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Uwe Altrock · Detlef Kurth *Editors.*

Urban Regeneration in Europe

Jahrbuch Stadterneuerung 2024/25



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Table of contents

40 years of urban regeneration policies for deprived neighbourhoods in France, continuities, changes and paradoxes	1
<i>Christine Lelévrier</i>	
Talking about Regeneration – some reflections on 50 years of policy in England	31
<i>Olivier Sykes, Alexander Nurse, Sebastian Dembski and Chris Couch</i>	
Low traffic neighbourhoods as urban regeneration? The case of the UK	57
<i>Juliet Carpenter and David Howard</i>	
Urban Regeneration and Neighbourhood Approach in the Netherlands: past, present and future	77
<i>Frank Wassenberg and Emre Can</i>	
Urban Regeneration in Denmark	99
<i>Interview with Øystein Leonardsen by Uwe Altröck</i>	
Urban Regeneration Trajectories in the Historic Centre of Porto, Portugal	119
The role of EU Urban Policies in Bairro da Sé <i>João Igreja</i>	
Urban planning and heritage management policies, separate or aligned? ..	147
Understanding current practice in Portugal <i>Margarida Relvão Calmeiro</i>	

Multicriteria Assessment of Urban Buildings' Rehabilitation for Integrated Urban Regeneration	179
<i>Joana Mourão</i>	
The regeneration of Spanish military real estate assets from the 1980s ..	203
Between neoliberal tendencies and a retightening of state control	
<i>Federico Camerin and Rafael Córdoba Hernández</i>	
The impact of European programmes on heritage-led urban regeneration initiatives in the historic centre of Malaga	235
<i>Marco Hernández-Escampa and Daniel Barrera-Fernández</i>	
The regeneration of urban vulnerable neighbourhoods; an EU policy that matters?	267
Replies from the Spanish case	
<i>Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado</i>	
Growth and crisis of Italian urban regeneration, a fragmented scenario ..	293
<i>Nadia Caruso</i>	
The rollercoaster of urban regeneration in Turin, Italy	309
<i>Elena Camilla Pedè</i>	
Urban regeneration of centers	327
Case studies of middle-sized cities in the federal state of Salzburg (Austria)	
<i>Stefan Netsch</i>	
Urban regeneration in Germany: continuation and further development of planning strategies for urban spaces	347
<i>Uwe Altröck and Detlef Kurth</i>	
Culture-led – and Sub-Culture-led Urban Regeneration in Germany ...	375
<i>Grischa Bertram</i>	
Urban revitalization in Poland	405
<i>Aleksandra Jadach-Sepiolo</i>	

Urban Regeneration in Romania: Ambiguity, Local Capacities and a Weak Urban Governance	429
<i>Pietro Elisei</i>	
Urban regeneration strategies and practice of Slovenia	443
Transition to low carbon economy with the case study Ljubljana <i>Matej Nikšič</i>	
Urban regeneration in the post-socialist context – the example of Belgrade	467
<i>Tamara Maričić, Marijana Pantić and Nataša Čolić Marković</i>	
Urban planning law in Ukraine – reforms since independence and how can law support reconstruction?	507
<i>János Brenner</i>	
Authors	535
Authors 1990–2024	545
List of places 1990–2024	551
Index 2024	559

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The regeneration of Spanish military real estate assets from the 1980s

Between neoliberal tendencies and a retightening of state control

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Abstract

This work examines the regeneration of former military sites in Spain – and the specific case study of Madrid – as a valuable example of the tendency to commodify public assets to highlight two main dynamics. First, the alienation policies of military sites from the 1980s onwards have followed the general trend of neoliberal restructuring of the public bodies. Facing the state cuts in defence, the MoD is likely to sell the land it owns in the real estate market as a recurring measure of the austerity toolbox. Second, ancient military sites are high-consuming public land so they may boost relevant public-led urban regeneration processes of deprived neighbourhoods and long-term local prosperity and well-being. Nevertheless, the alienation policies have searched for immediate economic benefits for the central government and the military. These reasons underline the need to provide an updated examination of the Spanish case, which is apparently understudied in comparison with the emerging international research in the field of urban studies on the regeneration of former military sites, mostly in France, Italy, and the UK.

Keywords

Public-owned assets, military land, urban policies, real estate developments, planning agreements, general master plan

1. Introduction

Today the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is one of the largest estates in single ownership in Western countries. For instance, in Spain by 2013 there were 1,046 installations, occupying an area of 134,677 ha, totalling 0.266% of the peninsula ('Defensa Racionaliza Su Patrimonio Inmobiliario', 2013, p. 18); in France military land covers 329,431 ha, corresponding to the 0.512% of the national territorial surface (Trucy & Boulaud, 2010); in Italy 123,481 ha, corresponding to 0.411% of the national surface (Camera dei Deputati, 2006, p. 20); and in the United Kingdom 227,199 ha, 0.937% of the total national surface (Ministry of Defence, 2011, p. 6).

The demise of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War in 1991 resulted in the reduction in the size of military forces and the retrenchment of military expenditure. These organisational changes were accompanied by the spatial reorganisation of the Armed Forces in Europe, with the rationalisation of the military presence in the territory and the consequent closure of thousands of installations. The Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC, 1997, p. 2) estimated that more than 8,000 military settlements of approximately 1 million ha have been abandoned in the 1990s in the world. The process of closure and disposal of military sites has accelerated over time, being framed in the cross-cutting administrative reforms of Western Europe – quantified in annual Financial Laws – following long-term urban policies under austerity conditions (Schipper & Schönig, 2016). According to Addison and Artioli (2020, p. 79), military land disposal constitutes a specific area of the public land austerity policies aimed at reducing the real estate management and maintenance costs and generating financial gains from sales. This dynamic has increasingly produced waves of revenue reallocated to the defence budget to face the reduction of military expenditure by central governments.

Specific state-led programmes – such as the USA “Base Realignment and Closure” (BRAC) since 1988 – and public bodies created ad hoc – i.e. the French “*Mission pour la réalisation des actifs immobiliers*” (MRAI) since 1987, the UK “Defence Infrastructure Organisation” since 2011 and the Italian “Defence Task Force for Real Estate Development, Energy, and the Environment”¹ since 2021 – have been entrusted with the management of the administrative procedures for the disposal and redevelopment of military

¹ “*Task Force Difesa per la Valorizzazione Immobili, l'Energia e l'Ambiente*” in Italian, https://www.difesa.it/Task_Force_Valorizzazione_Immobili_Energia_e_Ambiente/Pagine/default.aspx

assets. The European Union has also dealt with the conversion process of military sites into civilian uses in the 1990s – by means of the Perifra and Konver programmes – and since 2000 on the ground of transnational cooperation projects² (Camerin, 2017). Although having slightly different goals and being conceptualised in the realms of programmes such as Interreg, Southeast Europe, and URBACT, these projects aimed to analyse strategies for the redevelopment of redundant MoD sites to develop common knowledge and experiences good practices to share.

Military sites are made up of different kinds of installations, such as airports, arsenals, barracks, fortifications, hospitals, and warehouses, so their redundancy opens up a wide range of solutions for the civil society, especially for those located in urban sectors and in their fringes. Hidden beyond impenetrable walls, MoD sites' internal morphology usually presents rational and standardised layouts, with large open and green spaces originally intended for the military personnel circulation, training, and free time. Tree-lined avenues and squares give military enclosures the values and potential of truly “cities within a city”. These characteristics set them as unbearable opportunities for urban regeneration. For instance, their redevelopment may contain urban sprawl and provide new public equipment and amenities in areas that are currently lacking social housing units and green spaces. Despite these opportunities, (Marchigiani et al. (2022, p. 15) recently claimed that researchers and institutions show a certain vagueness in addressing the issue of regenerating military land. This is caused by the tendency to build aggregate discourses on very different real estate assets, ranging from single buildings and defensive infrastructures to more articulated compendiums such as barracks. Depending on their history, physical characteristics and size, military sites had and still have different relationships with their surroundings, the memories of local communities, and the definition of projects for their regeneration.

2. Methodology

This research provides a multidisciplinary approach to the theme that comprises four sections. The introduction discusses the relevance of military land disposal policies that have gradually become common practices in several countries and section 3 provides an international literature review on the regeneration of former military sites and the research gaps. Section 4 proposes the categorisation of the Spanish legislation on the disposal of Defence assets from the mid-1980s until today and highlights the main

² Such as “Fate” (From army to entrepreneurship) and “Repair” (Realising the potential of abandoned military sites as an integral part of sustainable urban community regeneration) between 2009 and 2011 and the 2015-2018 Maps (Military assets as public space).

regulatory mechanism for the alienation of military sites. Sections 5 and 6 analyse the results of the alienation policies both in terms of financial gains and suggests a categorisation of the new functions assigned to the former military land. Section 7 embeds the case study analysis and exemplifies the categorisation of the redevelopments of several military sites located in Madrid. This analysis relies on specific fieldwork, interviews and archival research carried out in the Spanish capital with the goal to demonstrate that MoD disposal has become routine practice in Spanish cities but is often conflictual and depends on ad hoc solutions. Section 8 uncovers the recent Madrid's urban policies in relation to the issue of redeveloping former military site. This section helps to understand and exemplify the main strategies in regenerating the sites, where are they located, what worked well, what were the urban development models, what has been achieved, and what is expected in the future.

3. Do former military sites enable urban regeneration? Interrogating the international literature and current research gaps

A growing number of academics have dealt with the redevelopment of MoD redundant estate in connection with the urban regeneration process in the last two decades. The general lack of knowledge on the topic is tied to the so-called “military secrets” that implies MoD's properties exclusion from the normal planning activity (Greed, 2014, p. 25). However, this issue did not impede inquiries by experts across different disciplines – i.e., architecture, ecology, geography, geopolitics, heritage, history, and urban studies. Academics have indeed highlighted the main economic (Hultquist & Petras, 2012), ecological (Ellwanger & Reiter, 2019), geographical (Aenka et al., 2021), heritage (Jevremović et al., 2021; Morar et al., 2016), physical (Kádár, 2014), political, social (Komarek & Wagner, 2019) and urban issues. Reverting military assets to civilian uses is often intended as operations affecting a specific type of brownfield (Glintić, 2015) or urban void (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020) in Europe (Artioli, 2015) and abroad (Touchton & Ashley, 2019).

In a nutshell, successful redevelopment of MoD estate hinges upon the interrelation of the following key factors: highly lucrative and desirable locations (Bagaen, 2018, p. 2); resolution of conflicts over the new uses and citizens' acceptance of the redevelopment outcomes (profit-driven vs commons, see (Camerin, 2021)); costs of environmental rehabilitation, including clearance and clean-up of contaminants (Hansen, 2004); real estate market conditions, stakeholder power, project timing and readiness (Ponzini & Vani, 2014); and intergovernmental relations and laws (Glassberg, 1995; Ponzini, 2008). The unfavourable interrelation between these factors, however, is contributing to the long-lasting abandonment of these public-

owned assets, thus generating urban spaces expecting redevelopment. In this context, the determination of public interest for redeveloping these areas is routinely debated and contested,³ with no visible consensus. In fact, public policy mechanisms for disposal sites that the MoD deems redundant are generally set up to benefit the government, not structured to enable a urban regeneration processes (Bagaeen & Clarck, 2016; Bennett, 2020; Peric & Miljus, 2021). Touchton and Ashley (2019, p. 4) observed that when the closure process finishes, «the difficult, multi-decade process of redevelopment begins» and, as summed up by the international conference “The regeneration of former military sites. Perspectives, debates and redevelopments in Italy, Spain and abroad”, the mothball of military installation implies new challenges for triggering urban regeneration process (Camerin & Gastaldi, 2021a).

Notwithstanding the endeavour to analyse European cases is undoubtedly increasing following the literature released on the US cases, international urban studies currently lack to analyse three main elements. First, a much-needed holistic and integrated approach to military brownfields in relation to the urban regeneration and governance arena. Most studies rely on a case-study approach based on the analysis of different cities in the same country (Ponzini & Vani, 2014) and a comparative analysis of disposal processes in two countries (Adisson & Artioli, 2020). Second, researchers should focus on country-related analyses on the evolution of the alienation policies following urban policy dynamics and on carrying out public inventories on the reuses successfully achieved. Spain is among the European countries in which urban-studies scholars have not updated the primordial studies on the territorial repercussions of the MoD estate alienation (Mas Hernández, 2003). Third, the main focus of the existing literature is on large cities, but it is sure that multiple military sites lie in remote locations, i.e. minor municipalities. The latter generally suffers from more difficulties to foster urban regeneration because they do not present the proper basis for public-led high-cost operations and public-private-partnership real estate developments (Congreso de los Diputados, 2001, pp. 6092–6100).

Mostly Spanish urban geographers have underscored MoD estate redevelopments on the basis of regional- and city-level inquiries (Alvargonzález Rodríguez, 2001; Brandis et al., 2005; Muro Morales, 1990) and specific case studies related to the reuse of former barracks (Camerin & Gastaldi, 2021b; Gené Gil & Alomar Garau, 2020; Lloret Piñol, 2000, 2001). Only Sánchez Pingarrón – a MoD employee – offered a more comprehensive vision of the reuse processes of military sites into university headquarters at

³ As claimed by the Spanish Socialist Party (Congreso de los Diputados, 2013), Sánchez Pingarrón (2019, p. 105), and Touchton and Ashley (Touchton & Ashley, 2019, p. 2), many City Councils, military trade unions and also Armed Forces heads are often against barracks closedown with the consequent delay in the abandonment of many sites.

the state level in his Ph.D. thesis. Most of the existing literature focuses on administrative issues (Lozano Muñoz, 2007) and historical aspects of the disposal policies (Cantera Montenegro, 2013; López Azanza, 2010), the changes in the military presence over time in Spain (Mas Hernández, 2003) and heritage, morphological, political and social issues related to military barracks (Cantera Montenegro, 2007; Sebastián Maestre, 1992). Two factors pose uncertainty when it comes to explaining the role of former MoD assets in triggering urban regeneration. They are the focus on a single case study basis (on a specific installation, city or region) and the lack of comparison between different cities and diverse kinds of military installations redevelopments. In addition, the 40-year disposal process has been mostly studied in Spain under the lens of MoD administrative reform, leaving aside territorial government issues.

The existing literature is very limited in tracking commonalities and differences in local urban policies based on the role played by redundant military assets in terms of urban regeneration. Filling the aforementioned research gaps may be good at disclosing the main dynamics of the phenomenon.

4. The evolution of the Spanish legislation on the disposal of Defence assets

1984 was a pivotal year for the beginning of the alienation policies of military sites in Spain. The Royal Decree no. 135 of 25 January 1984 started the MoD modernisation and restructuration (Presidencia del Gobierno, 1984; Sepulveda & Bacas, 2008). This decision implied the launching of the Infrastructure Management, in Spanish *Gerencia de Infraestructura de la Defensa* (GINDEF) according to the Law no. 28 of 31 July 1984 – the GINDEF Act. The latter aimed to create a 10-year independent state body to dissolve in 1995 in order to rationalise the military presence in the territory, buy and sell real estate assets, and collaborate with regional and local bodies in developing urban planning strategies and plans (Jefatura del Estado, 1984). The disposal of MoD assets based its foundation on the increasingly urgent need of cutting real estate management costs and auto-financing its territorial restructuration because the budget assigned to the military had been reduced from just over 2% to 1% of the GDP from 1984 to 1998. On the contrary of countries like Italy, where the sale of military real estate also partially contributes to wiping the public debt (Camerin, 2021), in Spain land disposal revenue is only aimed at the MoD modernisation and restructuration policies. This circumstance implied a new role of the MoD in urban and real estate matters to close installations located in urban centres that could potentially generate high revenues.

The alienation of the Spanish public domain assets, including military ones, may be carried out in three ways: auctions, exchanges, or an intermediate model based on planning agreements (Fernández-Piñeyro y Hernández, 1995). The GINDEF Act (Presidencia del Gobierno, 1984) established also that the disposal must be upon payment, whereby the assets cannot be transferred free of charge except for the disposals provided for the town planning legislation. Sales must be carried out by public auction, although MoD assets may be sold directly to private actors, Autonomous Communities, or Local Corporations, with the Government's approval and prior notification to the Ministry of Economy and Finance.⁴

The decision to suspend compulsory military service in 2001 and the consequent military professionalisation (Navajas Zubeldia, 2011; Navajas Zubeldía, 2004) resulted in the extension of the GINDEF for 10 years more, without any substantial changes. In fact, «the experience accumulated since the creation of the Infrastructure Management has demonstrated the need for such entity. The purposes for which it was created not only remain valid but also acquire special relevance [...] for at least the next ten years» (Jefatura del Estado, 1994).

Between 1997 and 1998 the GINDEF modified its status to become a self-governed administrative agency with new tasks (i.e. procurement of arms and equipment for the Armed Forces modernisation) and changed its denomination into “Defence Infrastructure and Equipment Management” – in Spanish *Gerencia de Infraestructura y Equipamiento de la Defensa* (GIED) (Jefatura del Estado, 1998). By doing so, the monetary resources from the alienation had to finance mainly the acquisition of armaments and equipment and, secondly, to modernise existing infrastructures.

The Defence White Paper 2000 pushed for the closure of peripheral- and urban-centre-located assets (Ministerio de Defensa, 2000, pp. 139–141) and the MoD obtained growing incomes from the sales (Lozano Muñoz, 2007, pp. 68–69) following the real estate boom between the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The outbreak of the 2007-2008 financial crisis led the Spanish government to drastically reduce public expenditure and rationalise public bodies, so this happened to the MoD apparatus. On the basis of the 2010 Financial Law, the GIED and the Armed Forces Housing Institute – in Spanish *Instituto de la Vivienda de las Fuerzas Armadas* – merged into the Institute for Defence Housing, Infrastructure and Equipment – in Spanish the *Instituto de*

⁴ Military sites to alienate are usually offered first to other state bodies (i.e. Minister of Finance and universities), then to the Autonomous Communities and finally to the local councils through planning agreements. When no public body is interested in the acquisition, the GINDEF launches public auctions in which private actors can participate.

Vivienda, Infraestructura y Equipamiento de la Defensa Organismo Autónomo (INVIED O.A.).⁵

The Ministerial Order no. 83 of September 2012 accelerated the restructuration of the MoD estate through an ad hoc “Commissioner for the elaboration of a proposal for the rationalisation and efficient use of the Mod estate”. The Commissioner launched in May 2013 the so-called “Proposal for the Rationalisation and Efficient Use of MoD Estate” (PREPIDEF) to close 163 installations in two phases, between 2014-2017 and 2018-2024 (Ministerio de Defensa, 2013). Today this programme is still ongoing.

5. The results of the alienation policies from the 1980s

Over the decades, specific inquiries have only partially highlighted the results of the alienation processes of infrastructures such as airfields, ammunition dumps, barracks, hospitals, shooting ranges, and warehouses. Muro Morales (1990, pp. 283–284) reported that the MoD had signed 56 planning agreements mostly with City Councils from 1981 to 1990 to dispose of 346,000 m² of urban land and approximately two million m² of rural land. Lozano Muñoz (2007, pp. 68–69) stated that a total of 179 planning agreements were signed between the MoD and Spanish public bodies from 1996 to 2006 for the disposal of 114,794,613.06 m² of military land worth 400,645,353.85 euros. Sánchez Pingarrón (2019) found that a total of 40 MoD installations were redeveloped into university facilities from the mid-1980s. INVIED O.A. publish annual reports from 2011 highlighting the most significant planning agreements, but without an in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis of the sites made redundant (INVIED O.A., 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). The same situation can be observed by the analysis of the MoD reports for each legislature,⁶ in which a paragraph is dedicated to GINDEF, GIED, and INVIED O.A. without any detailed study.

No deep inquiry has still been provided on the current implementation of the two phases of PREPIDEF. The first phase (2014-2017) aimed to make 86 sites of 3,837,264 m² redundant, of which 2,837,510 m² correspond to rural areas and 937,754 m² to urban sectors. The estimated cost of the entire operation would be approximately 40 million euros to save 15 million euros/year of the annual MoD expenditure (Ministerio de Defensa, 2013). The second phase targeted 77 military areas to close for a total expenditure

⁵ INVIED O.A.’s statute was approved by Royal Decree 1286/2010 and successively amended by Royal Decree no. 924/2015 and Royal Decree 1080/2017 due to the incorporation of the Military Building Service into INVIED.

⁶ From the 1980s to 2016. The free-download of reports from 2000 is available in <https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/memoria-de-la-xi-legislatura-del-ministerio-de-defensa-enero-junio-2016.html>

of 807 million euros, which should result in an estimated annual saving of 37 million (‘Defensa Racionaliza Su Patrimonio Inmobiliario’, 2013, p. 19). However, the first phase is still ongoing because the MoD inverted only 14 million euros and closed just 34 installations (21%).⁷

The impossibility to obtain far-reaching information on the disposal process was also confirmed in early 2021 when the Spanish MP Jon Iñarritu García addressed a specific question to the government: «*How many MoD sites classified by location and type are currently unused or abandoned?*».⁸ The Spanish Government’s answer appeared incoherent and unsatisfactory: «*In accordance with the INVIED O.A. statute, the procedure for the disposal of military installations depends on their economic value. Prior to this, the property must be restored, if necessary due to the previous use, and its legal status clarified, if necessary*».⁹

The Spanish Court of Auditors’ inquiry on INVIED O.D. activities highlighted several issues concerning the MoD estate alienation and redevelopment (Tribunal de Cuentas, 2017, p. 62): «*It is striking to note the excessive amount of time elapsed between the decision to dispose of an asset and the effective disposal and alienation. The average time for installations officially disposed of in 2017 is more than 12 years, with a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 26 years. In 4 cases the disposal exceeds 20 years and in 5 cases it exceeds 10 years. The cause of the long-standing procedures is largely due to both the physical and legal issues and the state of grave deterioration and decay of military sites*».

Overall, 2007-2008 marked a milestone in the MoD estate alienation and redevelopment processes. As stated by Romero González, Brandis and Melo (2015), the real estate bubble resulted in a dramatic drop in real estate developments, so the operations planned on disused military sites have faced an unfavourable framework. Although no public entities have still released any inventory of the reuses successfully achieved and failed, two may be the main phases of the Spanish MoD estate alienation. First, the literature review shows more achievements in a first period from the 1980s to 2006. The large number of planning agreements signed in this period may be related to the positive trends of the Spanish real estate market following neoliberal patterns (López, 2021). Second, worse results in redeveloping former MoD sites occurred in the last 15 years. This assumption can be demonstrated by the public auction prices of the two periods. Before 2007, the final auction prices of selling were often higher than the basic price (Brandis et al., 2005, pp.

⁷ <https://www.larazon.es/espana/defensa-solo-ha-logrado-cerrar-el-21-de-las-instalaciones-que-le-sobran-IK21186790/>

⁸ On 9th February 2021, see

https://www.congreso.es/entradap/114p/e8/e_0088868_n_000.pdf

⁹ On 23rd March 2021,

https://www.congreso.es/entradap/114p/e10/e_0103493_n_000.pdf

399–399), while after 2007-2008 a growing number of former military sites have been unsuccessfully auctioned several times. For instance, the ancient Air Force hospital in Madrid was auctioned in 2010 for 35 million euros and in 2018 for 37 million euros. It was finally sold in 2019 sold for 22,6 million euros¹⁰.

6. Assessing the redevelopment of military sites in Spain

Given that the regeneration of military sites has been an issue for decades, this topic represents an important tendency of urban regeneration in Spain still today and in the future. Spanish cities currently present disused barracks located in urban and peripheral land.¹¹ The relevance of the theme has been argued also in the recent “Spain’s recovery and resilience plan”. This tool pinpoints that one pillar of the national housing plan for affordable rentals will be the redevelopment of military land, especially former barracks to rehabilitate and/or partially demolish (Presidencia del Gobierno, 2021, p. 312). These redevelopments, in turn, are expected to have significant benefits on urban regeneration, densification, and the perceived safety of spaces from harassment and gender-based violence.

It is striking how difficult it seems to be to tackle the issue of regenerating military sites in Spain until today. The so-called ‘military secrets’ on the MoD’s land and the lack of public and academic inquiries on the results of the alienation processes are contributing to preventing research at the national level. As stressed in a parliamentary interrogation (Congreso de los Diputados, 2001, p. 6089), the MoD is not encouraged to map military sites’ current state for two main reasons. The first is the complexity of legal issues tied to the large variety of military sites. The second, and most important, is the constant and whirlwind changing defence policies. This instability derives mainly from the annual spending review policies and new international geopolitical scenarios, so the Armed Forces are constantly suffering short-term reorganisations. According to these factors, a public inventory should be continuously changed (at least every four or five years) and this operation would be too complex for the MoD. The difficulty to conduct a medium- or long-term alienation programme based on a public

¹⁰ See https://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/abci-subasta-terrenos-antiguo-hospital-aire-queda-desierta-201804200117_noticia.htm and <https://www.ejeprime.com/mercado/defensa-vende-el-hospital-del-aire-de-madrid-por-226-millones-a-dedir-clinica.html>

¹¹ For instance, large abandoned barracks are the 149,393-m² Alfonso XIII barracks in Seville; the 122,000-m² La Vega Army factory in Oviedo (San Fabián et al., 2016); the 119,790-m² General Monasterio-Caballeria Conde Ansúrez barracks and the 106.866-m² La Rubia barracks in Valladolid (Fernández Maroto, 2021).

inventory of sites to alienate is exemplified by the failed attempt of the 2014-2017 PREPIDEF.

In the attempt to categorise the results of former military sites' redevelopments in urban sectors at the state level, four types may be the following:

1. Mega-urban projects in form of state-led large-scale capital investments, single or multi-purpose, are generally based on planning agreements between the MoD and City Councils. These projects comprise urban redevelopment, economic development, and infrastructure and transport projects with huge social and environmental impacts. These redevelopments usually take place on huge pieces of land and may imply the need for greenfield development.
2. Real estate developments at the neighbourhood level. They comprise mostly new housing units with equipment, facilities, and amenities that avoid the need for greenfield development. Usually developed through public-public or public-private partnerships, these real estate projects are typically the result of planning agreements between the MoD and City Councils. After defining the new uses, these partnerships involve contracts or arrangements between the owner and private agents for projects with substantial levels of risk transfer. These projects are designed to meet government or social needs and to reward and remunerate the private sector depending on outputs.
3. Private-led projects, mostly tied to high-end developments. They are the result of a rent-seeking approach that conducts to privatise military land through public auctions. The new functions are expected to generate high revenues to face the state-fostered reduction of MoD expenditure in order to extract capital gains and compensate for the cuts.
4. Public facilities and amenities, such as headquarters of public territorial administrations, sports facilities, public gardens and parks, and university buildings and campuses (40 cases founded by Sánchez Pingarrón). These kinds of redevelopment are tied to the fact that once military sites are to be abandoned, they are offered first to public bodies. The interest of public entities usually results in planning agreements in which the actors agree on the price to pay to the MoD for the property transfer. Once verified that no public entity is interested, INVIED launches public auctions in which private actors can intervene.

7. The case study analysis: an attempt to exemplify the types of redevelopments

To partially fill the gap of knowledge on the results of redevelopment processes, each type of redevelopment can be exemplified by considering specific case studies located in a city. Madrid constitutes a proper example of a city in which one may find all the four typologies of redevelopment due to the relevant military presence strictly tied to the condition of the Spanish capital (Navarro Madrid, 2008) (Figure 1). The city suffered from the gradual disposal of most of its installations from the 1980s. Brandis et al. (2005, p. 401) found 212.79 ha of neglected military sites whose redevelopment processes have often failed about the initial objectives of the planning agreements. Nevertheless, no research has updated the situation of the disposal and redevelopment processes since 2005 and other sites suffered from the official disposal, such as the 8.910.206-m² Campamento barracks and the 273,794-m² Capitán Arenas barracks.

The data was collected from two main sources, archives (i.e., the MoD's archives *Archivo General Militar Segovia* and *Archivo General de Simancas*, and Madrid Autonomous Community and City Council ones) and grey literature (i.e. press review; auctions published in the Official State Gazette; Spanish and Madrid Autonomous governments' documents; and City Council's urban and territorial planning tools).

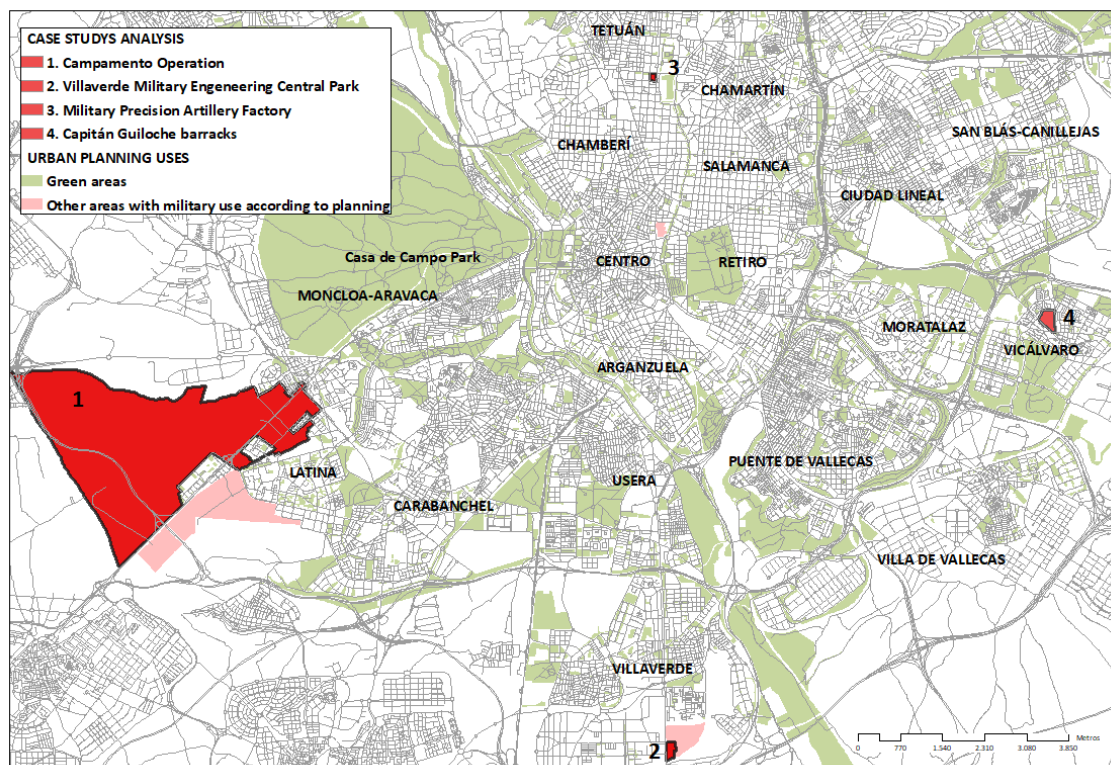


Figure 1. Localisation of the case studies in Madrid. Source: elaboration by the Authors (2022)

Urban mega-projects

The so-called “Campamento Operation” urban mega-project affects almost 9 million-m² of military land of Madrid’s south-western outskirts to build a

new neighborhood with relevant modifications of the infrastructure systems (construction of a motorway and a tunnel).

The first attempt was tied to the 1985 General Master Plan. It dated back to a draft agreement signed in 1989 between the MoD and regional and municipal authorities for a total expenditure of 1,800 million € and expected profits for the MoD of 180 million €. However, it failed due to the lack of public financial resources and no private real estate brokers were interested in carrying out the operation (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 1989).

A second attempt was developed in accordance with the 1997 General Master Plan. The City Council launched in 2006 the development plan “*Plan Parcial de Reforma Interior Instalaciones militares de Campamento*” (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2009b) that was eventually approved in 2009 by a planning agreement (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2009a). The planning agreement foresaw the implementation of the project in two development areas for a total expenditure of 617 million €. The first area, called “Military installations of Campamento”, covers an area of 2.110.206 m² for a buildability of 1.287.382 m² to erect 10,700 housing units in the development, of which 7,000 social housing. The second area – the so-called “Remate Suroeste-Campamento” – affects 6.800.000 m² still without a detailed planning to build 11,400 housing units.

Nevertheless, in 2012 the Madrid’s Supreme Court declared null and void 22 redevelopment plans, among which the Campamento Operation. These plans were claimed to unconstitutionally turn the land classified by the 1985 General Master Plan as “undeveloped land for special protection” into new buildable areas that may potentially damage the existing natural environment. The debate on this megaproject did not make any progress until today.

Real estate developments at the neighborhood level

The Capitán Arenas barracks, also called Villaverde Military Engineering Central Park, lies in a 273,794 m²-plot-size block in the southern low-income neighbourhood of Villaverde. Despite the underuse started in the mid-1980s,¹² the official abandonment took place only in 1999.

In 2005 the agreement between MoD, Ministry of Economy, and City Council modified the classification of the 1997 General Master Plan, and was then ratified in a planning agreement in 2009. The tool established the demolition of the existing barracks to build 2,000 private housing units with no provision of affordable and social housing, but the intention to provide 1,100 units for subsidised housing (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2006). In 2014 the Special plan for the improvement of urban development planning –

¹² The local association “*Asamblea Cívica de Villaverde*” proposed to the MoD and Madrid’s City Council a planning scheme for the redevelopment of the area into a hub for new public equipment, but without success (Asamblea Cívica de Villaverde, 1989).

Plan especial de mejora de la ordenación in Spanish – increased the units for subsidised housing to 1,672 and detailed the new zoning based on a total residential buildability of 199,584 m². The Special plan established to build 8 6-floor residential blocks and to create 53.928 m² of public equipment and 69.376 m² of green spaces (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2015). This project has been carried out through a public-public partnership between the Ministries of Defense and Public Works, for a total expenditure of 15.580.449 €. In June 2022 the rental and sale of the flat concluded.¹³

Private-led development

The Military Precision Artillery Factory lies on a small-size piece of land in the city centre (14.568,78 m²). It was decommissioned in 2011 and, three years later, sold at a public auction to a private cooperative for 111 million euros. The 1997 General Master Plan classified this area for residential development and the corresponding Urban Development Plan – *Plan Parcial de Reforma Interior* or PPRI– established a total buildability of 54,225 m² for approximately 450 private flats (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2015). Although the association *Madrid Ciudadanía y Patrimonio* claimed for protecting the barracks, it was entirely demolished in 2016. Successively, the Superior Court of Justice of Madrid declared the PPRI null and void in 2019 for two reasons. The first was the omission of the obligation to allocate 10% of a property development for public protection housing (in this case, 5,422.5 m³). The second was the lack of the mandatory report from the Tajo River Hydrographic Confederation on the sufficiency of water resources for the new residential area. Considering that the PPRI produces a real transformation of the area, therefore it must be equipped with the infrastructures and public provisions that satisfy the needs of the new area in which it is located. The Supreme Court was successively appealed too and called off the second of the nullity causes. During the appeal, the redevelopment works continued because the Judgment was not final, so the project has been successfully carried out and today the housing units are ready to be sold.¹⁴

Public facilities

The 82,486-m² Capitán Guiloche barracks is located in an urban area of the southeastern peripheral district of Vicalvaro. This barracks, along with Príncipe, Lepanto, and Trinidad barracks positioned in the northeastern municipality of Alcalá de Henares, was included in the Basic Agreements

¹³ By screening the real estate website “Idealista”, the subsidised housing’s prices for rent were around 11-12 €/m² and the prices for selling fluctuate from 2,000 to 2,200 €/m².

¹⁴ No public data is available on the rent and selling costs (<https://grupodomo.com/proyectos-viviendas-/pisos-madrid-raimundo-fernandez-villaverde-residencial-maravillas/>).

signed between MoD, City Councils, and Ministry of Education and Science between 1989 and 1990. The agreements determined the reuse on these military sites into university facilities as part of the national educational infrastructure policy. The Basic Agreement for the redevelopment of the Capitán Guiloche barracks into Universidad Rey Juan Carlos' campus was signed on 4 October 1990: the property transfer costed 2,500 million pesetas (approximately 15 million €) to the University. This new campus was inaugurated in 1998 after that most of the existing buildings were demolished for constructing new ones, apart from the main façades. This operation meant the expansion of the University Rey Juan Carlos within Madrid.

Table 1. Data on the categorisation of former military sites' redevelopments

Assets	Campamento barracks	Villaverde Engeneering Central Park	Military Precision Artillery Factory	Capitán Guiloche barracks
Plot Size	8.910.206	273,794	14.569	82,486
Main data				
Construction	1870s-1940s	1942	1900s	1770
Abandonment	1980s	1980s	2010	1989
Disposal	2010	1999		1990
Redevelopment	-	2014-2022	2015-2022	1991-1998
Owner	Ministry of Defence	Ministry of Public Works (SEPES)	Residencias Maravilla Cooperative	University Carlos III
Disposal mechanism (year and cost)	Planning agreement (2009; 112,000,000 euros by Ministry of Public Works) but it failed	Planning agreement (2008; 58,000,000 euros)	Auction (2013, 111,050,200 €)	Planning agreement (1990; 15,025,303 €)
Current state	Abandoned (partially demolished)	Social-housing sector (totally demolished)	High-end housing (totally demolished)	University campus (partially demolished)

Source: elaboration by authors (2022)

8. Urban policies in Madrid from the 1990s

It is not surprising that military land was incorporated into the dynamics of growth and transformation that Spanish cities experienced at the time of the greatest national economic boom. This prosperous period was accompanied by significant real estate development and land artificialisation in the whole country, including Madrid (Observatorio de la Sostenibilidad, 2016).

The dynamics affecting Madrid did not differ from what happened in other large Spanish cities where the residential fabric has gradually taken over the unbuilt land, absorbing everything in its path. The General Master Plan – *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid* in Spanish or PGOUM – approved in 1997 has strongly supported these dynamics. This document has been in force for 25 years but was drafted under social, environmental, and

economic considerations very different from today. In 1991, in a time of a strong transformation of the socio-economic context and change of political orientation in Madrid, the previous municipal planning instrument of 1985 was questioned for limiting the city's growth and hindering access to housing (Córdoba Hernández, 2015). In addition, the following issues at the city scale needed solutions urgently: the increasing mobility and accessibility problems (such as frequent traffic jams) provoked by the growing economic activity; the deterioration of the historic centre; the existence of industrial settlements in central locations; and the loss of urban and environmental quality (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2012).

A new PGOUM was approved in 1997 to deal with all these problems. The PGOUM-97 focused on the so-called strategy "Planning at the limit of capacity" – *Planeamiento al límite de capacidad* in Spanish. This strategy meant providing «sufficient land to meet the demand for housing in the whole city. This idea meant to set up a "project for the future" of Madrid that would reach the limits of the municipality's capacity for housing, with no fixed time limit for development» (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2012, p. 21). By doing so, the PGOUM-97 fostered a relevant greenfield development on the exterior side of the M-40 ring road. The planning tool classified 44% of Madrid's surface as "urban land" and 36% as "land not for development" for environmental protection reasons. It is clear that the PGOUM-97 opted for the growth of the city in contrast to the urban regeneration of the already consolidated land. This expansive model was clearly based on the centrality of Madrid over its immediate neighboring municipalities.

Most of the PGOUM-97-fostered real estate developments were however the cause for the partial nullity of the planning tool in 2003 by the Superior Court of Justice of Madrid. These projects were claimed to enable residential or tertiary developments in areas previously classified as "undeveloped land" for their environmental value (Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid, 2003). As seen in section 7, the Campamento Operation stood out for the two redevelopment projects "Military installations of Campamento" and "Remate Suroeste-Campamento" seeking the building of respectively 10,700 and 7,400 new dwellings. Their size – i.e. 2.110.206 m² and 6.800.000 m² respectively– and the disuse of their facilities should have made them attractive to the real estate market. However, the Campamento Operation was not among the redevelopments affected by the 2003 sentence of the Superior Court of Justice of Madrid. This sentence recognized that the abandonment of these areas resulted in the loss of their environmental values that were guaranteeing their protection from urban developments. A total of 38.73% of the first project's area and the 98.74 % of the second one were declared as not worth preserving due to this loss. This declaration was released with no argumentation nor complied with the necessary environmental procedures (Córdoba Hernández, 2021).



Figure 2. Land specially Protected for its ecological values in the PGOUM-85 reclassified as Land for Development in the PGOUM-97 in the “Military installations of Campamento” area. Source: (Rodrigo Arnillas & Córdoba Hernández, 2011)

the Supreme Court’s partial cassation of 2007 and final sentence of 2012 eventually cancelled 17 real estate developments covering approximately 3033.88 ha of land. This fact did not stop the expansive model of Madrid, but quite the opposite. In 2013, the City Council provisionally approved the so-called “Partial Revision of the PGOUM-85 and the Modification of the PGOUM-97 for the areas affected by the Superior Court of Justice of Madrid’s enforcement of judgments of 27 February 2003 and the judgments of the Supreme Court’s ones of 3 July 2007 and 28 September 2012”.¹⁵ This document classified these 17 pieces of land for new development without altering the number of dwellings planned 16 years earlier.

Este modelo expansivo de por sí, se ve reforzado al ceder los municipios sus responsabilidades de ordenación territorial y ejecución del planeamiento a diferentes agentes económicos (Córdoba Hernández & Morcillo Álvarez, 2020; Daher, 2013; Naredo Pérez, 2010) como promotoras inmobiliarias o grandes propietarios de suelo como puede ser en este caso de estudio el Ministerio de Defensa.

The persistence of this expansive model adopted by Madrid is a general phenomenon happening in Spain. This dynamic has been generally strengthening by the tendency of municipalities to entrust their

¹⁵ *Revisión Parcial del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid de 1985 y Modificación del Plan General de Madrid de 1997, en los ámbitos afectados por la ejecución de las sentencias del Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid de 27 de febrero de 2003 y del Tribunal Supremo de fechas 3 de julio de 2007 y 28 de septiembre de 2012* in Spanish (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2019).

responsibilities for spatial planning and planning execution to other economic actors (Córdoba Hernández & Morcillo Álvarez, 2020; Daher, 2013; Naredo Pérez, 2010), such as the MoD. These agents are more interested in the immediate profit based on real estate operations than the regeneration of the city itself. As a result, Madrid has recently witnessed enormous residential growth based on real estate operations promoted before the bursting of the real estate bubble in 2007-2008 (Córdoba Hernández, 2014). Currently, the residential expansion is happening through new large urban development operations. Two of them are standing out. “Madrid Nuevo Norte” is claimed to be the most ambitious real estate and urban growth project in Europe with new 10,474 flats (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2020), while “Valdecarros” is pinpointed to be the Spanish largest residential development as this operation will result in more than 51,656 flats (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2021).

In the context of expanding urban policies in Madrid and other Spanish cities, real estate projects on disused military land located in urban fabrics have faced long-lasting delays or suffered from standstill. This situation keeps ongoing for years while waiting for a more favorable economic and real estate situation for redeveloping not only large pieces of land but also smaller surface areas with more restrictive planning conditions. These are the cases generally located in urban sectors to regenerate that are expected to produce much lower economic profits than unbuilt areas for urban expansion.

Conclusion

From a planning perspective, the military sites’ redevelopments analysed in this chapter can be included within the municipal policies of regeneration or urban renewal in the artificialised land. The difference between these redevelopments is linked to their purpose, such as fostering socio-economic reactivation programmes, rehabilitating existing buildings, increasing the number of dwellings, buildability, and volume, and changing functions.

Beyond the discussion of whether these actions may be identified as rehabilitation or replacement of existing military sites, they should be included among the actions for fostering degrowth and resilience. The first issue to address for achieving degrowth in urban planning is to question the role of planning today and the reformulation of the prevailing models. Driven by profit-seeking tradition and the self-financing needs of municipalities, Spanish planning models have opted for economic, spatial and demographic growth that led to the bursting of the real estate bubble in 2012. Most of the large developments planned prior to this crisis are still included in the planning tools and neither City Councils nor developers want to recognise the unfeasibility of this model today. The transformation of disused military

spaces, which are mostly incorporated into urban land, should be approached as actions for recycling to reduce both land consumption and needs for greenfield development.

In this context, the redevelopment of former military sites is not a new issue in Europe. Since the late 1980s, the launch of specific disposal programmes for making redundant a vast range of military land has undoubtedly opened new possibilities to conduct new experiences of urban regeneration. Today is still difficult to resume what has been achieved from the reuse of redundant military sites, also in Spain. Here there is no inventory nor research that emphasises the redevelopments already carried out and the current state of former military land apart of Sánchez Pingarrón's inquiry on the reuses into university facilities.

The research provides a preliminary but fundamental in-depth understanding of this theme in Spain and in the specific case of Madrid, showing two tendencies tied to urban policies and urban development arrangements. The first trend is the general attempt to foster urban expansion and residential development through redundant military facilities, especially large sites (Campamento Operation and Capitán Arenas barracks) and small plots located on potentially high-revenue land (Military Precision Artillery Factory). The second one regards the endeavour to provide public services – such as university facilities – on the ground of public-public partnership. The case study analysis of Madrid highlights the crucial role of MoD and City Councils: their profit-seeking approach is likely to gridlock redevelopment for many years, waiting for the proper moment to generate profits in the real estate market. If not supplemented by public investment, the policy of military land alienation is likely to produce privatisation for building new residential areas for the wealthy. The analysis of the case study of Madrid helps to understand that the redevelopments were used as vehicles for urban sprawl, all of which supported by local urban policies. Despite this, not all military land has been redeveloped so it is still possible to reverse this trend in the areas still abandoned such as Campamento Operation. A responsible action for the immediate future should be posing limitation to large developments in urban planning tools that would boost land artificialisation. The new uses planned for military sites such as Campamento are currently unacceptable due to the lack of resources and go against the principles of resilient and sustainable development.

The next steps to take starting from this research should be the following. Firstly, to provide an inventory of the general set of military land redevelopment experiences collected in Spain. This activity may constitute the first empirical classification of new uses of former military sites in capital cities based on the results of the different procedures of disposal (direct sales, exchanges, and planning agreements) in term of urban regeneration. Secondly, the case study focuses on a large city and should be useful to

compare it to what happens in small municipalities. This kind of study may help to understand better similarities and differences between ongoing redevelopments in large and small cities.

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