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Government & Housing in a Time of Crisis
Policy, Planning, Design & Delivery

AMPS CONFERENCE 8

Government and Housing in a Time of Crisis: Policy, Planning, Design and Delivery.

AMPS, Architecture_MPS; Liverpool John Moores University
08—09 September, 2016

Government and Housing in a Time of Crisis: Policy, Planning, Design and Delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is the product of the conference *Government and Housing in a Time of Crisis: Policy, Planning, Design and Delivery* held at Liverpool John Moores University in 2016. The premise of the conference and this publication was that in the political economies of the West the provision of social and affordable housing has been subject to major change in recent decades. Nowhere is this more evident than in local and regional government. Today, local authority architects are mostly a thing of the past; house construction by regional administrators is increasingly rare; and local government management of housing is in decline. In place of these models are a plethora of policies, approaches and players. In the UK context these include ALMOs, stock transfers, Section 106 Agreements, right-to-buy, and the growth of Housing Associations etc. In other parts of Europe and across the developed world, the names of such initiatives and groups differ, but the issues in play remain the same. On that basis, the themes of the conference, reflecte this publication, include: Local Authorities, Government and Policy – planning ideas for housing the future; Building and Housing Professionals – ideas from inside (and about) the profession; Community Projects, Artists and Resident Engagement – the experience of users; Research, Academia, Innovation, Design and Case Studies – proposed and implemented models of housing

This publication, and the conference which it documents, were organised by the research organisation AMPS, its academic journal Architecture_MPS, and the Department of Architecture as Liverpool John Moores University. It formed part of the AMPS program of events, *Housing – Critical Futures*.

NEW HOUSING PROJECTS TO REGENERATE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines some different academic proposals for residential housing. These projects have been carried out by the students of the School of Architecture of Valladolid, coordinated by their professors Eusebio Alonso, Valeriano Sierra and others¹ during the last year 2015-2016.

The area of intervention or the field of action is located in La Victoria, a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Valladolid. It is an urban empty space whose persistence, after more than 30 years, is an opportunity today. Currently, in the neighbourhood new house-buildings coexist with the obsolete urban structures, which were built in times of original industrial and rural settlements.

The main aims of this work are research and opportunity. We have studied resilience in the current situation for the neighbourhood planning. Given the fragility of the architectural context in the district, we have studied typological alternatives and morphological transformations to renovate the urban stage.

We have considered three strategies to develop this project. Firstly, we have incorporated diversification programmes to meet the needs of the inhabitants, so we have designed houses for families, elderly and homes for young people in addition to providing community facilities for all of them.

Secondly, we have taken different alternatives from the traditional city prototype, designing new models for public areas besides new spaces of social relationships which could be able to revitalise urban life.

Ultimately, intervention on the urban “gaps” becomes an opportunity for the appropriation of space. New houses build a new town.

We have also studied the possibility of involving the community in the process of learning. For this purpose, we started by contacting the Neighbourhood Association and we took note of their main needs. Later, before starting the course, we visited their working areas with our students, which enabled us to focus our academic work on their urban reality. On the other hand, the Urban Planning Councillor gave a lesson to the students about the current urban and district problems. In addition, students explained their projects to the Neighbourhood Association (16 selected projects).

To conclude, we have prepared an exhibition and a conference about the projects in the Civic Center of the neighbourhood.

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Figure 1. The neighbourhood of La Victoria in Valladolid: in the centre of the photograph, the empty space of the old sawmill; West: Canal de Castilla; East: equipment area of the neighbourhood.

PROJECT, DESIGN, CITY AND ARCHITECTURE.

For the last years we have developed different projects throughout the academic course, for example: the one for The Cares Route in Picos de Europa (2011-2012), other around the aqueduct Alessandrino in Rome (2012-2013), another along the route of the Canal de Castilla (2013-2014) and also projects located on both sides of the border of Portugal at the height of the province of Salamanca (2014-2015). Those places were physically, culturally and politically marked by a use and a strongly characterized function, which is obsolete or depreciated nowadays. Without renouncing the complexity of the contemporary project, we have suggested a linear scan in those places and we have considered some specific locations along its itineraries and a series of open programs that could contribute to regenerate those territoriesⁱⁱ.

Along the course 2015-2016 we have worked in our own city, specifically in one of their peripheral, more characteristic and historical neighbourhoods: the neighbourhood of La Victoria in Valladolid. We can start pointing a determinant observation of Rafael Moneo by thanking the architecture for helping him to see the worldⁱⁱⁱ. A simple and direct observation but, with almost endless implications because it brings the coincidence of a cultivated and attentive look over time in their intentions: “*What we know or what we believe affects the way we see the things*”^{iv}. A look which is not purely contemplative but, which is focused on the action^v to influence reality^{vi} in an effective way.

There is no project without this transforming will of reality. The principal object of the architectural project is the development of the capacity for an effective advocacy in reality. This involves analysing reality in its complexity and with its contradictions, the formation of a critical and responsible judgment, the identification of the intentions and objectives of the project and the knowledge of the discipline of architectural projects. To see the world through architecture means a critical attitude that entails the need for intervention in a particular direction.

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Commitment with an entropic reality

Reality is so complex and changing that any observation of it is partial and incomplete. We warned from the outset about the need to complete the observed data and the statements of the problem. Students must complete the statement issues and critically justify the solution towards determinations of the planning. The project should articulate a critical thought of the city model and propose an architectural intervention. The plan also establishes a set of strategies that will be useful for satisfying different objectives: using creative potential of a contradictory reality, working with the discomfort of urban conflicts and uncertainty about the programs, supporting mechanisms of appropriation for obsolete spaces, and qualifying for the community, private and everyday life.

The proposed programs and locations stimulate commitment with reality. Every project is the will of action, as it has an object to take part in reality, organizing and ordering it in a different way. *"Architecture is order... the architect is an organizer, not a stylist of the drawing board"*^{vii}. With accurate stage directions to make easy and feasible the learning task, we propose exercises, which concern from the beginning; on the one hand, the complexity of programs and areas of intervention, on the other hand, the need to find an intervention system, which can give a global response to the problem. The reasons for creativity in architectural project are found in our present problems with its complexity and contradictions.

We introduced students to a complex reality at the district level, but in situations where a clear intervention is required. The first and necessary task was the analysis of reality, which was stimulating. The location in a neighbourhood allows us to jump from the urban scale to the more ordinary and intimate one, playing to set up the world without losing sight of everyday life of their inhabitants. *"It deals to question brick, cement, glass, our table manners, our tools, our schedules, our rhythms...Describe a street, describe another, compare. Do the inventory of their pockets"*^{viii}.



Figure 2-3. The empty space of the old sawmill and the neighbourhood of La Victoria in Valladolid.

Different urban “gaps” still remain in the quarter area despite urban development dated from many years ago. We can still see a patch undergoing transformation where coexist some obsolete industrial structures, gaps in state of neglect, abruptly interrupted and incomplete road patterns and the typology, scale and proportions of some architecture dramatically conflicting. This is a working area specifically suitable for the educational and learning goals that we have proposed for the subject. The proposal collects earlier experiences of international workshops developed by the professors of the subject^{ix}.

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The architectural proposals must be aimed at the urban entropy that we have described previously and must provide a suitable response.

In contrast to the entropic character of reality where architecture currently takes place and the added difficulty that involves working in territories with inherited problems and fragile urban structures, we propose the architectural project as the best discipline to provide a global response to this reality that integrates several knowledges.

We explore creativity in everyday life and carry out an immersion in our own city, specifically in the district of La Victoria in Valladolid. The objective was the regeneration of two urban settlements, which were specifically problematic for recovering the absent city, moving to the classroom a strategy of intervention in settled neighbourhoods that we had already tested in other experiences^x. We call it “the absent city” because it means the idea of a city that promised the modernity but nevertheless it did not progress in many urban areas and was an unfulfilled promise.

THE SKIN OF CITY AS URBAN STORY

“The deepest is the skin”^{xi}. A careful reading will help us to understand the internal forces, which have structured their tissues. Analysing the urban fabric, examining the footprints and the scars left by time. This will allow us to draw the map of the passage of time and to set up the topography of the facts.

There had been several reasons for the choosing La Victoria: It is a representative district that explains in a reduced form the processes of change undergoing in all the city; its development over time is like an experiment and the neighbourhood was a pioneer in the transformations from the political transition, the change in the urban model management, the renewal of relationships with the City Council, the involvement of the residents in decision-making and from the participation of citizen movements.

Description of the working place

To intervene in an intelligent way, the first thing we need to know is the field of action. The neighbourhood is the result of a complex evolution and transformation over time^{xii}.

Placed outside one of the historical gates of the city of Valladolid, its urban structure is developed with accurate physical limits: Pisuerga River, the Hill of the Fuente del Sol, Canal de Castilla, the stream of Villanubla and the Gijón road. This brings isolation and autonomy to the neighbourhood; for this reason it is configured as a city inside the main city. The first images that neighbourhood has given for centuries underline the picturesque condition of this area outside the walls, where the river acts like a barrier and the district appears as a promenade and recreation area. Therefore, it appears in the panoramic views of the city where it is possible to appreciate the rise to the Hill of the Fuente del Sol.

The door of the city passes through the bridge of Doña Eilo, the wife of the Earl Ansúrez, founder of the city of Valladolid. The origin of the district urban structure starts in this enclave with the location of hospitals, wayside shrines and monasteries situated along different axis and roads: Villanubla road (current Gijón road), the street of Fuente del Sol (recreational way), the way of Fuensaldaña (cut by the Canal de Castilla) and the road of Cigales village (current road from Burgos). The original core of the neighbourhood remained until the construction of the Canal de Castilla (1835). The Canal generated a first industrial core that characterized the evolution and growth of the district. This development was marked in the edges and roads of its layout. The flourmill formed the broken trace of the street, which runs parallel to the Canal.

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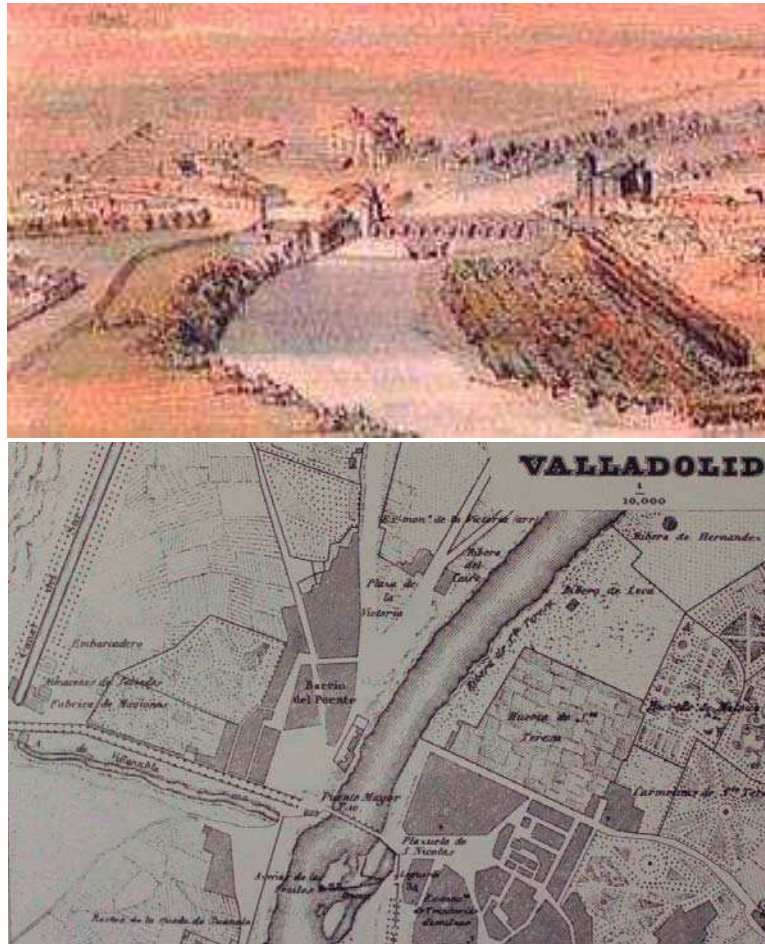


Figure 4-5. Canal de Castilla arrives to Valladolid in 1835. It starts its commercial work in 1850. Partial view of Alfred Guesdon, 1854. Plan of Coello, 1852

The original morphology was consistent with the rural character of the territory where some elements more representative and monumental stood out. The construction around the perimeter along the roads generated arable areas inside, the vegetable garden of the city. The low hamlet highlighted the perception of the monuments like urban milestones generating order and orientation. Furthermore, they were a sign of prestige and power. The urban structure was identified with the social structure. The first ordered growths emerged with the first industrial developments in the neighbourhood. The first plot that was projected as a regular trace leaned on the existing continuous structures as the Villanubla road. However, the property line (like the case of Dársena Street) was imposed on the planning. The urban structure is finally redirected to the street Fuente del Sol and was slashed by the limits of the property. Once again the structure associated to the land property was superimposed to the planning so, this was conditioned for that one. The industrial development of the area brought about a residential development. Supported in the Canal, the first industrial core was born, around which the urban plot of working buildings was developed. The church was relocated and the school was built in its place. Afterwards, the second uncontrolled growth took place and it was leaned on the bridge of the Canal.

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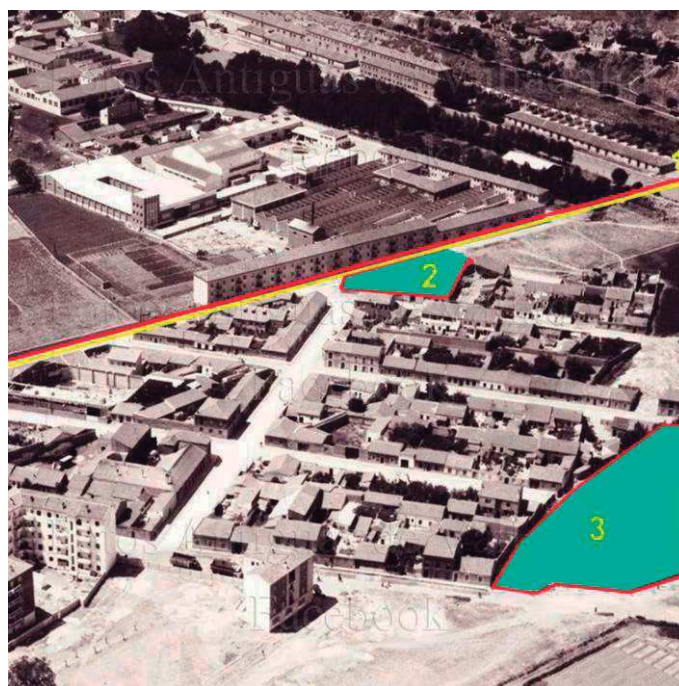


Figure 6. The working colony Textil Castilla was built in 1949. It demarcated the north side of the industrial plot with their linear blocks.

The working colony of the Textil Castilla in contrast with the self-built working houses in the projected urban plan are a paradigmatic example of the coexistence of two different urban systems, the construction of self-built houses and the planning of working neighbourhoods.

Largely, the current limits of the vacuum of the Sawmill, where we have located the different projects of housing, arise from this discordance between the ordered planning and the limits of the property. From this struggle between the speculative interest and the construction of the urban space, arose some various urban anomalies that are still present today: the confrontation of different urban structures, the discontinuity of road frames, the contrast between distribution systems and ways of occupation. The evolution of the buildability through different planning that affected the district generated unstoppable increases at each stage of its development and the increase of residual geometries in their urban planning^{xiii}.

With the political transition from the eighties, the district improved their standards of equipment, services and public spaces. However, some situations still remain stuck and in certain mode aggravated by the constructive rage over the recent years. This was the situation that we had to deal with in terms of regeneration of the district, proposing a responsible residential project that could generate new urban and social spaces for the neighbours.

THE INCREASE AND DIVERSIFICATION OF PUBLIC SPACES, PROPOSALS

The current urban planning establishes a clear distinction between public and private space, which is exclusively defined in the floor plan. These public spaces are the residual unoccupied areas occupied by dwellings and, on the other hand, have no greater qualification.

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Figure 7. The area of the old sawmill: current state and planning.

All of the works and proposals of the students, in one way or another, follow the idea that relationships between public and private space could be different, complex and flexible. Instead of understanding public space exclusively by negation, as all that is not private, we should think the public space with an attitude of purpose; public space should be a collective and social space, a space of meeting and relationship and we should talk about public spaces with different scales and characters according to the social function that they accomplish.

We have grouped the works made by them according to the different approaches of the project and design. Although some of these approaches contain characteristics of the others, all of them have in common the fact of addressing the relationships between public and private space and take advantage of the opportunity to build residential housing thinking about different alternatives for a city model with several public spaces for the community.

"Inhabiting collectively inside". These proposals work on the idea of creating different scales of relationship between the neighbours. The public space is not only what is outside the home, or what is outside from the area occupied by dwellings, so it may also be what remains between dwellings; this allows us to study the ability of public space, which can have different characters and scales, to explore the possibility of inhabiting the internal space of the plot and rescue it as public space but, also the possibility of regenerating the space inside the building treating it as a collective space. The condition of public space is not only defined in the plan, far from being on the ground floor; the section also comes into play.

"Random structures". They are proposals that avoid rigid and strong compositional mechanisms and which structure the organization of space, from the versatility and mutability of their combinatorial rules to suit the changing spatial organizations which come up from the sum of their small basic units: units of housing, elements of communication, orchards, small-scale public spaces. All of them generate a flexible shape that is adapted to the complex perimeter of its location. Actually, the geometric complexity of their limits is irrelevant because its organization grows from the cohesion of their basic parts and its logical additive of growth. The public global space is the addition of those small collective spaces of smaller scale. The vegetable gardens also work as relationship spaces. This proposal affects the creation of small-scale spaces whose sum is shared by all the neighbours.

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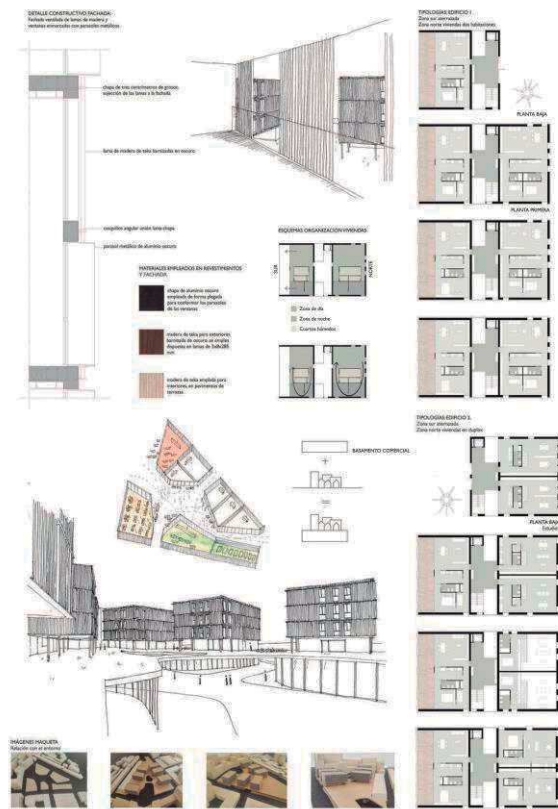


Figure 8 . "Inhabiting collectively inside". Student: Sandra Beloso; tutor: José Antonio Lozano.

Figure 9 . "Inhabiting collectively inside". Student: Ana Lubianco; tutor: Javier Blanco.

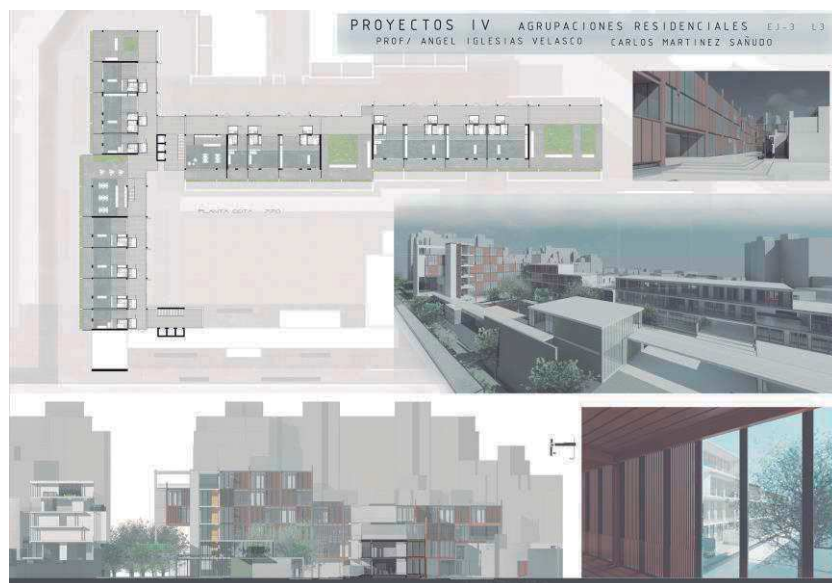


Figure 10 . "Inhabiting collectively inside". Student: Carlos Martínez; tutor: Ángel Iglesias.

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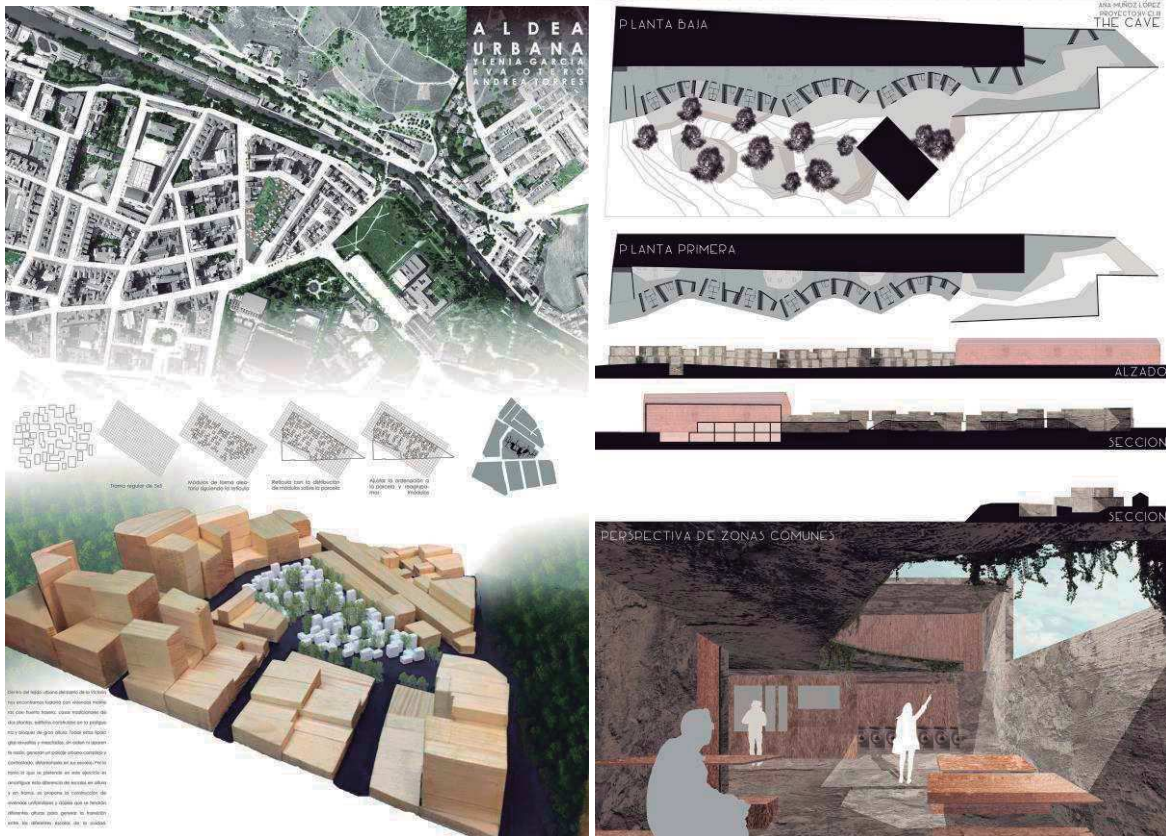


Figure 11. "Random structures". Students: Ylenia García, Eva Otero, Andrea Torres; tutor: José Manuel Martínez

Figure 12. "Excavated topographies". Students: Ana Muñoz; tutor: Jesús de los Ojos.

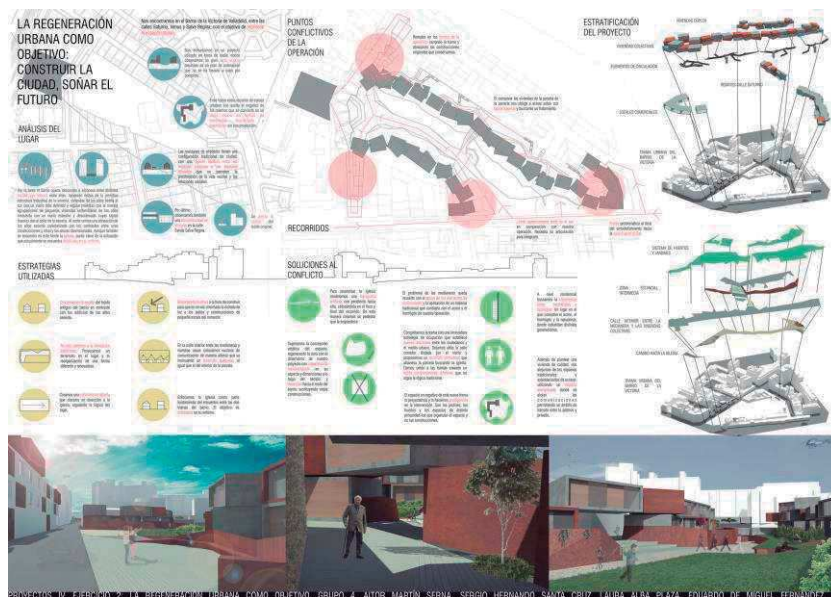


Figure 13. "Excavated topographies". Students: Aitor Martín, Sergio Hernando, Laura Alba, Eduardo de Miguel; tutor: Valeriano Sierra.

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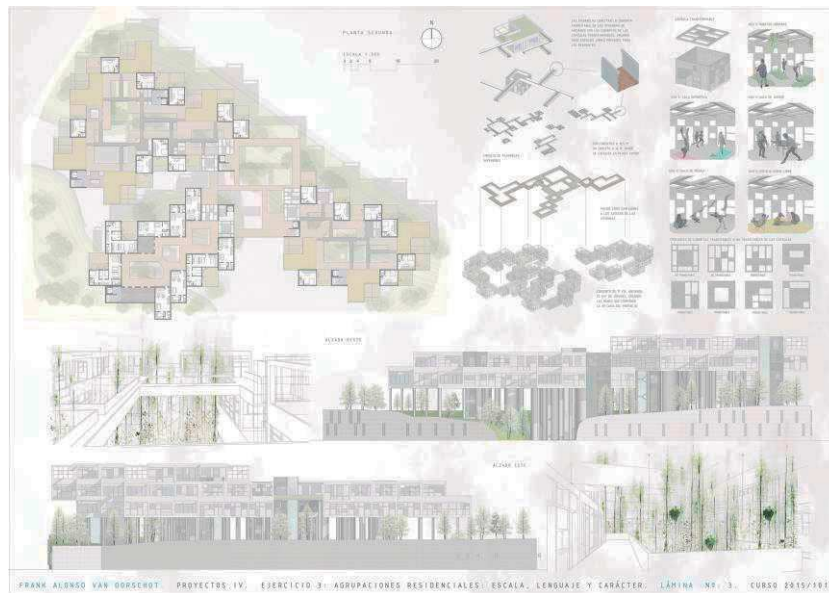


Figure 14. "Clouds". Student: Frank Alonso; tutor: Paloma Gil.



Figure 15. "Inhabited trees". Student: Pablo Cendón; tutor: Eusebio Alonso.

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“Excavated topographies and clouds”. They are two proposals that paradoxically respond to the dilemma between architecture and nature or housing and public space. In both proposals the two topics are overlapped and, through the manipulation of the section, public spaces can be set in different topographic levels. They demonstrate that we must not choose between dwellings and nature, neither public nor private space; the sum of both in the total space can give a greater result than its footprint on the ground.

In *“excavated topography”*, the new floor and the own roofs of the buildings recover the green space of the houses and the neighbourhood. This new topography brings diversity of scales for the new public spaces and creates spaces of privacy in the houses.

In the proposed *“clouds”*, the building is developed between an excavated land and another suspended on the high levels; between both parts the common green space of the new community is built up which means a new meeting space of relationship for the neighbourhood. The collective uses of the residential program are located under the new ground and build the new topography. Housings are located in higher floors; they emerge and rise up to the sky like clouds.

“Inhabited trees” is a proposal that looks into the idea of merging house and nature. The construction of residential buildings creates a new artificial nature, which merges with the existing one; each initial plot seems now a great park that continues growing upwards. The new neighbours will live in these technological trees, which are surrounded by yards and vegetation that work as an effective and sustainable bioclimatic system. The collective uses of the community are distributed under the ground, thanks to the excavated spaces that conform the topography and the roots of these new trees where the housings of the young people and elderly people are located.



Figure 16. Exhibition of works in the Architecture School of Valladolid, which have been shown to the neighbours.

CONCLUSION

Adriano Celentano sang in the seventies the evils of the century and, regretting that in the modern city it was not possible to breathe, he said goodbye with his song and warned us that a tree of thirty floors was rising^{xiv}. It was certainly an ecological criticism of the bad constructive practices that made the new cities uninhabitable. This was due to the lack of those standards that modern architecture had defended. New architecture in times of crisis can be an opportunity to regenerate the old forms that

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we have inherited. Many of these neighbourhoods in our cities have their origin in ancient agricultural structures and landscapes of the urban outskirts so, now we can recover both conditions with policies, planning and sustainable design which understands the new ecology as the rescue of a lost nature and the appropriation of a new social space that contributes to the regeneration of these neighbourhoods.

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