis, he considered the main cause of the sanitary situation to be,

*D'anciens villages, épars çà et là, sont devenus en peu d'années des gross centres de population [. . .]. De maisons récentes ont été construites en toute liberté, sans aucune réglementation [. . .]. Ni la viabilité, ni les égouts, pour l'évacuation des eaux et des matières usées n'étaient et en état de suffire aux besoins nouveaux toujours grandissants. Les budgets communaux, maigrement alimentés par des populations pauvres ou besogneuses, ne disposent que de ressources médiocres (Henri Sellier, 1921, p. 33).*

On 14 September 1909, a new debate emerged in the Saint-Denis City Council about the conditions of the private streets through the proposition, *tendant à l'installation dans certains quartiers de becs de gaz et de bouches de lavage*. The installation of public lighting and anti-fire infrastructure, however, was the “tip of the iceberg” of the broader issue: the existence of large areas in the periphery without basic public services.

The city had been growing by private initiatives. As a consequence of the high prices of real estate market and being excluded from the rental market, the working classes developed shacks in poor allotments that had gradually colonised the local periphery. As a reporter for the proposition, Mr. Aucharles, stated,

*C'est dans ces quartiers périphérie qu'une population ouvrière, dont les journées sont médiocres, mais dont les familles sont nombreuses, vont chercher asile. Le Saint-Denis centre leur est fermé, à cause du prix excessif des loyers, et à cause aussi des enfants dont on ne veut pas, dans nombre d'immeubles. Alors ces familles subissent les lois des forces centrifuges et sont rejetées aux zones<sup>235</sup> de la ville. [. . .] Pourquoi ne jouissent-ils par des mêmes avantages que les habitants du centre? Quelle est donc enfin la cause de cet état de choses ? En commission, voici les réponses qui m'ont été faites : ces quartiers ne sont pas reconnus.<sup>236</sup>*

In his report, the city councillor pointed out the “unrecognised” neighbourhoods without public services: la Plaine, Pleyel, la Briche, Barrage, the Franc-Moisin area (Fort de l'Est). The law reporter considered these areas to be inhabited by more than 10,000 people, whilst the municipality counted 65,000 inhabitants. The report claimed that such private streets,

*Ont été créés et tracés par des sociétés ou des propriétaires qui les ont conçus selon leur fantaisie, ont lotisé des terrains dont ils ont vendu des parcelles payables à temps. Aujourd'hui*

<sup>235</sup> The use of the word *zone* is interesting and could refer to a link between local phenomena and the Parisian informal urbanisation belt.

<sup>236</sup> Bulletin municipal officiel 1909, pp. 330–333. AMSD 3 D 8 / 21.

*ces quartiers sont devenus cités<sup>237</sup>, certains comptent 3.000 habitants et plus. Les rues n'y ont que 6, 7 et 8 mètres de large. Aucune canalisation d'égouts ; eau, gaz, n'y est établie.*<sup>238</sup>

In the absence of public regulation, through free market mechanisms, landowners developed urban fragments only with the point of view of maximising investment: small plot size, reducing public space to the minimum, and lack of sanitary infrastructures. The way in which such areas were financed led to a polarisation of the city growth; the income of the private owner completely conditioned a streets' character, leading to the construction of "correct" streets where the middle and upper classes owned the areas and defective streets where the inhabitants were working class. The lack of state investment impeded a redistribution of the capital gains and the democratisation of urban services.

The working-class inhabitants of these "unrecognised" neighbourhoods were unable to improve the infrastructures on their own because of their low wages. To face this situation, the city council debated the public provision of infrastructures and services to the whole territory, regardless their legal statute. However, the question of how to finance such investments was controversial; the adjoint of the mayor claimed that in order for the private streets to obtain municipality recognition and public services, the inhabitants had to pay at least half of the economic expenses, as some working-class *lotissements* had already done.<sup>239</sup> He used the inhabitants of Rue Sorin as an example, where the humble population had decided to pay half of the improvement costs of the area by themselves. However, the councillor who had proposed public investments in the substandard areas responded that,

*Les anciens propriétaires ont vendu des terrains, mais ils se sont conservé la propriété de la voie; ils ont inséré dans le cahier des charges une clause spécifiant que tous les frais qui pourraient être faits sur cette voie devraient incomber à leurs successeurs. [. . .] Ces rues appartiennent aux propriétaires qui ont vendu les terrains, mais l'entretien de la rue a été laissé à la charge des acquéreurs. [. . .] Il n'y a que l'Administration qui peut trancher la question. [. . .] Il m'est très pénible de vous dire que, . . . dans mon quartier, ne sont que de très petits propriétaires qui ont élevé sur leur terrain une baraque valant à peine 350 francs. Or, s'ils devaient payer la moitié de l'entretien de la rue, il en résulterait pour eux une dépense égale à la valeur de leur baraque. Quant à moi, jamais je les engagerai à le faire.*<sup>240</sup>

In 1910, the first private street was developed in the Francs-Moisin area: Villa du Bel-Air. At that time, this space was marked by sanitary risk; the local authorities had been warning the Prefet since 1872 about the bad smells and "miasmas" in the area, where the Montfort stream concentrated the detritus from the surrounding industries.<sup>241</sup> In 1909, the Prefet wrote the mayor, demanding he act against using the stream as a local landfill for the Saint-Denis population, who threw in it "*des ordures ménagères, des ferrailles, des pierres, des animaux crevés et autres matières organiques qui forment barrage*".<sup>242</sup> In addition, the area was subject to flooding, which dispersed the litter throughout the area and threatened the surrounding

<sup>237</sup> As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the word *cité* was often used pejoratively at that time to describe informal urbanisation neighbourhoods.

<sup>238</sup> Bulletin municipal officiel 1909, pp. 330–333. AMSD 3 D 8 / 21.

<sup>239</sup> The adjoint of the major also enounces the cases of the streets l'Amiral-Courbet, Voisine, Corradi, Loubet, and Impasse des Moulins Gémeaux, working-class areas that had already paid half of the viabilisation costs.

<sup>240</sup> Bulletin municipal officiel 1909, pp. 330-333. AMSD 3 D 8 / 21.

<sup>241</sup> AMSD, 4 O 18.

<sup>242</sup> AMSD, 4 O 18, Letter of the Préfet de la Seine to the Saint-Denis Major, 2 August 1909.

neighbourhoods, as happened in 1911 and 1914. It is likely that cheap land prices in the area could explain the development of housing areas around it, as would happen in flood areas around Paris during the 1920s (Fourcaut, 2000).

The archives saved a contract between a landowner and an inhabitant from that area. On 1 November 1910, Jean-Louis Demars, resident of the nearby town of Louvres, rented a plot of 200 square metres at 15 Route d'Aubervilliers to Pierre Larvor and his wife, Maria Françoise Nedelec, who were already living in the vicinity.

The contract had a length of seven years for an annual price of 40 francs. If they wanted to buy the land after the contracted ended, the inhabitants would have to pay 1,000 extra francs. The contract specified that payments should be made *“en bonnes espèces de monnaies d’or ou d’argent”* and that, in the event of non-payment or any payment delayed more than one month, the contract would be cancelled, the inhabitants evicted, and the land would have to be cleared before going back to the owner. *“Ils prendront le terrain présentement loué dans l’état où il se trouve actuellement et le rendront tel à la fin du bail, c’est-à-dire en bon état de culture sans remblai ni trou ni gravois”*.<sup>243</sup>

The contract showed one of the reasons for the precariousness of the housing in the area; in addition to being poor, the inhabitants would lose their house, having to demolish it and “clean” the land, if they had not bought the plot by the end of the contract. Such agreements did not encourage making housing improvements before obtaining full ownership.<sup>244</sup>

The abusive contract required reserving a strip of land 2.5 metres wide on the edge of each plot, in addition to the path 5 metres wide which gave access to the area; both fringes would allow for creating a future *impasse* 10 metres wide. The contract also specified that any urbanisation costs would be paid by the buyers or tenants, and that they would have to transfer space if demanded by the municipality in order to urbanise or enlarge the street. On the other hand, the contract permitted sub-renting spaces inside the plot. *“(Les locataires) auront la faculté de construire mais feront leur affaire personnelle de tout ce qui proviendra du fait de leur construction . . . de manière que le bailleur ne soit jamais inquiété ni recherché à cet égard attendu qu’il ne lue qu’un terrain nu”*.<sup>245</sup>

This kind of contract seemed to be commonplace at that time. The archives also saved a copy of the *Cahier des Charges* of another private street, Villa du Progrès, designed by the local surveyor, M. Godet, on 19 October 1911.<sup>246</sup> This technician, who was actually the author of the previously described *Plan d’Alignements Généraux*, would be involved in most of the future *lotissements défectueux* of Saint-Denis. The document was a generic booklet, probably applied to many other *lotissements*, in which the landowner filled out some concrete elements of the future neighbourhood to personalise them. However, the name M. Godet was not signed by hand but made part of the publication, making it clear that the technician took part on a large number of similar operations.

In its first article, a paragraph made the speculative goal of the operation explicit, consisting of transforming agricultural lands into “urban” ones *“pour faciliter la division et augmenter la*

<sup>243</sup> AMSD 1 O 350.

<sup>244</sup> Although it is beyond what is possible in this work, it would be interesting to search for changes in the area’s population to see which of them remained after the 7-year contract and also how many remained after the regularisation of the area, which, as we will see, required big investments by its population.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> AMSD 1 O 350.

*valeur des terrains*". In the second pre-written article, it was stated that the resulting private streets would not be urbanised by the land developer, "*Les rues seront livrés à l'état de simples chemins de terre sans que les vendeurs puissent être tenus de faire aucuns travaux de mise en état de viabilité, ces travaux et ceux d'entretien devant être supportés par les acquéreurs ou locataires réunis en syndicat*". The third article stated that the landowners could not be "*jamais inquiétés ni recherchés*", and it established the street width (10 metres) and its pavement material (*machefer*)<sup>247</sup>, which the tenants and new landowners would put into place. The generic document also stated that the inhabitants had to respect the street pattern and levelling established by M. Godet.

The historiography shows the rise of even more precarious substandard areas in Saint-Denis, the *quartier des Gauguieres*, popularly known as the *Petite Espagne* (N. Lillo, 2005). The area was formed by houses self-constructed by Spanish immigrants during WWI, on the private streets named Boise, Léon, Dupont, Des Gauguieres, and Duchefdelaville. The main owner of the area, V. Laurent, and his wife, María Duchefdelaville, lived in Paris' "rive gauche", Rue de la Convention. They seemed to be behind the rise of other defective neighbourhoods also inhabited by Spanish immigrants. As shown by Lillo (2001), it is probable that additional substandard areas of the Paris periphery, such as the *quartier nègre* of Drancy (Barron, 1998), emerged on other lands of the same developer.

In our archival research, we have found a "standard contract", elaborated without data in a professional printer, pre-filled with name of the landowner, V. Laurent, indicating as in other cases the existence of a large number of similar documents. However, the conditions were different from the previously shown contracts from the *lotissements* of Franc-Moisin, explaining the higher precariousness of the area developed under these terms.

On one hand, the contracts for the plots did not include rent-to-buy clauses; although the inhabitants owned their self-built houses, they did not own and would never own the land, disincentivising any housing improvements because at some point they would have to leave. In addition, in the contracts the tenant agreed to leave the plot "*dans l'état où il se trouve actuellement . . . le rendra à la fin du bail, débarrassé de tous matériaux, après avoir comblé les trous et les fosses qu'il aura pu pratiquer*".<sup>248</sup> Furthermore, this situation could happen at any time, as "*les bailleurs se réservent expressément le droit de résilier le présent bail à toute époque de l'année et pendant toute la durée du bail et ce, pour n'importe quelle cause que ce soit*".<sup>249</sup> As in the preceding case of Villa Bel-Air, a simple month of non-payment implied eviction.

However, the contract allowed (and even pushed onto) the tenants participation in the speculative process, building and sub-renting shacks that could remain on the plot if the landowner agreed to it, maximising the rent extraction:

*Pendant la durée du bail le preneur . . . pourra faire sur le terrain loué, en outre de la construction existante, que le preneur déclare l'appartenir, telles constructions que le semblera, mais à leur frais et en se conformant aux règlements . . . à la fin du bail, les constructions existantes devront être enlevées par le preneur, à moins que les bailleurs ne préfèrent les*

<sup>247</sup> Material recycled from the metal industries, composed of slag, and frequently collected from the nearby canal of Saint-Denis by the local inhabitants as a poor building material.

<sup>248</sup> Document without title. AMSD 1 O 156.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

*conserver et dans ce cas, il en paieront la valeur à dire d'expert, calculée comme matériaux de démolition seulement.*<sup>250</sup>

The text was written in order to precarise the situation of the inhabitants to the maximum, making them subject to the landlord's need, who could rent it for temporary houses whilst waiting for the revalorisation of the area to develop well-constructed houses. Although the inhabitants soon started to demand that the landowners provide sanitation and urbanisation, the area remained without infrastructure and the houses remained in defective conditions for a long time.<sup>251</sup> The inhabitants, motivated by their contracts to sub-rent shacks, made their rented plots denser through self-construction. As shown by Lillo, the inhabitants soon developed a second floors of their houses without municipal authorisation and developed shacks in the interior of the plots, creating a local typology of barracks around a courtyard, the so-called *courras*.<sup>252</sup>

The cadastre archives show the dissociation between the land and housing ownership and the large number of extensions and transformations of the houses built in the area, especially before the 1926 revision of the files. The documents generally including V. Laurent as the landowner, but also listing other individuals, such as O. Leon Duchefdelaville. After that date, the cadastre changed its organisation, including more details such as the construction date and information about the barracks rental market. For instance, for a 1913 construction at 23 Impasse Duchefdelaville,<sup>253</sup> the house, identified as a barrack and possessing between one and two openings (probably a door and a window), was owned by M. Clochepain, who did not live there<sup>254</sup>. The plot would have been built cheaply for rental purposes. That kind of market revealed, as has been discussed in the Madrid case and evidenced in other European cases, that the development of substandard houses was in many cases a temporary, speculative solution to obtaining rent payments while waiting for the precise moment to sell or develop the land. One example of this process was a house built in 1914 at the Impasse Dupont (without a number) by M. Gaillard, who lived nearby at 30 Rue Landy. The house, which had one door and one window, was soon demolished in 1922, and a new landowner built a new house in 1923 with seven windows and one door.<sup>255</sup>

Although the rental market seemed dominant at that time, barrack areas would also be inhabited on owned lands during the next decades, as land developers provided many facilities for the working-class populations to buy a plot, leading them to build a provisory barrack until they had enough savings to improve it.

On 22 July 1912, the French Parliament approved the "*Loi relative à l'assainissement des voies privées*". In the first article, the law stated that "*les lois et règlements relatives à l'hygiène des voies publiques et des maisons riveraines de ces voies sont applicables aux voies privées*". The law made it possible for the municipal powers and the Prefets to demand owners improve substandard areas, creating the *syndicats de propriétaires* in order to coordinate the work and finance the paying for all the improvements by themselves. However, as we have seen, in

<sup>250</sup> Although inheriting the houses seemed impossible to the inhabitants, the oral history developed by N. Lillo shows that in some cases the houses were sold, giving rise to a long-lasting legal imbroglio.

<sup>251</sup> The dissociation of constructions and lands in the area remained until the 1990s, when the municipality decided to expropriate the area (N. Lillo, 2005).

<sup>252</sup> The word appears to be a Hispanisation of the French word *cour* (courtyard in English).

<sup>253</sup> See annexes, p. 319

<sup>254</sup> See annexes, p. 320

<sup>255</sup> See annexes, p. 321

many areas the plot owners could not afford it. The law had various ways to obligate the landowners to pay for the urbanisation of the streets, but if they did not have the economic resources to do it, the only possible way was to obtain a loan from the municipal powers. The 1912 law was thought to obligate owners of middle- and high-class *lotissements* to pay for their own urbanisation, but it was not at all adapted to the working-class areas emerging in the Paris periphery.

In this legal and economical context, the Bureaux d'Hygiene had few possibilities to change the situation of the private streets. In Saint-Denis, more than 300 denunciations of unhealthy areas were found in folders that collected the activity of the local hygiene office,<sup>256</sup> mainly between 1910 and 1914 but also from 1918 to 1923. The accusations came from both inspector architects and neighbours, the last being far more abundant and revealing both the limited activity of the public administration supervisors and the internalisation of the hygiene concerns by the middle and working classes (Kalff, 2016; Lévy-Vroelant, 1999).

Some of the claims were related with the inhabitants' way of life, such as the production of excessive smoke or the presence of animals or garbage in the patios. Others involved the limited investment of the owners in their properties, such as the existence of bad toilets, humidity in the walls, or water leaking from the roof. However, most focused on the absence of a public water supply and sewer system, the overflow of septic tanks, the presence of stagnant water in the patios, and flooding. Starting in 1906, the local hygiene code did not allow any building to be without water supply, although much of it was provided by private wells that were often contaminated by nearby badly isolated septic tanks.

Whilst some denunciations were found about the existence of shacks areas, none of them seemed to trigger a demolition of the area. Most of the Saint-Denis hygiene office resolutions asked only for small improvements, probably taking into account the realistic socio-economic level of the owners.

One example of this lack of drastic measures was the *maisonettes* of 173 Boulevard Ornano. The entire street, which was owned by an individual living in a noble area of Paris city,<sup>257</sup> was developed on a single plot. The director of the Saint-Denis Bureau d'Hygiène visited it on 30 June 1914. He stated the following in his report:

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<sup>256</sup> CT 398 and CT 1200.

<sup>257</sup> M. Buchholt, 9 Rue de Corcelles, Levallois.

Le n° 173 boulevard Ornano est une impasse dans laquelle sont plusieurs maisonnettes. 16 Petits lots de terrains : 15 maisons habitées par 14 familles : 67 personnes en tout. Pas d'eau potable dans aucune. Les W-C sont primitifs ; simples trous ; les matières sont recueillies dans des tonneaux et vidées dans des jardins. Plusieurs habitations n'ont pas de W-C : les personnes qui y habitent vidant leurs eaux dans l'égout situé Boulevard Ornano, en face le n°171. Aucun nivellement, aucun écoulement, ni dans les cours, ni dans l'impasse.<sup>258</sup>

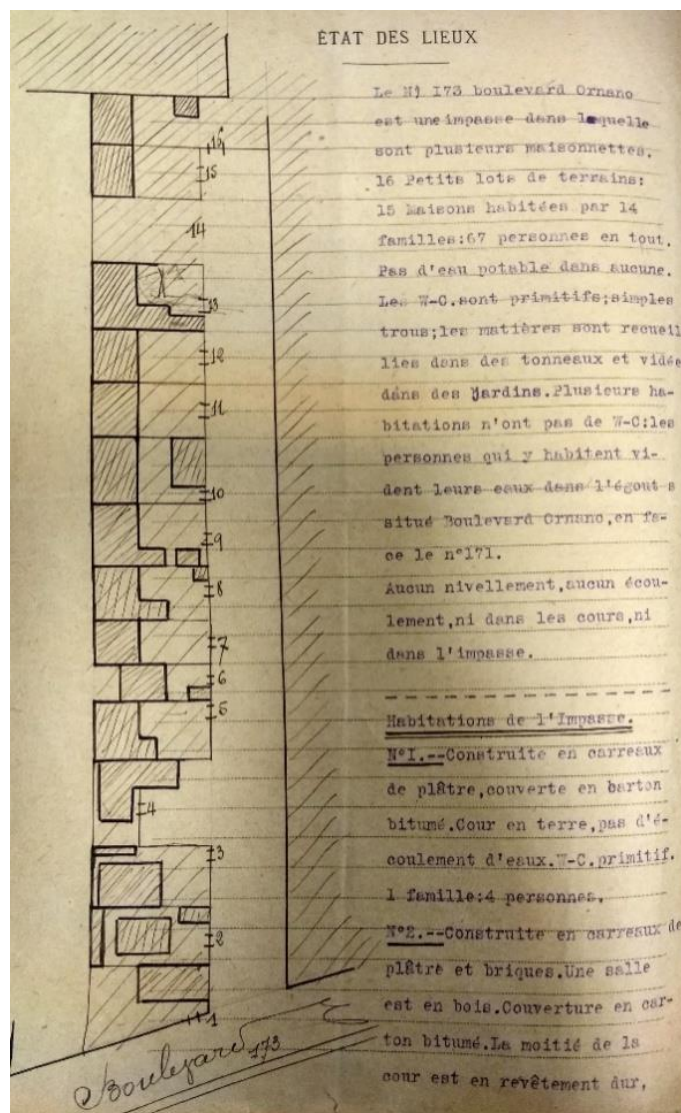


Illustration 11. Impasse 173 bd. Ornano.

Source: AMSD, CT 398.

The report was very detailed in the descriptions of the houses and the way they were grouped. The plot was constituted of small barracks forming a long line, which were accessed by a narrow private street. The ground inside and outside the small houses was frequently rough land, and some of the shacks were inhabited by families of up to eleven members. Although most of them were made with a mix of cheap materials such as, wood, bituminous cardboard, and recycled elements (one of the shacks was an old, wooden roulette), some others were

<sup>258</sup> AMSD CT 1200. Rapport du Bureau Municipal d'Hygiene Boulevard Ornano 173.



completely or partially made from bricks, denoting a transition from temporary to permanent housing.

The description of the area and its origin seemed related to the pattern that gave rise to the already studied poor housing areas of the 19th century, with Paris and the *Zone* having a difference: the division of land into personal plots. This process would explain the particular urban morphology of the *impasses*. The land subdivision would have tended to minimise the street space and maximise the number of plots by reducing their size to the minimum expression. Although there was no information about the plot ownership, it is probable that the houses were erected on rent-to-buy land, as happened at the same time in other areas of the city.

In the Francs-Moisins area, the first complaint of substandard urbanisation appeared in a letter against a recently built barrack, dated 9 August 1910:

*Je suis concierge au 56 rue du fort de l'est . . . et nous avons comme voisin au no 58 a Mr. Hosson qui habite une maison en bois qu'il a construit lui-même, déjà dans de mauvaises conditions d'hygiène. Depuis dimanche il a remonté un tuyau de poêle sur le toit qui n'est pas du tout dans le règlement donc lorsqu'il allume toute la fumée revient dans notre maison et les locataires sont obligées de fermer leur fenêtre et descendre dans la loge se plaindre.*<sup>259</sup>

It is relevant to note that the character of these denunciations criticised mainly the “bad smells”, a heritage of the 19th-century fear of “miasmas”, barely mentioning the bad housing conditions.

Another report arrived in the form of a letter to the Bureau d'Hygiène on 9 June 1911, describing the rise of a “Spanish colony” in the area organised by a person whose name had Iberian origins:

*Monsieur Gomes Baltathar (sic), propriétaire de l'immeuble comprenant plusieurs maisonnettes en planches, a bâti sur un terrain appartenant à M. Vendevu, depuis 6 mois environ, une colonie Espagnole, comprenant au moins 40 personnes logée et exploitée par M. Gomes.” La plainte portée ci-contre est justifiée : il n'y a pas de fosse d'aisance, un cabinet est adossé auprès du plaignant et reçoit toutes les matières et résidus des locataires. Un récipient où baque reçoit tous ces matières et est ensuite jeté dans un caniveau longeant cet immeuble et va rejoindre le caniveau rue de la Monjoie et tombe à l'égout. J'ai prié M. Gomes d'avoir a remédier a cet état de choses, en faisant construire une fosse d'aisance.*<sup>260</sup>

The neighbour that made the report, G. Vidaines, demanded that M. Gomes introduce sanitation in the next eight days and asked the mayor and the municipal architect to solve the sanitary problem but did not ask for the housing improvements.

On 16 June 1914, M. Le Guieré, director of the hygiene office, noted the insalubrity of the nearby Impasse des Francs-Moisins, owned by seven people: Mm. Coq, Deschamps, Chaize, Legendre, Clier, le Quéré, and Leclerc. “L'impasse ne possède aucun aménagement sérieux pour assurer l'écoulement des eaux. Ca et là, quelques bourdures en grès. Pas de nivellement approprié. Pas d'eau potable.”<sup>261</sup> The report did not mention the houses situation, but it detailed the sanitary improvements to be done, which included street levelling, pavement,

<sup>259</sup> AMSD CT 398.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

fresh water provision, sewage, and installation of common flush toilets at the street entrance. The invisibility of these shelters in a very poor urbanisation area evidenced again the tolerance towards miserable housing conditions as long as they did not propagate contagious diseases.<sup>262</sup> In fact, building permits did not seem to be demanded for the poorest houses. As will be shown, around the 1930s many building permits for substandard houses were received by the city council, clearly drawn up by their own inhabitants without relying on any technicians.

Substandard urbanisation was tolerated despite not complying with the urban regulations partly due to the unrealistic nature of these same regulations. As has been already shown, the 1912 *loi d'assainissement des voies privées* made the inhabitants responsible, not the state or private developers, of the construction of street infrastructures, often making any sanitary improvement impossible because they usually did not have economic resources to do it. Under this legal framework, the public powers' demands for urbanisation were useless. For instance, in a letter from 7 April 1922, the Saint-Denis Hygiene Commission itself declared, "*émue de l'état de saleté dans lequel se trouvent les passages Boise, Dupont, etc... qui font partie du lotissement créé par M. Laurent*".<sup>263</sup> However, the same text notified the humble neighbours of this migrant community that "*aux termes de votre bail avec M. Laurent, les dépenses de toutes sortes concernant les passages, et notamment les dépenses nécessaires pour l'assainissement sont à votre charge, proportionnellement à la longueur de façade de votre terrain*".<sup>264</sup>

The situation would remain unchanged until the 1920s, when the public powers developed specific measures to control the explosive growth of poor, unhealthy neighbourhoods throughout the periphery of the Paris region.

### War, housing crisis, and suburbanisation

Whilst the development of substandard housing areas, known as *lotissements*, seemed to start in Saint-Denis in the late 19th century, the process accelerated as a consequence of the WWI.

Different factors seemed to cause the "invasion" of working-class populations in the periphery. From a cultural point of view, the search of fresh air and nature seemed to push the popular classes towards the periphery in a process that had already been triggered by the upper classes in the last decades of the 19th century (Fourcaut, 2000). The tendency of soldiers to build barracks (H. Sellier & Bruggeman, 1927), together with the fear of contagious diseases and the anti-urban ideology developed under degenerationist arguments, led many people to search for fresh air in the rural periphery, despite the progressive development of medical treatment for illnesses such as the tuberculosis during the 1920s and 1930s (Miralles Buil, 2014). Additionally, the improvement of mass transit in the Paris region and the establishment of the 8-hour workday in 1919 seemed to permit long-distance displacements (Bisson, 1929, p. 18), leading to what would become the birth of urban sprawl.

Concerning the housing production, investors abandoned the sector during the war to invest in the war industry. Various historical authors from different ideological sensibilities, believed

<sup>262</sup> As has been already shown, during the second half of the 19th century, the right to live in substandard housing was defended if it did not constitute a sanitary threat towards the whole society.

<sup>263</sup> AMSD 1 O 156.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

that the rent control applied to help soldiers and their families discouraged investing in the real estate sector (Bureau International du Travail, 1924; Henri Sellier, 1921). Construction projects were dramatically abandoned, and in the absence of zoning some of the built areas were transformed for uses more profitable than housing (Bisson, 1929). This situation continued after the war because any deregulation of the sector could provoke massive evictions (Bonnetfond, 1925). In this context, the already existing exclusionary processes towards renting houses to the working class seemed to increase, whilst the little building activity that was being done focused on middle- and upper-class housing as a way to escape from rent regulations (Lavan, 1930). Meanwhile, the Loi Ribot, which was approved in 1908, subsidised the acquisition of small plots for constructing houses,<sup>265</sup> promoting the suburbanisation by owning single-family houses.

Finally, the arrival of populations to the Paris region increased throughout the war period, especially after the second and third years of the conflict, because of the development of the war industry and the resulting increase of rural migration, which worsened the housing deficit. With the end of hostilities in 1918 and in the context of monetary crisis, the land market emerged as a priority investment, becoming the “*placement de sauvegarde par excellence*” (Bisson, 1929, p. 15). This kind of speculative dynamic had as spatial consequence the over-presence of empty plots, as “*les acquéreurs de cette catégorie n’ont presque pas construit sur les terrains acquis*” (Bisson, 1929, p. 64).

The combination of these factors after WWI provoked a sudden displacement of the working classes to the semi-rural periphery, giving rise to the phenomenon of the *lotissements défectueux* (Fourcaut, 2000). As the journal *Urbanisme* described,

*Il s’agissait du jour au lendemain de donner asile à une foule anormale de provinciaux et d’étrangers. D’où la crise de logement et la nécessité de construire un peu partout aux abords de la capitale et jusqu’aux extrêmes limites de sa grande banlieue. C’est ainsi que surgirent du sol, un peu au hasard, tous ces lotissements défectueux, véritable plaie sociale, dont beaucoup trop ont encombré et enlaidi la périphérie, et apporté tant de gêne et tant de charges aux collectivités de la Seine et des départements limitrophes (“L’aménagement de La Région Parisienne,” 1936, p. 11).*

Around the time that the *Zone* population reached its peak, the development of shanty towns in the periphery exploded. The self-construction of houses on the empty, unurbanised lands became a mainstream housing option. As H. Sellier explained,

*Certaines communes, complètement rurales avant la guerre, se sont couvertes d’usines. Les anciens logements ont atteint un degré de surpeuplement inouï. On a mis en location des baraquements immondes* (Henri Sellier, 1921, pp. 127–128).

The industrialisation process, accelerated by the war economy, led to the arrival of migrant populations to the Paris region (Blanc-Chaleard, 1998). For instance, in Vitry-Sur-Seine, a town at the south-east of Paris, the population increased from 10,000 to 31,000 inhabitants in 1916; one-quarter of the territory was occupied by unplanned industries, and half of the municipal surface became “anarchical” urbanisations (Hazemann, 1927) as a result of subdividing agricultural plots. These lands were usually 1,000 or 1,200 metres squared and divided into three or five building areas without any kind of supply or sanitation. Paray-Vielle-Coste, a town close to Orly, grew from 5 houses and 82 inhabitants in 1922 to 1,587 inhabitants and more

<sup>265</sup> Loi relative à la petite propriété et aux maisons bon-marché of 12 April 1908.

than 40 kilometres of streets to urbanise in 1926, a population growth of 1935% (Bisson, 1929, p. 66). Savigny-sur-Orge, another nearby town, increased from 1,800 inhabitants in 1924 to 15,000 in 1933, a consequence of the action of 57 *caisses d'épargne*, which transformed 350 hectares of agricultural lands into 8,000 building plots without any kind of infrastructure (Descamps, 1933).

The reports of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning indicated that the process, which was common across post-war Europe, was leading to the sudden arrival of populations to urban areas and that most of the local authorities were not dealing with the housing problem in a satisfactory way. The same report also showed that, consequently,

*It frequently happened that homeless people have tried to help themselves and have built their own dwellings without permission or technical advice and this has resulted in the haphazard building of unsatisfactory dwellings without any planning. [. . .] They soon become unfit for habitation and their abolition becomes one of the most urgent problems in dealing with slums (Budapest, Bucharest, Milan, Rome, etc.)* (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, pp. 16–17).

However, links between the war and the 1920s development of *lotissements défectueux* in the Paris region were surely nuanced. As shown in the previous chapter, the development of substandard areas had started before the war, when polluting activities forbidden inside Paris moved to the periphery (Bastié, 1964), such as the gas factory in Saint-Denis. In addition, the inappropriate urban regulations resulted in the widespread private development of substandard, unauthorised working-class neighbourhoods. Between 1901 and 1926, the capital's population grew only 10.6% (Bisson, 1929, p. 27), yet the area within a radius of 30 kilometres<sup>266</sup> from Paris increased by 82.2%. On 15 December 1921, in a report published by the Conseil Général of the Seine region, declared that in the previous 15 years, 600 hectares of *lotissements défectueux* had developed from a total urban development of 1,700 hectares. As M. Bonnefond stated in 1925,

*Déjà, avant la guerre, des arrêtés municipaux avaient tenté d'imposer aux voies privées des conditions de largeur de viabilité et d'en soumettre l'ouverture à une autorisation préalable. En général ces règlements avaient produit certains effets autrefois, alors que l'établissement de la viabilité était relativement peu coûteux, et que les lotissements étaient destinés à une clientèle d'acquéreurs assez fortunés, qui préféraient payer 2 francs de plus par mètre carré pour obtenir des terrains facilement accessibles* (Bonnefond, 1925, p. 543).

However, the surface of substandard areas in the Paris *banlieue* increased exponentially during the 1920s. The demographer J. Lambert showed in a communication made in the *Société de Statistiques de Paris* that the number of wooden barracks in department de la Seine, the closest periphery of Paris, had officially risen from 2,269 in 1921 to 3,901 in 1926. However, the same author considered that this statistic did not show the real size of the problem.

*La statistique est-elle impuissante à saisir certaines manifestations du mal. Elle n'a pu tenir compte que des maisons ordinaires et meublés. Or, même que Paris a la tarde de ses "îlots*

<sup>266</sup> Bisson considered the *lotissements* to be especially present inside this 30-kilometre radius, and argues that the "rapport 21 décembre" 1929 about the "projet d'aménagement de la région parisienne" considers this distance to be the metropolitan area. However the final project will establish 35 kilometres (Fernández Águeda, 2016).

*insalubres", la banlieue a celle de ses immeubles dits "spéciaux", qui n'entrent point dans notre classification: les baraques en bois, en torchis.*

It is probable that they were many more. In addition to the methodologies used to clearly identify such "special" buildings, these statistics only counted those existing in the Seine department, the Paris close periphery. However, as will be shown, most of the substandard areas emerged beyond it.

As the contemporary historiography has shown (Fourcaut, 2000), many of the new areas were built by young couples that wanted to establish new households on the cheap, unurbanised lands of the metropolitan periphery (Bureau International du Travail, 1924). However, the most defective areas seemed to correspond to the spaces developed by migrant populations, who suffered more housing exclusion than French groups. That processes, which could have been the origin of the Spanish self-built spaces of Saint-Denis (Natacha Lillo, 2001), resulted in the development of other infamous migrant areas, such as the Armenian neighbourhood in Alfortville. *"Le problème du logement était angoissant. Les propriétaires français refusaient de loger ces malheureux à cause de leur aspect. [. . .] Aucun des propriétaires français ne consentait à les loger de façon normale"* (Lavigne, 1933, p. 66).

The population growth exploded in the northern area of Paris (current Seine-Saint Denis) in the beginning of the century, rising from 307,329 inhabitants in 1901 to 504,956 in 1926, yet the population of Saint-Denis grew at a slower pace, growing from 60,808 to 76,358 inhabitants.<sup>267</sup> The percentage of foreign populations living in the *banlieue* also increased, rising from 42 per 1,000 people in 1921 to 79 per 1,000 in 1926 (Bisson, 1929). In this context of housing scarcity, growth of the suburban areas accelerated, and they started to be developed in more distant peripheral territories. The areas less than 1 hour away from Paris by public transportation were increasingly colonised by poor, self-constructed shacks, known as *bicoques*, on unurbanised agricultural lands.

### The post-war production of "defective" spaces

New shack areas developed during the *lotissements défectueux* crisis, were usually located on the periphery of small, semi-rural towns, making it nearly impossible to connect them to basic urban infrastructures and provide them with public services. Very frequently, the lands on which the shacks were placed suffered flooding or were composed of expansive clays, making any construction on them unstable. In the absence of any territorial planning, the *lotissements* were organised depending only on the desires of private land developers (Fourcaut, 2000), thus according to the distribution of cheap lands throughout the territory. As stated by A. Granier, the formerly cheap prizes of the *Zone* were much higher than in the far periphery in 1923. For the price of a plot in *Zone* that was a few tens of metres squared, it was possible to obtain 400 metres squared in the growing *banlieue* (Granier, 2017, p. 223). Indeed, the new areas seemed to share the material precariousness of the *Zone*. In a report dated 7 September 1927 from the French Ministry of Interior, the housing problem of the new *lotissements défectueux* was described:

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<sup>267</sup> Sources: Ldh/EHESS/Cassini, SPLAF.

Les environs de Paris se sont couverts de baraques de matériaux très bon marché, incapables de résister la moindre intempérie, torrides en été, glacées en hiver. Lorsque la moindre pluie arrivait, dès le mois de novembre, c'étaient des cloaques. Impossible d'évacuer l'égout. Quant aux ordures ménagères, inutile d'en parler. On les entassait dans un champ voisin, quand on ne les laissait pas à la porte même du domicile.<sup>268</sup>



Photo 32. Lotissement défectueux in Vitry-Sur-Seine.  
Source: (Proquitte, 1930, p. 41).

The classic works of A. Fourcaut already revealed the history of the *lotissements défectueux* (Fourcaut, 1989b, 1993, 2000, 2003, 2007). However, the next few pages will discuss the genesis of these areas through different administrative sources and also through the archival collection of doctoral thesis of *Fonds Ancien de l'Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris*, from the Parisian *Bibliothèque Poète et Sellier*, which remains largely under-researched (Coudroy de Lille, 2019; Matus Carrasco, 2018). Those texts were developed by a multi-disciplinary student body as a part of its qualification as urbanist, and in some cases studied the question of the *lotissements défectueux*. The authors, many of whom had already worked on the issue from a professional point of view, developed their researches through fieldwork in the areas, quantitative inquiries, critical analysis of the regulations and analysis of the functioning of the Bureaux d'Hygiène (Coudroy de Lille, 2019). Through these works, they did not only analysed the urban growth problems, but integrated personal perceptions and propagated visions of the

<sup>268</sup> Archives Nationales de France (ANF), F/2/2971 and F/2/2972, Note pour M. Albert Sarraut, Ministre de l'Intérieur, sur les Lotissements.

need of urban planning to address the phenomenon, on which they were intended to work after graduating. The corpus of historical thesis, together with other archival sources, permit to draw the evolution of informal urbanisation during the first 1920's and connect it with the previous and further evolutions of the phenomenon.

The 1920s housing crisis provoked that the already previous substandard urbanisation dynamics exploded through the Paris *banlieue*. The substandard spaces generated at this time became larger and more problematic than in the previous decades.

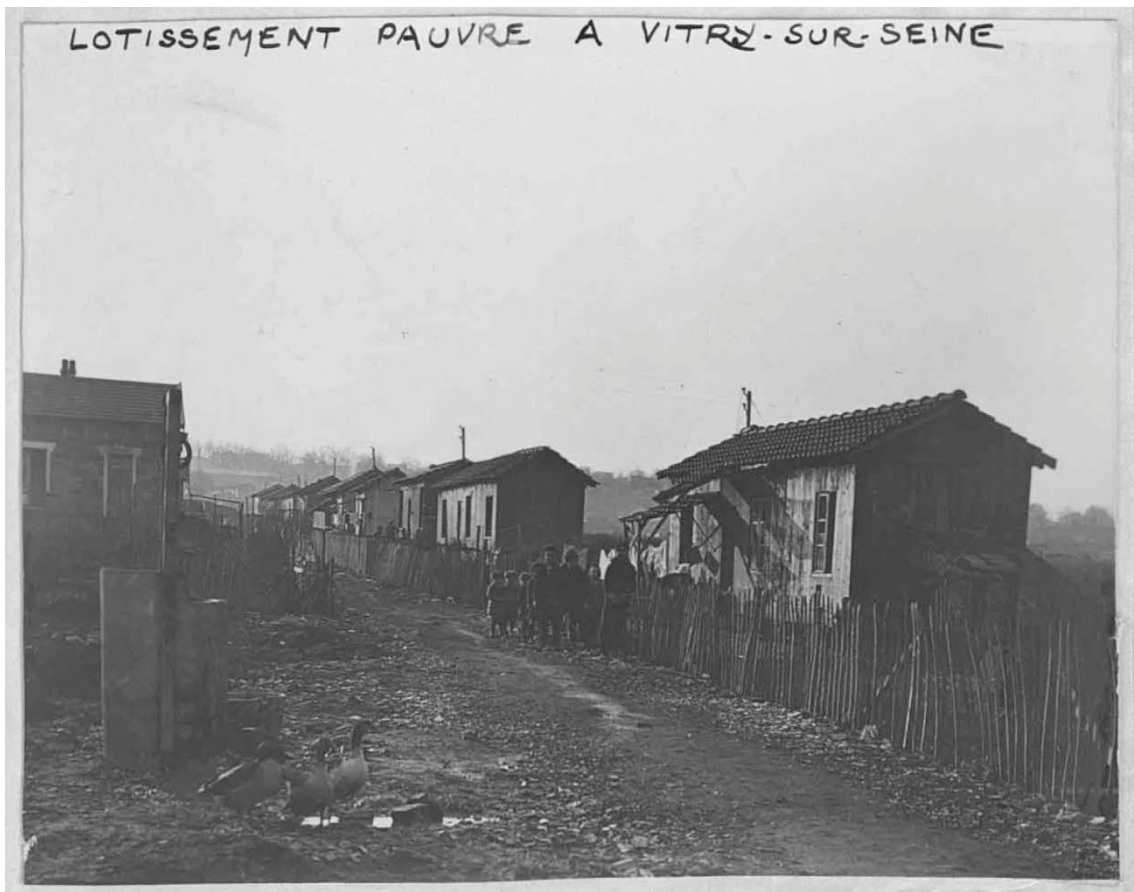


Photo 33. Lotissement défectueux.  
Source: (Proquitte, 1930, p. 41).

New areas overlapped the existing land ownership structure and were developed inside arbitrary rural partitions. The *lotisseurs*, the private land developers that created them without particular knowledge of urban design or laws,<sup>269</sup> produced narrow streets in order to maximise the surface to be subdivided and commercialised. The surveyors that designed the *lotissements défectueux* generally established a graticule of paths 8–10 metres wide, sometimes reducing them to 6–7 metres wide (Vignier, 1930). Historical sources partially explained that the characteristics of the new areas were related to not having architects designing the areas; while the first ones knew the hygiene regulations and understood that

<sup>269</sup> The historical sources account that a myriad of professionals—businessman, hairdressers, ragpickers—became *lotisseurs* in the 1920s (Bonnefond, 1925).

designing substandard areas could lead them to sanctions, the surveyors did not know the rules and accepted the demands of the landowners, who only wanted to maximise their profits and reduce the price of the plots (Bonnetfond, 1925). As the urbanist M. Bonnetfond stated, “*Il faut voir la réalité en face : ceux qui règlent l’extension des villes sont à l’heure actuelle, non pas les auteurs des plans d’extension d’accord avec les municipalités, mais bel et bien quelques douzaines d’agences de lotissement*” (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 562).

This maximisation of private profit also led to ignoring the slopes necessary to drain rainwater at a time when most of the areas were not connected to the public sewer system. The consequence was that “*au moindre orage les habitants se trouvent inondés dans les cahutes à ras de sol, et que, d’autre part, on ne pourrait songer à construire des égouts sans les placer à niveau très profond, ce qui entraînerait des énormes dépenses*” (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 551).

Private land urbanisation involved only dividing the land with stakes and reserving some space for future streets without any kind of pavement. Such paths quickly became muddy spaces full of with garbage. The far distance from the towns and the absence of paved streets often impeded the arrival of the municipal garbage services.

The quick extension of the periphery was not able to be accompanied by the development of public infrastructures. As the urbanist P. Vignier (1930) showed in the case of the *lotissements* of Seine-et-Marne, only one-third of them had water and electricity, and the sewer systems were absent not only in the new developments but in many of the municipalities where they were built. This lack of public services was exploited by the private sector. The historical sources show that the inhabitants of the large *lotissements* were obligated to pay enormous prices to receive water, electricity, or gas supplies (Neff, 1936).

To face this problem, the inhabitants of the *lotissements* of the Paris region often excavated wells because the high phreatic level made it possible to obtain a water supply. However, the vicinity inside each private plot of wells for evacuating black waters frequently caused the contamination of the phreatic nape and the consumption of contaminated water (Proquitté, 1930), increasing the risk of epidemics, as happened during the 19th century. In some cases, the underground water was not accessible, and families had to walk long distances to obtain water or, especially in the case of land rentals, to buy it from private actors at abusive prices. As has been shown in the case of the 1910s Saint-Denis *lotissements*, in many cases the houses were built with land rental contracts that did not permit excavating wells and the landowners frequently abused this need and made them pay “*une redevance élevée pour puiser une heure par jour de l’eau à une Fontaine*” (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 550). The lack of urbanisation of the areas seemed to be in part conceived to maximise the economic exploitation of the inhabitants.





Photo 34. The search for water, or *courvée de l'eau*, at the entrance of a *lotissement* in 1921.  
Source: (Bisson, 1933, p. 363)

The houses of the *lotissements* were generally smaller than the minimal sizes set in the local hygienic codes, and overcrowding was very frequent (Bonfond, p. 540). The shacks were generally developed by self-construction, avoiding contracting architects to make the plans and specialised workers to build the house, resulting in very defective construction solutions. Historical sources noted that such defectiveness resulted from the few resources the inhabitants of those areas, known as *mal-lotis*, had to invest in their houses and from the extremely high building costs (Bonfond, 1925). This situation happened across the whole continent during the post-war period, and sometimes the density of barracks totally covered the landscape, often producing areas similar to the *Zone*.

*Quoi qu'il en soit, le fait à retenir est que ces quartiers sont couverts de constructions affreuses parce qu'elles sont bâties par les occupants eux-mêmes, qui n'ont pas les moyens d'employer les matériaux nécessaires ni les ouvriers capables de leur mettre en œuvre* (Bonfond, p. 541).

However, the phenomenon was not homogeneous; various factors conditioned the morphology and characteristics of the new areas.

On one hand, the scale was variable. While the most typical *lotissements* appeared on large land extensions, giving rise to enormous shacks areas, other ones were small, banal subdivisions of agricultural plots where individuals built their houses (Proquitte, 1930, p. 40). While the first type were usually in the far periphery of the Paris region, the second type tended to rise in areas near Paris—the *Département de la Seine*—as was the case of Saint-Denis.

*Alors que dans la Seine la moyenne de superficie d'un lotissement est de 2 hectares 5, elle est de 16 hectares en Seine-et-Oise et de 21 hectares en Seine-et-Marne. L'importance des*

*lotissements croit avec la distance, et d'une manière inversement proportionnelle aux prix des terrains* (Bisson, 1929, p. 41).

As the urbanist Descamps stated in 1933, most of the *lotissements* of the Seine department were not usually more than one or two streets.

These different levels of land property concentration also allowed different levels control over the phenomenon. In the cases in which the land structure was more fragmented and the resulting plots were smaller, the commercialisation and arrival of populations were slower, allowing the municipal powers to make greater use of the legal tools (Vignier, 1930).



Photo 35. Bicoque in Villejuif, 1921. The was inhabited by seven people.  
Source: (Bisson, 1933, p. 365).

On the other hand, the character of class was also extremely variable. As Annie Fourcaut (2000), showed, the *lotissements défectueux* were spreading at the same time that other kinds of suburban land subdivisions were developing, such as the *lotissements de luxe*, composed of upper-class housing areas. The different spaces occupied by both kinds of unplanned, private urban growth led to a spatial segregation that would determine the future social geography of the Paris region. In the north-east sector of the metropolis, close to the industrial areas, the poorest *lotissements défectueux* grew, whilst in the south-west, working classes and employees mixed in areas that had better landscapes but also the risk of flooding. Finally, in the west and north-west of the region, well-equipped allotments, such as summer residences, were created to host fortunate individuals, and some *lotissements défectueux* existed for employees (Bisson, 1929, pp. 42–43).

Another difference seemed to be the kind of infrastructures developed. While in the Seine department (the towns around Paris) it was possible to install water, gas, and electricity in the

new *lotissements*, these services were less frequent in Seine-et-Oise and Seine-et-Marne, and the public sewer systems were nearly non-existent (Bisson, 1929, pp. 42–43). According to the urbanist Bonnefond's research, most of the plots were commercialised for a price of between 2 and 7 francs per square metre, and it was possible to make weekly payments over a 5-year period (1925, p. 536). However, the urbanist Vignier (1930) noted that while some *lotissements* were cheap because the inhabitants were supposed to urbanise them using their own budget, as was established in the 1912 law, some areas were simple land subdivisions without paths where future urbanisation was not even contemplated, resulting in even cheaper prices (Vignier, 1930). As will be shown, while in the first case the inhabitants themselves eventually invested to improve the areas, in the second case the only possibility was state intervention.

The *lotissements* also varied on the professionalization of the developers that shaped them. While some new areas were produced by individuals buying or hiring single plots to build their houses, other areas were designed by professional *lotisseurs* that commercialised and subdivided unurbanised lands in big real estate operations. Some of these large operations were led by the Caisses d'Épargne, which were financial associations created to develop lands and assign them among their investors. As has been already mentioned, the land was used at that time as a refuge of capital investment, and the historical sources showed that these speculative investments were used in the development of *lotissements* (Vignier, 1930). From this perspective, developing shacks under rental contracts to obtain capital gains while waiting for further land uses, as in what seemed to happen with the *Petite Espagne*, could have been widespread.

For the public administration, uncontrolled urbanisation posed various threats. The new areas demanded further resources from semi-rural municipalities with limited budgets. Going back to the note of the French Ministry of Interior,

*La commune, le département devaient faire dès le lendemain les canalisations d'eau, de gaz et d'électricité . . . sur une région privée pour le moment de tout moyen de communication et distante de plusieurs kilomètres.*<sup>270</sup>

In addition, the newcomers barely contributed tax money to develop local infrastructures.<sup>271</sup> As the urbanist R. Neff explained in a case study of Aulnay-Sous-Bois,

*Les ressources apportées par les nouveaux venus comprennent seulement la contribution personnelle, mobilière, car ils étaient dispensés de l'impôt foncier pendant une période de quinze années. En revanche la commune devait pourvoir à la voirie, à l'enseignement, à l'assistance, à la police, etc...* (Neff, 1936, p. 28).

From a sanitary point of view, these housing areas were considered a potential focal point of epidemic disease. Although these areas were generally considered at that time to be less dangerous than the city-centre slums, due to their better conditions of fresh air and light and thus smaller risk of tuberculosis, water contamination had been identified since the 19th century as a source of cholera transmission, and as has been already shown the water supply of the *lotissements défectueux* were extracted from contaminated phreatic napes.

<sup>270</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2972, Note pour M. Albert Sarraut, Ministre de l'Intérieur, sur les Lotissements.

<sup>271</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2972, Ville de Darnetal, Proposition Coty sur la situation des banlieues, 21 mars 1928.

But, how did these kinds of substandard areas grow despite the already existing hygienic legislations forbidding insalubrious houses?

As has been shown, the private streets were perfectly legal, and starting in 1912 they had to be equipped as any other area of the city. However, it was legal to make their inhabitants responsible for that task. Although erecting substandard houses was forbidden, it was legal to sell lands for building purposes, even where it would not be possible to build housing correctly. The *lotisseurs* could legally subdivide agricultural lands, trace streets, and build or rent the resulting plots. As the French Interior Minister noted,<sup>272</sup> before 1919 “*les lotisseurs n’étaient astreints à aucune obligation légale particulière : leur liberté était entière*”. Although building substandard houses was illegal, forming insalubrious neighbourhoods was permitted:

*Que le lotissement fût propre ou non à l’habitation, les lotisseurs avaient le droit de diviser à leur gré le terrain qu’ils se proposaient de vendre, louer ou sous-louer et d’y tracer des voies sans se soucier de leur orientation et de leur raccordement avec les voies existantes. Ils pouvaient donner à ces voies telle largeur qu’il leur convenait et n’étaient nullement tenus d’en aménager la viabilité, ni d’exécuter les travaux nécessaires pour permettre aux futurs habitants du lotissement de jouir des commodités procurées aux autres habitants de la commune (eau, gaz, électricité égoûts, etc...) [. . .] Les municipalités, qui ne cessaient pas de crier au secours, se trouvaient complètement désarmées vis-a-vis d’un accapareur, marchand de biens, lotisseur ou vendeur particulier qui prenait des options sur des terrains maraîchers ou sur les terrains de culture à très bas prix.*<sup>273</sup>

On the other hand the building permit, compulsory since the 1902 law, concerned municipalities only of more than 20,000 inhabitants, excluding most of the far periphery of Paris from the regulation. In addition, many of the towns which had developed an effective Bureau d’Hygiène did not have the means to truly supervise the territory to avoid shack development. Although some municipalities approved specific measures to prevent substandard housing construction, they did not succeed in controlling the shacks spread.

*Des arrêtés du même genre, complétés par l’addition de dispositions relatives aux constructions en bois (motivées précisément par l’apparition des colonies de bicoques), à la clôture des terrains vagues et constructions édifiées sur carrières sont restés en général sans aucun effet (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 558).*

Finally, although in municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants the housing developers had to ask for building permits for new constructions, contemporary observers noted that they were rarely demanded and that the public powers asked for them only when the buildings seemed “serious”, which is something that did not happen with shacks (Bonnetfond, 1925). Accordingly, building without a permit seemed to become an ordinary practice.

*Tous ces constructeurs, ayant conscience du peu valeur de leurs édifices, se soucient fort peu de l’approbation administrative, persuadés qu’aucun service n’osera les expulser de leur domaine pour les jeter sur le pavé (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 550).*

The process of *lotissement* started with an initial contact between the land dealer, known as a *rabatteur*, and the future *mal-lotis*. Depending on the kind of *lotissement*, different situations seemed to happen.

<sup>272</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2972, Ministère de l’Intérieur, note sur les lotissements, Paris 7 septembre 1927.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

In the case of small allotments, they were frequently developed through known people, who permitted simple arrangements for the land development and used in-situ cords to divide the terrain and come to an agreement. As new inhabitants tended to move to places where they already knew people (Malette, 1921, p. 24), this process frequently gave rise to the “spontaneous” gathering of communities, not only those of French origin but from other countries, such as the different *petites Italies* (Blanc-Chaleard, 1998, p. 38), the *petites Armenies* in Arnouville-les-Gonesse, Issy-les-Moulineaux, and Alphaville (Blanc-Chaleard, 1998, p. 38), and the previously seen *Petite Espagne*. This chain effect also provoked changes in the offer; the arrival of populations led the landowners of the surrounding areas to develop new *lotissements* (Vignier, 1930), a process that, as we will see, could explain the rise of various *lotissements* in the Francs-Moisins area.

In the case of large *lotissements*, the commercialiser was often the landowner, and they often showed it to future inhabitants on summer days when the land was not flooded. At that moment, eventually suggested that the future inhabitants joined a Société d’Épargne with another client, subsequently assigning the plots by raffle (Neff, 1936, p. 25).

After that, the families proceeded to enclose their plot and build a provisory barrack that was covered up during the weekends and that would be improved. The shacks were frequently built with recycled materials, such as “*vieux bidons de tôle, précieux pour faire des toits en les déployant et les fixant sur un bâtis au moyen de grosses pierres qui empêchent le vent de les déranger*” (Bisson, 1929, pp. 538–539). In 1922, a study of a *lotissement* showed the development of 81 houses, where 10 had been built with plaster tiles,<sup>274</sup> 21 with wood and tar paper,<sup>275</sup> 20 with unjointed bricks or rubble,<sup>276</sup> and 30 with humble but “adequate” materials. Additionally, there seemed to exist “*un nombre inouï de tonnelles, huttes, clapiers, poulaillers, chenils, apprentis hétéroclites entassés littéralement les uns contre les autres*” (Ibid 1929, pp. 538–539). However, during the subsequent months, the richest families bought better building materials, storing them on the plot in order to eventually improve their house (Ibid 1929, p. 537). Because of both their delays and visibility, this process seemed to be far from the secrecy that would drive informal housing in the subsequent decades.

*Les colonies de bicoques offrent . . . une variété infinie d'aspects, suivant qu'avec le temps la densité des constructions se fait plus forte. Presque toujours à l'origine ces lotissements offrent l'image des jardins ouvriers qu'on peut observer actuellement dans les fossés des fortifications* (Bonfond, 1925, p. 526).

<sup>274</sup> *Carreaux de plâtre* in the original French source.

<sup>275</sup> *Bois et papier goudronné* in the original French source.

<sup>276</sup> *Briques ou moellons de rebut non jointoyés* in the original French source.



Photo 36. Bicoques under construction.  
Source: (Bisson, 1933, p. 363).

Although the initial purpose of the new substandard areas was to flee the overcrowding of the city centre and its unhealthy living conditions, the densification process of the *lotissements* quickly changed the rural landscape, evolving from a bucolic semi-natural space to a suburban slum, permanently compared with the *Zone*.

*Les familles, qui venaient là au début passeur seulement le dimanche et manger sur le pouce sous la tonnelle, élisent domicile dans la cahute à peine terminée. Toute la population afflue, heureuse d'abandonner le taudis de la ville pour camper là au grand air. Mais l'évolution ne s'arrête pas sur ce tableau charmant; ... sans cesse on bâtit des nouvelles cahutes, qui se serrent de plus en plus sur les lots étroitement mesurés. Les jardinets sont sacrifiés un par un. En même temps la "rue", couverte de belle herbe que broutaient si allègrement les chèvres, se défonce de plus en plus et les ordures que chacun y jette s'accumulent indéfiniment. En même temps le pays d'alentour se métamorphose: les cultures ... font place à des lotissements semblables; peu à peu le site perd le charme qui avait séduit les premiers colons; les intempéries mettent à une rude épreuve les légères cahutes. Vient l'hiver, la pluie et le vent disloquent les baraques, la boue envahit rues, jardins et maisons; le gentil ruisseau, qui murmurait si gaiement tout l'été, se répand dans le quartier et s'y étale sans gêne [...]. Et toujours des cahutes nouvelles viennent s'accrocher aux anciennes, de plus en plus misérables, jusqu'au moment où le brave ouvrier qui avait fait le rêve de fixer sa famille "à la campagne" s'aperçoit que, bien loin de Paris pourtant, il n'habite qu'un coin sordide de "zone des fortifs" (Bonfond, 1925, pp. 528–529).*

Although the provision of public subsidies for home ownership could have influenced the general trend towards homeownership—the already mentioned Loi Ribot—their real impact in the phenomenon of the *lotissements défectueux* seemed limited. The rise of prices, that for

instance in Vitry-Sur-Seine, multiplied twenty times between 1905 and 1930, led to a big part of the inhabitants of the *lotissements* not being able to obtain subsidies (Proquitte, 1930). Due to the increased prices, a solution for the poor seemed to be, in many cases, to develop rental and rent-to-buy agreements. As in the previously shown periods, the landowners allowed individuals to build temporary houses, which would disappear if they stopped paying or did not eventually buy the land. These kinds of agreements allowed the working classes to save money by avoiding buying the land but disincentivised investing in housing improvements. As Blanc-Chaleard (1998) found, the populations migrating to the Paris region usually erected shacks on rented land when they arrived and saved money to eventually buy land to build a permanent home. The urbanist Bonnefond showed the use of rent agreements in the most precarious areas,

*Surtout dans les colonies voisines de Paris, tout près de la Zone, comme dans la Cité Pigeon à Gentilly, les mercants qui exploitent les misérables habitants . . . louent très cher le droit de construire sur leur terrain de précaires habitations* (Bonnefond, 1925, p. 550).

An example of construction on rented lands can be found in a famous 1920s case of a *lotissement*: the *Petite Arménie* of Alfortville, a town situated in the south-east of the city of Paris. The area originated from Armenian populations migrating to France due to the Turkish genocide, and the existing historiography about the neighbourhood, based on oral history, attributed their origin to undetermined, “spontaneous” processes of city growth (Hovanessian, 1996, 2001). Regarding this topic, historical documents such as the research done by the urbanist A. Lavigne (1933), permit the understanding that the birth of this area was caused by the already described dynamics of building cheap housing on rented lands.

Indeed, the genesis of the space seemed to be commercialising lands in flooding areas for very low prices from 1922 onwards. To do so, the landlords imposed both the impossibility of building permanent houses and the non-existence of legal, signed contracts.

*Une société, dont M. Boyer était le gérant, possédait tous les terrains de l’île Saint Pierre. Cette société s’entremet avec un homme d’affaire d’origine arménienne, M. Dilsizian [. . .] Ces terrains furent proposées aux Arméniens au prix de 1 fr 50/le mètre [. . .] C’étaient de véritables marais sans viabilité aucune [. . .] Les autres terrains mieux situés, mais toujours sans viabilité, compris entre la Seine et l’actuelle rue Etienne Dolet étaient vendus à raison de 15 frs. le mètre carré [. . .]. Pour disposer de ces terrains, il suffisait de verser une somme initiale de 100 frs., le reste payable à tempérament. [. . .] Ces gens, qui ne connaissaient rien à nos lois, n’étaient pas des propriétaires ; aucun d’entre eux n’eut d’acte de propriété ; ils n’avaient le droit de construire que des baraques sans fondations. [. . .] Pas d’eau, pas de lumière, ni gaz, ni électricité, rien. Un ruisseau dit « des Marais » servant d’égout ; coulant en plein air il fut le réceptacle de tous les immondices, de tous les débris des habitants* (Lavigne, 1933, pp. 64–65).

The cohesion of the community allowed the inhabitants to face the abuse that they suffered from the landowners, overcoming the difficulties and finally buying lands where members of the community developed permanent dwellings with full property rights and better material conditions.

*La première construction sérieuse, avec fondations, fut édifié au 145 rue Etienne Dolet par un nommé Tcharnissian. [. . .] Les compatriotes de M. Tcharnissian lui prêtèrent de l’argent (sommes variant de 3 à 5000 frs.) et louèrent les chambres avant que la maison ne fut construite. Cette façon de faire fut employée pour une cinquantaine de maisons et cela jusqu’en 1926. En 1927 un homme d’affaires . . . fit connaître aux propriétaires arméniens de*

*lopins de terrain la formule des prêts hypothécaires [. . .] C'est à partir de ce moment que le rythme de constructions arméniennes s'accéléra. On peut affirmer que de 1928 à 1931 90% des maisons arméniennes ont été hypothéqués dès la pose des fondations et cela à des taux usuraires. Toutes ces maisons, grâce à l'immigration arménienne, furent louées, ces locations permirent aux propriétaires de rembourser les annuités auxquelles ils s'étaient engagés. [. . .] Quoique mieux construites que les premières, ces maisons n'ont rien de commun avec nos maisons modernes ; elles sont toutes en parpaings de ciment (Lavigne, 1933, pp. 64–65).*

This text also explained the mechanisms the migrant community used to build cheap houses by bypassing the hygiene regulations. Although the town had a Bureau d'Hygiène and building regulations, their surveillance capacity was easily disrupted,

*Quelle que soit la vigilance du bureau d'hygiène, les arméniens construisent leurs maisons à leur manière, il déposent des plans à la mairie, plans conformes au règlement, mais dont ils essaient de tenir le moins de compte possible (Lavigne, 1933, pp. 64–65).*

Although substandard *lotissements* had already been developed in Saint-Denis during the previous decades without too many difficulties, as has been shown, the city council increasingly attempted to control and correct them after WWI.

In 1923, an internal report from the Saint-Denis public powers enumerated the *lotissements défectueux* existing in the municipality.<sup>277</sup> Ordered because of the urgency of the work to be carried out, places such as La Mazure St. Leger, Mutualité, and Les Basses Noelles, the most pressing cases, were not connected to the municipal sanitation network and did not have water or gas supply. They had also suffered floods in 1910 and had “*constructions légères en matériaux inférieurs (beton, machefer), la plupart du temps élevées par les intéressés eux mêmes*”.<sup>278</sup> Other areas, such as the *Lotissement Mon Jardin* was starting to be developed in the “Zone non-aedificandi” of the Fort de l'Est, and it did not have water, sewer systems, gas, electricity, or pavement.

<sup>277</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327 État des lotissements défectueux existants sur le territoire de la commune. 26 avril 1923.

<sup>278</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327 État des lotissements défectueux existants sur le territoire de la commune. 26 avril 1923.





Illustration 12. Cartography of the Saint-Denis lotissements défectueux in 1923, with their date of origin.  
Source: author's own work using data from AMSD 1 O 325-327.

However, the already mentioned *Petite Espagne* was in an even worse situation. Situated between Landy and Rue de la Justice streets, the area had paths with open-air sewers and was poorly paved. The houses were “*constructions légères en matériaux inférieurs, en général, véritables baraques, élevées sans aucun souci d’hygiène*”.<sup>279</sup> Without water, gas, or electricity, the neighbourhood, described as inhabited “*presqu’exclusivement par des Espagnols*”, was considered secondary priority by the municipal powers.

<sup>279</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327 État des lotissements défectueux existants sur le territoire de la commune. 26 avril 1923.

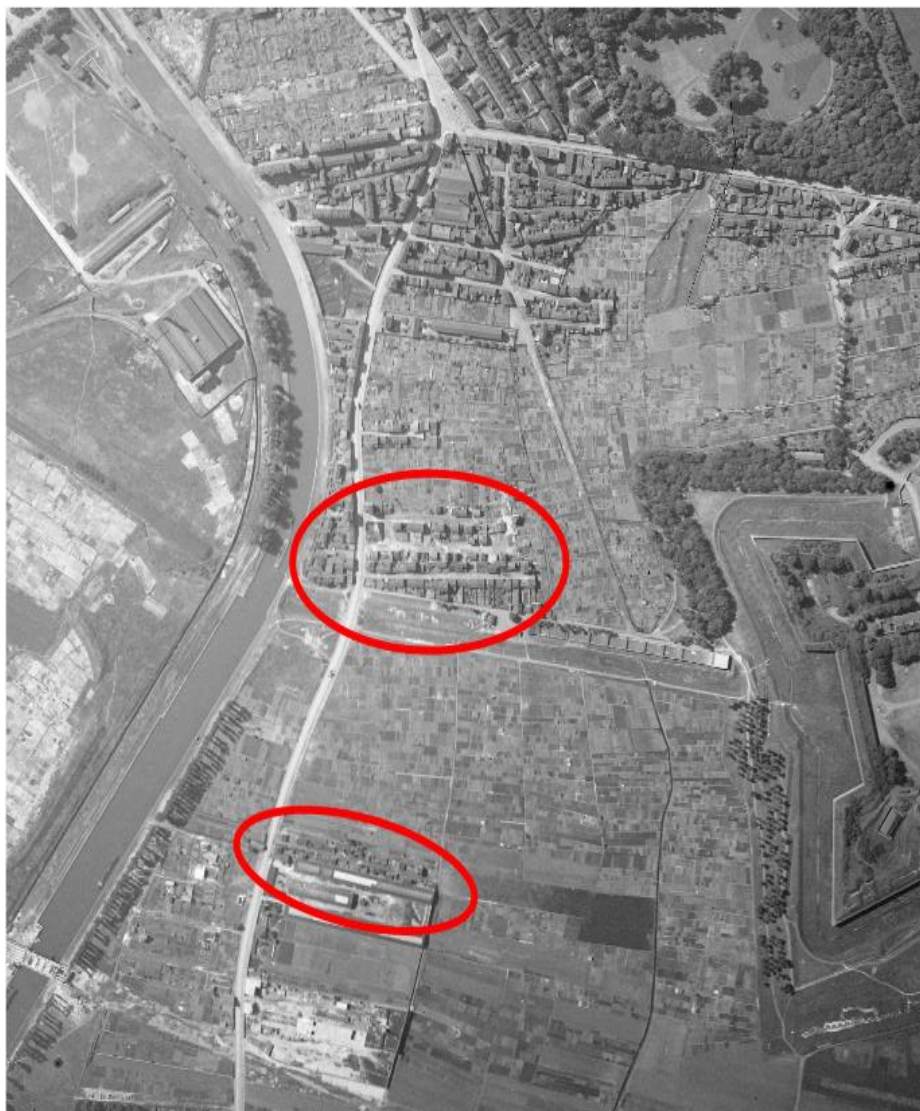


Illustration 13. 1921 aerial photograph of the Francs-Moisins area. Top: the “3rd and 4th groups” of streets. Bottom: the Impasse des Francs-Moisins.

Source: author’s own work using the data from AMSD 1 O 325-327.

Finally, in the Francs-Moisins area, still known as the quartier de Fort de l’Est, different groups of *lotissements* had already been developing during the first decades of the 20th century. The 1923 report identified five groups of streets and the Impasse des Francs-Moisins, all of them needing profound improvements.

The groups of streets were very heterogeneous. Although any of them were paved, the second group (around the Saint-Denis consolidated city) and the fifth group (located across from the Saint-Denis waterway) had water and gas supply and the possibility of connecting to the public sewer system in the future. In comparison, the third and fourth groups, which were composed of the already described 1910 Villa Bel-Air, together with Villa du Progrès, Villa Thierry, Charles Cros Street, and German Nouveau, had a level of urbanisation and sanitation considered “non-existent”. Some areas, as Villa Bel-Air, continued not having a water supply thirteen years after the first shacks were constructed. The text, however, referred to the state of the houses as “*assez bonnes*” at a moment in which probably many of the plots would have been bought by their inhabitants.

The nearby Impasse du Franc-Moisin had appeared in 1920 in quite worse conditions. The area had no sanitation, water, or gas, and the houses were “*constructions légères en matériaux inférieurs*”<sup>280</sup>. Although the report considered that it was “*tout en mauvais état*” the area, which was again inhabited by Spanish migrants, was signalled by the authorities in a secondary level of urgency, remaining without improvements throughout the subsequent decades. In fact, it was around the Impasse that the infamous 1960s *bidonville* of the Francs-Moisins would grow-up in the 1960s (Natacha Lillo, 2001).<sup>281</sup>

The same report that pointed out the 1923 *lotissements défectueux* of Saint-Denis mentioned a “*circulaire Préfectorale*”<sup>282</sup> that urged hygienic surveillance be increased of private streets in the town. It demanded the law 22 July 1912 be applied, which required that the plot owners invest to develop sanitation on their *lotissements*. Despite the regional government’s increasing anxiety, in a context in which the *lotissements défectueux* expanded in all directions without control, the Saint-Denis Municipality knew of the impossibility of pursuing the local urban regulations. As in the previous decades, most of their inhabitants had no funding to provide sanitation and pavement for the private streets. The report also recognised that “*la grande majorité et probablement même la totalité des riverains est dans l’incapacité absolue de participer aux frais nécessités par la mise en état de viabilité et d’assainissement conformément aux prescriptions d’un arrêté Municipal 15 Mars 1906*”.

To face this problem, the report recommended developing a cheap urbanisation of the areas using public funds: “*une viabilité relative, ce qui serait déjà une énorme amélioration dans certains quartiers, ou envisager la réalisation de la viabilité et de l’assainissement par l’intervention de la Commune et le Département*”. However, it later recognised “*étant donné le nombre élevé de rues ou tout est à faire, la dépense apparaît considérable et nous ne pouvons penser prélever la moindre part sur les crédits déjà insuffisants pour l’entretien de la voirie urbaine*”.<sup>283</sup>

Without more state intervention, the problem seemed impossible to resolve. Indeed, the context was marked by the crisis 19th century economic liberalism. The unlimited rights of the owner over the property were increasingly contested, and in 1919, the social function of property entered into the German constitution and into the Italian one in 1923 (Lavan, 1930).<sup>284</sup>

Accordingly, the 1920s development of *lotissements défectueux* were largely considered an aberration and, in a time when the public powers increasingly intervened to solve social problems, the state was made responsible for the situation. The free market dynamics of the private production of spaces and services had revealed themselves as clearly inefficient. Unregulation and the quest for unlimited capital gains applied to the city growth led to the systematic development of substandard areas. The private management of streets and

<sup>280</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327.

<sup>281</sup> Did the 1960s *bidonville* grow around the settlement because it was tolerated and the new arrivals believed that their shacks would be tolerated? Did the inhabitants sell water or electricity supply to the new arrivals, permitting them to supply the new shacks? Further research should discuss the 20th-century continuity of the area as a substandard housing space.

<sup>282</sup> Circulaire Préfectorale 10 Avril 1923.

<sup>283</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327 État des lotissements défectueux existants sur le territoire de la commune. 26 avril 1923.

<sup>284</sup> P. Lavan mentioned the book *L’évolution du droit de propriété* by M. Kaouchansky (1929) as a reference for his ideas about this change. This historical source, however, has been impossible to obtain.

services inherently abandoned common needs, and as shown in the previous chapter, the landowners' commercial strategies were designed to perennise the mid- and long-term exploitation of inhabitants, extracting rent for the temporary use of lands and for accessing basic services. These dynamics, largely denounced by the *mal-lotis*, could and had to be impeded with more intervention of the public powers in the city growth.

### Political threats, racial control, and the “social benefits” of planning the urban space (1920–1939)

As has been already discussed, the problematisation of informal areas was initially triggered by sanitary fears. The discovery of the mechanisms of disease transmission and the persistence of pandemic endemic diseases at the beginning of the 20th century provoked a substantial moral panic (Goode & Ben-yehuda, 2010) towards the poor neighbourhoods, which were considered to be focal points for disease. From the 1920s onwards, settlements of working-class populations in the unurbanised periphery increased sanitary fears because of their lack of sewerage and water systems. This process also provoked economic problems in the small towns that experienced an influx of populations and had to develop public services and infrastructure for the new arrivals. However, this double health and economic factor was not the only problem attributed to the uncontrolled urbanisation process. Discuss the perceived problems and fears towards those areas in the 1920s and 1930s is essential to understanding the mentality and reasons that led to the prohibition of informal urbanisation and emergence of urban planning, processes that will be explained later.

In a time in which the Soviet Revolution inspired the working classes across the continent, the authorities feared that if the liberal state did not tackle the inequalities of urban growth, the popular classes could rise up (Fourcaut, 2000), as had already happened fifty years earlier during the “Commune” and was happening all around Europe in the context of the Russian Revolution. To address these fears, the authorities had oriented housing policy since the early decades of the century towards the promotion of private ownership. Such policies were meant to educate the popular classes in the bourgeois values of property ownership.<sup>285</sup> Although owning a single-family house in the periphery was thought to have sanitary and moral benefits for the working classes and was related with the garden-city ideals of urban planners, the hard living conditions of the *lotissements défectueux* and their emerging political organisation quickly led to a problematisation of the phenomenon. As the urbanist Bonnefond explained,

*C'est ainsi que les habitants de ces colonies qu'on nous présentait comme « devant accéder à la propriété » et devenir les soutiens de l'ordre social, forment au contraire un prolétariat spécial, de pseudo-proprétaires, prêt à adhérer aux pires expectations révolutionnaires. [. . .] De fait, ces immigrants arrivent à former dans chaque commune un parti d'importance croissante (Bonnefond, 1925, pp. 555–556).*

One on hand, the *mal-lotis* created various local organisations, finally congregated in the “syndicat national de défense des acquereurs de terrains et d'habitations payables à temperement de toutes les categories”, with the goal of resisting the developers' rent

<sup>285</sup> Despite the already mentioned Loi Ribot, it did not seem to be a key element in the economic development of the phenomenon. It probably strengthened the desire for suburban housing that already existed in the upper classes and became general at the time (Fourcaut, 2000).

demands, improving contract negotiations, and acquiring pavements, sewerage, gas, and transport systems (Bonfond, 1925).

On the other hand, leftist governments started to encircle Paris after the triumph of leftist parties during the municipal elections of 1919 and 1925, creating a *ceinture rouge* around the city (E Bellanger & Mischi, 2013). The housing problem and the “defective” urbanisation process were seen as partly responsible for the new political behaviour of suburban dwellers. The *mal-lotis*, increasingly organised around the Communist Party, triggered the public powers to react and develop new legal frameworks and housing politics to deactivate political risk (Fourcaut, 1986). Although the situation of the 1920s *mal-lotis* and their influence on the development of urban regulations has already been explained by A. Fourcaut (2000), it is worthwhile to show how an internal report of the Minister of Interior described the poor suburbanisation process.

*Un mal immense et presque irréparable a été causé ainsi à toute la région parisienne. Mal du point de vue de l'hygiène dont aucune règle n'a été observée dans les lotissements ; du point de vue de la salubrité publique, puisque ces centres sont exposés à toutes les épidémies ; du point de vue financier des communes, puisque la nouvelle population leur apporte une clientèle gratuite pour les écoles et une clientèle gratuite également pour l'assistance, et pas un contribuable ; du point de vue social enfin, parce qu'on a créé ainsi une armée de mécontents qui vont grossier les rangs des communistes. Ainsi, le but que le législateur avait voulu poursuivre avec la loi Ribot et les cités-jardins n'est pas atteint, au contraire, puisque le fait de devenir propriétaire, loin d'apaiser les revendications sociales des classes laborieuses, ne fait que les irriter contre une société mal faite, et des pouvoirs publics imprévoyants.*<sup>286</sup>

However, the influence of housing conditions on the political behaviour of the working classes was only the “tip of the iceberg” of a larger social problem. In the previous pages, it was mentioned how decades earlier the “degenerationism” had signalled the social decay induced by the slums to the working classes. Although these perspectives had started to be timidly refuted by science during the 1920s (Garside, 1988), they were still broadly incorporated into the “common sense” of politicians, technicians, and hygienists, providing “scientific” justification for stigmatising and rejecting poor and working-class positions.

In the Paris region, the rise of the Communist Party was identified as some “red virus” propagating throughout the unhealthy housing areas that composed the *lotissements défectueux* and the *Zone* (Cannon, 2017). Accordingly, the problem of the new spaces was not only caused by their economical or sanitary consequences, but by their moral ones. In a context in which the rising field of urban planning was intended to be a tool to trigger societal improvements (Topalov & Magri, 1987), the influence of unplanned, substandard housing conditions could damage the working classes’ behaviour. As the urbanist Bonfond stated,

*Le danger moral de telles colonies est immense en ce sens que ce sont des écoles de découragement [. . .] C'est au point de vue moral surtout que de telles colonies présentent de graves dangers* (Bonfond, 1925, p. 554).

However, even though informal urbanisation was causing extremely hard living conditions for its inhabitants, part of the upper classes thought that a greater presence of sunlight and fresh air would have some beneficial influence on solving the “moral problems” of the working classes. From this perspective, the persistence of social deviance among the inhabitants of the

<sup>286</sup> ANF F/2/2971, F/2/2971 Note pour M. Albert Sarraut, Ministre de l'Intérieur, sur les Lotissements.

*lotissements* was a possible “residuum” (Mazumdar, 1980) of their past living in city-centre slums.

*Il est à supposer que le vice, s’il est plus apparent au grand soleil qu’au fond des obscurs taudis urbains d’où sortent ces habitants, n’est certes pas une conséquence de l’exode à la campagne, bien au contraire* (Bonnetfond, 1925, p. 554).

The development of an ordered and hygienic city was supposed to reduce the risk of alcoholism and family abandonment, a concept that was a key element to reinforcing the nuclear family and avoiding the socialisation of the working classes in “suspicious spaces”. For instance, in 1933, the doctor René Martial considered that,

*Tout ce qu’augmente l’attrait de l’habitation sur les occupants influence en bien leur psychologie [. . .]. Et l’influence psychologique de l’habitation constitue la meilleure défense contre le cabaret et le cinéma* (Martial, 1933a, p. 308).

In addition, in a context marked by the growth of fascism across Europe, a part of the medical profession increasingly embraced “scientific” racism paradigms (Larbiou, 2005). The same author, a well-known French hygienist and reformist who evolved towards having racist perspectives during the 1920s, stated that migration to cities was provoking unsuccessful racial mixing and increasing the risk of epidemic transmission (Ibid 2005). Therefore, it became important to understand their “deep health” of the newcomers (related to their degeneration) and to control their settlement.

Facing to the unplanned distribution of the population throughout the periphery, the doctor explained the benefits of rational planning developed by private enterprises that were creating garden cities and populating them with compatible races according to their national history. In this environment increasingly dominated by the rise of eugenics, and in a moment in which France was one of the main countries of immigration in the world (G Noiriel, 2009), spatial planning of the working-class habitat could permit “racial improvement” of the populations. Contrastingly, the unplanned development of substandard housing areas was considered a threat from a race perspective. Whilst the rural populations were inherently strong and healthy, the influence of the defective urban space was considered to provoke their ghettoisation and degeneration, making the development of policies to control urban growth necessary.

*L’exode des campagnes vers les villes amoindrit le vieux fonds ligure de la race française, c’est-à-dire la partie la plus résistante, la plus courageuse, la plus persévérante et la plus tenace de la race française. Ces familles qui abandonnent les champs . . . viennent périr dans les grandes villes et s’y éteignent en peu de générations. [. . .] les qualités inhérentes à cette race ne trouvent plus à s’employer dans le milieu urbain* (Martial, 1933b, p. 102).

A few years earlier, those racist perspectives had already been explicit at a European scale in the few international forums found that discussed the control and transformation of informal urbanisation. For instance, in the 1931 Housing and Town Planning Conference, the Italian deputy and discussant of the event, Alberto Calza-Bini, declared that “*détruire les logements malsains (nuisibles à la santé des habitants, préjudiciables au développement physique de la race) c’est contribuer au progrès de la civilisation*” (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 34). Other participants of the meeting, such as the doctor Laura Turnau, also demonstrated this concern: “*many diseases are consequences of bad housing*

conditions. Undesirable people have become so partly in consequence of bad housing conditions” (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 53).

In order to “correct” the working classes and urban poor, the best model was thought to be the garden city: small, individual houses in which contact with the nature and low population density would improve both the physical and social hygiene of the inhabitants. Accordingly, the Dutch delegate to the same conference, A. Kappler, considered the goal to be rehousing to these spaces all the “undesirable” populations living in substandard conditions (1931, p. 41). However, facing the supposed benefits of the spatial management of the working classes, the reality was imposing its own logic everywhere. C. Sfintescu, the Romanian delegate to the already mentioned 1931 International Housing Federation, stated that the task of the urbanist was to create conditions that prevented the construction of substandard areas, but it was not possible. In his country, as likely in others, the authorities were not building enough social housing. The difficulty of evicting without providing housing alternatives was causing widespread noncompliance of urban regulations (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931, p. 41). As will be shown in the next pages, the situation in France was not very different.

### The prohibition of *lotissements défectueux* and their reproduction: the 1919–1924 laws

On 14 March 1919, the French Parliament approved the “*Loi sur les plans d’aménagement, d’embellissement et d’extension des villes*”, also known as the Loi Cornudet. The norm, considered the birth of French urban planning (Gaudin, 1985; Renaud, 2016; Sutcliffe, 1981), made it obligatory to develop master plans. These new master plans were compulsory in all the municipalities of the Département de la Seine, in towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants, in towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants growing more than a 10% per year, in “balneary” cities that experienced seasonal population growth, and in those with a historical or artistic value.

The main reason for the law’s creation seemed to be regulating the *lotissements* phenomenon. Their growth had not been able to be controlled by the 1902 law (Bisson, 1929), and in addition to the sanitary, economic, political, and moral threats the new areas presented, their appearance in the metropolis of one of the world’s most powerful countries was a symbolic threat to the prestige and “national pride” of the country in a moment of exacerbated nationalism. As the senator E. Muller declared,

*L'étranger qui s'approche de Paris et qui a déjà la vision des splendeurs de la capitale, est douloureusement surpris du spectacle lamentable que lui présente la banlieue. Quand on admire passionnément les sévères et grandes lignes de la beauté architecturale de Paris, le spectacle d'incohérence, d'anarchie et de laideur que présente la plus grande partie de la banlieue parisienne, ne peut que vous affliger. Oui, la banlieue parisienne est une grande tache de laideur sur le beau visage de la France.*<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Journal officiel 10 mars 1928. Débats parlementaires Sénat, p. 621

As shown by the urbanist G. Bisson (1929), although the 1919 law was supposed to prevent the development of new substandard neighbourhoods, it quickly revealed some important problems. The approval of new *lotissements* had no “spatial” criteria; in the absence of urban planning, it was not possible to manage them spatially to permit coordinating with the public infrastructures and services implemented throughout the territory. Urban planning was necessary to set up the location of the new housing areas and establish their connection with already basic public infrastructures, such as the sewer system and water supply.

In addition, there were large administrative problems regarding the public powers supervision and approval of new neighbourhoods. In addition to a lack of urbanistic culture in the municipalities and the scarcity of technicians—the Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris had been created that same year—the *lotissements* approval had to pass a complicated traverse; it needed the approval of the city council and municipal hygiene office, public exhibition, revision by the “Comisión departamental d’aménagement et d’extension des villes et villages”, and the approval of the department. From the land developers’ point of view, it was not specified which documents had to be rendered to obtain a permit to develop new areas. There were also no established minimal characteristics of the spaces, and it was not specified anywhere if the development of urban infrastructures was the responsibility of the developer or the buyer.

Although, previous legislations had had clauses to prevent the defective urban growth, they were hard to be implemented. As has been shown, the urban regulations made the poor families that inhabited in the areas responsible instead of the land developers. The 22 July 1912 law regarding private lands obligated the landowners to develop a syndicate to improve the urbanisation of the areas, but for poor land buyers or residents who had only erected shacks on rented lands, the inhabitants were rarely able to follow the requirement. This problem, again, was not tackled by the public powers in the 1919 law.

In addition, as has been already shown, building permits were not usually demanded for substandard houses. The new law’s inability to contain the phenomenon led the Saint-Denis regional administration to propose some provisory local measures to avoid the development of defective areas.

However, probably the most important reason the law failed was that it did not contained clauses to punish noncompliance, except for rare cases in which an alignment plan had been approved and the new neighbourhood did not accomplish it. On 23 March 1921, an initiative of the municipalities of Drancy and Vitry-Sur-Seine demanded the Conséil Général de la Seine to modify the 1919 law to include punishments for offenders (Bisson, 1929).

The city council also seemed to make the conditions for the *lotissements* development more difficult. On 27 January 1923, the Saint-Denis Municipality send a letter to M. Grindel, a developer of *lotissements* in the Franc-Moisin area. “Il vient d’être porté à ma connaissance que vous aviez ouvert deux lotissements dans des terrains bordant la route d’Aubervilliers face aux nos 30 et 38”<sup>288</sup>. The text reminded the *lotisseur*, M. Grindel, that due to the 1919 law, it was compulsory to deliver a *plan d’aménagement* with the connections to public streets and the public water and sewer systems, if existing. No constructions could be erected without building permits, which would be given only after the plan had been submitted. On 14 March 1924, a demand was rejected for the creation of the *lotissement* Les Joncheres, which had

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<sup>288</sup> AMSD CT 1418, 27 janvier 1923, letter to Monsieur Grindel.



been submitted by the already mentioned M. Godet, because it did not fully comply with the local regulations.

Despite the 1919 law approval, the number of *lotissements défectueux* exploded throughout the periphery in the early 1920s (Fourcaut, 2000). On 19 July 1924, the French Parliament approved a law to correct the 1919 dysfunctions. The norm obligated the *lotisseurs* to make and pay for the urbanisation of the streets and increased the measures against developing *lotissements défectueux*, prohibiting the selling or renting of plots before the *lotissement* had been approved. Finally, the law increased the penalties for noncompliance, which could have penal consequences.

The public powers had to approve the new *lotissements*, making compulsory the delivery of a spatial plan, a work schedule, specifications of the new area (*Cahier des Charges*), and the composition and operation of the management committee until transfer to the public sector: the *syndicat de propriétaires*. In addition, the public administration could reserve some land in the *lotissements* to develop future public equipment or open spaces, and it was required to dedicate 25% of the surface to street space. The new private areas also needed to accomplish the public alignments (Cazenavette, 1936, pp. 84–85). If the legal requirements were not met, the public powers could declare the nullity of selling plots and expropriating and urbanising them to build social housing.

However, the 1924 law also had loopholes. On one hand, it did not provide a clear definition of what a *lotissement* was intended to be. Although on 29 November 1924, “*Circulaire Interministerielle*” had provided a negative definition of the *lotissements*, stating that the law was not applied to plots of streets *pourvues d’eau et de moyen d’évacuer les matières usées*, it remained unclear what a *lotissement défectueux* explicitly was.

The law was not applied to one of the main processes of defective urban growth: the staggered sale of agricultural lands as urban plots. The term *lotissement défectueux* was understood to be a massive operation of subdividing and transforming land into under-equipped urban plots. But what happened when plots were sold step by step throughout the years? In addition, it continued being legal to transform agricultural lands into urban plots as long as no new streets were considered in the operation (Lacave, 1989).

Another legal loophole was creating *lotissements jardins* by developing streets and plots for “gardening” purposes. Although in the contracts it was clearly stipulated that the lands would not be used to build houses, the sellers verbally convinced the buyers that they could build houses and that the municipalities would eventually regularise them and provide them with public infrastructures (Fourcaut, 2000).



Photo 37. Lotissement clandestin in Ivry-Sur-Seine after the 1924 law.

Source (Vajda, 1935).

In general terms, the 1924 law was able to institutionalise and control the *lotissements* urban growth phenomenon, requiring the development of new areas with water, sanitation, and other basic “modern” infrastructures. Whilst one year after the law was approved the size of new *lotissements* areas reached 1884.06 hectares, four years later it was only 281.79 hectares. However, the law seemed to have the effect of increasing the land value of the “legal”, well-supplied *lotissements*, making them less affordable for the poorest populations (Bisson, 1929, p. 40).

The popular classes’ need for shelter continued without being met. The new law had the side effect of causing the construction of unhealthy, cheap areas on unplanned municipalities to be done illegally, leading to the development of even more precarious informal urbanisation areas, for the first time clandestine.

Statistics from the Service de Statistique Municipale de la Préfecture de la Seine reported 2,696 barracks built from wood and mud, without including the *Zone*, before the development of the law, and two years later the number grew to 3,901, an increase of 70% (Lambert, 1929, p. 116).<sup>289</sup> However, this quantitative approach did not seem to reflect the evolution of the process. The numbers only corresponded to the closest area of Parisian periphery, département de la Seine, and only referred to a part of the defective constructions. As the urbanist G. Bonnefond explained, such statistics ignored the “*vraies régions de lotissements*

<sup>289</sup> The quantities correspond to 1921 and 1926.

*défectueux où la gravité du problème mériterait une étude spéciale*" (Bonnet, 1925, p. 67). The real number of shacks would have been much higher.

In addition, the surface area of defective *lotissements*, inherited from the times of the unregulated urban growth, and the new clandestine areas, was enormous. In 1927, between 185,000 (Fourcaut, 1989a) and 210,000 (Descamps, 1933, p. 376) defective plots had been developed in the Paris region. As the historiography has stated (Fourcaut, 2000), although the 1924 law allowed for controlling the phenomenon, it did not solve the existing problem. In 1927, the same year, a book by the urbanists H. Sellier and A. Bruggeman considered that,

*L'aspect sordide présente jusqu'ici seulement par la "Zone" des fortifications se trouve répandu maintenant dans toute la banlieue et il faut envisager pour l'avenir un aménagement entièrement nouveau pour les régions qui se couvrent de bicoques, un aménagement analogue à la transformation projetée actuellement de toute la "zone" en espaces libres* (H. Sellier & Bruggeman, 1927, p. 96).

Concerning Saint-Denis, as has been already seen, substandard *lotissements* had been growing since the late 19th century, yet in the 1910s, some populations (mainly Spanish) started to build shacks in the Francs-Moisins area, probably in the *lotissement* that would later be called Villa Bel-Air. In 1914 it had been developed the so-called "Impasse des Francs-Moisins" and by 1923 in various private streets such as Progrès and Villa Thierry.

On 26 January 1925, a new report of the Bureau d'Hygiène showed that one of these streets, Villa du Progrès, continued to be in a totally unurbanised state: "*assainissement inexistant. Chaussée en terre complètement défoncée. Trottoirs en terre, bordures en pavés de tous échantillons en mauvais état. Alimentation en eau et éclairage inexistant*".<sup>290</sup> On 12 February 1925, another document showed the composition of the street at that time: of 41 plots, 24 had solid "houses" built on them, 3 plots had wooden barracks, and 3 others were used for business (a grocery shop, a welding workshop, and a metal stockage area). The rest were labelled as "gardens". From the 39 owners of plots on the street, 29 lived on their plot and the other 10 inhabited other houses in the surrounding areas or in the Saint-Denis city centre. Different from other close *lotissements* most of them had French names, which perhaps is why they established direct communication with the local municipality to improve the situation of the street.

The 26 April 1925, a *syndicat de propriétaires* was developed. A letter signed by 33 people was sent to the Mayor of Saint-Denis, and in it the landowners of Progrès Street, together with those of Charles Cross and Germain Nouveau, proposed that the public powers pay for the urbanisation of the streets, but also demanding the public powers do the work themselves to save money. The initiative was outside the norm, but it initially seemed positive for the local authorities.<sup>291</sup> However, in an internal document of the Saint-Denis Municipalities from 28 October 1925, it was considered too complicated bureaucratically to justify receiving funds from the *lotissement* inhabitants. In response to it, the public powers proposed that they do it through the *syndicat de propriétaires*. However, the solution had a problem; all the landowners might all agree to it.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> AMSD 1 O 244.

<sup>291</sup> AMSD 1 O 331.

<sup>292</sup> AMSD 1 O 350.

This formula seemed to be adopted, but on 6 December 1925,<sup>293</sup> the landowners again asked for help from the municipality to obtain a subvention for 50% of the funds and to receive a borrow for another 50% so that the plot owners could pay throughout the subsequent ten years. An internal report from 23 March 1926 indicated that the law did not obligate the municipality to such kinds of arrangements. However, it also noted that the 1912 law permitted the public powers to borrow funds to the *syndicats* of landowners and warned that *“il est bien certain que si la Commune n’intervient pas, ce sera une lourde charge pour les riverains [. . .]. La majorité, sinon la totalité des propriétaires riverains de la Villa du Progrès sont des ouvriers sans grandes ressources”*.<sup>294</sup> The author of the report proposed an original solution: the municipal services complete the urbanisation process cheaply and the plot owners pay only for the costs of introducing the sewer system. In a document from 16 May 1926, the neighbours association accepted that proposal.<sup>295</sup>

However, the urbanisation process was not completed. In a document from 30 August 1927, the president of Villa du Progrès stated that *“L’architecte voyer de la ville e Saint-Denis, nous ont déclaré que notre dossier n’avait pas suivi son cours [. . .]. J’ai eu des audiences avec Mm. Les Adjoints, puis M. le Maire, divers Conseillers, et mes démarches se résument à ceci “nous n’avons pas d’argent”*.<sup>296</sup>

A few days later on 4 September 1927, the nearby Villa Bel-Air also wrote to the municipal powers,<sup>297</sup> demanding help to improve their street by a different method. The text described the disgraceful state, stating that the concerns of the neighbours increased with the arrival of winter, knowing that *“notre rue va devenir une véritable fondrière, un immense cloaque”*. To address the problem, the inhabitants proposed not the urbanisation of the street but some improvements, using as an example the highly mobilised *mal-lotis* of Mutualité, at the north of Saint-Denis. In that case, the municipality had provided building materials recycled from an avenue to improve the local pavement, a procedure that, as has been shown, had also been used for the private streets of Madrid when the inhabitants did not have the economic resources to afford its improvement. The Bel-Air inhabitants, applauding the method, asked for a similar treatment. Regarding the residents’ lack of funds but willingness to accelerate the work and reduce their costs, the letter stated that *“la nécessité même sommaire de notre rue est telle que nous sommes disposés à entreprendre nous mêmes ce travail”*. The text ended by introducing a polite critique to the city council’s management of the situation.

*Voici fort longtemps que nous avons réclamé auprès de l’Administration Municipale des moyens d’améliorations. . . Malheureusement notre situation est toujours aussi désastreuse. Nous osons croire que vous ne nous refuserez pas les quelques mètres cubes de soliditif que nous vous demandons à fin de remblayer notre rue vraiment impraticable l’hiver!*<sup>298</sup>

The problems of Villa Progrès and Villa Bel-Air allow us to understand the difficulties that, since the first decades of the 20th century were suffering the private streets developed on the area. The problem was not, or at least not only, the legal framework for developing improvements on substandard streets. The real problem was the lack of economic resources to do so, not

<sup>293</sup> AMSD 1 O 244.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> AMSD 1 O 115. Letter 4 September 1927.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

only for the plot owners but also the local public powers. By 1927 the Saint-Denis Municipality had 21 kilometres of urban public streets and already 20 kilometres of private streets.<sup>299</sup>

In addition to not solving the already existent situation, the Cornudet law did not seem to fully stop the development of new substandard urbanisations, at least in the case of Saint-Denis. On 23 January of 1926, a report of the local police<sup>300</sup> indicated for the first time an illegal *lotissement* in the Francs-Moisins area, giving the names and addresses of the developers.



Photo 38. Lotissement Le Rû de Montfort, in the Francs-Moisins area.

Source : (Bonfond, 1925, pp. 534–535).

Most of these people already lived in the Francs-Moisins area. That was the case of Mr Duie, inhabitant of 5 Chemin d'Aubervilliers; Mr Pajon, housed at 54 Route d'Aubervilliers; and Mr Henri, living in the defective area of 19 Chemin d'Aubervilliers. Another person named in the report, Mr Spinosa, who was also living in the *lotissement*, was identified as the main tenant of the ensemble. This scheme resembled other cases described in historical accounts, showing how the urban growth was led by unprofessional profiles, and was reminiscent of the management strategies of the Paris *cités* and the *Zone*: coordination and rent collection by a main tenant. Another of the land developers, Mr Le Dantec, was identified as the son of the mayor of Aubervilliers, a situation that could point to possible connivance between the development of *lotissements* and political power in this nearby municipality.

Another handwritten note from the police explained that the lands the shacks had been erected on were in fact subject of “*a location 4 fr. metre pour une periode de 10 ans. Il existe des baraques en bois en majorité mais aussi batiments en bizet*”.<sup>301</sup> The new area, as did other very defective spaces, consisted of shacks built on rented lands.

A second handwritten note explained that more *lotissements* were being developed in front of the *lotissement* the authorities had demanded a permit from in 1923, Chemin d'Aubervilliers 32 bis. The process of the initial land development, which was created when effective public punishments were not in place and it was impossible to be sanctioned, was probably imitated by other landowners. The case of Francs-Moisins seemed to be far from large professional real estate market operations such as those of Anthony or Drancy. Despite the new regulations, and the fact Saint-Denis was highly urbanised and had a Bureau d'Hygiène, the *lotissement* operations continued illegally, revealing the troubles of surveying and controlling the territory

<sup>299</sup> AMSD CT 1419. Plan d'aménagement d'embellissement et d'extension de la Commune de Saint-Denis, Dressé par l'Ingenieur Géomètre COPPIN, Juin 1927.

<sup>300</sup> AMSD, 1 O 331.

<sup>301</sup> AMSD, 1 O 331.

and the difficulties of applying for and subsequently evict poor populations from already built areas.

Some weeks later, on 17 February 1926, a letter from six neighbours who owned houses in the same area asked for the eviction of the newcomers, an event already mentioned in the work of Natacha Lillo (2001). Their text denounced that,

*Des citoyens moins soucieux de la santé de leurs voisins que de remplir leur portemonnaie ont transformé des terrains de culture jardinière en lotissements insalubres où des malheureux étrangers sont venus s'installer par milliers dans des baraquements demunis de tout confort et surtout d'hygiène.*<sup>302</sup>

The owners blamed the mayor of knowing about the situation because of the multiple, previous denunciations, and they suggested that the area had been developed before police inspection. Although the complaint warned against the risk of epidemic infections during the summer, showing the xenophobic fear of living in the vicinity of such “uncivilised” populations, the main problem with such “undesirable” neighbours seemed to be the possibility that their co-presence damaged the land value of the area.

*Nous n'avons plus aucune sécurité . . . obligés que nous sommes à tort . . . de rappeler ces étrangers aux mœurs de notre pays, nous avons pour toute réponse des insultes, des menaces, ils nous déversent leurs ordures et leur matières à nous portes”. [. . .] Quelques uns parmi les signataires avons édifié péniblement sur du sol qu'est notre propriété des maisonnettes de bon aspect, faudra agir d'une fois devant cette invasion dûe à la rapacité de deux ou trois profiteurs et laisser la nos maisonnettes qui n'ont plus de valeur.*<sup>303</sup>

The text finishing by asking using the law as unique way to impose authority and stop the “traffic” of lands, warning that in case of inaction of the public powers, “*le mal ne s'arrêtera pas la, beaucoup d'autre citoyens se proposent déjà de former sur . . . ces terrains des vastes agglomérations deporvues de toute hygiène*”.<sup>304</sup>

However, the neighbours' version was contradicted by the perspective of a municipal employee, S. Falvaire, sent to the area to make a hygiene report, which was signed on 23 February 1926. After his visit, the employee explained the details of the area, which was located near the Impasse des Francs-Moisins.

The first *lotissement*, owned by M. Duie, consisted of various plots of 90 metres squared rented to Spanish populations, where they had built *maisonnettes en bois*. The plots, which cost 320 francs per year, had no water supply and presented major sanitary problems. The inhabitants “*déposent leurs matières fécales dans des trous qu'ils comblent ulterieurement*”, as the plots were “*sans écolements pour les eaux sales, sans water-closets*”.<sup>305</sup>

A second piece of land, owned by M. Pajon, was rented for 3.50 francs per square metre. The public surveyor decried it for being “*dans un état plus complet d'insalubrité*”; wells had been excavated to obtain water and, around them, other wells had been made to infiltrate the faecal wastes. The situation was thought to contaminate the populations, and the public employee considered that “*l'eau des puits que ne manquera pas d'amener certaines épidemies*

<sup>302</sup> AMSD, 1 O 331.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

*regrettables pour la population environnante si nous laissons perpetuer cet état des choses*".<sup>306</sup> The text demanded the city council take action, considering the political consequences of not doing so "*si l'on negligait ce travail une grosse responsabilité nous incomberait, la population douterait sur le conseil municipal et elle aurait pleinement raison*".<sup>307</sup>

Finally, a third space, owned by M. Poisson, son of the ex-mayor of the nearby municipality of Aubervilliers, had rented land for 2 francs per square metre to a Spanish tenant called Spinoza, who was sub-renting the land for between 4 and 5 francs per square metre. This modality of commercialisation, without an assigned plot, was probably more profitable for people with fewer economic resources that could only pay for the footprint of their very small shack. At the same time, having delegated the management to a Spanish inhabitant, the landowner probably expected to attract some of the migrant populations that had arrived to work in the industries whilst avoiding any communication with them. The public employee, again, asked for action against the space, as it had sanitation problems similar to the previous ones.<sup>308</sup> The public report about these three spaces show the different ways the land was commercialised. Despite the approval of the Loi Cornudet, the *lotissement* methods of housing development continued being developed in Saint-Denis under the hesitant surveillance of the public powers.

In a letter from 2 September 1926, eight months after the first police report, the mayor wrote to M. Henri, *lotisseur* of one of the plots, reminding him that he had to provide a "reglementary WC with latrine" to every house created in his area before the end of the month. Although the law allowed for declaring the space unfit to live, and it was possible to expropriate it, the municipality did not do so, as had happened in other spaces during the previous decades. Although it is hard to know the reasons for this tolerance towards the informal spaces, it is probable that it was motivated, as will be shown, by the local need for shelter of the local working-classes and by the lack of economical resources of the municipality.

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<sup>306</sup> AMSD, 1 O 331.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. Impasse Des Francs Moisins. Monsieur le Maire de Saint-Denis, 17 février 1926.



Illustration 14. Francs-Moisin, 1931. Draft by the author from an aerial photograph.  
Source: Remonter le Temps, IGN.

To sum up, some neighbourhoods tried unsuccessfully to use legality to push the public powers to recognise their streets as public spaces and help in their urbanisation, and new areas grew near the previous *lotissements* with a higher level of precariousness. Whilst in the previous periods the old *lotissements* had developed legally, the new poor allotments were only identified by the public powers through the police survey. Whilst the Cornudet law seemed generally effective in controlling the sale of plots (with the exception of the *lotissements jardins*), these findings show that shack development through land rental bypassed the law and remaining in place because of the permissiveness of the public powers. This kind of uncertain equilibrium, which continued in the subsequent years, as will see, marked the beginning of a new stage of informal urbanisation: its illegal existence and precarious tolerance by the public powers.

### State action and improvement of the defective areas: The 1928 Loi Sarraut

Although the development of new informal areas had been handled to some extent, improving the already developed spaces was difficult, as they were composed of private streets which were intended to be improved by the owners of plots situated on them, who were generally working-class populations without resources. To face this situation, and under the increasing pressure of the *mal-lotis*, a new law—the Loi Sarraut—was approved in 1928 to permit



improvements for the areas through public funding. Although the government initially considered modifying the 1924 law by developing a general urban planning law divided into three sections (*Plans d'extension et d'aménagement, lotissements and agrandissement de la Ville de Paris*), this comprehensive law seemed too complicated to pass, risking the need for too much time for parliamentary discussion.<sup>309</sup>

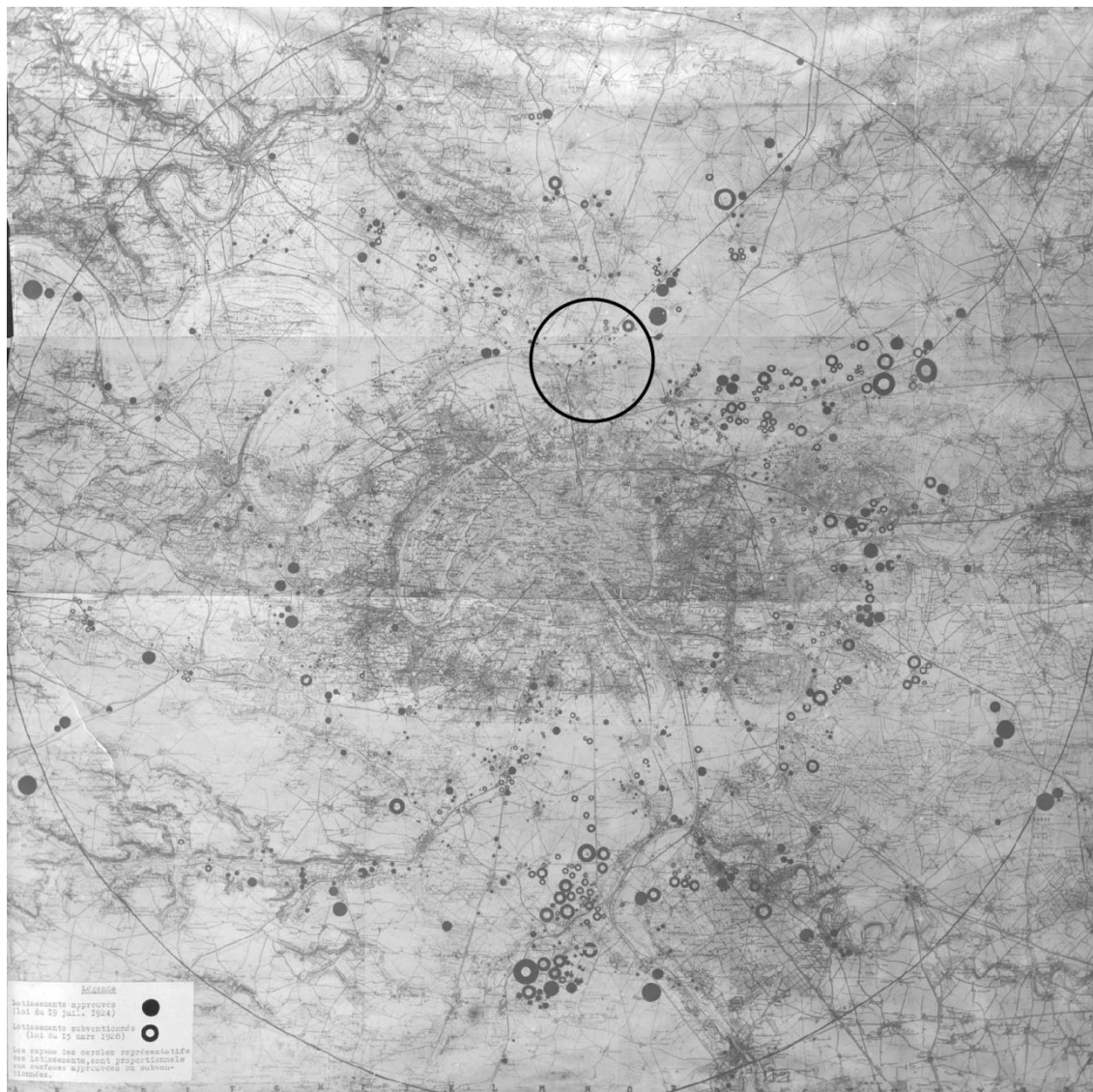


Illustration 15. Lotissements défectueux in the Paris Region, with the Saint-Denis area marked. Empty circles indicate areas with public funding approved in 1929.

Source: the author on Bisson cartography (1929, pp. 40–41)

The text finally approved allowing public subventions and credits to finance low-rise housing areas which were not “*dans les mêmes conditions d’assainissement, d’hygiène et de viabilité*”

<sup>309</sup> ANF F/2/2971 y F/2/2972. Acta réunion de la Sous-Commission des Lotissements, no date. “*Il serait évidemment désirable de pouvoir rédiger un véritable « code du lotissement ». Mais la rédaction de ce code ne saurait être établie, sans que l’on résolve, en même temps, toutes les questions relatives à l’urbanisme et à l’aménagement de la région parisienne ; c’est un très gros problème et le Parlement risque de ne passer, à son étude, toute la promptitude nécessaire. Resta alors la seconde méthode qui consiste à apporter à la législation en cours, les modifications qui apparaissent comme particulièrement nécessaires et urgentes*”.

que les agglomérations voisines de même importance”.<sup>310</sup> The public investments were thought to permit the development of basic works of sanitation, urbanisation, and hygiene, while also permitting the construction of water, sewerage, gas, and electricity infrastructures.<sup>311</sup> The investments were based on the triple economic collaboration between the state, the *départements*, and the inhabitants, putting the municipalities in a secondary role. The state would subsidise between 33% to 50% of the urbanisation expenses and the inhabitants would pay the other 50%, receiving “cheap” credits from a public financial institution, the *Caisses départementales de l’aménagement et de l’extension de villes et villages*.<sup>312</sup> Pierre Laval, ex-socialist and Labour Minister in the conservative government of André Tardie indicated that, “*Laissés à leurs seules ressources, ressources par définition infimes, les habitants des lotissements défectueux eussent à jamais été dans l’impossibilité de faire exécuter les travaux de viabilité et d’assainissement nécessaires*” (Lavan, 1930, p. 22).

The development of single-family houses, a consequence of the Sarraut law regularisation, was fuelled by the Loi Loucheur’s cheap loans for housing construction (Fourcaut, 2000) and permitted a quick and impressive transformation of the French peripheries. However, despite of the relative success of the law, it was criticised from several points of view.

On one hand, it implied regularising more than 10,000 hectares of *lotissements défectueux* (Descamps, 1933, p. 368), often developed in the worst territories for building—the cheapest for the *lotisseurs*, such as those in flooding areas, with instable soils, or on remote lands far from any public infrastructure.

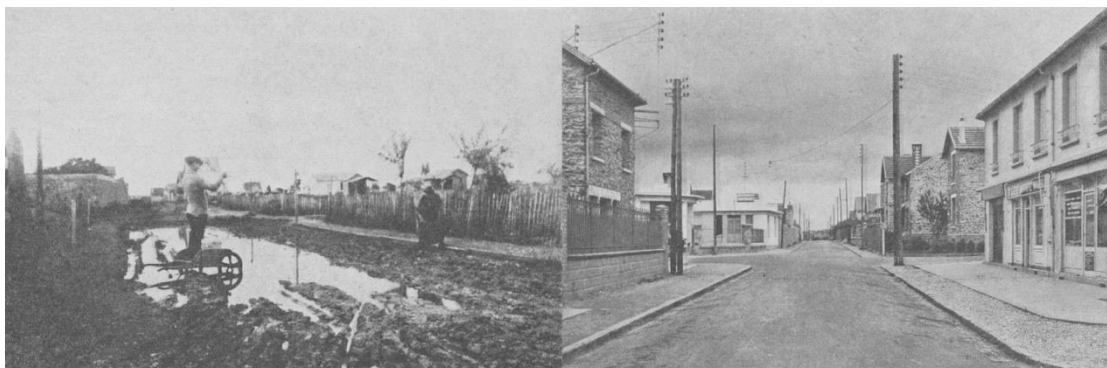


Photo 39. The same street (Rue de la Liberté) in Savigny-Sur-Orge in 1928 and 1933.

Source: (Descamps, 1933, pp. 374–375).

The regularisation of the informal areas, which was also the case in the 1920s Madrid *extrarradio*, as has already been shown, seemed to be the model for urban policies at that time. International conferences, such as the 1931 Housing and Town Planning Conference, considered improving the existing individual dwellings to be seen as the better way to deal with the problem. However, the urbanists of the forum considered necessary to treat differently the areas that worth being improved from those that could not be rehabilitated, which did not happen in the French case (1931, pp. 16–17); the Sarraut law was applied

<sup>310</sup> Loi Sarraut, art. 1.

<sup>311</sup> ANF F/2/2971 y F/2/2971, nota sin autor ni título sobre la aplicación de la Ley 15 mars 1928.

<sup>312</sup> The law was preceded by the Project of Law of 8 July 1926, which proposed a public subvention of 33% of the final costs. The law was transformed due to the pressure of the French Communist Party, which proposed public subvention of 90% (Bisson, 1929, p. 64).

without taking into account the adequacy of the sites on which the *lotissements* had been built.

The law was criticised for validating the status-quo, which was maintaining the existing street patterns and increasing the street width to 10 metres, thus improving areas that never should have been urbanised and that were hardly inhabited (Bisson, 1929). A plan that established which housing areas should be improved and which should be relocated to better spaces was identified as the ideal method to solve the problem and save enormous amounts of public funding, as reported in the research of the urbanist Vignier (1930). However, at that time there did not exist urban regulations for re-parcelling (Coudroy de Lille, 2019), so the only existing tool to change the street pattern to facilitate sanitation was expropriation, a long and very expensive process (Vignier, 1930). While in the Seine department most parts of the *lotissements* could be connected to the sewer system, it was impossible in most of the informal areas of the far periphery, Seine-et-Oise. The programme allowed investing large quantities of public funds to improve some spaces that had been subject of purely speculative investments (Vignier, 1930) but it did not include constructing the territorial infrastructures to reach these spaces. A new law was approved to finance connecting the rural areas where the *lotissements* were to the Paris metropolitan services.<sup>313</sup>

On the other side, the main claim against the programme was perhaps the absence of punishing the *lotisseurs*. Instead of making them pay for the necessary urbanisation and being truly responsible for the situation, the law solved the problem by socialising the costs of improving the *lotissements*.

*Le rôle de l'administration aurait dû se borner à faciliter, peut être aider dans certains cas, les lotis à poursuivre les lotisseurs qui avaient promis de faire la viabilité* (Bisson, 1929, p. 60).

Additionally, the Sarraut law was also criticised for not making the value of the public subventions dependent on the plot owners' rent. Some authors believed that the public investment was a "gift" to the private landowners of the areas (Bisson, 1929). From the perspective of the *mal-lotis*, in many cases the private landowners would receive more money from the state than the original price of the land (Vignier, 1930), multiplying the value of their investments. Although the law was designed to help poor populations, improving the areas not only benefitted the inhabitants but also the landowners who had kept speculative plots on such spaces. As the right-wing journal *Le Redressement Français* considered,

*L'aménagement général et rationnel des lotissements va entraîner pour les habitations édifiées sur ces terrains une plus-value appréciable. Est-ce que les capitaux considérables, mis en œuvre pour les travaux, ne pourraient faire l'objet d'une récupération sur cette plus-value?*<sup>314</sup>

For some authors, the solution should have been to impede from benefitting from the public funding the populations "*qui n'habitent pas réellement le lotissement, soit qu'elles conservent leur terrain comme jardin, soit qu'elles le mettent en location, ou même qu'elles l'aient acheté pour le revendre dans un but de spéculation*" (Descamps, 1933, p. 374). According to the urbanist Bisson (1929), the possession of plots in *lotissements défectueux* as land investments, by upper classes living in Paris, was a frequent situation. The law did not block investors from

<sup>313</sup> Loi 2 juillet 1930.

<sup>314</sup> ANF F/2/2971 y F/2/2972. Observations sur le projet de loi destiné à faciliter l'aménagement des lotissements défectueux. Le redressement français, supplément à la "Région Parisienne" 13 janvier 1928.

waiting for the public funding and selling once the improvement process was finished, and this process seemed to highly influence the evolution of the areas soon after their urbanisation. Finally, the law did not allow for compensating the syndicates that had urbanised their *lotissements* by following the 1912 law, despite their limited economic resources, and it did not provide the associations with funds to build urban amenities (Vignier, 1930).

In Saint-Denis, the Sarraut law was highly criticised by the city council, which was under the power of the Communist Party. In a booklet published in 1930,<sup>315</sup> the municipality denounced the obligation of indebting the inhabitants to the urbanisation costs. Accessing ownership through debt was too expensive for the extremely precarious inhabitants and was considered a strategy of the state to make it harder for the working classes to resist labour exploitation and organise strikes. This approach would have been rationally designed, according to the communist municipality, since the elaboration of the Ribot and Loucheur laws to promote housing ownership were at the very core of the reformist agenda, making the inhabitants of the *lotissements* debt-dependent:

*Les charges qui lui incombent du fait de la loi Sarraut sont souvent aussi lourdes que le prix d'un loyer onéreux. [. . .] Les petits propriétaires ouvriers sont devenus tributaires de grands propriétaires de fait aussi rapaces que les anciens propriétaires de maisons (Etats, lotisseurs, grandes compagnies concessionnaires d'eau, de gaz et d'électricité). [. . .] Il est souvent devenu le responsable d'une propriété, mais il ne la possède pas.*<sup>316</sup>

The text criticised the public powers' lack of foresight to approve the first urban planning law only in 1919, various decades after the initiation of a process of "monster" human agglomeration that London, New York, and Paris "had not known with the same intensity". The municipality's alternative to the *lotissements défectueux* would have been for the state and the *lotisseurs* to pay the urbanisation costs integrally, as the French Communist Party demanded. Instead, the public powers wanted to subsidise private speculation.

Additionally, the local public powers blamed the state for the delays of the urbanisation process. While the objective of the municipality was to tackle the urbanisation over a short period in coordination with the municipal plan, the instructions from the Préfet to implement the Sarraut law planned to urbanise the informal areas over a long period of time, between five and ten years.

The local administrations had to identify which *lotissements* to urbanise, establishing an order of urgency to determine the first ones to be provided with public infrastructures. To accelerate the process, the communist municipality of Saint-Denis asked to maintain the collective action<sup>317</sup> of the *mal-lotis*, as had been already carried out mainly in the *lotissement* of the Mutualité years before the beginning of the *lotissements* laws.

The archives show the *lotissements* inhabitants' ongoing demands for improvements. For instance, in Villa Bel-Air, another letter from the neighbours to the mayor on 5 October 1928 stated that during the winter the street became "*une cloaque de boue*" and that "*elle est*

<sup>315</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327. La Municipalité Ouvrière de Saint-Denis et le problème des Mal-Lotis.

<sup>316</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327. Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> *Les ordres d'urgence du Préfet, la pénurie de crédits, les lenteurs administratives, la lenteur des travaux, les charges financières, ne pourront être changés que par l'action vigoureuse des mal-lotis. C'est pourquoi il convient que, des maintenant, en accord avec la Municipalité, ils constituent des comités de défense de leurs rues ou de leur quartier, en vue de mener la lutte pour le rapide aménagement de leur lotissement.*

démuni de tout éclairage et à la nuit nous pénétrons chez nous très difficilement par tatonnements”.<sup>318</sup> The inhabitants asked for the installation of public lighting while waiting the definitive urbanisation of the area. On 10 May 1930, in a new letter, the inhabitants declared that they were surprised by the slowness of the area’s improvement, which they had been demanding since 1924. The letter ended with a significant description of the area and their problems:

*Avec le commencement des chaleurs, ils se forment des flaques d’eau qui empeste ou les enfants jouent. Les propriétaires, qui sont tous des ouvriers qui ont construit leurs chez-soi a forcé de privations, payent leurs impôts comme les habitants des grands artères et ont droit à leur part d’hygiène.*<sup>319</sup>

The plan devised by the *syndicat de propriétaires* in 1930 to improve the area shows the nature of the constructions existing in the neighbourhood that year. The private street, which was composed of small plots of about 100 square metres, had houses that usually occupied only a small part of that space. Many of them seemed to have a surface area of around 25 square metres. The smallest “houses” were at the interior of the plots, probably to abide by the private street regulations; the *Cahier des Charges* didn’t allow houses built with precarious materials if aligned to the street.

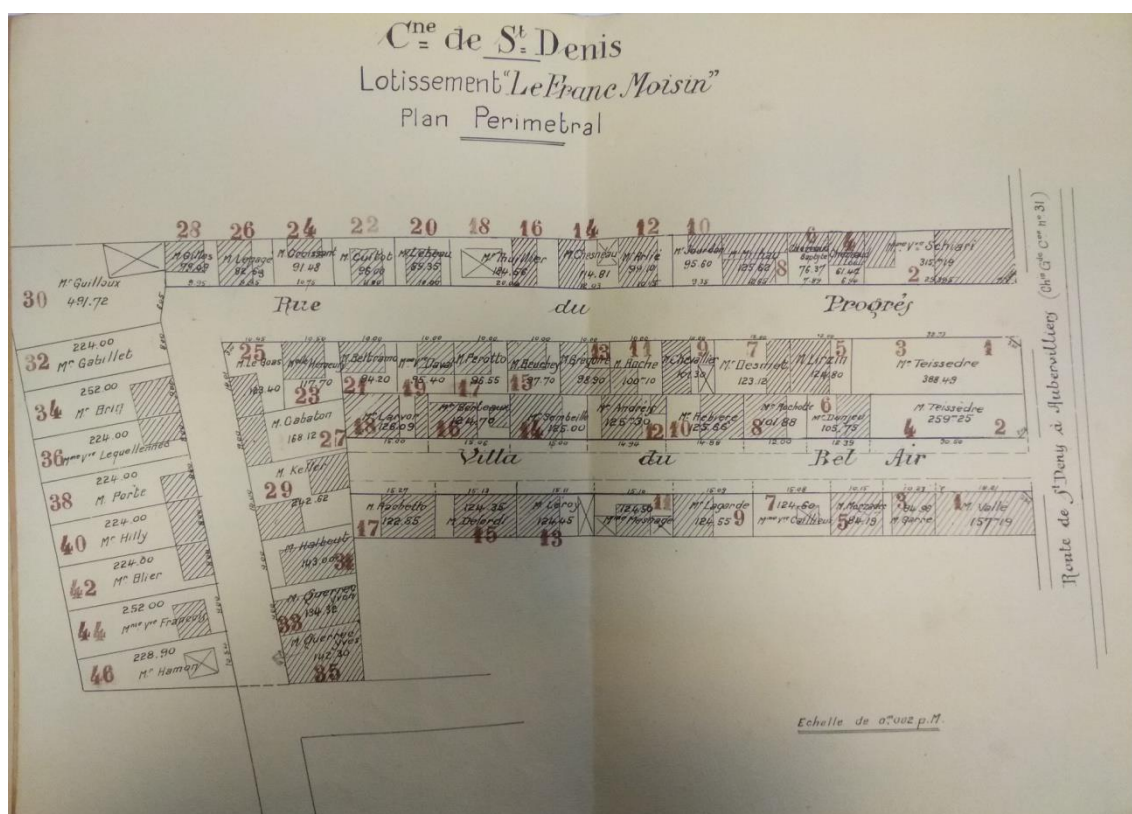


Illustration 16. Lotissement Le Franc-Moisin, streets Rue du Progrès and Villa du Bel-Air in the urbanisation project submitted on 26 April 1930.

Source: AMSD 1 O 350.

<sup>318</sup> AMSD 1 O 115.

<sup>319</sup> AMSD 1 O 115.

Du Progrès and Bel-Air streets were finally able to initiate obtaining the Sarraut law funding on 5 June 1930, and the urbanisation concluded in 1934<sup>320</sup>. However, not all areas of Saint-Denis had the same opportunity. Although the law seemed to be effective in general, transforming largely the informal areas of the Paris region, it had some inefficiencies and gaps.

To obtain public funding, the inhabitants had to complete several tasks: create a *syndicat de propriétaires*, contract a technician to do the improvement project, negotiate and establish the local building requirements and area management, request approval for their *lotissements* according to the 1924 law, and only then send a dossier to the public powers with all the requirements (*Comissions d'aménagement départementales*) in order to be evaluated and eventually approved. This list of tasks was probably not easy to accomplish for populations who were often illiterate, sometimes foreign.

Although actors involved in the regularisation process reported that the legal requirements were not generally an obstacle because of the public administration's laxity in accepting the proposal (Descamps, 1933), other historical sources denounced the difficulty and slowness of the different public administrations in approving the plans (Bisson, 1929). The diversity of the administrations could partially explain such different points of view; the criteria for accepting the approval and subsidising the different *lotissements* were "very variable" depending of the different "commissions départementales d'aménagement" seeking instructions from various administrations in charge of the Paris region: the départements of Seine, Seine-et-Oise, and Seine-et-Marne (Bisson, 1929, p. 49).

Additionally, the administration sometimes had problems evaluating very small *lotissements* and their limits, as had been the case in Saint-Denis, due to the presence of agricultural lands that would be "granted" their urbanisation without financing it<sup>321</sup> (Descamps, 1933).

Another reason was the rate of spending of the capital allocated to the law. It was thought that the Sarraut law would be developed in ten years, but it finished de facto much earlier due to the lack of funding for the last projects. While the total programme budget for the period of 1928 to 1938 was 550 million francs, 431 million (78%) had already been spent by 1933 (Descamps, 1933). In order to prioritise investments, the state asked the municipalities to assign an order of urgency for the areas to be improved. The syndicates that the local powers were not privileged by the local powers—those with different, unexplained criteria for assigning the order—or those which had management problems to accomplish all the requirements and submit a project, had a much lower probability of receiving support from the state.

Another reason that some areas were excluded from the programme was the age of some *lotissements*. The 1928 law did not explicitly define an age limit for the areas to be improved. However, as Sarraut considered, "*La loi de 1912 . . . a été faite pour obliger les propriétaires riverains des voies privées urbaines à exécuter certains travaux. La loi de 1928, comme les lois de 1919 et 1924, vise des terrains encore non bâtis, les quartiers neufs des villes et non les parties déjà agglomérées*".<sup>322</sup>

<sup>320</sup> AMSD 1 0 326 Fiche B, aménagement des lotissements défectueux.

<sup>321</sup> Although such circumstances remained unclear in the law, the agricultural landowners near *lotissements* streets were finally compelled to participate in the budget of the urbanisation process.

<sup>322</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2971, note without author or title about the application of the law 15 March 1928.

Although this imprecision gave rise to various debates about the extent of the law, and a number of books were published with legal analysis in order to help the municipalities and associations obtain the funds,<sup>323</sup> the general interpretation was that,

*Il se dégagait nettement des débats parlementaires que l'on visait les lotissements d'après guerre, ceux qui avaient pu se développer en raison des lacunes de la législation et du défaut de sanction . . . le Ministre de l'Intérieur a toujours estimé que les subventions devaient, sauf cas particuliers, être réservées aux lotissements établis entre 1919 et 1924.*<sup>324</sup>

However, the age of the regularised areas seemed to be an extremely flexible criterion. In Saint-Denis, documents from 1931 about the process of the 1928 law showed that even areas developed before 1900 were included by the municipal powers in their priority list. As the urbanist Bisson indicated, the regularisation of the *lotissements* was enormously varied depending on the different local powers, despite the supervision of the “commissions départementales d'aménagement” (Bisson, 1929, p. 49). This fact explained why areas older than those the law originally focused on were urbanised in Saint-Denis.

The persistence of *lotissements défectueux* would have been a consequence of the Sarraut law not attending to some kinds of existing defective areas and also due to their further management. Although the 1928 law intended to transfer the improved areas to the public sector, making the inhabitants' associations pay for five years of street maintenance, this was not obligatory. In some towns, the massive costs involved in maintaining the new low-density areas, and the original inhabitants' refusal to contribute to their costs, led some public administrations to reject their classification as public streets. Accordingly, in the long term, their humble populations were not able to finance their maintenance (Descamps, 1933).

Finally, another criterion that excluded areas from being improved under the Loi Sarraut in the municipality of Saint-Denis was if housing areas existing on rented lands. Therefore, the area of *Petite Espagne* and probably the informal settlements of Francs-Moisins remained outside of the benefits of the law, explaining their remaining in very poor conditions until the second half of the 20th century.

*Pour certaines de ces voies, il est formel que la Loi Sarraut ne peut pas s'appliquer, non seulement pour celles qui appartiennent à des collectivités, mais aussi pour d'autres telles que le passage Dupont, le passage Boise, le passage des Gauguères, puisque ces rues et les terrains appartiennent toujours à un seul et même propriétaire, qui a fait un lotissement de location et non de vente. Peut être pourra-t-on, à l'examen approfondi, en extraire quelques-unes de la nomenclature, et essayer de les faire bénéficier de la loi*<sup>325</sup>.

In 1936, due to the pressure from the Bureau d'Hygiène, *Petite Espagne's* landowner, M. Laurent, seemed to accept to make a partial improvement in the area, providing a water supply by installing two infrastructures in the public space; a *bouche de lavage* and a *borne*

<sup>323</sup> Among such juridical sources conceived to facilitate the understanding of the Loi Sarraut and its use are the following : *Aménagement des lotissements défectueux, instructions Prefectorales* (Préfecture de Seine-et-Oise, 1928); *Commentaire de la loi 15 du mars 1928* (Bonde, 1929); *Traité théorique et pratique sur les lotissements* (Minvielle, 1930); *Les lotissements défectueux et la Loi Sarraut* (Combe, 1933); *Extension des villes et lotissements, projets régionaux d'urbanisme* (Cazenavette, 1936); and *Le régime juridique des lotissements* (Benoist d'Etiveaud, 1939).

<sup>324</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2971, note without author or title, about the application of 15 March 1928 law.

<sup>325</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327. Loi Sarraut.

*fontaine* in the street space. The municipality would pay for the water and, as the archives explained, “*naturellement aucun riverain ne pourrait se piquer sur la conduite après compteur*”.<sup>326</sup> However, as N. Lillo noted (Natacha Lillo, 2001), the owner eventually rejected carrying out the agreed improvements.

In other cases, the failure to accomplish the requirements of the Sarraut Law was caused by managerial problems in the *syndicats de propriétaires*. For instance, the association of the Francs-Moisins 2nd Group, formed by Charles Gross, Progrès Prolongé, and Germain Nouveau streets, demanded their inclusion as a public street only on 23 April 1923. The texts from the syndicate showed that most of the individuals were Spanish workers, who probably had difficulties facing the large amount of bureaucratic exigencies of the process. Another case was the syndicate of Simon Street, whose administrative process was halted by the sudden death of their president, remaining unattended several years.<sup>327</sup> On 29 July 1938, a letter to the mayor from one of the inhabitants reminded him that there was no water, gas, sewerage, or public lighting systems in the area.<sup>328</sup>

However, other areas in Francs-Moisins established *syndicats de propriétaires* in order to receive the public funding. As has been shown, du Progrès and Bel-Air streets, known as Francs-Moisins 1, constituted a *syndicat de propriétaires* on 5 June 1930, while Germain Nouveau, Charles Cros, Bourget streets, known as Francs-Moisins 2, set up a syndicate on 20 March 1931. Both were approved on 1 June 1931. But, what happened with the most precarious *lotissements* of the area?

In a report titled “*État des lotissements de la Commune à la date 1st December 1930*”,<sup>329</sup> the Francs-Moisins streets of Villa du Progrès and Villa du Bel-Air had the maximum priority level and a constituted syndicate, although other spaces of the area appeared with the 6th urgency level, such as Rue du Progrès, Charles Cros, Germain Nouveau, and with the 12th urgency level, such as Impasse du Franc-Mosin, Villa Gabriel, and Villa Thierry.

In a similar report published on 8 December 1931, *lotissements* Francs-Moisins 1 and 2 appeared as in *cours d'exécution*. However, no mention was made of the Impasse des Francs-Moisins.

Most of the areas that benefitted from the Loi Sarraut evolved quickly, passing from a general landscape of self-made barracks to neighbourhoods of well-constructed familiar pavilions. Such evolution would have been partly a consequence of regularising the areas. The new law not only ensured the inhabitants' investments but it permitted them to get into debt to improve the houses. In addition to the private funding, the Loi Loucheur, approved in 1926, allowed obtaining public loans to build cheap houses (Bisson, 1929). During the early 1930s, the archives gathered a big number of building demands, many of them extremely succinct, including a short text and a plan clearly not drawn by an architect or superior technician.

For instance, a plan submitted on 16 October 1930 for a building expansion on a plot of Villa Bel-Air included a small plan of no more than 15 centimetres. It showed a new “house” consisting of a substandard single room of around 12 square metres, with one window and one door, and without any details about the construction materials. In the middle of the plot,

<sup>326</sup> AMSD 1 O 156. Letter 25 February 1936 of the Architecte-Voyeur.

<sup>327</sup> AMSD 1 O 331.

<sup>328</sup> AMSD 1 O 331.

<sup>329</sup> AMSD 1 O 326.



the word *courre* is used to describe the remaining patio. This word was possibly a deformation of the word *courras*, which Spanish immigrants of that area frequently used to refer to these spaces as a derivation of the French word *cour* (Natacha Lillo, 2001). The demand was apparently approved, as no letter or inscription expressed its rejection.

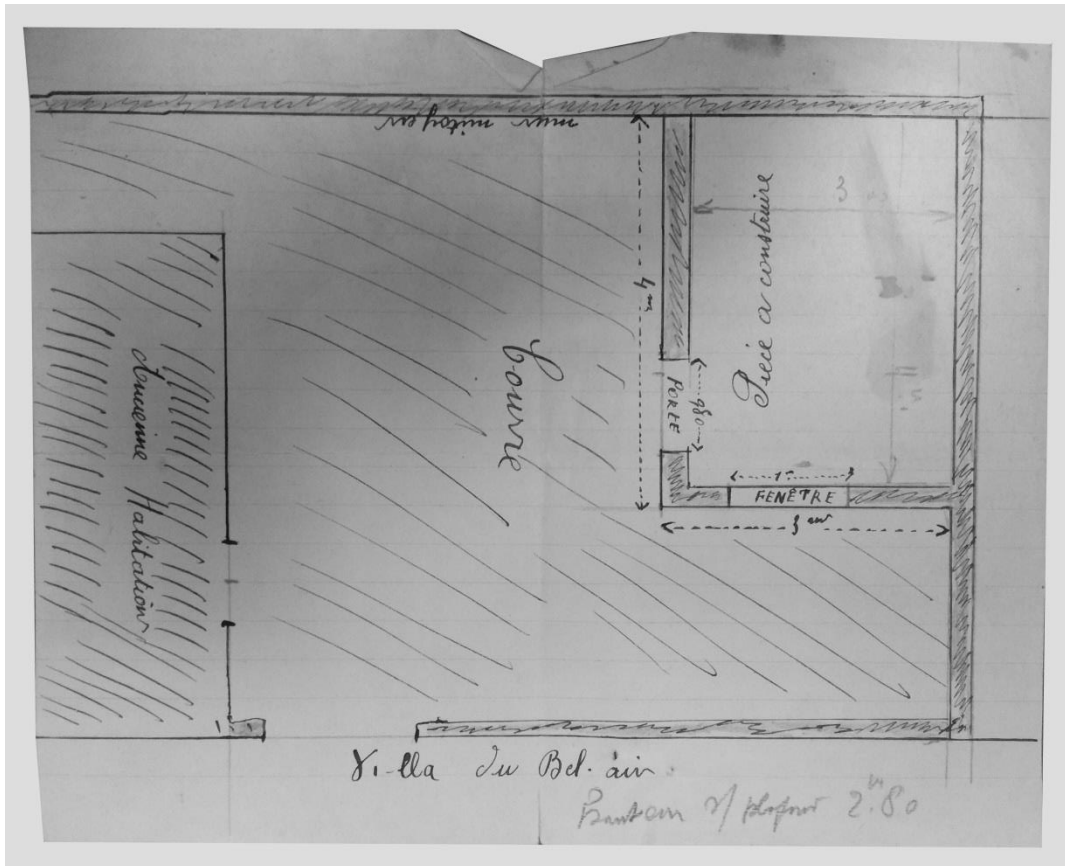


Illustration 17. A demand for construction on a plot in Villa Bel-Air, 16 October 1930.  
Source: AMSD 2 O 25.

Interestingly, “formal” building demands were also asked for rented lands. In Impasse Duchefdelaville, in the *Petite Espagne* area, an M. Roy Louis proposed a small two-room house of about 20 square metres on a plot “owned by M. Duchefdelaville”. Again, the demand was clearly not drawn by a building technician, and the plan (without scale) did not measure more than 10 centimetres. The sudden inclusion of plans for this kind of self-developed house could have resulted from the possibility to use them to demand subventions under the Loi Loucheur.

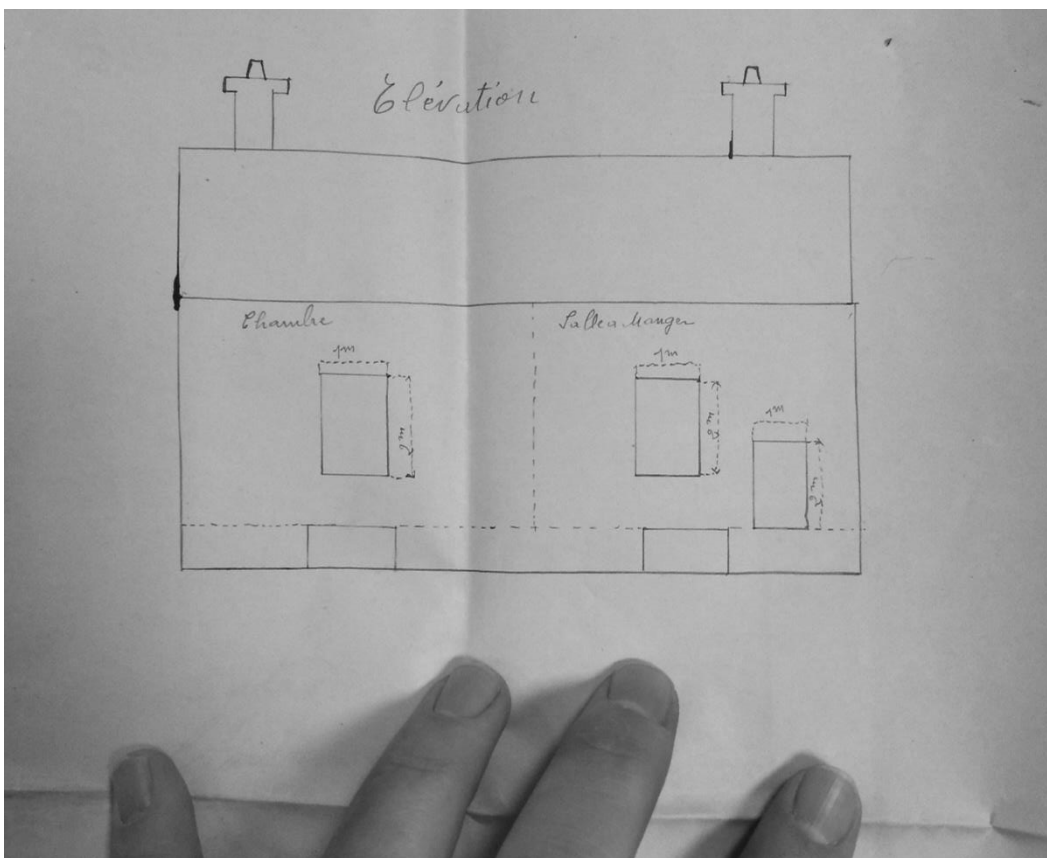


Illustration 18. Impasse Duchefdelaville, 42 Rue de la Justice, 22 July 1929.

Source: AMSD 2 O 86.

Whilst during the late 1920s and early 1930s a number of these amateur building permits were accepted, a demand was rejected in 1934. In a letter, the *architecte-voyeur* argued that the plans delivered were insufficient and, in order to obtain the building permit, asked “*de faire parvenir au Bureau de Travaux des plans dessinés par une personne compétente*”.<sup>330</sup> The criteria for accepting plans seemed to have changed, maybe because of the end of the *lotissements défectueux* improvements and the development of a local master plan, as will be shown in the next pages, that would consolidate the control and bureaucratisation of urban growth.

<sup>330</sup> AMSD 2 O 87.

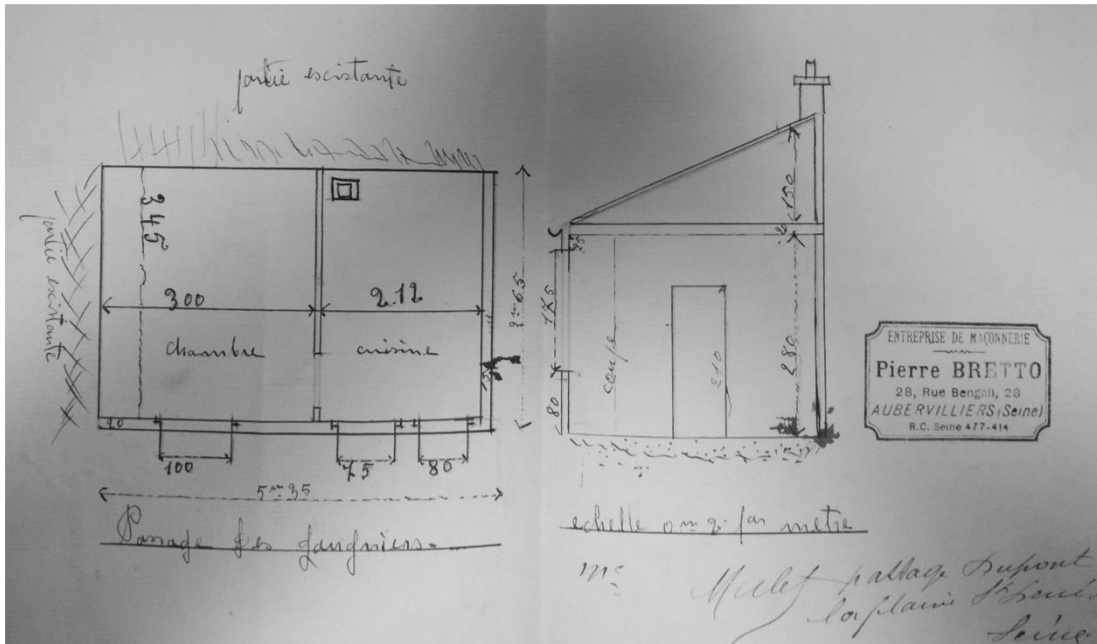


Illustration 19. Passage Dupont rejected building permit, 20 December 1934.

Source: AMSD 2 O 87.

In a context of crisis—the 1929 Great Depression—some of the newly indebted *mal-lotis* were in a desperate situation. As the municipality of Saint-Denis explained in 1930,<sup>331</sup> referring to the situation of the *lotissements* inhabitants related to rising unemployment, “Le ‘propriétaire’ d’une maison incomplètement payée, court vers l’hypothèque, la vente, l’expropriation pure et simple”.

After urbanisation, the number of properties sold in the *lotissements* increased in the whole Paris region (Bisson, 1929). In Saint-Denis, the improvement and urbanisation of the Francs-Moisins *lotissements* attracted the attention and investments of professional developers and real estate actors, as revealed by the letters delivered to the mayor.

For instance, on 5 February 1934, public notary M. Chaslot asked the Mayor of Saint-Denis by letter<sup>332</sup> if Germain Nouveau Street was already public or still remained private. He received the answer that it was still private but being improved under the Sarraut law. On 16 December 1935, another letter from the same person asked if Villa du Progrès Street had been improved, what the price of the urbanisation costs were, if it was already a public street,<sup>333</sup> and what was planned for it in the ongoing “Plan d’aménagement”. The public notary represented a couple living in the city of Amiens who were thinking of selling their plots on the same street.

On 12 June 1935, another public notary, M. Saintville, asked the Mayor of Saint-Denis to authorise Madame Grindel—probably the wife from the already mentioned surveyor and land developer—to sell a plot in the *lotissement* Le Franc-Moisin 2nd group.

<sup>331</sup> AMSD 1 O 325-327. La Municipalité Ouvrière de Saint-Denis et le problème des Mal-Lotis.

<sup>332</sup> AMSD 1 O 331.

<sup>333</sup> AMSD 1 O 331.

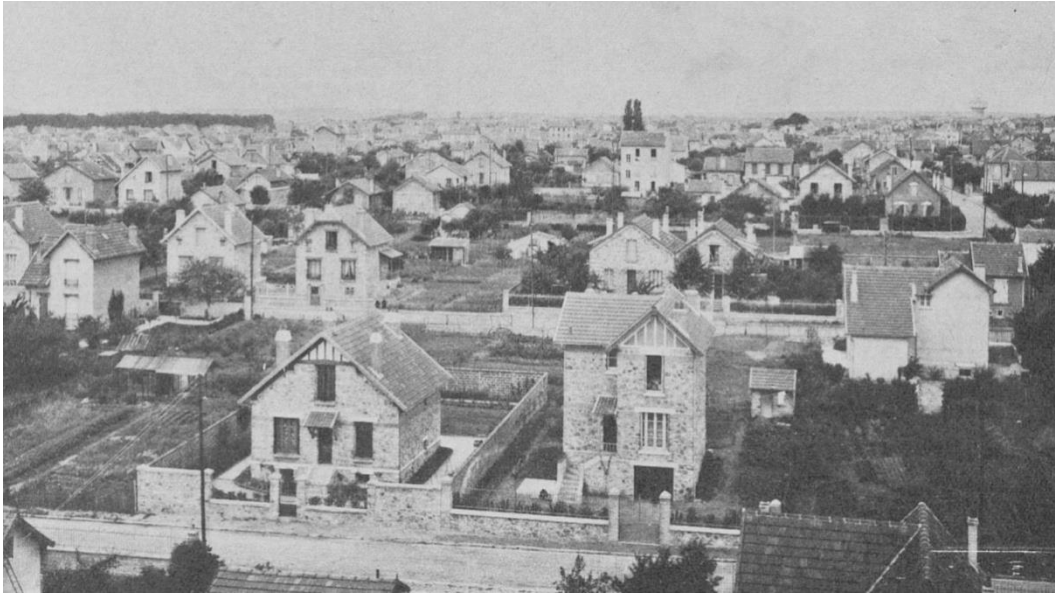


Photo 40. The former barrack area of Savigny-Sur-Orge in 1933.  
Source: (Bisson, 1933, p. 362).

The elitization of these spaces after the 1928 law could partially explain the spectacular change that occurred in some of the *lotissements* a few years after the Loi Sarraut, and the middle-class character that the word *lotissements* acquired during the next decades (Topalov et al., 2010). It is likely that the poorest strata of *lotissements* populations decided not to create syndicates because of the lack of income to tackle the urbanisation costs, explaining the persistence of a number of informal areas despite this public programme. After the general improvement of the *lotissements défectueux*, a new legal framework attempted to establish new set of regulations to organize the space and transform the remaining “defective areas”: the Plan Prost and its local expression, the Plan Municipal de Saint-Denis. However, as we will see, new informal areas would be built illegally during the following years; the so-called *campements de nomades*.

### The Paris regional plan against the remaining informal areas

A new stage in the regulation of the Paris periphery and the fight against developing informal housing areas was the approval of a master plan for the Paris region, the so-called Plan Prost. Facing the previous normative frameworks, the development of the master plan permitted the regulations to be spatialised. Although the plan had very diverse aspects, some of its core elements were correcting and making the *lotissements défectueux* invisible and preventing the area from a reproduction of poor, uncontrolled urbanisation processes.

Despite the already described normative production and in the absence of an institutional urban planning frame, city growth was driven by the real estate market, without any institutional device to establish (correctly or incorrectly) a “common will”. In 1938, a press article<sup>334</sup> showed what the real estate developers’ “typical” procedure was like in the absence of public masterplans. Landowners established some personal contact with municipal workers

<sup>334</sup> *L’Humanité*, 8 Mars 1938. Un grand centre industriel. Né dans le desordre “organisé”.

to gather information from the administration, made land price predictions and secured political favours to vaguely predict the evolution of the area where they wanted to invest.

Facing to it, the master plans provided a reliable scenario of the area's future character and also permitted precisely knowing the quantity of square metres to build and estimate the profitability of the operation. Public control of the land was, in fact, a regulatory need for the private sector. Contrastingly, unplanned urban development was a factor of unpredictability that could completely change the land use, status, and prices. Factories, roads, and also informal areas were major factors of instability for the real estate sector before urban planning.



Illustration 20. Regional Plan of Paris.

Source: *Révue Urbanisme* n°41, 1935–36, p. 11.

In the Paris region, the Plan Prost consisted in a regional plan which coordinated infrastructures and land uses at a regional level through the development of municipal master plans that included them. As has been already shown, the municipalities were compelled by the laws from 1919 to 1924 to develop and approve local plans, among other reasons to integrate the defective areas. However, most of the small towns did not meet these requirements.

In 1904, Albert Thomas, member of the French Socialist Party stated the necessity to establish some mechanisms of infrastructure and policies coordination in the Paris region. However, it was only from 1911 onwards—with the establishment of the Commission d'Extension by the Conseil Général de la Seine in close relationship with the Musée Sociale—that the Paris regional planning started to be debated (Casselle, 2012). Despite the regional planning competition of Paris in 1919 (Fernández Águeda, 2016) and the creation of the Bureau de l'extension à la Préfecture de la Seine in 1919, the problem was not fully tackled until 1928, with the creation of CSAORP, the Comité Supérieur de de l'Amenagement et de l'Organisation de la Région Parisienne. On 14 May 1932, the French Parliament approved the development of a regional plan that would be only slightly modified until the 1960s.

This action approved the planning of common regional infrastructure as roads, airports, green areas, and industrial poles, which would be coordinated with detailed municipal plans. However, one of the main issues was integrating and equipping the areas developed during the *lotissements défectueux* crisis. The journal *Urbanisme*, directed by Henri Prost himself, described the attempts of the plan to improve these areas and the difficulties to do so while they were still growing “without control”:

*Les mises à jour du fond de plan se trouvaient-elles démenties d'année en année. L'esquisse des grandes lignes d'aménagement se poursuivait pourtant, tandis qu'un peu d'ordre apparaissait grâce à l'application de la loi Sarraut, sur le réaménagement des lotissements défectueux* (Prost, 1936, p. 14).

The previous attempts to develop municipal plans had failed, perhaps due to the public servants' lack of knowledge. Although the development of this local planning could be done by the local municipal architects, the “intelligentsia” of the French planning grouped around the Musée Sociale and the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, created an office financed by the Administration Départementale that would develop the plans of the municipalities without costs to them.<sup>335</sup> In Saint-Denis, an initial version of the local plan was delivered on December 1929,<sup>336</sup> presented by Louis Bonnier, and a “definitive” version on 13 July 1938, which would finally be approved in 1941.

As in the Madrid case, the plan had been elaborated at a large scale (1/10,000), requiring topographical work to establish the alignments on the ground. However, differently from the Madrid case, in which the spontaneous urban growth had continued before the implementation of the plan, the regional administration of the Paris region declared it illegal to

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<sup>335</sup> AMSD, CT 1418.

<sup>336</sup> AMSD, CT 1119.

build, a process known as *sursis à statuer*.<sup>337</sup> This juridical clause permitted the halting of legal uncontrolled urban growth and allowed the implementation of the plan.

*Il faut faire, pour l'ensemble des communes de la région parisienne, ce qui a été accompli à Paris depuis trois quarts de siècle, en vue de l'aménagement des anciens faubourgs; mais aussi, en même temps, d'empêcher qu'une nouvelle banlieue se reconstitue au-delà, "sans autre règle", comme le disait Haussmann, "que la convenance de chacun", aussi monstrueuse, aussi désordonnée que celle que nous connaissons, au fur et à mesure que les villes actuellement constituées auront été assainies et aménagées* ("L'aménagement de La Région Parisienne," 1936, p. 6).

The control of such "disordered" urbanisation was supposed to permit two economic improvements. It would protect the private property value, impeding its devaluation by the arrival of undesired new properties and controlling the characteristics of the new buildings.<sup>338</sup> It would also protect municipal finances, preventing the immense expense of urbanising and improving the new, poor, low-density areas with public infrastructure and services.

The tool used to achieve these objectives was zoning, first implemented in France at that time. The plan divided the municipalities of the Paris area into four categories (A, B, C, and D) with different land uses depending on their distance from Paris. Inside them, each local plan could divide the territory for different uses: agricultural, known as *zones non affectées*, industrial, individual housing, and collective housing.

The *zones non affectées* were supposed to remain in the periphery of Paris, not existing in Saint-Denis. The plan prohibited construction on these rural lands, except for agricultural buildings and neighbourhoods that, different from the *lotissements défectueux*, would be fully equipped with infrastructure and services such as schools and not need any public investment. Establishing these regulated rural areas, which was contested by the rural landowners surrounding Paris due to the loss of land value (Dreif, 2008), was supposed to impede transforming agricultural lands into poor, defective spaces. Doing so, the plan would make difficult the development of "pathological" areas, a problem that was not only a threat to zoning but to the reputation of the French state.

*Cette création des zones non affectées contribuera en outre à préparer la solution du problème des " confins " de la ville et de la campagne [ . . . ]. Elle est appelée en effet à mettre fin à ce champignonnage de constructions lépreuses qui tend à proliférer autour des centres de peuplement normalement organisés et dont la " zone " des servitudes militaires de Paris constitue l'un des plus anciens et notables exemples, en même temps que l'un des faits les plus humiliants pour notre amour-propre national.* ("L'aménagement de La Région Parisienne," 1936, p. 26).

In addition to the sanitary and economic problematisation of informal areas, the plan was expected to tackle another problem: the symbolic threat to the prestige of France and of Paris

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<sup>337</sup> AMSD CT 1418, Le préfet de la Seine, 5 mars 1936. Signé A. Viley.

<sup>338</sup> The Plan apparently provoked some discussions about urban growth in absence of regulation, shortly showed on the number 41 of the revue *Urbanisme*. The Proust Plan was supposed to control the long-term evolution of the periphery. The authors imagined that in the absence of rules the developers would start to build high-rise buildings. Although initially it would not be a big problem, the densification process would multiply such kinds of buildings, producing dark, overcrowded spaces and provoking a general depreciation of the area. It is interesting to note that the same kind of "free-rider problem" seems to be happening today in informal urbanisation areas all around the world.

as a metropolis, where such kind of informal areas, frequently attributed to the colonial world, could not exist. In fact, in 1934 a press article about the Plan Prost from the journal *Les Echos du Grand Paris* denounced the situation in Paris region, describing the prevalence of informal areas despite the improvements achieved by the Sarraut law. In it, the term *bidonville* was used, which was common at that time to describe the North African shanty towns but which would not be generalised to metropolitan France until the 1950s (Cattedra, 2006). The existence of informal areas, compared through the lexicon with African ones, was considered a sign of a societal disorder, in a discourse that seemed to be related to degenerationist theories:

*Jusqu'à plus de 20 kilomètres à la ronde, les Gouvernements qui se sont succédés depuis la guerre ont laissé et laissent encore se multiplier à l'infini les lotissements défectueux, insalubres. Ces Bidonvilles, ces baraques couvertes de tôles ondulées, ces "pavillons" pour personnages à la Courteline, ces "villas" échappées d'un album de Sociétés pour constructions à bon marché n'ont rien de commun, est-il besoin de l'écrire, avec les maisons si accueillantes, si empreintes de bonhomie, si faciles à édifier qui s'alignaient jadis en Ile-de-France, au bord des routes plantées d'ormes. L'absence d'urbanisme est le symptôme d'une carence beaucoup plus grave de l'autorité et d'un désordre des esprits.*<sup>339</sup>



Photo 41. Problem neighbourhoods according to the editors of the *Révue Urbanisme*. In the photo caption, it was identified the "*champignonnage de constructions qui tend à proliférer autour des centres de peuplement normalement organisés*". Source :("L'aménagement de La Région Parisienne," 1936, p. 19).

From an environmental point of view, the Plan Prost was asked to separate housing and industrial areas. Whilst in Paris the urban regulations had prohibited the existence of *établissements insalubres et incommodes* within the city, in the periphery the lack of regulations and the large inequalities had provoked such areas to gather around each other, producing large sanitary problems for the working-class populations, as described N. Lillo (2001) in the case of Saint-Denis.

<sup>339</sup> *Les Echos du Grand Paris*, 1er decembre 1934. L'aménagement de la Région Parisienne.



Despite the plan's goals to concentrate the most dangerous industries in isolated areas, the spatial continuum between factories and working-class houses made the land use differentiation extremely difficult. Eventually, it was tackled pragmatically by an intermediate kind of land use, known as *zone mixte*, which would tolerate the existence of industries that did not introduce smoke, smells, noises, or any other discomforts to the neighbourhoods in the old industrial belt, the so-called "A" municipalities.

In Saint-Denis, although in the initial plan of 1929 no *zone mixte* had been proposed, different public and private interests pushed for its use in many areas of the municipality. The city council's acquisition of land from the biggest local industrial corporation, the Société Delaunay-Belleville, in order to build a carpark, was brought to the Préfet to propose the area as mixed zone.<sup>340</sup> Only two days later, on 18 November 1933, the Directeur Général des Transports de l'Extension et de l'Inspection Générale wrote to the Saint-Denis Mayor about a broader proposition:

*Il faut considérer que dans certains quartiers de la commune de Saint Denis, habitations et industries sont enchevêtrées les unes dans les autres. De tels quartiers ne peuvent pas logiquement être classés en zones réservées à l'habitation. On ne peut pas non plus envisager un classement massif de ces quartiers en zone industrielle étant donné la contiguïté de l'agglomération dense de Saint Denis. Mes services proposent donc . . . de créer une zone mixte d'habitations et d'industries sur les quartiers Nord de Saint-Denis.*<sup>341</sup>

The proposition, approved on 13 December 1933, was followed by different claims from the private sector, such as the Société Delaunay-Belleville, which in a letter from the end of 1936 asked for a total classification of their lands as a *zone mixte* in order to build houses.<sup>342</sup>

The authors of the plan considered the area to be clearly industrial, arguing that a part of the company's lands had been sold to the highly pollutant Société Française de Caoutchouc. Although after these claims the Bureau du Plan proposed to maintain *purement et simplement le zoning tel qu'il est prévu au projet communal d'aménagement*, the area was finally considered a *zone mixte* in the plan submitted on 11 February 1937.

It is methodologically impossible to know the authorities' reasons for maintaining a highly contaminating area around a housing space. However, the influence of the industrial owners could have played a major role, as it was in their best interest to have a workforce reserve in the vicinity of the factories. As *Le Redressement Français* remembered in 1928,

*La création de lotissements a pour conséquence le développement rapide des communes sur le territoire desquelles ils sont situés. [. . .] Qui profite de ce nouvel état des choses ? Ce sont les*

<sup>340</sup> AMSD CT 1419. Letter 16 Novembre 1933. Le Préfet de la Seine à Monsieur le Maire de Saint-Denis.

<sup>341</sup> AMSD CT 1419. Bureau d'Extension, 18 November 1933. Letter from the Saint-Denis major to the Directeur Général des Transports de l'Extension et de l'Inspection Générale.

<sup>342</sup> The mixed area would allow increasing the land value and hypothetically obtaining housing rent from the area, helping to conserve a disposable workforce close to the factory. As the company declared, "*Il semble donc que tout en laissant subsister dans cette région des usines susceptibles d'utiliser la main-d'oeuvre existante il soit intéressant de conserver la possibilité d'y construire ds maisons d'habitation*", AMSD CT 1419, Letter from the Société Anonyme des Etablissements Delaunay-Belleville to Monsieur le Commissaire-Enquêteur. St-Denis, le 24 juillet 1936.

*cités industrielles voisines qui peuvent commodément disposer de ces réservoirs de travailleurs.*<sup>343</sup>

Concerning the transport system, the plan promoted the development of new regional roads that connected the periphery to the inner city, inspired by the American model of parkways, placing importance on tourism and the “charme” of rural France. Accordingly, the plan tried to create visual barriers to hide the defective areas to the Parisian visitors<sup>344</sup> and avoid crossing into the remaining informal neighbourhoods. As the journal *Urbanisme*, directed by the author of the regional plan H. Prost explained,

*On pourra en outre, accessoirement, réaliser ainsi le camouflage de certains ensembles de constructions dont l'architecture est fort indigente et dont la vue donne aux visiteurs qui gagnent Paris par la route une piètre idée du goût français. [. . .] En dehors des régions boisées, les routes nouvelles devront être pourvues, d'une manière générale, de plantations d'alignement [. . .]. On devra d'ailleurs aller plus loin pour les grandes radiales, à la traversée de certaines portions de la petite banlieue. Il sera alors indispensable de "camoufler" les groupes de constructions riveraines d'une architecture particulièrement mal venue et l'on pourra constituer, à cet effet, sur les zones acquises à cet effet en bordure de la route, des bouquets d'arbres et des massifs de verdure qui dissimuleront certains paysages affligeants. [. . .] Pour tous les voyageurs venant de l'est par les routes : Nationale n° 19, Départementale n° 18, Nationale n° 21 et Nationale n° 3, il serait possible de pénétrer dans Paris par les bords de la Marne et le bois de Vincennes, où les autos se diffuseraient vers différentes portes de Paris, en évitant complètement toutes les agglomérations qui, depuis la guerre, se sont constituées dans tout l'est de la banlieue parisienne (Prost, 1936, pp. 26–29).*

This explicit purpose was publicly known and accepted without apparent criticism. In 1934, a press article considered that,

*Le prestige national et international de Paris n'a pas échappé aux urbanistes quand ils ont entrepris de tracer les voies de pénétration. Il s'agit de pénétrer dans Paris sans que nos yeux aient à subir l'offense d'un spectacle misérable.*<sup>345</sup>

However, the objective of the roads in the Plan Prost was not only to make the areas invisible but eventually to destroy them. As the plan's authors described in *Révue Urbanisme*,

*L'autoroute du Nord, dont le principal objectif est de desservir l'aéroport du Bourget . . . pourrait aussi être le prétexte d'un remembrement de certains quartiers traversés, dont la densité d'habitations est assez faible et la qualité des constructions tout à fait précaire. Les emprises, déterminés très largement, faciliteraient ce réaménagement (Henri Prost, 1936, p. 46).*

In the Saint-Denis Municipal Plan, some examples of this strategy can be found. The deviation of National Route 186 (op. No. 5 of the plan) would allow “*la disparition d'un îlot à tendance insalubre*”.<sup>346</sup> Another example was the neighbourhood Fouquet Becquet, a *lotissement jardin*

<sup>343</sup> ANF F/2/2971 y F/2/2972. Observations sur le projet de loi destiné à faciliter l'aménagement des lotissements défectueux. Le redressement français, supplément à la “Région Parisienne” 13 janvier 1928.

<sup>344</sup> The dissimulation of the phenomenon regarding access to the city was also an important element in the treatment of the defective areas in the 1950s (Manzano Gómez & Castrillo Romón, 2019).

<sup>345</sup> *Les Echos du Grand Paris*, 1er décembre 1934. L'aménagement de la Région Parisienne.

<sup>346</sup> AMSD CT 1419.

developed after the 1924. On 27 October 1935, the Prefet de la Seine received a letter from the inhabitants:

*Courant de l'année 1926, nous nous sommes rendus acquéreurs de terrains sis 24 rue Fouquet Bacquet à Saint-Denis, terrains vendus comme jardins, les propriétaires vendeurs n'ayant pas voulu se charger de la viabilité. Au début de l'année 1928, nous avons adressé à la Mairie de St-Denis une demande pour la formation d'un Syndicat pour la mise en viabilité de ce lotissement; cette demande est restée sans réponse. Par la suite, quelques acquéreurs ayant eu l'intention de construire se sont vus refuser l'autorisation.*<sup>347</sup>

Although legalising those areas was forbidden in 1926,<sup>348</sup> the décret-loi 8 August 1935 opened the door to regularising them when the inhabitants presented a syndicate and a project, whilst also making municipal permits compulsory for developing new gardening areas. A letter signed by the plot's residents, most of whom were living in the gardens, demanded the road be traced in a different way to avoid the destruction of their houses. The claim was, of course, rejected.

However, the roads were not the only tool of the public powers for destroying precarious housing areas. As it is evident in the Municipal Plan of Saint-Denis, a minimal street width of 10 metres was set for both public and private lands, obligating the transformation of *lotissements* areas and historical streets, which were often from 4 to 7 metres wide, and leading to a long-term demolition of most of the shacks. The plan explicitly explained their intentions to use public infrastructures to expropriate and demolish the undesired areas:

*En ce qui concerne la suppression des îlots insalubres, nous indiquons que certaines opérations de voirie ont été proposées dans la vue de faire disparaître les immeubles ou les îlots vieux et insalubres et qu'autres atteindront accessoirement ce même résultat. D'autres groups d'opérations de voirie ont été envisagés spécialement pour aérer, dégager ou assainir des îlots douteux. Certains emplacements réservés pour services publics ou espaces libres publics ont été choisis suivant des directives semblables.*<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> AMSD CT 1418.

<sup>348</sup> ANF F/2/2971 and F/2/2972, "La Cour de Cassation, le 7 mai 1927, sur appel d'un arrêt rendu par la Cour de Paris le 23 juillet 1926, a décidé que les prescriptions édictées par les lois du 14 mars 1919 et 19 juillet 1924 ne doivent recevoir d'application que pour les terrains mis en vente en vue d'édification d'habitations."

<sup>349</sup>



Illustration 21. The main roads and green areas in the Saint-Denis Plan.  
Source: AMSD 1119.

Although the municipal plan explained that there were not *îlots insalubres* in Saint-Denis of the same importance as the ones in Paris, it described the existence of housing at the edge of the legality concerning their sanitary conditions. “*Il existe bien des quartiers ou îlots, et nous les indiquons plus loin, où logent des étrangers, des chiffonniers, des familles nombreuses très pauvres où l’hygiène aurait à intervenir en vertu de la loi du 15 février 1902 sur la Santé publique*”. However, “*il n’y a pas de cas nettement exprimés dans lesquels l’interdiction*

*d'habitation ou le danger d'habitation ont été prononcés après intervention de la Commission d'hygiène de l'arrondissement de Saint-Denis*".<sup>350</sup>

Although some of these problem neighbourhoods corresponded to inner city areas, many of the tolerated defective spaces seemed to inherit the dysfunctions of the 1924 to 1928 laws. The text recounted that *"dans ces quartiers ou îlots on trouve encore des voies publiques ou privées où la viabilité est restée défectueuse et doit faire l'objet d'une programme d'amélioration ou de mise en état"*.<sup>351</sup> The informal areas would have remained *"parce que les locataires ne se sont pas plaints"*.<sup>352</sup> As already outlined in previous pages, the poorest inhabitants could have ignored the Sarraut law to avoid being asked to fund part of the improvements.

The Saint-Denis plan mentioned various unhealthy areas, some in the city centre and some in the periphery. The first version from 1927 noted the co-existence of housing areas and insalubrious industries, and that the north-east area of the municipality had recently been "invaded" by *lotissements* of individual shelters. Additionally, although city growth in the eastern part of the town was blocked by the presence of military lands, the area beyond them was increasingly occupied by substandard individual constructions. Finally, the *Petite Espagne* was identified as insalubrious composed of "passages" and "impasses": *"de très anciennes voies privées à la viabilité et à l'assainissement insuffisants"*.<sup>353</sup> Regarding the area, the plan project considered that *"les maisons sont minables et d'aspects vétustes. Les habitations, il y a beaucoup d'étrangers, sont généralement des populations ouvrières pauvres"*.<sup>354</sup>

To solve these problems, the plan suggested, as in the case of Madrid, that demolishing the insalubrious neighbourhoods would be the best solution: *"Cet état d'insalubrité latente, pour disparaître, n'est pas tributaire de mesures isolées atteignant un local, un immeuble ou une rue, ce sont des îlots entiers qui devront être démolis"*.<sup>355</sup>

Although during the 1920s regularising informal areas seemed to have been the policy internationally recommended by forums such as the Housing and Town Planning congresses, another international conference developed in 1935 highlighted the urgency of demolishing them, beyond any other consideration. As indicated in the preamble by F. Schuster, the general secretary of the International Housing Association, the problem of substandard housing had until that moment been handled by attempting to accelerate the construction of hygienic houses, believing that the unhealthy dwellings would be abandoned when a surplus of better ones existed. However, the evidence was showing that in most countries, new, hygienic houses remained too expensive for the lower strata of the population, which frequently had unstable salaries. In the words of its president, the association believed that *"as long as there are slums, so long will people live in them"* (International Housing Association, 1935, p. 5). Instead of criticising the real estate dynamics and proposing state-led redistribution policies to confront the dysfunctional tendencies of the capitalist market, the expert considered *"The social obligation of eliminating slums, whether they are the neglected heritage, rich in tradition, of historical development, or the result of a too speedy extension of the large towns"* (International Housing Association, 1935, p. 5).

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<sup>350</sup> AMSD CT 1119.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

However, the Plan Proust opted to be pragmatic, at least in the case of Saint-Denis. In that city, the first plan submitted stated that carrying out demolition operations would be too expensive.

*Nous ne prévoyons donc dans cette étude que les opérations strictement nécessaires à cette partie dense du territoire, et nous comptons surtout sur le règlement, qui avec le temps, permettra d'ordonner un peu la situation chaotique actuelle, et rejettera petit à petit les usines dans leurs zones industrielles, laissant à l'habitation un peu plus d'air, et une meilleure situation au point de vue de l'Hygiène.*<sup>356</sup>

The regulations of the plan were indeed written to legalise the existence of legal, substandard housing areas. The initial plan included an article stating that *“toute parcelle destinée à recevoir une habitation devra mesurer au moins 100m<sup>2</sup>”*<sup>357</sup>. The existence of a minimum plot that banned de facto most of the defective areas was eliminated in the last versions of the plan. Eventually, the final regulation did not prohibit such areas.

Although the administrative archives show many denunciations for illegal constructions or reforms of houses without building permits,<sup>358</sup> none of them after the plan's approval corresponded to informal areas. The already existing illegal housing areas were thought to be slowly corrected through the plan. However, the identified informal areas would persist for many decades longer than expected, in some cases remaining until today.

### “Nomad” populations and land squats

The Saint-Denis Municipal Plan also revealed the existence of a “new” kind of informal areas: the *campements de nomades*. These spaces seemed to constitute some kind of local reproduction of the *Zone*, having developed the same kind of informal urbanisation near the not-constructible lands around the city walls of the local fortress, an infrastructure that complemented the Paris defence system.

As the plan stated, *“sept à huit cent personnes installées sur les anciens terrains militaires . . . occupent des casemates et des bicoques de toutes natures qu'elles ont édifiées, et vivent là dans des conditions d'hygiène déplorable (pas d'eau, pas d'éclairage, pas d'assainissement, pas de voies) qui sont un défi permanent à l'hygiène publique, à la morale et à l'urbanisme”*.<sup>359</sup> However, this was different from the *Zone* where most of the inhabitants were actually tenants (Granier, 2017). The populations of the new precarious areas of Saint-Denis seemed to have settled *“sans aucun droit, ne payant aucun loyer”*.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> AMSD CT 1419.

<sup>357</sup> AMSD CT 1419.

<sup>358</sup> AMSD CT 835.

<sup>359</sup> AMSD CT 1119.

<sup>360</sup> AMSD CT 1119.



Informal urbanisation around the military area of Saint-Denis<sup>361</sup>.

Source: *L'Humanité*, 2 December 1936.

The *nomade* population was, in fact, an administrative category created by a 1912 law. At that time, in order to control the movements of “nomad” populations through the territory, an “anthropometrical card” had been created. It was unneeded for the rest of the French population, and it was obligatory for moving from one municipality to other. Although this kind of internal passport had been thought of for Roma people during the process of developing, discussing, and approving the law, it was finally created as a more generic category. The *nomades* were then defined by a double condition: not having a permanent address and not having a concrete profession (Bordigoni, 2010). Although this norm had as an objective to control and make the living conditions of Roma people harder in order to make them progressively leave France “by themselves” (Filhol, 2019), it was used to criminalise indistinctly large categories of the lower classes (Asséo, 2007).

<sup>361</sup> In the photo caption it is written : Oui, comme il est triste ce coin de banlieue, près du Fort de Saint-Denis ! c'est la zone, sale et froide, rébarbative. Les pauvres bicoques en bois, dont les toits sont en tôle ondulée ou de toile goudronnée, abritent cependant des familles entières. Et même, au fond et à gauche, on peut voir que ces humbles travailleurs se sont aménagé un petit jardinet où poussent de chétifs plants de pommes de terre. Mais quel poignant aspect de la profonde misère, qui règne encore dans notre banlieue, n'a-t-on pas à la vue de cet endroit désolé ?

The first Dyonisian reference found during our inquiry dated to 1907, when the city council debated establishing a new street alignment.

*Pour demander que l'on frappe d'expropriation, pour cause d'utilité publique, les terrains se trouvant en bordure du boulevard Félix Faure, après la rue Bonnevide. Il existe, là, une dizaine de maisonnettes, en terre, ce qui laisse à désirer aussi bien au point de vue de l'esthétique qu'à celui de l'hygiène. Il s'agit d'une bande de 70 mètres de longueur environ sur 4 mètres de largeur. [...] Ces terrains appartiennent à un propriétaire qui ne demanderait peut-être pas mieux que de s'entendre avec la Ville, et on aurait un boulevard plus propre. Il y a, à cet endroit, des bohèmes.*<sup>362</sup>

However, this kind of settlement was forgotten by the Saint-Denis Municipal Plan, which asserted that the “nomad” populations had arrived in Saint-Denis in 1919, when they had settled “sur des terrains militaires non surveillés et principalement sur la partie Nord-Est du fort de la Double Couronne”.<sup>363</sup> This date coincided with the prohibition of building construction in the Zone and could mean that the populations arriving to the area had decided to try settling in this nearby military space without the Zone’s restrictions.

In 1933, in a context of increasing xenophobia, the infamous mayor Jacques Doriot<sup>364</sup> approved a first regulation to expulse those populations from the inner areas of Saint-Denis. The “arrêté municipale 28 mars” led to the expulsion of a *campement de nomades* on a plot in the northern area of the town,<sup>365</sup> and the action was supported by the mentioned 1912 law<sup>366</sup> due to the “*graves inconvénients résultent, au point de vue de l'hygiène et de la tranquillité publiques*”. The municipality gave the inhabitants one month to leave the area, to move beyond the system of fortifications<sup>367</sup>—that is, to the far periphery of the town—and to justify the authorisation of the landowners to settle on their lands. In the event that the “nomads” did not comply with the order, they would be “*refoulés hors du territoire de la Ville de Saint-Denis*”.<sup>368</sup> Although the *nomades* seemed have fixed their residence in the area over a span of fourteen years,<sup>369</sup> the “nomad” administrative category was used to release the land by an extra-judiciary and collective eviction, occurring at the same time the Saint-Denis plan was discussed.

In 1937, a new initiative to expulse the Saint-Denis “nomad” population was triggered. The “arrêté 18 février 1937”, again developed by Mr Doriot, identified four “*campements*”

<sup>362</sup> Alignement du Boulevard Felix Faure. Proposition de M. Fleury. Bulletin Municipal de la Ville de Saint-Denis, 1907, p. 80.

<sup>363</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>364</sup> Jacques Doriot, born in Bresles but an inhabitant of Saint-Denis since his youth, he became a head of the Parti Communiste Française, having increasingly conflictive links with the Communist International due to his opportunistic and ambiguous political positions. Expulsed from the PCF in 1936, he progressively turned to the far-right, founding the Partie Populaire Français with the support of the higher French finances. Calling for a nationalist coalition of social classes and for a pacific relationship with Nazi Germany, he was finally killed by a bomb strike of the German Air Force in 1945.

<sup>365</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16, “*campement de nomades sur le terrain situé entre les rues Petit, Berne, Karl Marx et Eugène Fournière*”.

<sup>366</sup> Loi art. 91-97 Loi 5 avril 1884, Loi 16 juillet 1912, Décret du 16 février 1913.

<sup>367</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16. “*Ils devront dans le même délai se replier au-delà de la zone des Forts de l’Est, de la Double Couronne ou de la Briche*”.

<sup>368</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>369</sup> AMSD CT 1119.



*insalubres*” along the roads connecting the city with surrounding municipalities.<sup>370</sup> One of them, the “*Route d’Aubervilliers entre le chemin de Clos St-Quentin et la rue Bergerie*” was a plot in the Francs-Moisins area. Based on the same legal framework of the previous eviction, the texts asserted that “*il apparait indispensable de faire cesser d’urgence cette situation*”<sup>371</sup> because of their threats to hygiene and public tranquillity. The resolution was the same as that of the 1933 by-law. The municipality evicted the shacks, obligating the inhabitants to move outside the city. The “nomads” had to ask for explicit permission to rebuild their settlement inside the municipal boundaries.



Illustration 22. “Nomad” areas, 27 January 1938.  
Source: AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>370</sup> “*Route d’Epinay, côté impair, entre les fortifications et la ligne de chemin de fer . . . Route de Gonesse dans les rues n°8 (chemin de la Métairie) et n° 9 (Chemin de St-Denis au Moulin de Stains) de la Double Couronne . . . Route de la Courneuve, au dela et à gauche de la digue du Croult . . . Route d’Aubervilliers entre le chemin de Clos St-Quentin et la rue Bergerie.* AMSD - 50 AC 16.

<sup>371</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

At the end of that same year, on 19 November 1937, a report transcribing a telephone conversation with M. Carré, Chef du Service du Domaine et des Travaux Publics du Département Préfecture de a Seine, celebrated the results obtained in the expulsion of the nomads of the whole municipality.<sup>372</sup> Entitled *Agglomération Route d'Epinay*, the text explained that “*la Double Couronne, le Champ Noir, la digue du Rû Montfort, ont été débarrassés and les romanichels de la route d'Epinay ont été expulsés*”. However, the text conversation also indicated that in the last area “*il ne reste, dit-il, que des braves gens, familles nombreuses à qui il est nécessaire de donner un peu d'hygiène*”, proposing the mayor build a public spring.

Whilst the municipal plan was being discussed, the public powers of Saint-Denis tolerated those informal areas, despite their unaccomplishment of the hygiene and urban planning norms. The limits between “nomads” and the so-called *braves gens* (good people) show the arbitrary and xenophobic nature of the Saint-Denis administration and the fallacy of the urban planning “technical neutrality”. The planning apparatus was increasingly subdued to ideological and contextual interests, applying legality or creating “exceptions” when needed.

Some days after the eviction of the different spaces, the employees of the Saint-Denis Municipality replied to the Prefecture services, revealing a very different situation in the *Campements de Nomades*.<sup>373</sup> Three different plots, with large surfaces, were still occupied by shanty towns:

*De l'enquête fait par mes Services, il ressort que la presque totalité des terrains compris entre les rues n° 16 et 14 en bordure de la route d'Epinay est occupée par des gens qui habitent en roulotte ou dans des baraques en planches. Ces terrains se décomposent ainsi : en bordure de la route, deux rectangles . . . d'environ 50 mètres de profondeur, et un triangle dont la surface est exactement de 2.834 m2 50. L'affectation au plan d'aménagement des zones est celle-ci : les deux rectangles sont affectés à la zone d'habitation collective et le triangle doit demeurer en espace libre.*<sup>374</sup>

The barrack areas occupied both private and public lands. The last ones had been acquired by the local administration from the Department de la Seine in order to develop a green space. However, the same public employees that had previously announced their clearance, allowing a part of the population to stay, started to ask for rent from their inhabitants.

*Tous les occupants des terrains désignés ci-dessus paraissent avoir reçu une lettre de votre Service en date du 22 Octobre 1937, signée de vous-même, et demandant aux occupants une indemnité. Monsieur le géomètre Chadefaux est venu métrer les occupations de chacun, puis il s'est présenté et a encaissé les loyers. La moitié des occupants aurait paraît-il réglé. Il n'y a aucun titre de location, aucun engagement; le loyer perçu porte sur un trimestre et un reçu banal est donné. [. . .] Je dois vous signaler que c'est la première fois qu'un loyer est réclamé à ces gens dont certains, d'après leur déclaration, sont installés à cet endroit depuis plus de 10 ans.*<sup>375</sup>

<sup>372</sup> 50 AC 16.

<sup>373</sup> Letter from M. Marschall, Maire de Saint-Denis and Conseiller Général de la Seine, to Monsieur Carré, chief of the Service du Domaine et des Travaux Publics du Département Préfecture de a Seine, Paris. 27 de November 1937. AMSD - 50 AC 16.

<sup>374</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>375</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

The explanation for this extra-legal situation was probably corruption. The departmental authorities apparently asked the squatters for money, likely to avoid eviction. The same authorities had recommended the mayor allow those populations to remain and provide them with public services. The fragility of their status made them susceptible to threats, even by illegitimate sources of power obligating them to pay for their use of lands. It is important to note that these spaces appeared in the archives because of the Saint-Denis master plan implementation and the regulation of land use in this municipality. As a consequence the Roma settlement became illegal and hidden rental schemes emerged to take advantage of the precarity of their populations.

These dynamics could have happened in other squatted areas. The same report described how the occupied private lands, property of the Société Sainrapt et Brice, were also subject to a clandestine rent.

*Mes services ont trouvé un cas particulier : un nommé MONSOUR, dont la surface d'occupation paraît être à cheval sur la zone collective et l'espace libre, paye un loyer depuis 3 ans au Percepteur – Ils étaient, paraît-il, 4 ou 5 dans ce cas- Monsieur CHADEFAX leur a d'ailleurs dit que dorénavant ils ne paieraient plus au Percepteur, mais à lui-même.*<sup>376</sup>

In that case, it seems probable that the landowner, as already mentioned in other cases, obtained precarious rent for an area “frozen” for speculative reasons. Knowing about the illegality of the private landowner’s rent extraction and their difficulty in denouncing it (which would also be blamed), the public servants seemed to take advantage of their positions to, in turn, obtain these rents payments. Despite the inhabitants’ claims, which asked for a public solution, in both cases the inhabitants of the areas were treated as “nomades”:

*Les occupants m'ont adressé une protestation; [. . .] je n'entends pas tolérer indéfiniment une occupation de territoire appartenant soit à des tiers, soit à la Commune, occupation qui fait ressortir un manque d'hygiène et de sécurité pour les habitants de la Commune que j'ai l'honneur d'administrer.*<sup>377</sup>

Another letter, from 27 January 1938, summarised the situation and evolution of the *campements de nomades* in Saint-Denis. The 1937 expulsions had not provoked any effect; the settlements continued there. In that year, the text showed different denunciations against various settlements of *nomades* and also ragpicker areas. The denunciations were from neighbourhoods and a railroad company whose lands had been occupied. In addition, the text described the existence of *zoniers* in the already described area of Route d'Épinay. Two important considerations can be extracted from this. The populations, the so-called “nomades” of Saint-Denis, seemed to be a heterogeneous group, and except for a part of the Route d'Épinay populations of Roma origin, the documents do not describe a predominance of any ethnic group.

Furthermore, the evictions seemed not to have been accomplished after five years of effort from the local administration. The absence of written records about this resistance makes it improbable that a frontal opposition occurred from the *nomades* to stay in the lands. On the contrary, it seems that some kind of subaltern resistance could have happened (Scott, 1985),

<sup>376</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16, Letter from M. Marschall, Mayor of Saint-Denis and Conseiller Général de la Seine, to Monsieur Carré, chief of the Service du Domaine et des Travaux Publics du Département Préfecture de la Seine, 27 November 1937.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

ignoring or hardening the top-down control strategies, as has been documented by other *nomades* populations in the same period (Filhol, 2019).

The public administration responded to their clear incapacity to control the phenomenon by creating a new by-law. Although the hygiene norms had already made these settlements illegal, the new regulations did not consist of controlling the poor populations but in making the landowners responsible for the use of their plots for hosting informal areas.

To do so, on 7 December 1938, the Mayor of Saint-Denis got in touch with his colleague from Rouen, Georges Metayer, a member of the centre-left Parti Radical in order to obtain the recently approved legislation against the *campements insalubres*.<sup>378</sup> The law permitted the destruction of any housing without sanitary infrastructures because of their sanitary dangers “*ils répandent dans le voisinage des fumées, odeurs et germes morbides*” and the mobility and absence of control of their inhabitants that made the sanitary surveillance of the territory more difficult. The main novelty was the addition of an article to the 1909 hygiene code implying that,

*Les propriétaires, usagers ou usufruitiers qui reçoivent sur leurs terrains des campements comportant des constructions ou abris, même précaires, utilisés pour l’habitation, ou en autorisent ou tolèrent l’installation, sont tenus d’en assurer par eux-mêmes la salubrité et de prendre à cette fin toutes les précautions d’hygiène nécessaires. [. . .] Les propriétaires des terrains sont tenus personnellement responsables des infractions aux dispositions visées à l’article premier du présent arrêté.*<sup>379</sup>

The law of Rouen made the landowners of the plots responsible of the informal housing conditions. Based on it, the Saint-Denis Municipality developed a first draft of a regulation against the *Campements insalubres sur le terrain d’autrui*. Invoking municipal laws, the local and national hygiene laws, the 1919 and 1924 *lotissements* laws, the regional urban planning decree and, of course, the nomad laws,<sup>380</sup> it denounced that “*des personnes campent dans des propriétés privées, closes ou non, sans aucun aménagement du point de vue sanitaire*” and “*les propriétaires de ces terrains les louent . . . en contravention avec les prescriptions concernant l’habitation et la salubrité des immeubles*”.<sup>381</sup> Assuming that such areas were generally subject to undeclared tenancies, the creation of “nomad” settlements would need a permission from the municipality, making the landowner “*personnellement responsable des infractions au règlement sanitaire commises sur le terrain lui appartenant*”.<sup>382</sup> The text, which seemed mainly against the traditional roma settlements, explicitly prohibited the unauthorised settlement of “*roulotte ou tout autre véhicule, avec ou sans roues*”.<sup>383</sup>

<sup>378</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Loi 5 Avril 1884 sur l’organisation municipale, Loi 16 juillet 1912 réglementant la circulation des nomades, Décrets 3 Mai 1913 et 7 Juillet 1926 sur l’administration publique, Loi 15 Février 1902 et règlement sanitaire municipal du 15 mars 1906, Lois 14 mars 1919 et 19 juillet 1924 sur les Lotissements, Décret-loi du 25 Juillet 1935 concernant l’aménagement de la région parisienne.

<sup>381</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>382</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

However, a second version of the text, approved on 31 January 1939 as an addition to the local sanitary regulation,<sup>384</sup> problematised all expressions of informal urbanisation in a broader way. The text, whose clauses “*ne dispensent pas les constructions de baraques . . . de se pourvoir des autorisations de construire*” declared that,

*Les propriétaires, usagers ou usufruitiers qui reçoivent sur leurs terrains des campements comportent des constructions ou abris, même précaires, utilisés pour l’habitation, sont tenus d’en assurer par eux-mêmes la salubrité et de prendre à cette fin, toutes les précautions d’hygiène nécessaires.*<sup>385</sup>

As in the previous draft, evicting poor areas was justified by sanitary concerns. The need to minimise the presence of “morbid” smoke, smells, and germs would require controlling these poor populations. The “*dangers que font courir à la santé publique des baraques et habitations précaires élevées sur le terrain d’autrui*” would be originated by the “*caractère précaire de ces habitations, l’insolvabilité et l’instabilité de leurs occupants*” impeding their control. The presence of such spaces would make it difficult for the state to obligate them to take “*les précautions sanitaires indispensables*”.<sup>386</sup>

On May 1939, the Mayor of Saint-Denis, M. Marschall, also from the fascist-inspired *Partie Populaire Français*, wrote an article speaking about the *Réglementation et stationnement de Nomades*,<sup>387</sup> justifying the strict policies towards the *campements de nomades* and constructing them as spaces of otherness:

*Les nomades, ce sont les individus ou groupes d’individus errants [. . .]. Ce sont, en quelque sorte, les inconnus, les inclassables. [. . .] À notre avis, il convient d’être assez sévère et de considérer comme nomades, tous ceux qui, dépourvus de domicile fixe, ne présentent pas des références suffisantes pour faire admettre qu’ils exercent une profession régulière. [. . .] Ajoutons, pour être complet, que les étrangers, dès lors qu’ils n’ont pas de domicile fixe sont considérés comme nomades, même s’ils exercent une profession. [. . .] Ces bandes d’inconnus, ne vivant que des ressources d’origine imprécise, constituent un danger pour l’hygiène et la moralité publiques, pour la conservation des biens particuliers, et sont susceptibles de provoquer des désordres.*<sup>388</sup>

The text not only showed the criminalisation and dehumanisation of the poor populations but pointed out a “definitive” solution against the informal settlements. Although the 1912 law did not allow prohibiting the settlement of the “nomads” in local territory, it was possible to set up a segregated area where controlling them,

*La loi du 16 juillet 1912 s’est préoccupée de donner à ces vagabonds une sorte de statut qui rende possible le contrôle de l’autorité. [. . .] En ce qui concerne les nomades proprement dits, les pouvoirs de police du Maire, expressément maintenus par la loi 1912, peuvent être employés de façon beaucoup plus stricte. En effet, d’une part, le passage et le séjour des nomades inconnus et incontrôlés, est source éventuelle d’insécurité et de désordre. D’autre*

<sup>384</sup> Campements insalubres sur le terrain d’autrui. Additif au règlement sanitaire. Se citan las leyes 1884, 1902 y 1906, así como l’arrêté municipal 28 juin 1938. No se menciona el arrêté 1935 sobre plan de urbanismo.

<sup>385</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> M. Marshall, *Réglementation et Stationnement des Nomades*. *Revue des Finances Comunales*, (1939, p. 235).

<sup>388</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

*part, ce passage et ce séjour ne se justifient pas du tout par les besoins de l'exercice d'une profession. [. . .] le Maire ne peut interdire le stationnement des nomades d'une manière absolue et permanente. [. . .] Dans l'espace, il doit prévoir une zone où le stationnement est possible. C'est soit une limite déterminée à une distance suffisante de l'agglomération, soit un emplacement spécialement réservé.*<sup>389</sup>

On 12 November 1938, the French Parliament approved a law allowing the deportation of “undesirable foreigners” to the *camps d'internement*, spaces for reclude individuals “that their original countries do not accept”. In a pre-war context in which political refugees from the Spanish war and other European anti-fascist movements fled to France, this group constituted a large part of the population, combining political refugees and ethnic minorities under persecution. Although in some municipalities the process of deportation had started the same year (Lebourg & Moumen, 2015), in Saint-Denis, as in most of the Paris region, it seems that the “undesirable” populations were sent to *camps d'internement* mainly under the Nazi occupation. The very concise “Décret 6 avril 1940, interdisant la circulation des nomades sur la totalité du territoire métropolitain” prohibited the “nomad” populations from moving and gave them fifteen days after the publication of the law to go to the closest police station. After that, the law stated that “*Il leur sera enjoint de se rendre dans une localité où ils seront tenus à résider sous la surveillance de la police*”.

The end of the Saint-Denis squatter settlements, as with many other “deviant” pre-war areas, was linked to the outrageous history of the Nazi Holocaust from that moment on.

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<sup>389</sup> AMSD 50 AC 16.

# CONCLUSIONS

Through this thesis, we have tried to understand the 20th-century European dimension of informal urbanisation, the origins of this phenomena in Madrid and Paris, and its relationship with the “birth” of urban planning. We will now discuss some of the results obtained in order to draw some conclusions through two parts.

Firstly, the observed historiographical and historical dimensions of the research should allow us to examine the European extent of informal urbanisation, and analyse the similarities, differences, and interdependence of the Madrid and Paris historical processes of substandard housing outlawing. These historical findings will allow us to indicate some openings and future paths of inquiry, informed by the already developed empirical work about post-war Madrid *chabolismo* and Paris *bidonvilles*.

Secondly, although the diversity of contextual elements makes it impossible to establish a “general theory” of the phenomenon, some historical sociology hypotheses will be proposed to describe the historical immanency and changes of informal urbanisation grounded in the cases of Madrid and Paris, identifying socio-historical processes. Finally, some of these patterns will be used to very briefly illustrate current debates about today’s housing problem.



# COMPARATIVE HISTORY DISCUSSION

## The development of informal urbanisation through 20th-century Europe

As has been already shown, the historiographical research has revealed that informal urbanisation grew in most of the western, southern, and eastern capital cities of the European continent throughout the 20th century. Whilst “common sense” and academia have traditionally attributed such phenomena to southern European cities, “prestigious” metropolis such as Berlin, Stockholm, Vienna, Paris, and the periphery of London hosted these kinds of spaces until well into the second half of the century. On the other hand, the capital cities of socialist states such as Minsk, Budapest, and Belgrade, where the housing problem had been a priority policy but there were scarce economic resources, also produced these kinds of spaces. The extent of informal urbanisation and the content of its historiographical accounts validate one of the initial hypotheses of this thesis: **informal urbanisation was not a minor or southern phenomenon but a mechanism of urban growth all around Europe during the 20th century.**

The existence of a similar transnational process of problematising informal urbanisation validates another of the initial hypotheses of this thesis: **the emergence of informal urbanisation as a public problem and its subsequent prohibition was a central element in the “birth” of urban planning in Europe as an answer and remedy.** Designing complex systems of urban control and planning would not have been a volunteer project of intellectual elites to improve the dynamics of urban growth, but a contextual response to a large and pressing historically material problem, that was perceived as an urgent threat that needed to be deactivated and avoided in the future.

These historical facts would make it possible to dismantle the mythical idea of a harmonious European society in which rational urban planning, developed as a part of the general efficiency and foresight of European administrations, impeded the existence of informal urbanisation. Under a decolonial and global history perspective, these historical facts permit fighting against the stories the West most often tells itself about itself” (Gregory 2004:4 in Ananya Roy, 2016) and facilitating the **wrenching apart of the mythical idea of Europe away from the reality of its historical social processes.**

In addition, the presented historiographical research has permitted us to identify some common patterns of informal urbanisation through the continent.

Firstly, two main informal urbanisation subphenomena seemed to coexist in Europe: squatting areas and poor allotments. The first, growing through illegal land occupation and housing construction on empty lands, had barely been described by European historiography before WWII. In contrast, the development of poor allotments, composed of shacks without basic infrastructure developed by private landowners, grew without public control in the peripheries of most European capital cities during the first half of the 20th century, constituting the major driver of informal urbanisation in Europe. After poor housing allotments were prohibited, squatting areas seemed to emerge in various European capital cities during the second half of the 20th century, perhaps contributing to the current association of squatting settlements as being the main informal urbanisation process. This change could be explained to some extent by cultural and regulatory differences. However, it seems more likely that the increase of

planning and control over the territories limited the availability of poor allotments, leading the lowest strata of the working classes to illegally occupy lands.

Secondly, two main peaks of informal housing development can be pointed out in 20<sup>th</sup> century throughout Europe: the 1920s and the 1960s. Although the historiography shows that this kind of spaces had already appeared during the 19th century and especially around the 1880s in the United Kingdom and Germany (and as has been shown in Madrid and Paris), the peak of the growth seemed to be around the 1920s, when accounts about the phenomenon “exploded” across the entire continent.

There seemed to be multiple causes. Throughout the region, a large housing and construction crisis followed WWI. Through the case studies of Paris and Madrid, several elements have been identified that could hypothetically explain the pan-European emergence of the phenomenon: the acceleration of rural migration to supply the war industry, the lack of building activity during the conflict, the demobilisation of soldiers, the high costs of construction materials, and the development of rent control across the continent.<sup>390</sup> However, the rise of informal urbanisation as a public problem coincided with other synchronic factors. As has been shown and will be discussed in the next pages, sanitary fears, revolutionary threats, economical regulation needs, and symbolic conflicts converged during the first decades of the 20th century in Paris and Madrid, leading to a synchronic prohibition of this phenomenon. In both cities, urban planning was developed as an institutional alternative to the perceived problems of the informal urban growth.

Further research should try to understand if, beyond the cases of Madrid and Paris, the synchronicities and parallelisms observed in Europe were consequences of the spread of planning ideas and the crossed development of prohibition systems or, on the contrary, if the general prohibition of informal housing was mainly a consequence of autonomous functional answers to equivalent problems. Our position, with the data we dispose, is to consider both processes to be of similar importance: a moderate spread of ideas about informal urbanisation seemed to happen but the European public administrations seemed opaque while explaining their problems to manage informal urbanisation.

After WWII, informal housing areas appeared again in the southern and eastern countries of Europe. However, the characteristic development of social housing states in the wealthier countries of the continent led to large slum-clearance operations in many countries of western and northern Europe. Accordingly, since the 1960s, the phenomenon of informal urbanisation declined in this region, whilst it expanded in Mediterranean Europe. It has been traditionally assumed that the development of informal neighbourhoods in that area, as in other world regions, resulted from a sudden influx of rural migration to the cities, overflowing the previous urbanisation control systems. However, in the Madrid and Paris cases, continuity could have existed between the pre- and post-WWII informal development practices and its re-emergence could be due to some extent to their “re-problematisation”. As a hypothesis it could be proposed that, in addition to the acceleration of substandard housing development

<sup>390</sup> Historical and contemporary bibliography blamed rent control in different countries of the continent for provoking a general reduction of rental schemes and housing construction. Whilst the 1920s the housing crisis seem to have been integrated into the economic theory as proof of the a-historical side effects of regulating the housing sector, other elements converged at that time to provoke the crisis. Further critical research should be tackled to revise and understand the axiom consisting that the history “shows” that rental control is counterproductive. The different factors that led to the 1920s housing scarcity are largely different from the current ones.

consequence of the 1950s and 60s rural migration, the conditions of informal urbanisation at that time, illegal and precarised by urban planning control systems, had become socially unacceptable.

At that time, the existence of informal urbanisation in capitalist and socialist Europe raises questions about the different role of both systems in compensating the housing problem. As a hypothesis, the existence of informal areas in both economical spheres could have different causes. Whilst in capitalist Europe economic inequalities and the lack of the real estate market's interest in producing cheap housing caused the problem to remain, in socialist Europe the lack of flexibility of the housing policies and public management of real estate seemed to lead to housing problems in specific areas of quick urban growth. Further researches should explore informal urbanisation in both sides of the iron curtain.

Thirdly, the geography of the phenomenon evolved throughout the 20th century. Within Europe, whilst in the 1920s most of the self-built housing areas were developed in western and central countries—the very core of capitalism—by the 1960s the re-emergence (or precarious continuity) of informal urbanisation occurred in southern and eastern European countries. As shown in previous work (Manzano 2021, forthcoming) and discussed in the sociological literature (Kováts, 2020b), this situation would imply a historical displacement of the informal urban growth processes from the centre to the semi-periphery in the capitalist world system (Wallerstein, 1988).

Whilst this “process of peripheralisation” of informal urbanisation at a European scale is evident throughout this research, the process could have happened at a global scale, allowing to see two synchronic elements: the radical reduction of informal urbanisation areas in Europe from the 1960s onwards and the eruption of this kind of space in the global south. During the 1970s, in regions such as Latin America the deficiencies of southern urban growth were interpreted as a consequence of the increasing economic dependency on the core of the capitalist system (Cardoso & Faletto, 1978; Dos Santos, 1972; Quijano, 1977), and the economic impossibility of building social housing states was described as a reason for the large development of informal urbanisation in the area (Turner, 1976).

Perhaps because of a lack of historical perspective and comparative literature, this process did not appear at that time to be related to the evolution of informal urbanisation in Europe, even though in most parts of the northern and western European countries large social housing states were, in fact, rehousing the informal dwellers and permitting the planned development of the city to succeed during that time. The differences between the compliance of urban planning and the development of informal urbanisation in north and south could have been a consequence of the construction of a “geography of privilege”, perhaps resulting in the peripheralisation of the phenomena to the south.

Finally, to complete the conclusions of the historiographical analysis, it is worth reflecting on the historical causes of the knowledge gap on informal urbanisation in Europe.

Although the evolution of informal housing was discussed from pan-European and even global perspectives at some international forums in the 1920s, such as the Association Internationale d'Hygienistes et des Techniciens Municipaux (1927), the XIII International Housing and Town Planning Congress (1931), and the International Housing Association (1935)—and although a large quantity of works were produced that compare the juridical solutions to the expansion of the city at that moment (Bureau International du Travail, 1924; Société Française des Urbanistes, 1923; Villes, 1925)—the position of the technicians seemed to be to dissimulate

the extent of the phenomenon, if compared to the real magnitude of the problem as revealed by the recent historiographical analysis.

In the cases of Madrid and Paris, the press, political actors, and technicians often seemed to be unaware of the comparable development of informal areas in other European cities, a phenomena especially interesting in Madrid because Paris was frequently mentioned as an example of how to possibly avoid informal urbanisation in the peripheries. Despite the importance paid to these issues at the national level, the international lack of publicity and knowledge about such processes could have been a response, in a highly nationalist period, to rational attempts to “hide” the phenomenon to reinforce national prestige. Indeed, as has been seen in the cases of Paris and Madrid, the urban regulations and urban plans were explicitly designed to reduce the visibility of the phenomenon.

As stated by B. Souza Santos (2009), the idea of modernity led to the marginalisation of traditions and experiences that did not conform to the idea of European progress. Beyond the public powers’ range of actions, the exclusion of informal urbanisation from the historical account could have been part of a phenomenon of silencing (Ben-Ze’ev et al., 2010). This was probably consequence of the elitist dynamics of the urban planning profession, which would have constructed informality as a historical “otherness” (I. Chatterjee & Shafique, 2020), excluding any subaltern perspectives from the official accounts of the profession. However, and probably most importantly, the prevalent thinking about Europe was simply not compatible with the idea of a general existence of informal urbanisation across the continent. The permeability of Eurocentric thinking probably led informal urbanisation not to be considered as representative of the European cities’ urban growth, making local evidence appear as atypical and thus marginalised.

### The three phases at the origin of informal urbanisation in Madrid and Paris and the birth of urban planning

In Madrid and Paris, according to the present research, three periods can be recognised regarding the control and prohibition of informal urbanisation: (i) the **unregulated development** of substandard housing areas, (ii) the implementation of building restrictions and the setting **exception regulations** in peripheral fringes, permitting informal housing production in those areas, and (iii) the **national prohibition** of the phenomenon and the clandestine development of informal urbanisation.

**Unregulated development** of informal urbanisation occurred in both cities before the 20th century. Controlling the deviant populations living in the peripheries (*arrabales* and *faubourgs*) had already triggered several annexations of the city outskirts during the previous centuries. Although the end of the “ancient regime” led to increased control, systematisation, and bureaucratisation of urban growth throughout the 19th century in Madrid and Paris, and to the beginning of problematising the peripheries because of the lack of control of their built conditions, the liberal paradigms of the time permitted the unregulated growth of private streets. However, the spread of epidemic and endemic diseases increased the problematisation of the poor and working-class neighbourhoods, which together with the perception that these areas were focal points of criminality, degeneration, and social uprising,

led to an increasing development of control devices. The development of hygiene committees, which were mainly relevant throughout the 19th century in Paris but were also initiated in Madrid at the end of the century, led to the selective eradication of some informal areas. However, during that period, there was still little control of the building process.

In Madrid, the *arrabales* beyond city control had already been occupied by substandard housing areas before the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although no sources explaining the formation of those shacks, known as *chozas*, have been identified, the existing historiography shows that they were profitable businesses of peripheral landowners. Whilst the development of the *ensanche* should have transformed these spaces, as it might transform the areas and serve with public infrastructures the periphery, they seemed to remain near the former northern and southern *arrabales*. At the same time, private streets without public services emerged as a cheap solution to host working-class populations beyond the *ensanche*. Through the commercialisation of rent-to-buy plots, these areas hosted an increasing part of Madrid's working classes in the *extrarradio*, an unplanned area beyond the *ensanche* limits (Vorms, 2012). Outside the Madrid city boundaries, surrounding towns such as Vallecas were still semi-rural spaces, for which no accounts about substandard housing had been found for that time.

In 19th-century Paris, the *alignements* and *ordonnances* affected only the public streets, whilst the private streets remained unregulated, leading to a development of informal areas that could not be prevented. As a response, the public powers established hygiene control mechanisms that acted a posteriori, demanding the demolition of problematic spaces after visiting them. Shack areas, generally known as *cités*, grew in the periphery of Paris and Saint-Denis through longue-durée rental agreements with landowners. Although some cases of spontaneous land occupation apparently happened, the private landowners ended up demanding payment and establishing rental agreements. Otherwise, most of the informal areas that were built consisted of extremely poor allotments on private lands managed by one principal tenant who built barracks or sub-rented spaces for poor populations to build their own shacks. Although the leases usually had a time limit (after which the lands would be returned to the landowner without the constructions) and sometimes the public powers or the hygiene committee ordered demolition, these areas remained in some cases for several decades without being demolished. This kind of process also seemed to happen beyond the city limits—in the *faubourgs* annexed to Paris in 1859 and in the *Zone*, the area non-aedificandi around the city walls where it was permitted to build with light materials. In Saint-Denis, poor allotments for the working classes arose with no or very few infrastructures, still through long leases.

Although the substandard areas in both cities seemed to share a number of common aspects and a comparable problematisation process, there were some noteworthy differences between the two case studies.

In France, the hygiene regulatory corpus was developed earlier, in the 19th century, and the public identification, and problematisation of informal spaces seemed to be deeper and broader. The reasons were probably related to socio-demographics: Paris was much bigger, more industrialised, and had experienced several popular uprisings. The revolutionary ambience of 19th-century Paris, passing through the 1789 French Revolution, the 1848 Revolution, and the 1871 “Commune”, probably led to more pressing concerns and control needs than in Madrid. In addition, the substandard areas in Paris at that time seemed to be built with trash materials and in a more precarious way than the shacks in the Madrid

peripheries. The reasons may be varied, but compared to Paris, Madrid's regulations may have been more demanding, as building permits were required not only for public streets, but also for private ones. However, in neither of the two cities, the construction inside the plot limits was at that time regulated by public permits. Thus, informal urbanisation processes seemed to follow the same logic in Madrid and Paris, and probably in many others on the European continent: the allotment of private land and the development of shacks within it.

The development of **exception regulations** in peripheral land fringes, although starting in the late 19th century, led to an intense development of informal spaces during the first decades of the 20th century. At that time, new “exception regulations” in fringes of the periphery (the *extrarradio* and the *Zone*) seemed to facilitate a controlled development of informal neighbourhoods. However, at some point, the popular classes overflowed these very specific urban areas, massively developing substandard areas in the metropolitan regions of both cities (the Parisian *banlieue* and the Madrid *suburbio*) with a very similar formula: developing private streets without public services.

To avoid this process, the approval of the *loi du 15 février 1902 sur la Santé publique* in the Paris region made building permits compulsory and any construction illegal that did not comply with such demand in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. This measure also established *bureaux d'hygiène*, which permitted the surveyance of insalubrious housing beyond the Paris city limits. However, the archives do not show cases of demolition or rehousing of shack areas, probably because the economic cost.

Meanwhile, the *Zone* emerged between Paris and the surrounding municipalities as an exception space, where local regulations had been approved to permit the development of small barracks, impeding the construction of urban infrastructure and the use of durable buildings and thus avoiding their consolidation as a “normal” urban space. In this area, small shacks were developed into private plots, forming an apparently organic morphology that in fact depended on the land structure and private plot limits, the nature of the commercial agreements—leading to plots accumulating several shacks from different families or hosting single-family houses—and the legal precariousness the authorities imposed on the housing environment. Although renovating the area seemed to be widely discussed, it was argued that it would generate a large housing problem, showing the functionality of maintaining a distinct, informal space where the popular classes could develop cheap housing. However, substandard private streets were also being developed beyond this peripheral fringe, as happening in Saint-Denis. In the case of both the *Zone* and Saint-Denis, the new informal areas developed under mechanisms that seemed quite similar: rental and rent-to-buy contracts for plots without any kind of urban infrastructure; most of the areas seemed to be in the form of *impasses*, single streets surrounded by shacks, permitting the reduction of non-profitable street space to a minimum. When the situation exploded after WWI, a new informal landscape emerged that consisted of barracks built on individual plots, generally with small agricultural areas, that formed new allotments of private streets without public services, created by private actors or acquired through saving societies. That process became a problem for the public powers; the municipalities that were increasingly hosting substandard spaces did not have the economic means to provide the areas with public services, and the politisation of their inhabitants was increasingly perceived as a risk of revolution by the authorities.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, discussions about the *Zone* renewal, and about the growing development of informal, problematic areas on the periphery beyond it, triggered the

establishment of a Commission d'Extension de Paris, charged to produce regulatory frameworks that would lead to a systematic control of urban growth of the Paris Region and, thus, the local development of urban planning.

In the Madrid periphery, hygiene regulations and surveyance organisations were also approved in 1898 and 1905, the last one inspired by the Paris experiences. Maybe as a consequence of the development of regulations prohibiting new substandard housing areas, the *chozas* developed in this time became extremely precarious spaces, continually being demolished and reappearing in the *ensanche* around the Madrid city centre. Meanwhile, the *extrarradio* functioned as an “exception” space. In it, the public powers did not provide *alignements* and included clauses in the building permits allowing any house to be expropriated without providing economic compensations, in order to develop a future plan for the area. Therefore, private streets of different sizes were developed through rent-to-buy agreements, generally by private actors (Vorms, 2012), but as has been shown, on some occasions also by financial entities forming small housing areas. Whilst the development of this space had been consolidating throughout several decades, its future expropriation became suddenly real after the 1910s, when a *proyecto para la urbanización del extrarradio* proposed to demolish a large part of the substandard spaces in the area.

That plan, which at some point proposed to expropriate and municipalise the territory between the *ensanche* and the city-limits to stop speculative processes and capture the capital gains, clashed with the interests of the landowners associations and was finally sabotaged by the same municipal powers. However, the growing problem of informal peripheries kept the Nuñez Granes’ plan alive in the public sphere until the beginning of the 1920s. Facing with the difficulties of demolishing and rebuilding the existing periphery, the municipal architects of the Madrid City Council proposed to progressively improve the informal neighbourhoods and create distant satellite cities to reduce the housing problem. Although ultimately not implemented, Madrid's first masterplans were created in response to the problem of informal urbanisation.

Meanwhile, substandard suburbanisation was growing beyond the *extrarradio* fringe, and was tolerated as long as it remained at a prudent distance from the consolidated city in a context dominated by fears of epidemics. The public powers proposed specific regulations to set up at distance the prone-to-disease informal housing belts, to prevent their air from penetrating the city.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both cities had approved hygienic regulations, relatively equivalent “exception regulations” were allowed on peripheral fringes, informal urbanisation developed both inside and outside these areas, and new planning frameworks were simultaneously explored in both cities. However, some specificities and differences between the two cities could again be noted.

Concerning the urban form, the Madrid *extrarradio* seemed generally denser than the Paris *lotissements défectueux*, maybe as a consequence of the better mass transit in Paris that allowed farther suburbanisation when compared to the relative vicinity of the *extrarradio* to Madrid. However, in the Paris region also existed around private streets. In those allotments, the Madrid houses were often built with mud and adobe whilst the French ones were often built with light materials such as wood. In the Paris case, the *Zone* presented a more precarious built environment than the *lotissements défectueux*, and the Madrid *chozas*, at least after their illegalisation, seemed to reach even higher levels of precariousness. In general,

the largest parts of the informal areas in both cities resulted from the commercialisation of private lands. However, in Madrid some spaces grew as a consequence of public land squats, showing street patterns that seemed to result from the inhabitants' self-management.

When comparatively reading the “exception regulations” developed by the public powers, the *Zone* norms seemed to precarise housing development much more than those of the *extrarradio*. In Paris the authorities did not permit any consolidation of housing areas, yet in Madrid the public powers failed in limiting of the housing rights of the *extrarradio*, which became more consolidated step by step, making it impossible to develop the plan that was intended to transform it. Perhaps as a consequence of this differential level of state imposition, the final public answer in the *Zone* was divergent from that in the *extrarradio*; whilst Madrid finally abandoned the idea of demolishing its “exception” area and opted to improve it step by step, the *Zone* was finally expropriated and evicted.

On the other hand, the “uncontrolled” informal development of the periphery beyond those spaces seemed to provoke different levels of alarm. Although in Paris the urban growth of the banlieue municipalities was highly problematised, a very similar suburbanisation process in Madrid was not only tolerated but even promoted by the local public powers as a way to avoid responsibilities for this kind of space. The reason for this very differential problematisation and political solution could be the different impacts of informal urbanisation on each city. As shown through the text, between 10,000 and 20,000 people arrived to live in the Madrid *chozas* (Chicote, 1914) and 160,000 in the *extrarradio*'s unserved periphery, yet the Paris *Zone* reached 42,000 people (Granier, 2017) and the *lotissements défectueux* hosted between 300,000 and 400,000 people (Fourcaut, 2000). In addition, the different political traditions of both cities could have played a role. Whilst in the Paris *banlieue* there was a leftist political movement specifically grounded on demanding urban improvements, in the Madrid *suburbio* the popular claims seemed to focus more on renovating the previously developed *extrarradio*, which as stated by C. Vorms, had become a classic and highly debated question at the time (Vorms, 2019). Finally, there were fears that a popular periphery encircling the capital city could trigger a revolution, and although this idea was present in Madrid, it was likely less severe than in Paris, where the experience of the Commune was still present.

The initial regulatory answer in both cities, although synchronic and comparable in some elements, had large differences, probably as a consequence of different legal cultures of both countries. Paris was traditionally regulated through alignments, and the first attempts to control the issue were done through laws (in 1902 and 1912), focusing on the processes and actors of urban growth. In contrast, Madrid had a tradition of *ensanche* plans, and the situation was attempted to be controlled by the urban shape, developing maximalist initiatives of spatial definition of the periphery. However, in both cases, the housing crisis caused informal urbanisation to continue to grow.

To tackle the situation, the streets started to be improved step by step through public funding in the Madrid periphery from the late 19th century onwards. In contrast, at least in the peripheral area studied in the Paris region, the public powers initially rejected helping the neighbourhoods unless they contributed part of the cost to improve their housing areas.

The development of regularisation policies that consisted of the public urbanisation of the poorest private areas of the urban peripheries emerged as a solution in both Madrid and Paris during the 1920s. The relative similarity of these processes may have been partly a consequence of common influences, such as the international technical forums indicating the



advantages of this kind of process (International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, 1931). However, in both metropolitan areas tensions existed around producing private capital gains through the public investment in urbanisation and infrastructure. Whilst in Madrid the landowners pushed for urbanisation through public expenses against the demands of the left-wing parties, in Paris the communist party and the *mal-lotis* demanded that the land developers payed for part of the allotments' improvement processes. However, public authorities ended up socialising most of the costs of informal urbanisation improvements in both cities. In Madrid, the land improvements seemed to be fully paid for by the public powers. In Paris, whereas the state paid most of the costs, the inhabitants of the informal areas were also compelled to co-finance part of the improvements or remain in poor conditions. The historical sources show indices of a general increase in land price and an increase of plot commercialisation, triggering a gentrification *avant-la-lettre* in the regularised areas of Paris, something that could also have happened in Madrid. Additional research should examine the accuracy of this evidence.

Regularisation initially seemed to be a recommended practice, but later international forums pushed for demolitions of informal spaces, as the development of urban regulations and the real estate market was not leading to the disappearance of the remaining substandard spaces (International Housing Association, 1935). This process, which would become the main public policy against informal areas in the subsequent decades, was considered and rejected in the Madrid and Paris peripheries because of their costs, proposing more pragmatic solutions towards those "problem" spaces.

Finally, the public powers in Spain and France approved regulations leading to **the national prohibition** of informal urbanisation during 1923 and 1924, leading to a subsequent transformation of the phenomenon into a clandestine practice.

In Paris, such prohibition was carried out by the 1919-24 laws, which banned developing and commercialising *lotissements défectueux*, at the same time that made compulsory urban planning as a way to direct urban growth processes and avoid informal urbanisation. Although the development of masterplans was not achieved at that moment, the prohibition of poor allotments seemed to be quite effective, and subsequent norms led to the improvement of a big part of the substandard areas. However, new informal neighbourhoods appeared, as shown in the case of Saint-Denis. The shacks were built using legal loopholes owing to the lack of effective control of the whole territory by the police, and giving rise to new informal areas developed through land rental contracts on private streets.

The first regional planning of Paris during the 1930s, the Plan Prost, was developed in part to tackle the problem created by unplanned suburbanisation and, unlike the Madrid case, it was not blocked by ongoing housing development, as the authorities achieved to freeze building permits during its implementation. Although urban planning seemed to be in part conceived as a way to correct (and hidden) the consequences of the informal urbanisation, it did not seem to transform drastically previously developed informal areas, at least in the Saint-Denis case. On the contrary, very precarious new settlements, called *campements insalubres* started to emerge in the municipality. The public powers answer was to criminalise their inhabitants, and public and private actors took advantage of their vulnerability, developing schemes of economic exploitation.

In Madrid, the different positions regarding renovating the *extrarradio* and *suburbio* were tackled by developing the Estatuto Municipal and subsequent norms that prohibited informal urbanisation.

Although the new rules theoretically obligated Vallecas to develop a master plan and local regulations prohibiting substandard housing, the plan and the regulations did not seem to be approved, and informal urbanisation continued growing as a direct inheritance of the previously legal process of urban development through rent-to-buy contracts. The existing substandard houses were simply legalized, without apparent transformations on the private streets that had led to their development. The lack of economic means and the non-annexation of the *suburbio* into Madrid during the first decades of the century impeded investments in public infrastructures and led to an apparent tolerance towards the existing situation.

However, in both cities, the prohibition of the informal urbanisation was not able to hinder their redevelopment, and it instead transformed the building practices, leading to hidden agreements with landowners and clandestine building construction processes. Such regulation did not stop informal urbanisation but increased the precariousness of the building rights of the popular classes in both cities. During the first decades of the century, the public powers of Madrid and Paris mentioned the “strangulation” of urban growth by these kinds of “spontaneous” building processes as well as impossibility of avoiding them only through legal restrictions. Accordingly, the adoption of these regulatory frameworks were probably not due to a real expectation of ending informal urbanisation. Although further research should clarify the hypothetical discussions that could take place (or non) in the 1920s about the development of urban planning and the banning of substandard housing, we can establish the impact that the new legal frameworks produced after their promulgation; the general prohibition of informal urbanisation facilitated in the subsequent decades the management and displacement of the new informal areas and their populations, legally precarised. Whilst these parallel processes could have been just a governmental response to the relatively similar local problems to be tackled, further research should clarify the role of the international discussions in these equivalent and synchronic policies of housing development restriction.

Despite some similarities in contextual elements regarding the informal urbanisation prohibition (the requirement for master plans, the national extent of the regulations), the illegalisation processes had different logic and consequences. In Paris, the 1924 law, after the “failed” 1919 one, seemed to be effective and led the public powers to control the development of *lotissements défectueux*. Contrastingly, the Estatuto Municipal and its associated regulations seemed to have fewer consequences regarding the poor housing development practices in the Madrid periphery. Perhaps partly because of this, in the following decades a large part of Madrid’s informal urbanisation happened through agricultural land subdivisions, whilst in Paris the practices would change greatly, with land squats starting to prevail.

To conclude, the comparative analysis of both contexts seems to validate the initial hypothesis; though with questionable effectiveness, urban planning emerged both in Madrid and Paris as the “reverse” of informal urbanisation: an institutional frame created to impose a public-led extension of the city in contrast to informal urban growth process. In contrast, the perennisation of the housing question provoked the reproduction of informal urbanisation, evolving geographically and processually to adapt to the urban regulations and its loopholes.

## Historical research openings

Although ultimately this text has not studied post-war informal urbanisation, some ideas can be advanced about that period, based on the archival research carried out and directly related to the facts already described in this text. In both cities, a spatial and procedural continuum seemed to exist between the pre-war model of informal housing development and the “new” post-war informal settlements.

In Madrid, the post-civil war informal production of space, *chabolismo*, grew enormously, being used to qualify two subphenomena. One on hand, it referred to the construction of shacks on squatted empty lands. Although further research based on oral history would be necessary to understand this kind of urban growth process, in some cases it seemed to grow around already existing informal neighbourhoods, as described by J.J. Mancha (2018). Considering that some illegal areas were tolerated, it would be plausible that new individuals opted to build shacks around the existing informal spaces with the hope of not being evicted.



Photo 42. Barriada de Ventas, 1942.

Source: Archivo Regional de Madrid, fondo Santos Yubero.

However, most of the new informal areas were probably developed through rent-to-buy agreements in which a landowner designed streets, sold plots of rural lands, and included a clause making the plot builder responsible for respecting the urban regulations (Montes Mieza et al., 1976b). That would explain the tolerance towards the construction of informal areas through plot commercialisation (Burbano, 2015; Canosa Zamora & Rodríguez Chumillas, 1985) despite their illegality. This very simple development process seems extraordinarily similar to the development of the *suburbio* during the 1920s and 1930s shown in this thesis. Indeed, the

process seemed to be “facilitated” by the development of urban planning; a large part of the periphery of Madrid had been zoned as non-constructible, making it impossible to build legally (Montes Mieza et al., 1976a) and causing land prices to fall. This side-effect seemed to lead the landowners to sell at low price the zoned lands as the only way to recover a part of the previous investments, attracting shack builders (Vorms, 2013).

Despite being commercialised through rent-to-buy methods, as in the previous decades, the new illegality implied large differences within these territories; whilst in the pre-war period the substandard houses developed in that way were easily regularised, after the war the new informal dwellers not only lived in neighbourhoods without the existence or expectation of public facilities, but possessed illegal houses which had few or no rights and whose expropriation and eviction would be cheaper and easier.

In Paris, the “new” phenomenon of informal housing development consisted of the rise of *bidonvilles*, shack areas mainly based on illegal land occupation, frequently facilitated by industrial entrepreneurs that permitted their migrant employees to settle in empty areas close to their factories, sometimes providing them with access to services such as water or electricity (Colette Pétonnet, 1979a). However, some historiographical sources also show the “birth” of some settlements through hidden, commercial agreements of land use (Sayad & Dupuy, 1995; M.-C. C. Volovitch-Tavares, 1995). The same sources occasionally related the emergence of actors and networks managing the hidden, informal real estate market and achieving the rent extraction of the tenants through extra-legal methods; the *marchands de sommeil* (M.-C. C. Volovitch-Tavares, 1995).

The prohibition of informal urbanisation, in addition to precarising the rights of the dwellers, led to the transformation of building practices. The urbanistic regulations impeded “solid” houses from being erected, being constantly demolished by the public powers; however, the most fragile shacks were not considered “houses” by the judicial apparatus, therefore being tolerated.<sup>391</sup> At the same time, the informal dwellers observed that in many cases the better built houses were demolished, yet the building practices adapted to a calculated precarity to avoid eviction (Colette Pétonnet, 1979a).

The emergence of informal housing areas in Paris, known as *bidonvilles*, seemed to be more precarious than in Madrid. The reasons could be multiple. Whilst informal housing areas on private land allotments prevailed in Madrid, the spread of land occupations in Paris was probably a consequence of the pre-existence of a large normative corpus against the *lotissements défectueux*, making difficult the explicit plot commercialisation for housing purposes. In addition, the different bodies of police in charge of surveying informal areas, the *brigade Z* in Paris (Blanc-Chaléard, 2016) and the *servicio de vigilancia del extrarradio* in Madrid, had different strategies. The first one seemed more focused on impeding housing improvements, yet the second one seemed to focus their work in preventing the housing construction and facilitating its eviction. However, further comparative research should be undertaken to understand the function of and the possible connections between those apparently very similar police bodies, and their consequences in the shape of illegal informal areas.

To conclude, in both Madrid and Paris, despite some contextual differences, an equivalent process of prohibiting informal housing occurred during the late 19th century and the first

<sup>391</sup> ANF 19950237 / 43, *Moyens juridiques de lute contre les bidonvilles et les garnis*.

decades of the 20th century. This process provoked, in both cities, the rise of what is today generally known as informal urbanisation, leading to the opacity of their growing mechanisms and the exceptionality and extra-legality of their management by the public powers.

The existence of a historical prohibition process revealed through the cases of Madrid and Paris could be, in fact, an extension of the governmental mechanics that led to the development of “exception regulations”. Whilst the “exception regulations” facilitated the transformation of the substandard periphery for both private owners and the public powers, the subsequent banning of informal urbanisation weakened still more the legal status of the substandard dwellers, facilitating to the authorities the management of urban growth through the eradication of those spaces and the displacement of their inhabitants.

Further research should clarify the effects of the post-war implementation of urban planning and its use to “displace” and revalorise lands occupied by *chabolas* and *bidonvilles*.

## SOCIOLOGICAL HISTORY HYPOTHESIS

## Structural patterns

In our research, we found some patterns that apparently endured throughout the different studied periods. Whilst some of them seem to be consequence of inheriting the problematisation of informal housing areas, making it possible to identify a genealogy of their genesis and continuity, other elements seemed to respond to “functional” adaptations to the economic structure, re-emerging in different historical moments without any apparent mutual influence that could explain their similarities.

The historical immanency in the history of informal housing development in our cases of study can be understood (i) from the point of view of the public powers, (ii) from the point of view of the land and housing market, and (iii) from the point of view of the inhabitants.

Concerning the existence of structural patterns in the **public powers’ behaviour**, the need to control the phenomenon seems to have been founded in some common elements from the late 19th century both in Madrid and in Paris, persisting throughout the 20th century, and maybe until today.

First of all, the **sanitary fears** seemed to be the main explicit element justifying the need for controlling and avoiding the existence of informal housing areas. During the 19th century, the fears of personal contagion and “miasmas”, or corrupted air that was supposed to transmit disease through circulation, led to strategies of distancing and destroying the spaces that were considered to be focal points of disease to avoid the air penetrating the city. In addition, during the last decades of the 19th century the emerging degenerationist theory popularised the idea that the built environment could contribute to the physical and moral decay of the popular classes and make them more prone to disease, crime, and revolt. To address the problem, the state would have made the spatial control of informal urbanisation a top biopolitical goal (Foucault, 2004b), with the intention of producing improvements to hygiene and “race”, facilitating the performance of the population, and impeding the development of contagious diseases threatening the wealthy classes. The prevalence of these goals and the development of germ theory influenced the development of urban planning as a way to produce an alternative to informal urbanisation.

Beyond the studied period, after the WWII, such spaces remained associated with a generic perception of threat related to “pathological space” both in a physical and behavioural sense, probably resulting from the interiorisation of the previous sanitary paradigms in the “common sense” and their historical transmission. The degenerationist imaginaries assigned to informal housing at the beginning of the 20th century seemed to persist and be identified with the further development of Madrid *chabolas* and French *bidonvilles*. These representations and imaginaries, although publicly contested, seem to still be used to point at informal areas today (Manzano Gómez, 2021b in preparation).

Secondly, from the **economic regulation** point of view, the accelerated urban growth introduced substantial instability into the land uses, complicating the traditional strategies of housing development and real estate management. The development of institutions to regulate land use became a necessity to ensure private investments, reducing the costs of public expropriations and (theoretically) reducing speculation and land prices in the periphery, resulting from the expectative of an unrestricted urbanisation. Whilst these economic goals contributed decisively to the birth of planning as a device to establish land uses, it was considered necessary to control the spontaneous development of poor housing areas. After

the time span of this thesis, the development of informal urbanisation after WWII was seen as a threat to the established planning, blocking approved real estate operations and introducing instability.

However, at the same time, informal urbanisation was an outlet that permitted the public powers to alleviate their responsibility in the housing problem situation. Therefore, the development of “exception regulations” and the further tolerance of illegal informal urbanisation permitted the public powers to alleviate the structural housing problem. As put forth at the beginning of the thesis, the phenomenon permitted to increase the cheap housing production, balancing the malfunction of the real estate market and giving rise to pragmatic strategies on the part of the public authorities to tolerate a phenomenon considered undesirable but largely unavoidable. The process of illegalization actually increased the control and power of the public authorities, creating tools not so much to prevent the phenomenon as to regulate it through public action, establishing an arbitrary and precarious tolerance (Gonçalves & Santos, 2021).

Thirdly, a **symbolic conflict** seemed to lead the public powers to problematise informal urbanisation. On one hand, the substandard housing areas clashed with the urban ideals of the elites. Culturally, those spaces were a threat to the dominant classes’ values and imaginaries. Considered to be ugly, dirty, and a shelter for the “dangerous classes” (Chevalier, 1958), the status of these areas within the city approached the concept of deviant heterotopias, or places where populations whose behaviour does not fit with the social norms concentrate (Foucault, 2004a), constituting the antagonist of urban utopias. The informal areas’ eradication was frequently justified by projects to beautify the city. In addition, Madrid and Paris were the heads of colonial states grounded in the idea of superiority and modernity, and the existence of these spaces perceived as primitive in the metropolitan capitals was a threat to their status. One of the main reasons used to justify destroying the *Zone*, developing a regional plan in Paris, and transforming the *extrarradio* in Madrid was the bad image that such peripheries projected to the visitors. After WWII, although equivalent concerns were expressed in various laws to eliminate the Madrid *chabolas* and the Paris *bidonvilles*, a new sensitivity to the state’s responsibility to prevent them seemed to emerge. Francoist Spain mobilised catholic ideas about the state’s need to “redeem” these spaces and France mobilised the idea of indignity to justify the public rehousing operations, showing the increasing weight of welfare optics and the evolution of the idea of national shame. However, the symbolic character of informal urbanisation as spaces expressing the weakness of the public powers seemed to be a permanent concern of the authorities, leading the public powers to eradicate or hidden the phenomena from the public gaze.

Finally, there seemed to be a persistent problematisation of substandard housing areas because they were considered to be “anarchic” spaces prone to **social and political upheavals**. The perspectives about informal areas as spaces that triggered crime and revolutionary movements were established during the late 19th century, probably linked to degenerationist perspectives, remained during the first decades of the 20th century, and seemed to continue into the second half of the century.

In Paris, in addition to the 19th-century criminal fears of those spaces (Chevalier, 1958), the *Zone* (Cannon, 2017) and the *lotissements défectueux* revealed an important presence of the French Communist Party. The revolutionary threat led the government to deactivate it by improving the informal areas in a context internationally marked by the Soviet Revolution

(Fourcaut, 2000). After WWII, the important presence of Algerian revolutionary groups in the *bidonvilles* sparked the development of specific social housing programmes, initially conceived to rehouse the Algerian population (M. Cohen, 2006; De Barros, 2012; Tricart, 1977) and subsequently extended to all populations without economic resources.

In Madrid, on the other hand, there existed direct links between the *extrarradio* inhabitants' demands and the Socialist Party proposals, and the risk of a social revolution was the main argument used to support the municipalisation of peripheral land. After the Spanish Civil War, the general suspicion of the presence of leftist families in the *chabolas* that had left their villages and cities searching for the "anonymity" of Madrid could have been one of the major factors leading to the control and eradication of self-built areas and the development social housing alternatives. In fact, the demands from these informal areas triggered the birth of Madrid's Asociaciones de Vecinos and with it a new wave of social organisation that would be decisive in the re-establishing democracy in Spain (Ofer, 2017).

In addition to the public powers' concerns about informal urbanisation, there seemed to be another question about the phenomenon that arose among politicians both in Madrid and Paris: the public powers' repeated hesitation between **concentrating or dispersing** the inhabitants of informal areas. The containment (Spitzer, 1975) of deviant populations seemed to be used by the law enforcement authorities in the Madrid *chozas* and in the Paris *Zone*, permitting the public powers to survey their inhabitants, whilst the dispersion of informal areas throughout the far periphery in the *suburbio* and *banlieue* was considered a public order threat.

Nevertheless, throughout the studied period there also seemed to be concerns about the ghettoisation of spaces. Developing social links between the inhabitants and the consolidation of ways of life that were considered pathological was also one of the reasons invoked to destroy those spaces and displace their populations. Such fears of concentrated deviant populations were also expressed by identifying them as focal points for disease and degeneration, a situation resulting not only from the housing conditions or overcrowding but from the ways of life engendered in their differential spaces.<sup>392</sup>

The reasons for dispersing the informal dwellers were probably feedbacked by acquiring capital gains through the transformation of informal areas, capitalising the rent-gap between the land prices of the informal spaces and those of future renewed neighbourhoods. These incentives could have triggered the development of planning frameworks to facilitate the private investment in and transformation of the spaces. That seemed to play a role in the *extrarradio* and in the *banlieue* informal areas, and it also seemed to be a factor (but not the only one) in the destruction of the *chozas* and in the discussions about the *Zone*.

Accordingly, the rent-gap theory could be useful for understanding the historical reproduction and destruction of informal urbanisation areas in the peripheral fringes of Madrid and Paris.

<sup>392</sup> The need to control marginal populations at the end of the 1930s seemed to led the public powers to displacing them to spaces where controlling and correcting their deviant behaviour, such as to *camps d'internement des nomades* in France and *reformatorios de vagos y maleantes* in Spain. After WWII and the Spanish Civil War, the new wave of poor, uncontrolled neighbourhoods seemed to be conducted by the development of new correctional spaces, such as the *Cités de Transit* in Paris and the *U.V.As* in Madrid, which took populations from different informal communities to break their rising solidarities and allowed the authorities to evaluate and "civilise" their behaviour.<sup>392</sup> Further research should study the "corrective" purposes of these housing programmes, inquiring about their genealogy and possible intellectual circulations as "control devices", in order to understand their strong similarities.



The historical cycles of developing these areas facilitated by “exception” regulations, producing urban planning to transform them, and then evicting them, could be related to the rent-gap extraction possibilities of those areas, following a sequence.

In the first step, the “mushrooming” of very precarious housing areas in the periphery would be tolerated by the authorities, aware of the housing problem and maybe also under the influence of developers and real estate agents. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need to ensure their future transformation would have impelled them to give rise to specific “exception” regulations, allowing housing construction whilst public powers also avoided the proliferation of “normal”, permanent constructions to facilitate their future eviction. After the 1920s, the necessity to produce “exception regulations” to ensure the temporality of informal urbanization would have been replaced by a simple tolerance towards illegal urbanization.

In a second step, the periphery, increasingly revalorised by the metropolisation process, would have been the object of regulatory changes in order to facilitate its transformation and the arrival of capital in real estate. The planning and development of the “normal” city by the public powers would be an urban renewal operation through the use of the rent-gap capital gains, displacing informal housing elsewhere. This process of transforming the last fringes of the city, would had go together with the labelling and criminalisation of informal urbanisation, a complex process that in fact eased the processes of eviction socially delegitimising resistance to them.

As shown through the case studies, although concentrating deviant populations in segregated spaces facilitated surveillance, the areas were considered a threat from various points of view. The tensions between the incentives to evict and transform the informal areas by one side, and the need to stabilise the real estate market and control deviant populations on the other, could partly explain the public powers precarious ambiguous positions towards those areas.

Regarding the perspective of the **land and housing market**, the history of informal housing in Madrid and Paris also seemed to show some historical regularities.

As has been shown, the real estate market tended to not supply the demand of cheap housing solutions during the period of study and afterwards. This tendency was partially compensated for by the development of self-help houses in cheap informal areas which often shared some common characteristics.

Firstly, during the late 19th century to WWII, the majority of informal areas in Paris and Madrid used contracts that allowed **building houses without full ownership of the land**. This mechanism facilitated the lower strata of the working classes access to ownership without having the necessary capital to buy the land and permitted the landowners to obtain rents from such temporary inhabitants. The development of frameworks to withdraw housing construction rights and guarantee the precariousness of the shacks seemed to be structurally linked with the informal development. The functionality of this economic response regarding the landowners and the lack of alternatives for their dwellers would have led to the rise of quite similar economical dynamics despite the different contextual and historical frames.

Throughout the studied period there seemed to exist two main kinds of contracts in Paris. During the 19th century, emphyteusis thrived, which were long-term lease contracts that recognised the inhabitants’ full ownership of the constructions, whilst from the late 19th century onwards, the rental and rent-to-buy contracts in which landowners allowed construction on their lands substituted them. In both cases, the results were similar; as the

inhabitants could abandon at some point the land and their constructions, the expenses for housing improvement were reduced as much as possible. The absence of master plans could have facilitated the speculation of the periphery, as a part of the landowners would have used their lands for “temporary” rent while waiting to the definitive use of the lands. This temporary strategy seemed to be behind the development of the *cités*, a big part of the *Zone* and could explain the nature of the contracts of some *lotissements* areas, as was shown in Saint-Denis.

In Madrid, such dissociation seemed to be less clear. With the emphyteusis being forbidden since the beginning of the 19th century, most of the substandard housing areas were also developed through rent-to-buy schemes, facilitating the access to land without high initial expenses. However, further research on the contracts of the *extrarradio* area should be tackled to understand if, together with those ownership arrangements, shack areas were also developed directly on rental lands, as happened in Paris and other European contexts. In support of this hypothesis, accounts in the historical press have been found that suggested hidden rent payments in order to build barracks on unowned plots, the so-called *chozas*. In Madrid, the economic functionality of dissociating land and build property and the non-existence of juridical forms to do it legally could have led to the hidden renting of private land for the construction of shacks.

During the 1930s, and especially afterwards (Canosa Zamora et al., 1985; Montes Mieza, Paredes Grosso, Villanueva Paredes, et al., 1976; Sayad & Dupuy, 1995; Volovitch-Tavares, 1995), the planning and building obligations led to the development of opaque rent schemes, in which the production of housing over not owned lands was permitted through unwritten agreements. During the same time, land squatting seemed to emerge with force in both cities, contrasting with previous periods in which this practice seemed scarce. But again, further research should clarify the circumstances of this situation.

To summarise, during the second half of the 19th century, the first decades of the 20th century, and apparently afterwards as well, the economic functionality of permitting the dissociation between land and housing ownership seemed to trigger the development of informal urbanisation processes in several European locations and also in Madrid and Paris.

Rent-to-buy contracts would have facilitated access to land for the urban poor and working classes without needing to obtain a mortgage and build their houses gradually. At the same time, the threat of losing all their investments in the event of non-payment gave the landowners a significant power over the tenants to ensure their payments. In addition, the lack of public infrastructures resulting from the precarious status of tenure seemed to give rise, both in Paris and Madrid, to processes of private exploitation of the inhabitants' basic needs such as water, often commercialised by the same land owners who offered plots of land for lease. Land rentals permitted the landowners to wait to materialise an investment or not and then renew the area. From such perspective, the development of precarious housing could have been in part a real estate response to the uncertainty of the future use of the lands. In a context of economic exploitation and lack of resources, the rental schemes would have been the only way for the poor and working class to access land use, investing fewer resources in the land where their houses would be erected.

The temporary land use agreements would have been some kind of “exception regulations” developed by landowners to ensure future capitalisation of the rent-gap. That seemed the case of some of the Saint-Denis rental allotments and could also explain the suspected

payments of the *chozas* inhabitants to the landowners where they had settled. In fact, the historical sources revealed in the *Zone*, the *extrarradio*, and even in the *lotissements défectueux* that investors played with the expectation of regulatory changes, waiting the transformation of the “exception regulations” in stable planning frames that permitted the development of informal areas into “normal” urban spaces.

Finally, there also seemed to exist structural patterns in **the positions of the populations that inhabited the informal areas.**

On one hand, a clear relationship between the legal precarisation of the informal housing areas and the way they were built has been observed. Although the inhabitants’ rent level undoubtedly influenced the material aspect of the shacks, long-lasting persistence of informal areas was largely dependent on the existence of “exception regulations” and private clauses precarising the juridical status of tenancy, limiting the inhabitants’ expectations and thus disincentivising making improvements in their houses. On the contrary, when there was decided support for the informal dwellers, as happened in the 1920s *mal-lotis*, a quick improvement of the areas seemed to happen, although not exempt from gentrifying *avant-la-lettre* processes.

On the other hand, although likely at different times some housing areas emerged on land squats as a self-managed housing solutions for the inhabitants, the historical sources show that at some point most of these spaces finished by being economically exploited, both in Madrid and Paris. It is probable that at a time when it was highly illegal, the juridical precariousness derived from the land squat brought the inhabitants to a situation of vulnerability that facilitated the abuse of different economical actors towards them. This would explain the recurrent accounts of payments to intermediaries both in the Spanish and French context. From this point of view, although the spaces were tolerated, the illegality would have led the populations to suffer diverse mechanisms of hidden domination.

Finally, as the public powers expected, developing informal areas seemed to provoke strong social bonds among the inhabitants, bringing about the emergence of solidarities and social movements. The conditions imposed by both the public powers and the private market to perpetuate the “temporary” situation of the houses often kept them in a legal limbo. The absence of full rights led the inhabitants to organise themselves and act.

Throughout different decades, the inhabitants of informal areas in both Madrid and Paris created leagues, federations and associations to demand full rights for their habitats and demand improvement from the public powers. During the first decades of the century, the Ligue des Zoniers and the Associations de mal-lotis in Paris, and the Federación de Asociaciones del Extrarradio in Madrid seemed to be created to demand that the public powers provide full rights and “normal” public equipment and infrastructure. Frequently linked with the Socialist and Communist parties, their demands were satisfied to some extent due to the previously described fears about the spatial concentration of working classes and their increasing agency in a time of revolutionary unrest. In addition, the continuous redevelopment of the *chozas* after the public powers eviction processes in Madrid and *campements de nomades* in Paris could be interpreted as a form of “subaltern resistance” (Scott, 1985). Although they seemed to be generally stigmatised by working-class parties and even anarchist thinking (Beauchez & Zeneidi, 2019; Girón, 1999), further research should investigate the lectures and shades of the different working-class organisations and sensibilities of those spaces more deeply.

After WWII, the production of social housing areas, where most of the demolished settlements were rehoused in both Paris and Madrid, could have been a consequence of the necessity to deactivate the Algerian associations that flourished in the growing *bidonvilles*, and could have been motivated by a need to prevent communist infiltration in the Madrid' *chabolas*. Indeed, despite the rehousing processes (and maybe also fuelled by them) in Paris the *bidonvilles* population had a major role in the "Mai 68" revolution (Collet, 2019), and in Madrid the *chabolas*' Asociaciones de Vecinos played a decisive part in the process that led to democracy during the 1970s (Ofer, 2017). The different groups inhabiting precarious areas asked not only for infrastructural improvements but for full rights facing the exceptionality of their treatment, something which nowadays we would call the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968). Further work based on oral history should be done to understand the history of informal areas "from below".

Finally, although the informal areas seemed to grow mainly through commercial agreements with landowners and by adapting to the local historical and geographical contexts, some spaces developed through land squats could be the result of processes of popular self-organisation. Future research should analyse development of spaces not managed by landowners with the objective of understanding if forms of popular agency led to a collective self-management of the urbanisation process. Historizing the development of space and internal conflicts of these kinds of spontaneous spaces in a comparative way should permit discussing this hypothesis in a future research.

### Processes of historical change

Our research has described a historical change: the transition from an unregulated development of substandard housing areas to their legal prohibition, giving rise to what it is understood today as informal urbanisation. The analysis of the cases of Madrid and Paris validate some of the starting hypotheses; (i) the co-evolutive history of informal urbanisation and European urban planning, and (ii) the adaptation of popular practices to the historical development of urban regulations. As has been shown, urban regulations in Madrid and Paris were constructed to a large extent to restrict informal urbanisation, and informal urbanisation tended to move to areas with low or no building standards.

During the 19th century, the development of the *Zone* in Paris and the *extrarradio* in Madrid partly happened as a way to avoid the restrictions of the more regulated *faubourgs* and *ensanche*. In the first case, the historical sources informed of a movement of the lowest strata of the working classes to the periphery and the development of fragile shacks to comply with the local regulations (Granier, 2017). In the second, the neighbours demanded official building permits and obtained some ad hoc administrative practices to compel the law (Vorms, 2012).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the expansion and problematisation of informal urbanisation led to the development of hygiene norms that attempted to restrict the substandard housing development. Although not always applied, those norms seemed to reinforce the suburbanisation of the cheap housing that, below those requirements, started to grow in the relatively unregulated *banlieue* of Paris and in the equivalent *suburbio* of Madrid. In that city, the *chozas* would have also evolved with the urban regulations, transformed into a semi-clandestine precarious process, possibly hiding commercial agreements and moving beyond the city limits as a consequence of the public powers' demolition policies.

As a consequence, the question of how to control the peripheral fringes called for the development of urban planning in both cities. The approval of the laws from 1919 to 1924 in Paris prohibited informal urbanisation and also made it compulsory to develop master plans in the periphery, whilst the 1923-24 Estatuto Municipal and its subsidiary norms in Madrid also banned informal urbanisation and obligated the development of master plans around the city.

However, facing illegalisation, the practices evolved again, firstly hiding commercial practices leading to informal housing development and secondly provoking a precarisation of the building practices to conform to the increasing exposition to eviction. Such trends seemed apparent in the evolution in Paris from the *lotissements* to the *campements de nomades* and *bidonvilles*, and in Madrid in the development of *chabolismo*. Whilst the prohibition of informal urbanisation should have impeded its redevelopment, it apparently only transformed the phenomenon, creating real estate opportunities in the form of black markets of precarious housing.

To summarise, the cases of study of Madrid and Paris show complex and interconnected co-evolution between the urban regulations and planning framework on one side and the real estate strategies and popular practices on the other, adapting to by-pass the legal framework and conforming the building conditions of each space and time to the security of the tenure. The morphological and procedural evolution of the phenomenon challenge mainstream assumptions, grounded on the structuralist architectural theories of the 1960s and 1970s, which identify current stages of informal urbanisation as vernacular (Rudofsky, 1965), timeless ways of building (Alexander, 1979). Further work should permit those findings to discuss and complexify the disciplinary narratives about the phenomena.

On the other side, another historical change remained visible in the analysis of the cases of Madrid and Paris. The historical substitution of informal urbanisation with a planned urban growth meant a transition from a private urban growth to a public, redistributive one, permitting the improvement of popular territories that had been conceived of for pure economic profitability.

The historical forms of informal urbanisation were based on the liberal paradigm of *laissez-faire* applied to urban growth. Whilst the upper classes were able to afford quality urban spaces with correctly urbanised streets, full sanitary infrastructures, and good houses, the poorest strata of society could not pay for the urbanisation costs, building poor houses without a correct sanitation. The public powers' lack of intervention in the urbanisation process led to the materialisation of unbalanced territories as a direct translation of the social inequalities. Although since the last decades of the 19th century an increasing normative corpus demanded minimum standard for the urban space, such as sanitation, lighting, pavements, and electricity, substandard spaces continued growing due to the lack of redistributive planning policies. In both Madrid and Paris, only the public powers' increasing funding of public space improvements was able to tackle such inequalities. As has been shown through the specific problems of Las Californias and Francs-Moisins, facing the working classes' impossibility of paying for neighbourhood improvements and as a consequence of the diverse authorities' fears already mentioned in the previous pages, the public powers approved regulations that lead to the public funded improvement of those areas. In this context, the birth of urban planning was imagined by some of its initiators not just as an instrument of domination, but a hardly replaceable tool for economic redistribution throughout the urban

space, enabling the development of infrastructure, public equipment, and services in unprivileged neighbourhoods.

However, whilst the public powers finished by correcting to some point the real estate inequalities concerning public space, the housing sector had no a systematic influx of public capital to correct its inequalities. Improving substandard streets was largely tackled through an increasing territorial solidarity, yet the avoidance of substandard housing was based on its prohibition, provoking an increasing repression and perennisation of the phenomenon that continues today. In Madrid and Paris, beyond the period studied through this thesis, only the large construction of social housing areas from the 1960s until the 1980s, permitted a dramatic reduction of informal areas.

### Some learnings on today's housing problem

Although the historical analysis is contextual and path-dependent (Mahoney et al., 2009), making it impossible to acquire mechanical insights for future planning policies, the existence of strong, comparatively shared patterns in the evolution of informal urbanisation should permit us to identify historical causalities permitting to discuss the always present housing problem and other related urban issues.

Firstly, the role of historical expressions of informal urbanisation seems to have created an enduring footprint in the Madrid and Paris urban peripheries. The suburbanisation of informal urbanisation created a geography of stigmas that could have polarised further urban growth, strengthening territorial segregation. In Madrid and Paris, the territories that hosted informal areas during the first decades of the 20th century to a big extent hosted the post-WWII *chaboleras* and *bidonvilles* and host nowadays much of the Parisian *quartiers sensibles* (sensible neighbourhoods) and Spanish *barrios vulnerables* (vulnerable neighbourhoods). The heritage of previous geographical conditions, such as stigma, lack of public infrastructures, and cheap land prices could have led to a phenomenon of space inertia and subsequently a consolidation of those territories as in the popular areas of both cities.

Although some parts of the periphery in Madrid and Paris were largely transformed by their demolition and the construction of social housing states to rehouse the populations, their symbolic place within the cities could have not changed. The transmission of historical imaginaries about *chabolismo* to Madrid neighbourhoods such as Vallecas, Carabanchel, and San Blas, and the projection of French fears about the Algerian *bidonvilles* to the current Grands Ensembles of the Paris periphery could explain some to the current stigmatisation of both areas, requiring a re-signification of the spaces and policies that tend to the recognition of their current local cultures. Specifically in the case of Madrid, the planned segregation of the periphery as a way for the Madrid public powers to avoid being responsible for the popular classes' needs, emerges as a strong conclusion of this text, revealing the existence of a historical debt towards the periphery that should be asked for today.

Secondly, the evolution of the prohibition process seems to have continued until current times, leading to an increasing precarisation of informal housing production. As current scholars have pointed out, the present development of informal areas in the global north is extremely precarious (T. Aguilera & Smart, 2016). According to the historical findings previously shown, the current precarious material characteristics of the *bidonvilles* are

consequence of the urban regulations and planning frames avoiding erecting permanent houses. Indeed, in Madrid the same situation seems to happen; the public powers demolish “consolidated” housing areas, provoking an in-situ redevelopment of very precarious shacks (Álvarez Agüí, 2017). The present-day construction of camp tents instead of solid shacks could be an exacerbation of this historical precarisation process. Further research should discuss such precarisation. In addition, whilst the 20th-century increase of territorial control and the adaptation of popular housing practices would have led to a decline of the most visible and durable forms of informal urbanisation other types of informal housing, such as the empty housing squats, would have persisted in becoming, at least in Madrid, a major alternative to the former development of housing in empty lands (Manzano Gómez & Castrillo Romón, 2019).

Thirdly, the identified structural dynamics permitting the development of cheap housing through the dissociation of land and building ownership and leading to a temporary use of lands are mechanisms still used in contemporary real estate (Ferreri, 2021). The historical perspective should serve to help urban planners and activist in understanding the reasons behind their re-emergence. Today’s “community land trusts”,<sup>393</sup> dissociating land and housing ownership to permit cheaper house prices, has been described as a “housing revolution” (Kingsley, 2012). However, this kind of strategy appeared “spontaneously” in different areas of the European continent in the past, permitting the access to land use to the lowest strata of the working classes. As in the times of the sabotaged lands municipalisation proposed by Nuñez Granés in Madrid, the provision of public cheap lands for developing housing cooperatives seems to be a tool that could permit residential housing construction through the dissociation of land and housing ownership. The municipalisation of lands and the offer for the development of houses over them is a powerful tool that should be explored, especially in areas with high urban growth rates where informal urbanisation is illegally developed on private lands, providing large capital gains to private (and not infrequently mobsters) actors and organisations.<sup>394</sup>

Finally, this thesis should lead us to reflect about the historical nature of informal urbanisation, the reasons that led to the prohibition of these areas, and the role of urban planning in addressing it. The analysis of the historical process of prohibition of the informal housing areas has allowed for elaborating a genetic perspective (Bordieu, 2012) of informal urbanisation, denaturalising and deconstructing the norms and institutions that were built to control and govern it. Have the historical conditions changed that led to illegalising informal urbanisation in the past?

The answer is not so much. Although the development of informal areas is no longer a political threat, fears about the “pathological” space, the “ghettoisation” of the working classes and their possibility of creating solid communities and contesting social order remain very present nowadays. That reality is explicit in France where the current *banlieue*, heir of the social and cultural “identity” of the 1970s informal areas, is constantly invoked as the major problem of

<sup>393</sup> Whilst in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world the word generally used is “community land trust”, in Spain and Latin America this model is generally known as “cooperativas de cesión de uso”.

<sup>394</sup> Indeed, in southern contexts, the “commoning” of land is a tool being increasingly explored for the regularisation of informal areas (Simonneau & Denis, 2020) in place of the individual entitling and financing of the informal areas (Del Soto, 1987). Developing historical analyses in these contexts could help building contextually-based planning frameworks to facilitate the transition between unregulated, informal schemes to publicly supported, collective owned land trusts.

the French Republic. From a symbolic point of view, the public powers' policies of demolishing and hiding the existent informal areas of Madrid and Paris seem to follow the mentioned structural symbolic conflict towards those spaces and the necessity to reduce its impact in the political prestige of the governmental apparatus. Although from a sanitary point of view, the fears about the contagion of the poor and working classes has been eliminated from the public powers' explicit concerns, some of the degenerationists perspectives on "pathological" housing areas seem to remain as clichés, and it is possible that in the coming years the current Covid-19 crisis will serve to justify slum-clearance operations to reduce the "sanitary threat" of informal spaces (Manzano Gómez, 2021b). Finally, from an economic point of view, in nowadays' Madrid and probably also in Paris the possibility of an informal area reducing the land prices of the surrounding areas still seems to constitute a powerful driver against the existence of informal spaces<sup>395</sup>.

On the other hand, if the necessity for urban planning is accepted not only as a way to facilitate the real estate business, but as a tool for spatially coordinating public policies to permit public investments and preserving unurbanised areas, informal urbanisation will continue being problematic.

However, this historical research has shown that its prohibition has not solved the problems behind it. The housing problem that tends to exclude part of the population from their right to housing has provoked a continual re-emergence of informal urbanisation throughout the 20th century. The adaptations of the housing practices of the lowest strata shown in the historical period analysed through this thesis, and pointed out in the post-war period (and still today) (Manzano Gómez & Castrillo Romón, 2019), made evident the lack of effectivity of prohibiting basic human needs without providing solutions. The only effective policy to avoid the development of informal housing seemed to have been a large increase in offering social housing states for living, or cheap public lands for building. Publicly or autonomously led and based on major or minor involvement of technicians, a large range of possibilities is to be explored to tackle the structural imbalances of the free market. However, in the absence of redistributive public policies and under the current trends of the liberalisation of informal areas (Del Soto, 1987), informal urbanisation could differ from a way of community-led social production of habitat, to become closer to what under historical liberal paradigms seemed to be; a substandard real estate market designed to increase the rent extraction from their inhabitants.

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<sup>395</sup> Both elements seem to converge in the situation of current informal areas, as the Cañada Real Galeana of Madrid (Camargo, 2021)



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## ANNEXES

Hoja núm. 1 (papel blanco).

Calle de

núm.

### DESCRIPCIÓN DEL EDIFICIO

Fecha de la construcción.

Longitud de la fachada.

Altura de la misma.

Fondo.

Área del solar.

Pacios: número	superficie.	}	Nivel respecto de la calle.
			Suelo.
Jardines: número	superficie.	}	Nivel respecto de la calle.
			Cultivos, etc.
Soleamiento y ventilación: huecos.....		}	A la calle.
			A patios ó jardines.

Orientación de la fachada.

Observaciones respecto de ella.

Establecimientos industriales y comerciales.

Tiendas abiertas.

Profesiones, oficios y comercios que se ejercen en las viviendas.

### NÚMERO DE VIVIENDAS

PISOS	VIVIENDAS NÚMERO		NÚMERO DE PIEZAS				HABITANTES		OBSERVACIONES
	Este- riores.	Inte- riores.	A la calle.	A patios ó jardín.	A corre- dores.	Ventil. indirecta	Número de vecinos	Número de individ.	
Sótanos ...									
Piso bajo...									
Idem 1.º ...									
Idem 2.º ...									
Idem 3.º ..									
Idem 4.º ...									
Idem 5.º ...									
Bohardillas.									

Abierta esta hoja en

Proyecto de empadronamiento sanitario, hoja nº1. Source: (Médicos Inspectores municipales de Salubridad é Higiene, 1906, p. 29)

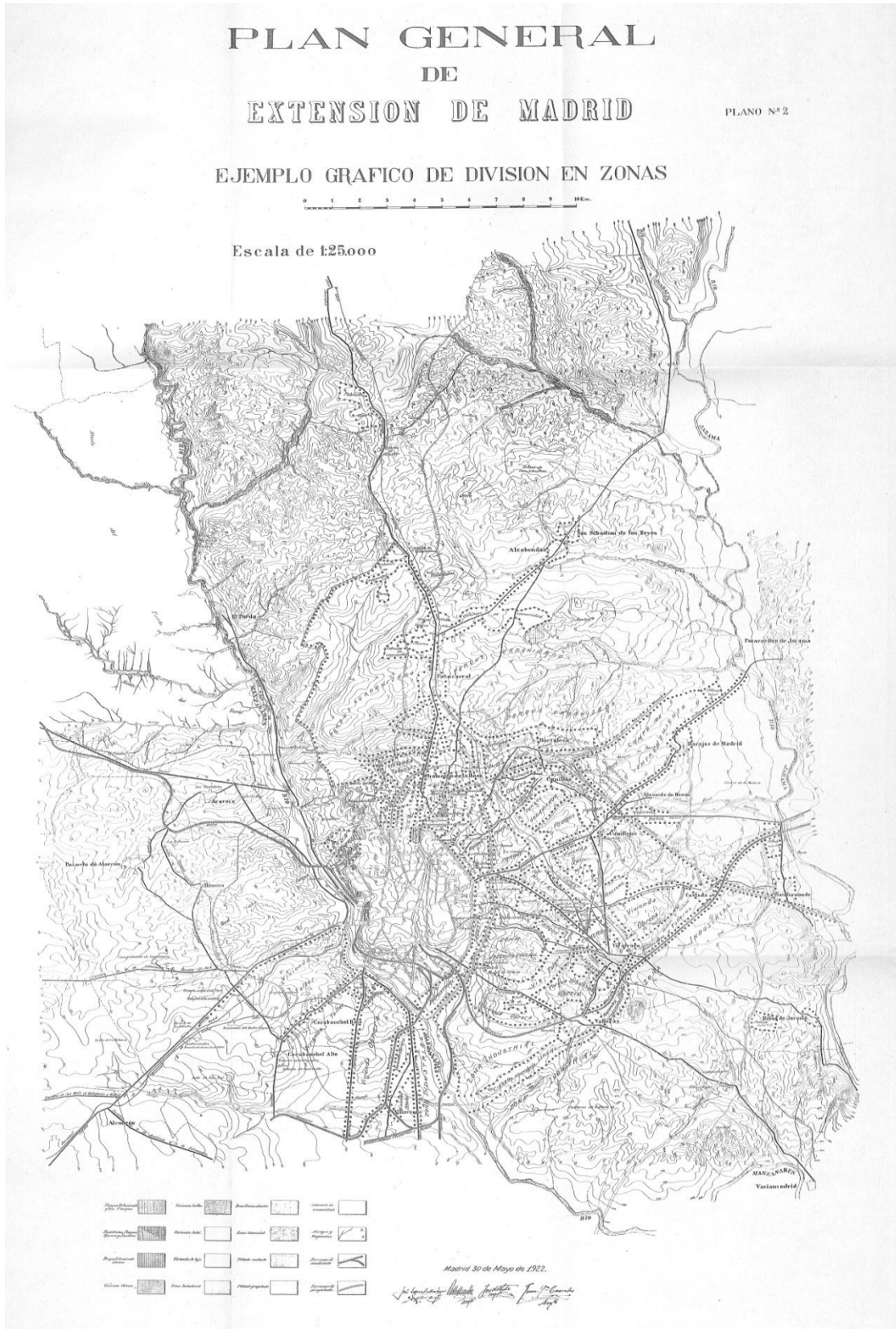
# PLAN GENERAL DE EXTENSION DE MADRID

PLANO Nº 2

EJEMPLO GRAFICO DE DIVISION EN ZONAS



Escala de 1:25.000

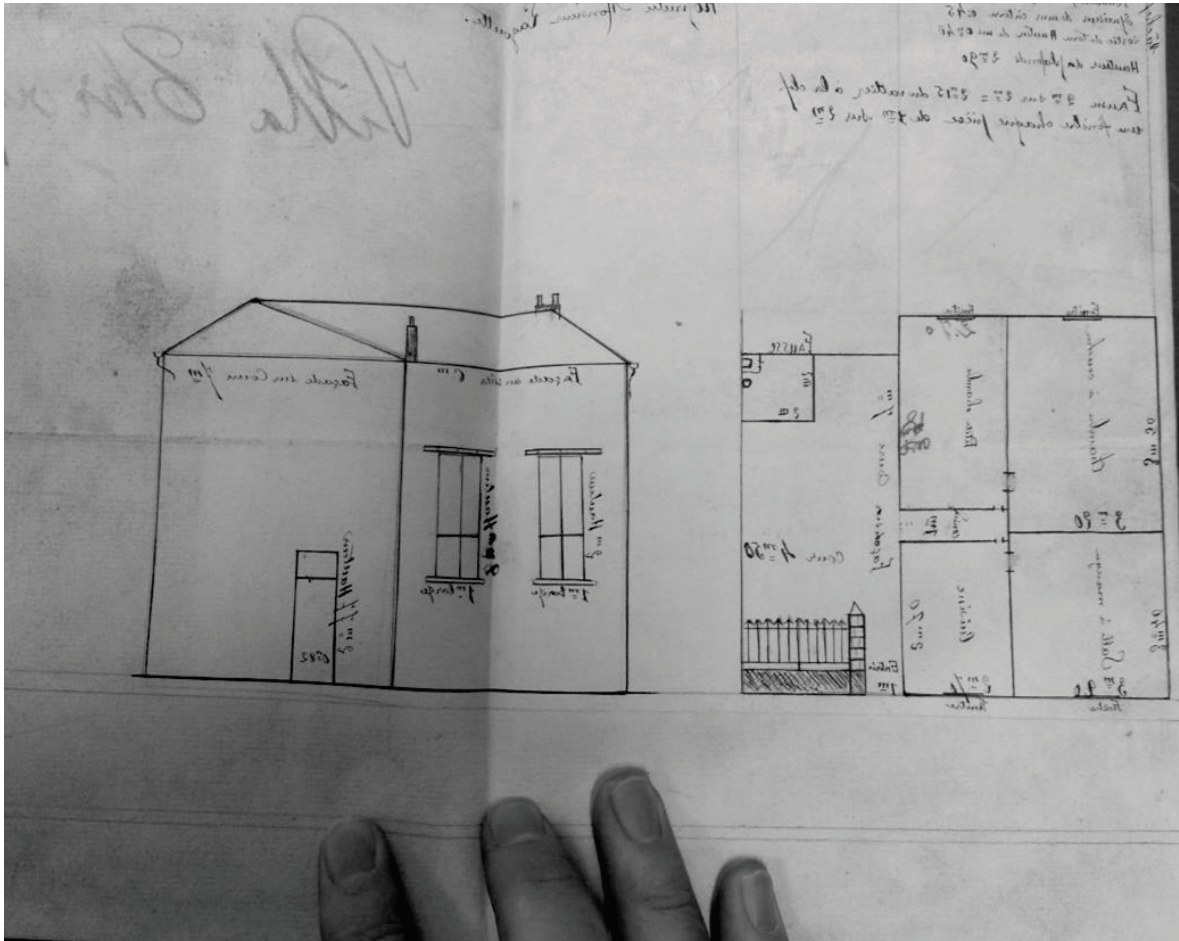


1922 Draft for a land use plan of the Madrid suburbs. Source: (Junta Consultiva Municipal de Obras, 1923)

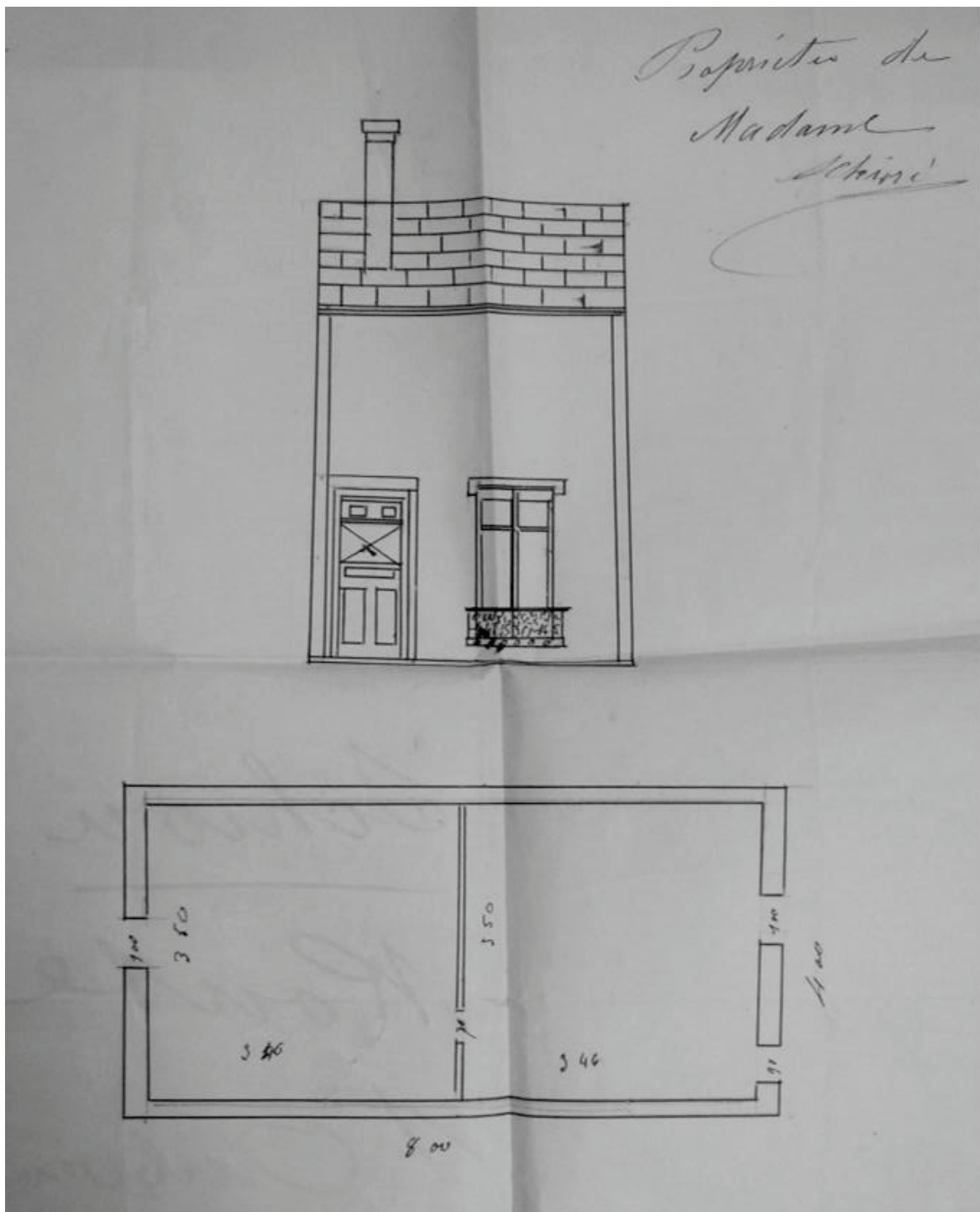


SÉRIES ET GROUPES DES PROFESSIONS	Individus attachés directement aux professions ci-dessous comme :				TOTAL GÉNÉRAL		
	PATRONS		OUVRIERS JOURNALIERS, MANŒUVRES		Masculin	Féminin	Total
	Masculin	Féminin	Masculin	Féminin			
<b>Industrie.</b>							
Blanchisseurs .....			2	16	2	16	18
Bordeurs et piqueurs de bottines.....				10		10	10
Bouchoonniers.....			2	1	2	1	3
Boutonniers.....			2	3	2	3	5
Brossiers .....			1	2	1	2	3
Cartonniers .....			3	3	3	3	6
Casquetiers .....			1	3	1	3	4
Charretiers .....			4		4		4
Chauffeurs .....			1		1		1
Ciseleurs .....			2		2		2
Cordonniers.....			21		21		21
Corroyeurs .....			6		6		6
Couturières.....				19		19	19
Couvreurs .....			5		5		5
Découpeurs en papier.....							
Fleuristes .....				6		6	6
Fondeurs, tourneurs sur cuivre.....			9		9		9
Fumistes .....			3		3		3
Imprimeurs, compositeurs, typographes .....			7		7		7
Journaliers (sans désignation de genre d'industrie).....			72	78	72	78	150
Maçons .....			8		8		8
Maréchaux-ferrants.....							
Mécaniciens.....			1		1		1
Menuisiers, charpentiers, emballeurs.....			7		7		7
Passementiers .....			2	2	2	2	4
Peintres en bâtiment .....			4		4		4
Plumassiers.....				2		2	2
Polisseurs .....				1		1	1
Porteurs aux halles.....			2		2		2
Raffineurs .....			174		174		174
Relieurs .....			1	2	1	2	3
Rempailleurs de chaises.....							
Selliers.....			2		2		2
Serruriers.....			3		3		3
Tailleurs.....			2		2		2
Teinturiers .....			3		3		3
Tondeurs.....			1	1	1	1	2
<b>Commerce.</b>							
Courtiers .....							
Logeurs .....				1		1	1
Marchands-ambulants .....	2		3		2	3	5
-- boulangers.....	1		1		1	1	2
-- brocanteurs et chiffonniers .....	6		3		6	3	9
-- charbonniers .....	3		1		4		4
-- comestibles.....	1		1	1	2	2	4
-- fruitiers .....				1		1	1
-- vin.....	1		2	1	3	3	6
Sans profession (enfants, femmes, vieillards)			(92)	(122)	92	122	216
TOTAUX.....	14	13	448	275	462	288	750

Professions of the inhabitants of the Cité Doré. Source: (Bourneville, 1882, p. 12)



Non-professional building permit from Villa-Thierry, Franc-Moisin area, probably around 1930.  
Source: AMSD 2 O 283.



Non-professional building permit from Route d'Aubervilliers, Franc-Moisin area, probably around 1930.  
Source: AMSD 2 O 73

Rue Passage Boise, n° 9 Section CJ N° 19  
 Lieu-dit 838

Pour M. Citorès Mariano manœuvre (sur sol à M. Laurent)  
 M. Velez Gregorio, manœuvre 5 Passage Dupont 4 pot. ch. d'eau  
22 rue Jules Verne 92 - Villejuif

19 M.  
 19 M.  
 19 M.  
 19 M.  
 19 M.  
 19 M.  
 19 M.

Propriété bâtie. *sur 2q40  
 la 2q40*

MODIFICATIONS.				NATURE de la PROPRIÉTÉ.	REVENU.						OBSERVATIONS.
LIGNE	ANNÉE.	NATURE.	RÉFÉRENCES explicatives sommaires		MAISONS.	USINES.				TOTAL.	
						Bâiments	Outillage				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
				<u>maison</u>	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.	fr. c.		<u>2.940</u>	
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											

Clé 1 | Clé 2 | Numéro | Clé 2  
 R V | 1016N

«Typical » house built by some individual, probably of Spanish origins, « sur sol à M. Laurent ». Source: Archive Departamentale de Seine-Saint Denis (ADSD), Cadastre de Saint-Denis.



