

**The struggle to belong**  
***Dealing with Diversity in 21st Century urban settings.***

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**Suburbanism, social change and new urban patterns in Madrid**  
(draft version, please do not quote without authors' permission)

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**Abstract:**

Since the 1980s Spanish cities underwent a deep transformation: the *traditional* compact urban model has been replaced by a new extensive one based on the massive use of the private car, new housing developments lacking of public spaces and where the promotion of the so called new centralities, mainly shopping and leisure centres. The recent prick of the real estate housing bubble has become more obvious the social and environmental consequences of suburbanism.

This opens new challenges for sociological research. The paper focuses on Madrid and the recent and massive suburban development. The classic centre/periphery frame is now obsolete in Madrid. Its social and spatial reality is no more as was described until the 1980s, the suburbs (made up of family homes and/or tower blocks) occupy not only most of the Madrid Metropolitan Area, but also a significant part of the Madrid Region. But this fast process of change is not by chance or an answer to social demands, on the contrary, it's a consequence of a growth policy promoted by the local, regional and central governments and supported by the main Business organizations.

The authors analyze the relation between suburbanism and new patterns of socio-spatial inequality in Madrid. Segregation has been reinforced not only by housing prices but also by long distances and mobility chances. Work opportunities, educational facilities, consume services and public spaces are also conditioned by suburbanism.

"The level of poverty is so great that it is hard to explain. Without furniture, without clothes, almost without food; that is how thousands of souls living on the outskirts of Madrid always foraging, begging or pilfering, mistrustful and enfeebled. This is a mass of humanity ripe for infection with tuberculosis, constantly awaiting social and political upheaval in order to sate their covetous desire for the many wonders the city offers their impotent envy. (...) Beyond Tetúan ... there are new slums, marginalised neighbourhoods where the phenomena of red virulence, latent bitterness and heightened immorality are already appearing"(*Patronato de Protección de la Mujer* [Foundation for the Protection of Women], *Informe sobre la moralidad pública* [Report on public morality], 1943-1944)<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Background: The proletarian outskirts of Madrid**

In the early nineteen forties, Madrid, the city recently crushed by fascism, was undergoing extreme social pressure. Poverty and hunger were most acutely manifest in the peripheral districts, regarded with great suspicion by the new regime because they were where the city's proletarian population was mainly concentrated. It must not be forgotten that the Spanish Civil War had been, above all, a class war.

As pointed out by Prieto Moreno (1948)<sup>2</sup>, the population of Madrid had doubled between 1900 and 1940 to over one million inhabitants, and this had happened without any planning, except for the development of the central extension. Some 300,000 people were concentrated around the city in conditions of extreme poverty. By the early nineteen fifties the gradual annexation of municipalities within the Metropolitan Area had given rise to the notion of Greater Madrid, a conurbation with a population of 1,724,674 in 1955 (Diaz Orueta, 2001: 226).

The new totalitarian regime, markedly centralist and suspicious of the economic strength and desire for autonomy of the Basque Country and Catalonia, set out to strengthen Madrid, not only as the political capital, but also as the main hub of economic activity in the country. Throughout the nineteen fifties, the growth of Madrid intensified with the arrival of immigrants from different Spanish regions (the two Castiles, Andalusia, Extremadura, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Text cited by Gavira (1999: 130)

<sup>2</sup> Gavira: 1999, 134.

While the worst years of the post-war era were over, overcrowding, substandard housing, lack of services and infrastructure<sup>3</sup> were still common features of the peripheral districts, primarily concentrated South of the capital, which by 1960 had over two million inhabitants<sup>4</sup>. Socio-spatial structures continued to be polarised on a spacial axis of inequalities that, with nuances, would remain in subsequent decades (Díaz Orueta, 2001).

By the late nineteen fifties the Francoist authorities had realised their intentions of remaining in power required, in addition to their alliance with the U.S.A. and the Vatican, the implementation of a series of measures to liberalise the economy. The nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies in Spain can be characterised as the stage of completion of capitalist industrialisation (Orti, 1990). Madrid's economy was considerably strengthened and the population of the city grew rapidly, from 2,177,123 inhabitants in 1960 to 3,120,941 in 1970.

Madrid's General Plan of 1963 had several objectives, one being to respond to the serious problems of the city and its Metropolitan Area, but the results were meagre. As pointed out by Leira et al (1976), the Plan adopted a socio-spatially segregated approach, with extensive growth of low-density suburbs of greater environmental quality to the West and Northwest, while the East and even more clearly the South were chosen for intensive residential growth, accompanied in many cases by the presence of polluting industrial activities. The term "dormitory towns" was openly used to refer to municipalities in the South.

The National Housing Plan of 1961 triggered the construction of new dwellings, many in the private and fewer in the public sector, usually of very

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<sup>3</sup> Water supplied by tankers, lack of sewers, insufficient rubbish collection, public transport by van (when available) etc. (Leira et al, 1976)

<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by Capel (1983), the dictatorship's response to the urgent demand for housing was to favour the construction of cheap residential estates on the city outskirts, aimed at the working class. The majority of these had poor transport links with the city proper, and suffered serious deficiencies in facilities and infrastructure.

poor quality<sup>5</sup>, while new residential areas sprang up further and further away from the city centre. Speculation ran riot, taking advantage of every opportunity for maximum economic gain, rezoning land and creating urban areas blighted by serious deficiencies of infrastructure and communication with the centre of their *metropoli*, though largely dependent thereon. Of the many large real-estate / construction companies that emerged at this time, linked to the dictatorship, several are still prominent in Spain (Naredo, 2011: 29).

Since so much economic activity was concentrated in the heart of the metropolis, the flow of workers commuting to and from intensified. In these years most of the state's investment in the field of mobility focused on promoting the use of the car: boulevards were replaced, overpasses were built, car parks were created, and at the same time, Madrid's access roads were improved (Fernández Durán, 1981: 6):

"(...) the state, especially through investments in the transport system (together with basic infrastructure and housing), enhanced and made possible a territorial model more in line with the interests of capital at this stage, and in turn promoted the forms of transport most closely linked to the leading industries (automotive sector) and, in general, motorised transport, which required significant investment and involve high operating costs, marginalizing those autonomous means of non-motorised transport (pedestrian, bicycle etc.) requiring little investment, as these harmed the mechanisms of concentration and accumulation of capital".

In the final years of the dictatorship, Madrid's peripheral districts, abandoned to their fate for so long, became the main focus of social and political unrest against Franco. As stated by Gavira (1999:144), the organisational capacity of the people and the urgency of their demands led to the emergence of some urban movements that would have a momentous impact on the history of the city.

## **2. City and democracy: the shift to a new territorial model**

In 1979, after the first democratic elections in over forty years, the urban agenda of the new local authorities focused primarily on settling the historical

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<sup>5</sup> In 1974 it was estimated that 587,000 families, 58.9% off the total population of Madrid and its Metropolitan Area, lived in inadequate housing, *i.e.* in slums or dwellings in derelict or ruinous conditions, lacking utilities, of insufficient size, etc. (Díaz Orueta, 2001: 231-232)

debt accumulated during the dictatorship by giving an immediate response to the demands of urban movements. In fact, the first half of the nineteen eighties was a period of important change in Spanish cities. Investment in housing, construction of new facilities, improved public transport networks, the creation of basic infrastructure, etc. significantly changed social and urban reality. All this was done in a context of an economic crisis.

In most of the city's peripheral districts and the municipalities of the Metropolitan Area a historic transformation took place, especially notable in terms of spatial changes. From the social point of view, the situation evolved differently and, despite improvements, the highest rates of poverty and exclusion continued (and continue) to be concentrated in the same areas of the city and its Metropolitan Area<sup>6</sup>.

As regards demographic trends, the growth of the city of Madrid had stalled since the mid-seventies. Migratory movements came to a sudden halt, partly due to the economic crisis that particularly affected the industrial sector. In fact, between 1975 and 1981 the population of the city of Madrid decreased in absolute numbers, a phenomenon repeated between 1981 and 1986. In parallel, intra-metropolitan migration emerged with increasing intensity<sup>7</sup>, mainly involving the movement of new families from within the city to towns on the Southern and Eastern fringes, where housing prices were more affordable. From the period 1981-1986, significant migration began to the areas North and West of the city, in this case featuring high-income social groups that moved into spaces of less congestion and better environmental quality in the Metropolitan Area.

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<sup>6</sup> Although of course less than in previous decades.

<sup>7</sup> See Méndez, 1994.

Between 1986 and 1991, a time of clear economic growth, the more peripheral areas continued to expand, and clearly began extending into the Provincial Area<sup>8</sup> (Díaz Orueta, 1992: 504):

"(...) During the stage of economic recovery (1986-1991) there was a confirmation of the tendency for higher rates of population growth to move to external areas of the Metropolitan Area and certain parts of the Provincial Area. In the latter, the process reached a level of intensity previously unknown, with four zones already experiencing growth exceeding 20%. (...) It is possible to foresee that the patterns of socio-spatial location of the population identified in the metropolitan area are spreading to the Provincial Area. That is, the people with greater resources will move to the West and Northwest and those with lower purchasing power to the South and East."

Consequently, the *Comunidad de Madrid* increasingly took the form of a Metropolitan Region<sup>9</sup>. The great migrations of the nineteen sixties and early seventies came to a halt, and the region achieved an almost equal balance of immigration and emigration. However, movements within the region, especially from the central city to the Metropolitan Area and increasingly the Provincial Area, produced a growing regional land occupation, heavily affected by the large number of second homes<sup>10</sup>.

In this Metropolitan Region under construction, the importance of the state capital remained weighty, although there has been a gradual change toward a multi-centred territory. The reclassification of the old urban proletarian periphery, coupled with the implementation of local policies aimed at bolstering businesses and the appeal of old neighbourhoods and dormitory towns, helps to explain this transformation. In general, we are not seeing the emergence of the "classic" Anglo-American suburb, although, of course, there are some low density areas of single family homes<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> This is to say that the borders of the Metropolitan Area were crossed during the course of the "conquest" of the rest of the territory of the *Comunidad de Madrid*. Over the years local growth also crossed the administrative frontiers of the Region, clearly entering the adjacent provinces of Guadalajara y Toledo (*Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla-La Mancha*)

<sup>9</sup> In 1991 the population of the *Comunidad de Madrid* was 4,845,851, of whom 2,909,792 lived in the capital, 1,579, 875 in the Metropolitan Area and 356,184 in the Provincial Area.

<sup>10</sup> As to the Sierra Norte de Madrid: Lourés Seoane, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the nineteen eighties developments of single family dwellings, usually semi-detached, spread across the West and Northeast of the Metropolitan Area, aimed at the upper middle class. Soon these types of dwellings started appearing in the South and East, aimed at sectors of the middle class and certain working class groups. With the money obtained by

Nor could the situation be compared to the extension of proletarian outskirts of earlier decades, since now the protagonists of this new process, even in the Southern and Eastern areas, were moving to live in areas with more facilities and services<sup>12</sup>, and their socio-economic situation was completely different.

Of course, many people who migrated from the city centre to the new urban spaces on the Southern and Eastern peripheries did so beset by the unstoppable growth of housing prices, generated by the boom of the second half of the nineteen eighties (Leal, 1987). This housing boom was closely related to the entry of Spain into the European Union on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986.

### **3. The diffuse Madrid conurbation<sup>13</sup>**

In the mid-nineties, the shift from an urban agenda that in the early days of local democracy had been marked by the right to the city and social justice to another fully aligned with the tenets of what has been called Neo-liberal Urbanism (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), was fully accomplished<sup>14</sup>. A tacit

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selling their previous residences and thanks to massive credit facilities, these social groups acquired new homes. As pointed out by Leal (1994: 77), Sector 3 of Getafe (Southern periphery) was representative of such social movement: the new debtors of the neighbourhood were families seeking to improve their lifestyles without going too far from their original areas and new families who wanted to remain close to their first social milieu.

<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that here were no serious problems, especially with regard to transport. For example, in the autumn-winter of 1989-1990 there were significant social movements (road blocks, demonstrations, attacks on facilities etc.) in several commuter railway stations, motivated in most cases by overcrowding and the virtual impossibility of getting to work on time. (Díaz Orueta, 2001: 476-480)

<sup>13</sup> Various writers, including Naredo (2010), use this term to refer to the metropolitan territorial network, built along the principal axes of roads undergoing increasingly dense traffic. The growth of the conurbation has got out of control, utterly disconnected from demographic evolution to address only economic needs. This expansion destroys agricultural systems and engulfs pre-existing settlements.

<sup>14</sup> Roch (2006: 52) identifies 1985 as the year when the change of model began in Madrid "(...) overproduction of social space –socially differentiated and exclusive, as we shall see– and services, -with their general systems-, territorially extensive and economically overvalued, around which there grows a powerful accumulation mechanism of particular benefit to the companies involved in their construction, allowing them hardly 20 years later to leap onto the international stage into very advantageous positions".



accord that had been under consolidation since the mid-eighties converted Madrid into the Spanish urban area best placed in the new global economic scenario (Díaz Orueta, 1994). This accord involved the different administrations (local, regional and central) and different social and economic groups in the region, especially the business and financial capital sectors. As predicted by Orti (1990), Madrid was strengthening its role in the Spanish territorial and economic system even further.

The regional government, established in 1983, played an essential role in promoting various activities aimed at making the region a competitive metropolitan area in the European urban context. From the municipal level the stakes were also clear. Thus, in 1993 the Preliminary General Development Plan of Madrid<sup>15</sup> said:

"(...) Madrid can have clear international specialisation options in flows from the Americas and Africa into Europe - and back again – while at the same time meeting the needs for services and competition in the Mediterranean area, actively linking to it."

The public sector created agencies aimed at fostering the processes of globalisation, favouring the interests of business sectors (Fernández Durán and Vega, 1994: 301):

"In Madrid the outstanding cases are those of Arpeggio and Imad, with the creation of large urbanised land developments for Science Parks, major service industry projects, Airport Cities, Cities of the Image... aimed at reducing localisation costs for large companies, particularly transnational corporations (...) and the cooperation and internationalisation of business, promoting the image of Madrid in global markets in order to attract investment..."

As can be seen, the new urban discourse was by then already fully in place. The orientation towards economic growth and competition between cities as key objectives, together with the defence of privatisation, deregulation, flexibility in management and new forms of public-private partnership became part of the everyday vocabulary of politicians and managers. The new economic gamble had immediate and far-reaching effects in the Madrid area, which in a short period of time was radically changed, moving towards the model of a "diffuse conurbation".

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<sup>15</sup> Finally approved in 1997.

As noted by Roch (2006: 50), the growth of the Community of Madrid since the mid-nineties was in construction, especially housing, one of its main axes, resulting in a true overflow:

"(...) Just as spectacular has been and continues to be the upward trend of all dwelling prices, or the uncontrollable extension over the regional territory of the physical metropolis, not to mention the constant increase in its stock of empty houses, the unstoppable development of its transport infrastructure, the volume of mortgages crushing the city and its citizens, and now stretching like a dark cloud towards the middle of the century (...)"

That is to say, in Madrid, as in other Spanish urban areas, a hegemonic position is enjoyed by an alliance of financial and real estate interests. The accumulative capacity of the sector, increasingly internationalised, has been enormous, and the involvement of politicians, creating the conditions that have allowed, has been total. In this new historical stage, the production of space became the central activity, creating a rift between the needs of the population and the increasing role assumed by urban space as a stable accumulator of wealth and a springboard for the companies producing it to leap onto the global stage. Thus, as suggested by Roch (2006), Madrid became, essentially, building space, a space of social exclusion organised to accumulate the income of its residents according to a rigid hierarchical structure that puts everyone "in their place".

To make this possible, the political powers favoured the process, accompanying it with some *ad hoc* legislative changes that laid the groundwork, making way for new local and regional political bosses, forcing the rate of new construction that made Spain the leading producer of housing and consumption of cement (Naredo, 2011: 14-15).

In the *Comunidad de Madrid*, this process resulted in a massive regional land occupation. According to data from the *Observatorio Metropolitano* (2007: 227-238), between 1993 and 2003 the region experienced a population growth of 12%, while the occupied surface grew by 47%<sup>16</sup>. That is to say, in ten years

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<sup>16</sup> Urbanisation is one of the factors contributing most to desertification in Spain (*Ecologistas en Acción*, 2007: 18-21).

urban land increased by half of what it had done in its entire history and did so in a context of moderate population growth. The confluence of the liberalisation of the real estate market, the use of land as a source of municipal financing, the interest of land owners in developing their properties and the growing demand for housing favoured a process that was slowed only when the crisis erupted in 2007<sup>17</sup>. Growth bore no relationship with the housing needs of the whole population (*Observatorio Metropolitano*, 2007: 235):

"We are thus faced with a situation of mild population growth, with one of the highest rates of housing *per capita*, with a high concentration of houses in the hands of the highest social classes (purchased as investments), but also with a population with unmet housing needs, still unable to access housing. And this when, paradoxically, there are enough housing units to accommodate everyone."

The growth of this diffuse conurbation would have been impossible without extension of the network of roads (López de Lucio, 1995). Madrid is now the European urban area with more kilometres of motorway (with or without tolls) in relation to its population (*El Ecologista*, 2009: 9). Between 1985 and 2009, the number of kilometres of high capacity road<sup>18</sup> rose from 218 to 970. In 2009 the region, with an area of 8.028 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 6,386,932 inhabitants, had a road network of 3.341 km<sup>19</sup>.

Major investment was also made in the network of high speed rail (AVE) and Barajas Airport, concentrating a significant part of investments made throughout the Spanish territory. The policy of major construction and expansion of transport infrastructure has been a pillar of the strategy to strengthen Madrid as the central axis of the Spanish economy (Segura, 2011).

In Figures 1, 2 and 3, taken from research by Naredo (2010) on the progressive land use in the *Comunidad de Madrid*, the process described can clearly be seen. In 2005 the urban sprawl had spread, with greater or lesser

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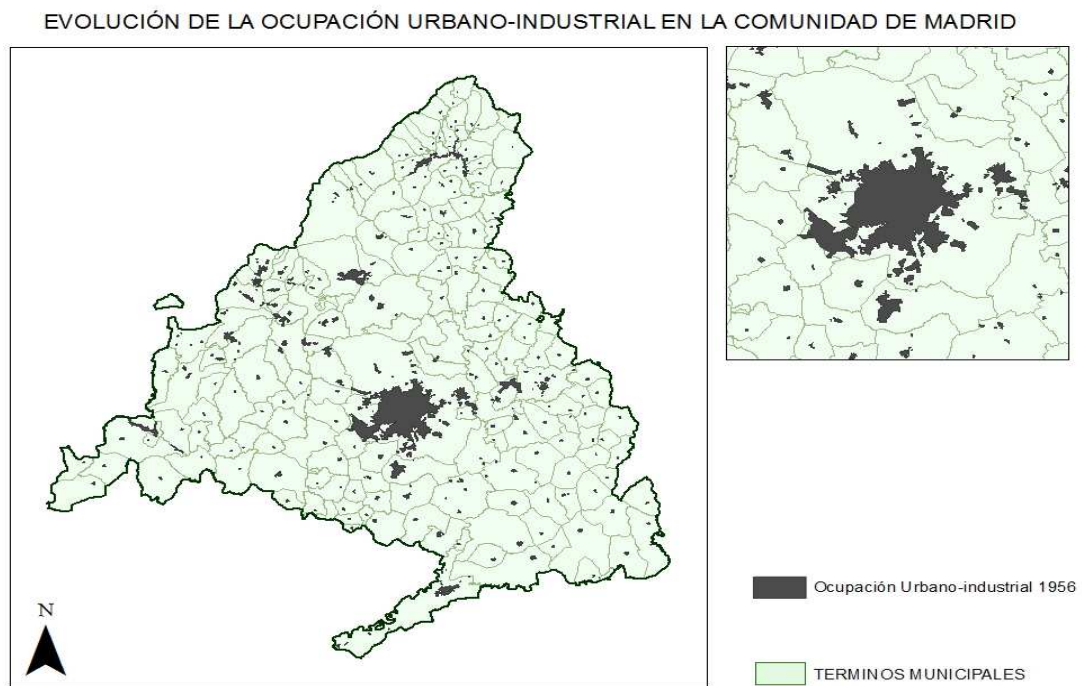
<sup>17</sup> At the end of 2009, in the Region of Madrid there were 47,637 unsold new housing units, according to data from the *Asociación de Promotores Madrileños (Asprima)*. Approximately one third of these were in the Southern zone. (*El Mundo, Suplemento Su Vivienda*, 22 January 2010)

<sup>18</sup> This category includes motorways with and without tolls and dual carriageways.

<sup>19</sup> *Anuario Estadístico de la Comunidad de Madrid*: <http://www.madrid.org/iestadis/fijas/estructu/general/anuario/ianucap09.htm>

density, across almost the entire region, in an unstoppable process that from the capital has mainly followed the road network of communication towards Burgos and Colmenar Viejo (North), Barcelona (Northeast), Valencia (Southeast), Andalusia and Toledo (South), Extremadura (Southwest) and La Coruña (northwest). Simultaneously, Madrid has strengthened its communications through high-speed train to Seville, Barcelona, Valladolid and Valencia, and its airport (Barajas) has become one of the largest in Europe. Investment in the local commuter rail network, although insufficient, has also been very significant.

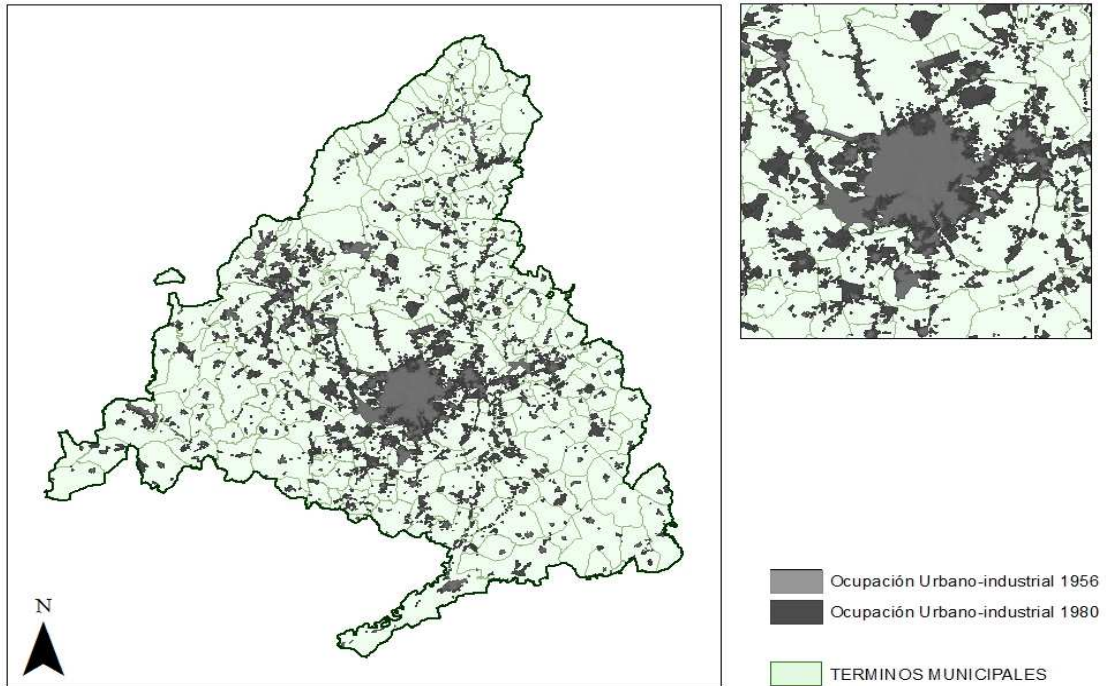
**FIGURE 1:  
LAND OCCUPATION IN 1956**



Fuente: Naredo, 2006: 3

**FIGURE 2:  
LAND OCCUPATION IN 1980**

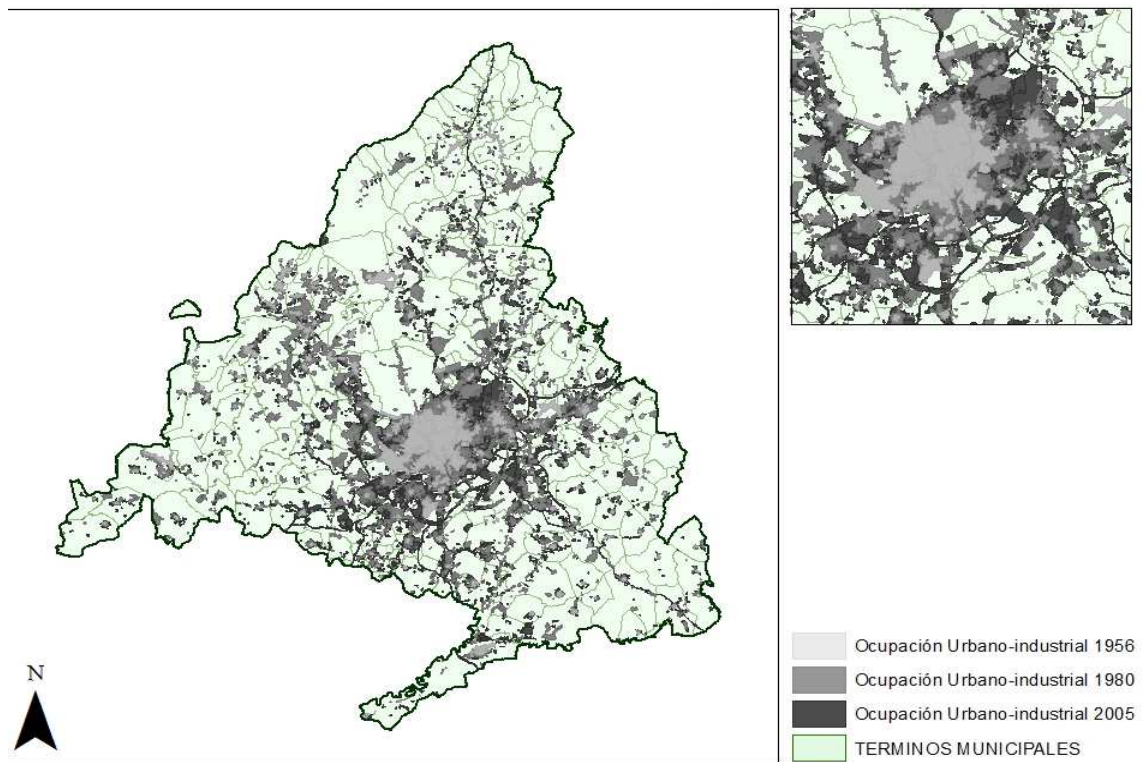
EVOLUCIÓN DE LA OCUPACIÓN URBANO-INDUSTRIAL EN LA COMUNIDAD DE MADRID



Fuente: Naredo, 2006: 3

**FIGURE 3:  
LAND OCCUPATION IN 2005**

EVOLUCIÓN DE LA OCUPACIÓN URBANO-INDUSTRIAL EN LA COMUNIDAD DE MADRID



Fuente: Naredo, 2006: 4

In line with the trends described in the foregoing pages, the data in Table 1 (Naredo, 2006: 20), confirm that the demographic weight of the city of Madrid in the whole region has been steadily decreasing since 1956: if in 1956 it accounted for 87.3% of the total regional population, in 2005 this percentage was 52.9%. Computation on the number of households produces similar results.

Between 1956 and 1980 the population of the Metropolitan Area had already greatly increased, rising from 5.7% to 28.4%, a rate of growth which in the next period would continue until it reached 39.7% of the population. The increase in the Provincial Area (called "Rest of Territory" in Naredo's investigation) was stronger between 1980 and 2005, rising from 4.2% of the total population of the region to 7.4%. Since the mid-nineties all areas have experienced population growth. Variations in the percentages of the total population are due to the intensity of growth in each area<sup>20</sup>.

**TABLE 1:  
SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION, HOUSING AND AREA OCCUPIED (residential and other)**

	Percentage composition (%) of selected variables											
	1956				1980				2005			
	Pop.	Hs	Area occupied		Pop.	Hs	Area occupied		Pop.	Hs	Area occupied	
			Res	Other			Res	Other			Res	Other
Madrid (municipality)	87.3	85.6	57.4	56.7	67.4	64.0	25.3	30.4	52.9	53.6	20.0	25.8
Corona Metropol.	5.7	6.6	16.8	19.9	28.4	27.8	35.0	42.1	39.7	35.0	40.6	49.3
Resto del territorio	7.0	7.8	25.8	23.4	4.2	8.2	39.7	27.5	7.4	11.4	39.4	24.9
Total Com. Madrid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Naredo, 2006: 20

As regards land use, what is noteworthy is how much was available in both the Metropolitan and Provincial Areas in 1956 (Table 1). As noted by Naredo (2006), this was due to the development of second homes and the existence of an environment which was less concentrated than in the capital. In several rural mountain areas the space taken up by reservoirs was also

<sup>20</sup> The municipality of Madrid has even recovered population, from 2,957,058 inhabitants in 2001 to 3,255,944 in 2009 (*Anuario Estadístico de la Comunidad de Madrid*: <http://www.madrid.org/iestadis/fijas/estructu/general/anuario/ianucap02.htm>)

important. The huge growth of the Metropolitan Area in 1980 can clearly be seen in the data footprint.

#### **4. A socially and spatially complex space**

As stated above, urban expansion in the Madrid region has been accompanied by a redefinition of the real property model. The price of housing rose steadily in line with the number of available homes (Roch, 2004: 32):

"In metropolitan Madrid alone, where there are more than 300,000 empty dwellings and another 275,000 clearly underused, more than 40.000 new units have come on the market in recent years and available land has been zoned for another 800,000, which would comfortably accommodate Valencia and Seville together"

The "new" Madrid, which has been undergoing consolidation above all since the second half of the nineteen nineties, is not only much larger in size and environmentally degraded; it is also a more stratified social space. Several studies (Díaz Orueta, 2001; *Observatorio Metropolitano*, 2007; Leal, 2007) confirming the consolidation of a structured social space arising from areas with increasingly homogeneous socio-economic compositions. Also, some comparative studies emphasize that the tendency to segregation is higher in Madrid than in other European cities. So says e.g. Preteceille (2000), in line with the arguments put forward by Leal (2007: 34), stressing the role of weak social housing policies in Spain.

Of course, the transformation of the real property model is incomprehensible unless it is contextualised within the framework of the restructuring process undergone by Madrid's economy. And economic growth would not have been possible without a very large influx of foreign workers. During the nineteen nineties and the first decade of this century, until the outbreak of the crisis, growth was undoubtedly the most innovative feature of Madrid's population. In January 2011, the number of foreign inhabitants was 1,103,470, i.e.16.81% of the total population<sup>21</sup> (Consejería de Empleo, Mujer e

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<sup>21</sup> Most growth in the population of the Region of Madrid in the last two decades can be explained by this influx of immigrants, not as great as in numbers as that of the nineteen seventies, but very significant nonetheless. .

Inmigración, 2011). This population is distributed throughout the region and reaches its largest percentage concentration (not in absolute values) in several municipalities in the Provincial Area<sup>22</sup>.

The main trend in terms of their residential location is to live in areas inhabited by local people of similar socio-economic characteristics. For example, in the city of Madrid many neighbourhoods are shared by mainly working class majorities. Several Southern districts (Carabanchel, Usera, Puente de Vallecas or Villaverde) have percentages of over 15%, though the areas with the highest percentages are Centro and Tetuan, city neighbourhoods with strong popular traditions<sup>23</sup> (*Observatorio de migraciones y de la convivencia intercultural de la ciudad de Madrid*, 2005) and a relatively higher supply of rental housing. In fact, as pointed out by different writers (Leal, 2007; *Colectivo loé*, 2007), immigrants' primary residence strategies are very influenced by the possibility of access to rental housing before they can consolidate their preponderance in Spain (Leal, 2007: 42-43):

"The fact that 75% of all households made up of foreigners were rented in 2003 compared to 13% for Spaniards, and that the centre has a ratio of rental accommodation more than double that of the municipality of Madrid reflects differential residential behaviour with important consequences on the location and form of settlement of immigrants.

But once the centre was saturated and rental prices began to rise, the strategy was reversed; homes could still be found for rent in central locations, although at higher prices, leading to overcrowding in such dwellings in to pay the rent required, or alternatively to seeking accommodation space at the extreme periphery, in places characterised by second homes or in remote areas where rents were lower."

For traditional working-class neighbourhoods in both the city of Madrid and the Metropolitan Area (especially the South and East), the influx of immigrants has been a fundamental factor that has enabled local people to lease out or sell their homes in order to access others of higher quality. As stated by Roch (2004: 51), it is thanks to immigrants that a part of the real estate assets that had remained stuck and seemed to have lost their value were reintroduced to the dynamic real estate market.

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<sup>22</sup> The most extreme example is Fresnedillas de la Oliva, a town on the Sierra Oeste de Madrid of 1,600 inhabitants, of whom 40.7% were foreigners in January 2011..

<sup>23</sup> As to the Lavapiés district in central Madrid: Lourés Seoane, 2003.



But in addition to housing prices, other factors contribute to the entrenchment of segregation. Job opportunities, the public transport network, the existence and quality of educational, health and other facilities, the range of consumer services, the quality of public space or environmental quality, among other considerations, are important factors that have been hard hit by the model of diffuse conurbation. Many new housing developments built in the last twenty years have opted for designs that are very closed to the outside, often with private security. These housing types have deepened the loss of public spaces while large shopping malls, entertainment centres have largely replaced small traditional shops. This is true not just in some of the PAUS developed from Madrid Plan of 1997 (e.g. Sanchinarro, Las Tablas, Montecarmelo), but also in medium or large developments in municipalities outside the city.

Specifically, it is in the latest big housing developments, built at the height of neo-liberal euphoria, that problems have grown with the greatest intensity. Some of the most extreme examples are located either in the administrative boundaries of the region, in adjacent areas of neighbouring regions touched by the diffuse conurbation of Madrid. One of the most remarkable speculative macro-operations was Ciudad Valdeluz ("Valdeluz City") (<http://www.ciudadvaldeluz.com/>), a mega real estate development built on reclassified rustic land (Prada Llorente, 2010) and with a new Madrid-Barcelona AVE station<sup>24</sup>. If they had complied with the original estimates the population of this nucleus would have reach more than 30,000, but the economic crisis interrupted the project, leaving for the time being an abandoned urban landscape of unfinished constructions and infrastructural dearth. In early 2011, the newspaper *El País* published a report which described Valdeluz City through the eyes of two of its inhabitants. Abril wrote (2011: 32-33):

"The aerial view of Valdeluz would make you grimace. (...) There are grids of asphalt and vacant lots, like a blank notepad. There is only life in one corner, with nothing around it, other than highways, paths, farmland, a corner inhabited by Paula and Pavel and another 1,200 people. (...) (Valdeluz) had everything going for it: an AVE station, proximity to Madrid, competitive prices. *Designed to grow* said a promotional video."

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<sup>24</sup> Some 65 kilometres northeast of Madrid and about 8 from the city of Guadalajara, within the municipal limits of the small rural community of Yebes.

Something not dissimilar is happening to the South, in regions such as La Sagra, in the province of Toledo (also within the *Comunidad de Castilla-La Mancha*), bordering Madrid. In this region, 35 kilometres from the Spanish capital, can be found one of the largest concentrations of apartments and bungalows currently for sale in the whole country<sup>25</sup>. In towns like Seseña large residential projects stand unfinished, poorly equipped, clearly disproportionate, in which the inhabitants, originally attracted by more affordable prices, must now face a host of everyday problems.

In short, despite the remarkable transformations that have taken place in recent years, the overall trend towards the existence of a North-South axis of socio-spatial differentiation, identified years ago (Leal, 1994, Díaz Orueta, 2001), remains in essence. It is true that there is a more complex social composition, especially due to the settlement of immigrants and the social mobility of native *Madriileños*. And it is extending, with greater or lesser definition, not only to the Provincial Area, but also to other areas of adjacent provinces.

### **5. Confronting the crisis from a diffuse territory.**

Naredo (2011: 55-62) summarised the consequences of the property model adopted during the recent stage of economic euphoria under three main headings. The first are economic consequences, given that the mono-crop of real estate has led to serious indebtedness and inequalities. The housing bubble sped up and accentuated Spain's economic crisis. Secondly, the ecological consequences include the need to deal with the impact of a veritable urban tsunami whereby the land in the *Comunidad de Madrid* zoned for urban-industrial use increased from 112 m<sup>2</sup> per inhabitant in 1956 to 270 m<sup>2</sup> in 2005 (Naredo, 2010). Furthermore, a large amount of land, previously agricultural, is now held in the hope of future urbanisation. And third, of course, are the social consequences, given that the crisis has brought with it large scale unemployment and welfare cuts, sending up poverty rates. The number of

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/04/14/suvienda/1302800550.html>

evictions has multiplied in the last three years, affecting a mass of heavily indebted people who, with the loss of income due to job loss or worsening of working conditions, cannot make mortgage repayments.

But the crisis is not simply in the housing sector. As pointed out by Fernández Durán (2011), the crisis is a multi-dimensional manifestation of the inefficacy of an economic model founded on increasingly unsustainable ecological bases. Likewise, the energy shortage expected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century necessarily requires reconsideration of the future of the metropolis, given that for it to continue in the form we know today is not a viable option..

In Madrid, as explained above, the new territorial model has favoured massive private car use, devouring land insatiably. But even though this model has repeatedly been shown to be unworkable, politicians, businessmen and trade unions continue to insist, as in past decades, on the ideology of growth, promoting the continuity of policies to develop grand infrastructural and service industry projects. It would seem more reasonable to go in a very different direction, making an effort to undo the damage and promote other territorial structures. (Fernández Durán and Vega, 1994: 310):

“(...) it is imperative to establish the urgent need to restructure the metropolis by way of its social and ecological transformation as a first step towards the objective of a more dispersed and self-sufficient territorial model. By achieving greater autonomy for neighbourhoods, reducing the need for motorised transport, decreasing energy consumption, taking advantage of and transforming existing buildings to meet current needs – housing, employment, social centres – (without renewing construction activities), encouraging greater nutritional self-sufficiency, e.g. with urban allotments.... “

In Madrid the groups which have argued for years in favour of an urban agenda based on these kinds of proposals have received very little public support. Nevertheless, within the current framework of social movements against the crisis and in defence of democracy, the issue of the economic and territorial model has been tabled for discussion.

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