



CONVERSATIONS IN PLANNING THEORY AND PRACTICE BOOKLET PROJECT

IN THE MIRROR OF URBAN LANDSCAPES: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND GROUNDING

JUAN LUIS DE LAS RIVAS, IN CONVERSATION WITH ANA RUIZ-VARONA
AND FEDERICO CAMERIN



Master Plan for the "City of Youth" new urban development in Ponferrada (León, Spain). Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas & Planz SLP, 2006



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Booklet 11

Juan Luis de las Rivas, Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin

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Foreword by Mario Paris

The ‘Conversations-in-Planning’ YA-AESOP booklet series is a Young Academics (YA) initiative to document conversations between scholars about relevant theories, ideas, concepts and practices in the field of spatial planning. The booklet series aims to provide an interactive platform for YAs to develop their academic and intellectual skills through their involvement in the production and publication of these series. As I think this is an intriguing tool for the intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experiences, I first developed a booklet in 2019 as an author (with Prof. Alessandro Balducci). Since 2022, I have been a member of the Editorial Board of this series of booklets. The present issue, following this consolidated tradition, includes a dialogue among a senior profile—Prof. Juan Luis de las Rivas—and two academics, Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin. Therefore, for my colleagues and I on the board, it represents a new opportunity to continue the work that started in 2013. Furthermore, for the authors, this is a triple challenge connected to the processes of sharing knowledge and contributing to scientific dialogue.

The first challenge refers to the content produced by the dialogue, which is the basis of the booklet. In this case, we are far from a hagiographic effort, and the interaction among the authors is horizontal and planar, mainly focused on discussing topics and concepts rather than celebrating a figure. Therefore, in this booklet, the reference to the work and profile of Prof. de las Rivas serves as a witness to a long trajectory in which our protagonist moves between research, practice and teaching—mixing all of them in one continuous interaction. This privileged position allows the authors to observe how an academic with a refined and consolidated background in planning and architecture culture defines his perspective throughout the years based on his voracious readings, thereby situating himself in the national and international academic discourse but never forgetting his roots and the conditions in which he has worked and passed for.

Throughout the pages of this book, the exchanges between Federico, Ana and Prof. de las Rivas show how planners must be conscious of the context in which they work, move and live, producing a personal approach to the different topics and problems arising from the practice and the dialogues with students and public bodies. The large succession of plans, projects and writings quoted within the pages also shows how evolved a specific identity is within the planning discourse, marked by a precise and evident position. Through the answers proposed by Prof. de las Rivas, there is a remark on how a committed and identified perspective can be relevant within the academic debate and have a considerable impact on the context in which he works, especially in ways that are also relevant and useful to the broader scientific community. This lateral—I won’t use the term ‘peripheral’— point of view is a peculiar feature of Prof. de las Rivas’ profile and, for several reasons, one of the common grounds shared by the authors. How can we exceed the potential insignificance when we work in a medium city within a low-density rural region, dealing with problems and issues amidst the current urban planning debate? From the dialogue emerges a double solution. On the one hand, even on a different scale, Valladolid and Castilla y León share more than they expected with other large European cities. On the other hand, those issues that are currently important in the planning discourse (the quality of urban fabric and the public spaces, the role of nature in the city, the proximity and its impact on everyday life and the use of landscape as a tool) can be tackled and tested with a manageable effort in a medium city, enabling us to compare lessons learned with those produced in other contexts by different colleagues.

Thus, considering this aspect, the role of Ana and Federico emerged throughout the development of the booklet. While they encountered Prof. de las Rivas during their respective careers, they never worked directly with him. When they answered the call for authors (January 2023), they showed a certain enthusiasm about the idea of exchanging knowledge with one of the most relevant Spanish planners. At the same time, among the editorial board, we did not want to give up involving them either. Therefore, we proposed to work together, taking advantage of their different sensitivities, interests and trajectories. They had to collaborate and stimulate each other for months, systematising their work, questions and specific concerns. Together, they covered a large set of research fields and interests that matched those of Juan Luis. It was amazing to see how their interactions gradually flourished, shifting from a set of classic interviews to a three-way dialogue.

The second challenge faced by the authors—the selection of a pattern for the booklet—is deeply connected to the first one. The final structure should be able to describe the complexity of a profile straddling academia and professional practice—one that has always been developed within the university and its research structures. The result is a complex product that collects different materials, allowing readers to peruse this work in different, non-linear ways. Together with a biographical focus, the booklet faces a set of discourses about planning studies and the relationship between planning and academia. Firstly, there is an attempt to situate the discourse within the larger context of the planning discipline in Spain and Southern Europe, not discarding several links with the U.S. and Latin-American debates. There are sections in this volume that belong to this transversal approach, such as the reflection about the tensions between plan and project, the space as a place or the approach to ecological planning, which the readers can find upon reading the text. Moreover, the authors not only discuss the role of planners within the schools of architecture but also how students react when they deal with the urban/regional scales and the stimuli connected with planning fields. In this light, within the words of Prof. de las Rivas, there is a passionate reflection about the relevance of the role of planners with a background in architecture and urban design in current debates. Based on his perspective, the ability to read and manage space remains an important task that competes with this kind of planner. This task we cannot forget, as we must abstract from the materiality of the city and the landscape in which we live and operate. Another interesting perspective of the booklet is the continuous reference to the bridge that joins research and practice. Since the first experiences, Prof. de las Rivas developed a parallel interest in the involvement of ideas and concepts in the interpretation and design of real cases using the city and its close environment as a testing ground. All of these perspectives appear within the booklet, and readers can move within the pages that focus on these themes.

Together with these transversal issues emerging from the dialogue, the booklet contains a set of essays and texts developed by the authors, in which they frame the argumentations in the disciplinary context or connect the reflections proposed by Juan Luis to the general debates in the urban planning/urban studies discourse. To lend support to the ongoing narrative, there is an articulated collection of images that accompany the text. These comprise a synthetic atlas of sketches drawn by Juan Luis, which are projects and plans produced together with the research team of the IUU_Lab and some covers of his books and diagrams. The authors included those materials not as decorative additions but to demonstrate how the work of Prof. de las Rivas utilises representation by maps, schemes and charts as a key tool to reflect about spaces and places. The authors also use these as devices to

share and communicate with experts, technicians, academics and the general public, in accordance with the different occasions and opportunities. Finally, the booklet contains a collection of boxes featuring different voices of individuals who have worked with Prof. de las Rivas over the decades. Often, these serve as highlights for additional potential hints that may not have been included in the booklet but otherwise help the readers understand the complexity of the protagonist's profile.

Altogether, these materials shape a complex product; while they are synthetic, they are not simplistic or self-celebrating. The booklet is a solid contribution that, starting from the figure of Prof. de las Rivas, comprehends a set of scientific components in a non-banal format. This option successfully represents all his roles and activities, as well as the different languages, registers and tones involved, which are also examples of the capacity of Juan Luis to move among scales, disciplines and interlocutors throughout his academic and professional paths.

The third challenge of the booklet is how to frame the relevance and the role of the works of Prof. de las Rivas in the international debate. Despite his rich and structured network of collaborations with foreign universities and institutions, the majority of his activities (plans, projects and programmes) are situated in his region. The background of all the discussion can be found within Castilla y León, its cities, its rural areas with small but resilient towns and its agricultural and human landscape. This low-density region marked by corridors and axes where the urban dynamics are more intense is the principal—but not the only—research and work field within the booklet. Therefore, we read about an academic who knows, plans and designs within this area; works with civil servants and local and regional administrations; and tackles relevant issues with experts and the inhabitants. At the same time, we discover the important role played by the work of Prof. de las Rivas in disseminating what he has learned and tested within this context through his impressive national and international networks. In my opinion, this link between the space of action and the reflections of a discussant in the booklet, along with its personal and disciplinary development, is another most interesting aspect of this text. At the same time, the capacity to go back and forth between a specific context and general questions and problems is the reason why this booklet (and the work of Prof. de las Rivas) is anchored to the local context but not necessarily localist.

Thus, in their narration, Federico and Ana developed an actual 'translation' of the real meaning of this action. According to Latin etymology, for the majority in Spanish, they made the efforts of *trans and ducere* in the work of Juan Luis. They not only crossed the linguistic boundaries of his production that, by the way, is already an important operation in which they placed the writings and their professional outputs in the disciplinary context, making them palatable for a non-Spanish public. Federico and Ana aimed to 'lead beyond' their production to international academics, situating them in the specific temporal and cultural contexts where they were developed. Therefore, the booklet required important work to find an encounter point in the first chapters, where they established a common ground—and a common language—that serve as the base of the final part in which the dialogue is more open and oriented towards the future. Month after month, I saw them becoming involved in this unwritten but evident struggle in the booklet, and for this, I had to thank them.

In my opinion, the final result of the authors' efforts is a strong contribution to academic dialogue and the advancement of knowledge in planning theory and practice. As in other booklets, we can

gather several lessons learned from the experiences of one of the most important Spanish planners, which we can then use to reflect on the future of our discipline. Prof. Juan Luis de las Rivas is an experienced educator in the field of planning and urban design. Many of his disciples nowadays are lecturers and academics, while others are civil servants and local/regional administrators. Therefore, once again, he took the opportunity to teach us something, not by giving us abstract theories, but by doing and thinking about what he did, thus keeping a strong link between reflections and actions.

Video 1:

Making of J.L. de las Rivas, in conversation with A. Ruiz Varona and F. Camerin

<https://youtu.be/YF89D9MQCrg>



Contributors

Architect and PhD from Universidad de Navarra. He is a Full Professor of City Planning and Urban Design at the School of Architecture of the Universidad de Valladolid (UVa) (Spain), where he serves as a director of the Department of Urbanism and the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística (<https://iuu.uva.es>). Today, he is chair of the GIR PTU-IUU-Lab. In March 2024, he was elected dean of his school.

As a visiting professor in the Politecnico di Milano, the University of Texas at Austin, the Universidad Iberoamericana de Puebla-México and other universities, he is an experienced practitioner and author of a large number of specialised writings, including *Supercities* with Alfonso Vegara (2016, English version 2020). Some of his works garnered international recognition: in 2002, he won the 4th European Urban and Regional Planning Award from the European Council of Town Planners (ECTP) for the Valladolid Metropolitan Area Guidelines; was duly recognised with the Gubbio International Prize in 2003; and was given a Special Mention in the 9th European Urban and Regional Planning Awards, ECTP 2011–12.

Architect and PhD from Universidad de Navarra. She is a Certified Planner on Territorial and Urban Planning Studies from the National Institute of Public Administration and a Master in Geographic Information Technologies for Planning from Universidad de Zaragoza. She has been a Fulbright Fellow at the Department of Urban Planning and Social Welfare, UCLA.

At present, she is an Associate Professor and holds a tenured professorship in Spatial Planning at the School of Architecture and Technology of Universidad San Jorge (USJ) in Zaragoza, where, since 2023, she has served as Vice Dean of Research. She specialises in the design of innovative GIS-based methodologies applied to the study of current urban and territorial transformations. She also leads technological innovation and research projects with institutions and companies by applying AI and analytical techniques to urban mobility, shrinkage territories, biodiversity loss and energy efficiency challenges at the urban and territorial scales.



Fig. 01-03, Juan Luis de las Rivas



Fig. 01-03, Ana Ruiz-Varona

With a city planner degree and a European postgraduate degree in Planning and Policies for Cities, Environment and Landscape from the Università luav di Venezia (2014), Federico Camerin was awarded in 2014–15 and 2016–17 with two fellow research grants at the same university. He was successively an Early Stage Researcher at the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action-Innovative Training Networks ‘UrbanHist’ (European Joint Doctorate). In 2020, he achieved a double degree of *Doctor en Arquitectura* and PhD, jointly awarded by the Universidad de Valladolid (UVa, Spain) and Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (BUW, Germany). A former post-doc fellow in urban planning at luav (2021), and post-doc researcher ‘Margarita Salas’ for UVa and Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM) (2022–24), he is currently post-doc researcher ‘Ramón y Cajal’ (2024–29).



Fig. 01-03, Federico Camerin

His varied teaching experiences comprise official teaching stints at luav, BUW, UPM, and UVa, and guest lecturer experiences in Austrian, Czech Republic, Italian, Mexican and Spanish universities. His research interests are mainly focused on planning, planning history, urban governance and urban regeneration.



Video 2:

Reasons and the opportunity of the booklet

<https://youtu.be/vYKJBDfy94c>



Introduction

The book is organised into four main sections in accordance with what has come to characterise the profile of Prof. Juan Luis de las Rivas — a person dedicated to urbanism — from his education (1. *Building an academic and professional identity*), his intellectual reflection (2. *Places and landscapes, an open dialectic*) and his practical exercise (3. *Planning practice and urban culture in a peripheral region*).

Building an academic and professional identity aims to explore the limitations and opportunities of becoming an architect who teaches urbanism in Spanish academia and analyses his academic background and approach to urbanism within a framework in which spatial planning intersects with architectural design. Along with an effort to explain how planning is taught in Spain, the main outcomes of this section are the key concepts for teaching applied by Juan Luis and a lecture regarding his experiences that can address the main challenges raised by young academics from AESOP.

Places and landscapes, an open dialectic provides an analysis of his extensive production and reveals some of the references that have contributed to advancing the quest for Juan Luis' path in practicing urbanism, highlighting his ability to observe, construct ideas and achieve progress.

Planning practice and urban culture in a peripheral region examines the role of research in advancing planning academic and practice. This section specifically analyses the work and production of the *Instituto Universitario de Urbanística* (IUU), along with the main themes, challenges and impacts considered by Juan Luis. This section comprises the main areas that he has explored during the last three decades: urban and regional planning, urban regeneration and minor landscapes.

The concluding aspects of this three-way shared dialogue constitute the fourth main block in this work (*The narrow paths of spatial planning*). This dialogue offers calm, critical and mature insights from the authors, synthesising some of their reflections on spatial planning, their successes and mistakes, as well as their outlook on the future. This section also aims to serve as an epilogue in conveying a useful message for young academics who seek to dedicate themselves to urbanism.

The authors have sought to highlight an essential issue in the opportunity to present this trajectory. In particular, they aimed to present how, from a provincial city (Valladolid) and in a small architecture school (ETSA Universidad de Valladolid), an unusual research institute (IUU) dedicated to urbanism is able to produce knowledge linked to its territory. The authors also aimed to discuss how this knowledge is open to the world as an opportunity for progress, particularly connected to the main challenges of society within the European framework.

Valladolid has barely 300,000 inhabitants and an exceptional history. It is the venue of the third oldest university in Spain (and of the Spanish Court at a precise historical moment, the 17th century) as well as hometown for illustrious figures: it is where Felipe II (Philip II of Spain) was born, explorer and navigator Christopher Columbus died and writer Miguel de Cervantes lived. In this book, Valladolid and its region become a testing ground around which innovative planning instruments are conceived, designed and proposed, both from and for the territory.

Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of the book is how a seemingly minor career dedicated to urbanism contributes, to the right extent, to building an argument for the new generations of scholars, specifically highlighting the relationship between education, practice, reading, reflection and teaching as a path that matters in the advancement of planning.

In this careful process between education and research and between teaching and practice, some contents may have been presented in more than one block, and we apologise for that. At this point, the authors would like to thank all the people who have wanted to participate in the book (especially Ángel Marinero Peral, Juan Miró Sardá, Alfonso Vegara, Roberto Kawano, Miguel Fernández Maroto, Agustín Hernández Aja and María Castrillo Romón), especially Mario Paris and the editorial team of the YAs Booklet series for proposing this opportunity and challenge to us. It has been a pleasure to dedicate our time to it.

Eventually, a final word to Prof. de las Rivas. Across the text, we consciously decide to generally not mention him in a formal way but instead refer to him informally as 'Juan Luis'. We are grateful for his patience and availability in having monthly 'conversations in planning' with us for more than one year in our attempt to accurately develop this booklet.

1. BUILDING AN ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Architecture has always had a deep personality in Spain; however, something changed in the late 1970s. At this time, architecture and urban planning were significantly affected by the transition from an authoritarian Francoist regime to a new democracy. During this period of change, architects were expected to be highly skilled, while the concept of 'urbanism' taught in Spanish architecture schools experienced a renewal that influenced its references and content.

1.1 Academic Background at the University: The Late 1970s and Early 1980s

Juan Luis de las Rivas was born in Logroño in 1960. After finishing high school in San Sebastian, he enrolled at Universidad de Navarra to study architecture in 1977. Universidad de Navarra is a private university founded in Pamplona in 1952, and its School of Architecture only began in 1964. This period also marked a significant date in Spain's political calendar, as the current Constitution was approved (1978), restoring democracy after a period of war, a dictatorial regime and autarky, followed by international openness and socioeconomic stabilisation.

During that time, there were about a dozen universities in Spain offering architecture studies located in the main cities of the country, such as Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, or Valencia. Additionally, provincial capital cities, such as Valladolid, La Coruña, Las Palmas and San Sebastián, also began offering these studies either in the late 1960s or well into the 1970s.

The establishment of the School of Architecture at the University of Navarra in Pamplona in 1964 represented a unique situation. It was situated in a regional capital city with a population of fewer than 150,000 people and stood as the first private institution for higher education in training architecture students. There were no other private institutions until the late 1990s, during a period of proliferation of new schools of architecture across the country, which now number more than 30.

When Juan Luis arrived, the School of Architecture was relatively young, with just over 10 years of experience. Its director, Javier Lahuerta, was a recognised professor of structures from the School of Architecture in Madrid. In 1979, he was succeeded by Leopoldo Gil Nebot, a professor from the School in Barcelona. This succession of individuals from influential backgrounds, originating from the two main schools of architecture in the country (Madrid and Barcelona), continued to hold teaching and managerial positions at the Pamplona School well into the last decade of the 20th century.

The Architecture programme was structured into six courses, with a seventh dedicated to the development of the Final Degree Project. The curriculum pursued by Juan Luis dates back to 1975. Notably, architectural studies in Spain follow a unique approach compared with other countries. From the first curriculum in 1844 until the mid-20th century, architecture education in Spain was directed towards a small number of elite students. The academic model prevailed over the polytechnic approach, and the training emphasised graphic virtuosity and education in fine arts, apart from providing technical and scientific dimensions based on the study of arithmetic, geometry or mechanics in the early years of education. Initially, the early curricula included an entrance exam (with one or two preparatory courses) and lasted between four and six years, with an average of five subjects per year and no specialisations. By 1964, selective entrance exams were eliminated, and different specialisations were introduced, though always leading to a degree with full competencies. The 1975 curriculum set the duration of architectural studies at six years (consistent across all higher technical studies) while maintaining two specialisations: building and urbanism. It was at this time that Juan Luis obtained his

degree as an architect in 1984 with a specialisation in urbanism.

From that moment on, he began to collaborate in teaching and research matters within the Urbanism Department, working as an assistant professor with Carlos Martínez Caro and securing collaboration scholarships. During that time, Martínez Caro, an architect from the School of Madrid, was the director of the Urbanism Department at the Pamplona School. He held the position for 25 years (from 1970 to 1995) before later attaining the Chair of Urbanism position at the University of Seville. During this period, Juan Luis crossed paths with individuals, including Alfonso Vegara and Ángel Marinero Peral, with whom he developed a special affinity, embarking on a journey of collaborations that continues to the present time.

From this initial teaching collaboration emerged two publications resulting from the works completed during the 1984–85 and 1985–86 academic years, the first in collaboration with Martínez Caro and the second with Vegara, just before the latter created *Taller de Ideas*. These were two years of intense production and, above all, a personal drive to mature in the discipline and contribute to its positive development in Spain.

The book *Arquitectura Urbana. Elementos de teoría y diseño* (Urban Architecture. Elements of Theory And Design) was published in 1985, comprising 260 pages of text with some graphical support. The main intention was to create academic materials for students. The authors, Carlos Martínez Caro and Juan Luis de las Rivas, were assisted with their collaboration in monographic research by 80 students. The team worked on this project during the academic year of 1984. By then, Juan Luis had completed his degree and was collaborating as an assistant professor teaching urbanism subject at the School of Architecture while pursuing his doctoral thesis.

The origins of this publication trace back to initial notes on urban art and urban aesthetics prepared by Carlos Martínez Caro in the late 1960s, which Juan Luis studied as specific urbanistic training during the completion of his architecture degree. Essentially, there was an interest in incorporating the theoretical and practical aspects of urban design as an integral part of urbanistic education, expanding knowledge in the field of urban design, termed *Arquitectura Urbana* (Urban Architecture), which also became the title of the publication.

The contents of the book were organised into five sections, with the first explaining urban architecture through the analysis and design recommendations drawn from examples retrieved from historical treatises and contemporary authors, such as Lynch (1960, 1981), Sitte (1889), Cullen (1961), Rowe y Koetter (1981), Bacon (1967), Benevolo (1967, 1980), Caniggia (1984) and Saarinen (1943). This book defined the foundations for its study, focusing on the relationships between the structure of urban space and architectural work, the relationship between buildings and their surroundings, city construction, building typologies and the dynamic conception of the city (Caro & de las Rivas, 1985).

These issues remained important for those seeking to clarify one of the most entrenched paradoxes in the discipline: understanding urbanism as a science, a technique or an interdisciplinary activity. One significant idea extracted from this reading is the importance of the spatial dimension that the architect provides in this interdisciplinary activity. The book had a distinct didactic sense, incorporating references from renowned authors to construct necessary knowledge about the history of urbanism. It also presented concepts and analytical tools to understand the process of projecting the spatial di-

mension in the exercise of their activity.

During the academic year 1985–86, Juan Luis served as the assistant of Vegara, who was the former's professor for the doctoral course called 'The Historical Crossroads of Current Urbanism'. Simultaneously, they were working on shaping the book *Urbanism of Ideas* (1986), a publication that represented a further step in marking a position —or at least aspiring to do so— that proposes a way to approach urbanism.

The book *Urbanismo de Ideas. Sinergia de una Escuela de Arquitectura* (Urbanism of Ideas: Synergy of an Architecture School), which was also related to working with their students and edited by the Provincial Council of Vizcaya, presented the thesis that 'ideas, or the way of conceiving society and the world, constitute the fundamental force for the transformation of the city, and Urbanismo de ideas is the basic strategy to recover the creative dynamics of urban activity and foster citizens' interest in the present and future of their urban environment' (p. 10). This book serves as the seed of a mode of thinking applied to cities and territories based on their urban intelligence and digital technology —a concept that Vegara would later develop through the *Fundación Metropoli* (Metropoli Foundation), founded in 1988. Indeed, one of the fundamental references in their collaborative work is *Territorios Inteligentes* (Vegara & de las Rivas, 2004), which gives continuity to this approach of understanding urban planning as the key to achieving future cities that are capable of adapting to competitive demands.

In any of these contributions, Vegara and de las Rivas provide a lecture on the main milestones in urban planning culture as a base on their advocacy for active urbanism: a necessary tool in shaping the form required by a city in each scenario. Specifically, in the first three chapters of *Urbanismo de Ideas*, the authors present the main conceptual approaches to intervening in the city formulated throughout the present century. Particularly, and as per the authors' analysis, they delve into compositional urbanism, originating with Camilo Sitte (1889) and continuing with Robert Krier (1979); functionalistic urbanism, mainly reflected in the Athens Charter and Le Corbusier's contributions (1923, 1925); systemic urbanism emerging in American universities with a strong impact in the 1960s; participation urbanism, theoretically formalised by Christopher Alexander and collaborators (1977, 1979); morphological urbanism, stemming from the Italian school and revising previous approaches (Aymonino, 1975, 1965; Rossi, 1966); and normative urbanism, referencing Kevin Lynch and his book *A Theory of Good City Form* (1981), published precisely during those same years.

In the subsequent chapters, the authors present urban research conducted on three municipalities along the coast of Vizcaya (Bermeo, Lequeitio and Ondárroa), with the participation of the Pamplona School students. In these chapters, the authors emphasise the significance of urban analysis as a fundamental element for contextualising proposals, essentially arguing that understanding the place represents an important support that inspires ideas and concrete projects for transforming a city.

This publication concludes with a reflective final chapter, almost like an essay, that takes a stance on the state of the discipline and its practice. This intellectual effort to take a position, articulate it and communicate it becomes a valuable constant throughout Juan Luis' trajectory. Notably, he has published extensively and diversely, and in his writings there is a need to establish a position. When asked about this, his response reveals that there is still much to discover in the following pages that document our conversation.

Dialogue:

Ana Ruiz (AR): There is a degree of self-demanding in the writings you produce throughout your career, as if you could not allow yourself not to reflect on each work. Is it like this?

Juan Luis (JL): Although I have written a lot, it has not been the result of a curricular desire. In fact, I have not been attentive to the main journals in our field, and almost all my writings are the result of specific demands in courses, conferences, etc. They have been in close relationships with my work as an urban planner and as a teacher. The degree of self-demand in the writings you refer to, over time, would be a consequence of a way of understanding the teaching of urban planning, based on a personal and progressive work of study that avoids repetition. As Heidegger would say, we are our state of mind. I try to be attentive [and] vigilant, especially when I'm away from home.

Video 3:

A peripheral perspective

<https://youtu.be/60NzjqNyk6o>



i. State Of The Art: Urbanism As An Autonomous Discipline in Spain

The establishment and growth of the discipline of urbanism in the Spanish context have been shaped by a fundamental issue: the uniqueness of its urban planning practice, which, to some extent, is related to its organisation and management of the territory at various administrative levels.

In the pre-autonomous phase, during the political transition and the drafting of the constitution project approved in late 1978, the competencies in urban planning held by the state were transferred to most pre-autonomous entities. Urbanism seeks general interest and is defined as a public function aimed at organising and defining the use of land and territory, as well as determining the rights and duties of land ownership in accordance with its use. Urbanism, as a matter of establishing what could be called policies for the organisation of the city (as they determine how, when and where human settlements should emerge or develop), along with the necessary urban planning techniques and instruments to achieve this objective, was transferred as a form of competence to the autonomy statutes. However, the state retained exclusive competence in the comprehensive coordination of the general planning of economic activities, to which urbanism activity was subordinated in a certain way.

This uniqueness in the organisation and management of the territory at different administrative levels has an important reference that predates the first Town and Country Land Act (*Ley del Suelo*) in 1956. It is the shift from municipal intervention in urban development activities to the nationalisation of urban planning through legislation on expansion and interior reform in the mid-19th century.

On the one hand, the expansion of many settlements, mainly towns and cities, was necessary to satisfy the housing demands of a population living within walled or fenced enclosures that were already crowded and prevented expansion. The conditions inside these enclosures included hygiene problems, congestion, a shortage of ones and a scarcity of available housing. This raised the need to open and expand cities. In response, the 1864 First Expansion Act declared as public utility all the actions required to this expansion, concerning streets, squares, markets and promenades, thus laying down the foundation of what would be considered urbanisation works. The public nature of these urbanisation works allowed the administration to resort to expropriation. This is a clear reference to the path opened by Ildefonso Cerdá in 1860, who, in his work for the *ensanche* (extension) of Barcelona, coined the word *urbanización* (urbanisation).

On the other hand, the interior reform of cities would also be declared public utility in the last third of the 19th century, facilitating the expropriation of areas lateral or parallel to the public roads in a width of up to 50 meters. In turn, this led to the opening of the Grand Avenues, whose name now remains in the main provincial capitals of Spain.

There were two possibilities in terms of carrying out these expansion works: either the administration undertook the execution of the works using fiscal resources with extraordinary surcharges paid by the owners (fiscal approach) or the owners assumed the execution of the works, in which case they did not pay taxes but ceded to the administration the necessary lands for the roads and open and public spaces, thus assuming the execution of urbanisation themselves (urban approach). This second path is the one that would guide the Spanish urban planning practice, in contrast to other types of urbanism that emerged in other countries.

This reference is an example of something that is relevant when explaining the disciplinary framework of urban planning in Spain. At that time, there was an obvious academic, regulatory and professional (practical) convergence of the discipline in its contemporary beginning. With his pioneering work, *General Theory of Urbanisation* (Cerdá, 1867), Ildefonso Cerdá represents this moment in which the reform and expansion of the existing city acquired the status of public utility. In addition, urban planning practice produced an unprecedented number of *ensanches* and the opening of major avenues in the history of urbanism in Spanish cities. Since then, perhaps there has not been such a clear convergence between academy, regulation and practice.

Later, at the time de las Rivas was enrolled in architecture studies, Spanish urbanism and municipal spatial planning experienced an extraordinary period of vitality, especially after the first elections of democratic city councils in 1979. Indeed, during the first 25 years of democracy, Spanish legislation was highly regarded by European town planners, such as the Portuguese Nuno Portas (1934) or the Italian Giuseppe Campos Venuti (1926–2019). This period facilitated the country's re-equipment and provided cities with significant improvements.

However, this triple convergence between the conceptual and more academic, regulatory, and urban planning practice frameworks has not always existed. In fact, a decline was subsequently triggered by the development of urban planning laws that have yielded minimal influence on the planning tools established by the 1978 *Reglamento de Planeamiento* (Planning Regulations) on the grounds of the 1976 Town and Country Land Act. Neither far-reaching planning reforms (Perales Madueño, 1996) nor the legislative powers in planning held by the Autonomous Communities have sorted the situation out in the background (de las Rivas & Fernández-Maroto, 2023a). In particular, planning choices in Spain usually relied on expansion plans (*planes parciales*), which are more efficient than all-encompassing municipal spatial plans (*planes generales*), in terms of approval processes (Baño León, 2020). This fact led to widespread urban sprawl and real estate speculation until the 2008 economic crisis, which rendered unsustainable the production of the built environment carried out by the banking-real estate system (Guzmán, 2023). These trends have successively affected the profession's reliability in creating just and healthy environments that are affordable to everyone in the spirit of public interest.

Today, in this critical context, the notion of Spanish urbanism for residential sectors encompasses both architects and civil engineers, allowing all qualified graduates to draw all kinds of plans and projects at the urban and territorial scales. This could be the reason why a dedicated bachelor's degree in urban planning has not yet been developed (Terán, 2005), in contrast to neighbouring countries, such as Italy or Portugal, where proper bachelor's degree programmes for spatial planning and planners enjoy official recognition — albeit with poor relevance — as specialists in the field. In Spain, there are currently more than 170 spatial planning-related subjects (Rodríguez-Rojas et al., 2023), of which more than 75 percent are taught in schools of architecture (bachelor and master) and the rest in schools of engineering (bachelor and master). There is a sense of widespread acceptance that these spatial planning-related subjects are significant in teaching architecture, not only as electives and specialisations, but also as integral parts of the core curriculum. As we progress through this booklet, the reader will confirm that de las Rivas is indeed among those defending the integration of spatial planning in the core curriculum through his professional endeavours and teaching.

Many academics and practitioners consider urbanism and spatial planning as a discipline and practice of crisis, respectively, to the extent that they manage the uncertainty with which society faces its future. In turn, this critical status refers unconditionally to other wider crises (economic, environmental and sanitary) along with war conflicts; thus, it has deep roots in societal changes, which do not depend on discipline and practice (Font Arellano, 2022, p. 210). There are also some references that perceive Spanish urbanism as perpetually in crisis due to its singular normative nature (García-Bellido, 1998, pp. 15–20). The most recent extant research has focused on some key aspects to characterise the crisis affecting current Spanish urbanism (González-García & Ezquiaga-Domínguez, 2023, p. 587), including the exponential increase in litigation and judgments annulling the content of the already approved planning tools (Fernández Valverde, 2022), or the extraordinary increase in diversity and functional complexity that requires new forms of governance and organisational tools. According to de las Rivas (2023, 726–737), this crisis in Spanish urbanism can be explained in terms of the following five difficulties.

The first is ‘time’, specifically the difficulties of working in planning with a long-term scenario and the consequent decision to carry out projects through expansion masterplans (*planes parciales*) instead of relying on a broader vision of the city based on the municipal spatial plan (*plan general*). The problem here would be to verify whether the municipal plan is useful for developing the city and its territory in the medium- and long-term, as its contents will condition the urban future with effects that are difficult to reverse.

The second is ‘compliance’, which relies on how inadequately the technical elites devoted to preparing or managing spatial plans are trained in Spain. Without regulated specialisation in spatial planning, Spanish practitioners are usually autodidacts or have backgrounds from other countries.

The third is ‘hyper-regulation’. It is common for urban planning practice and practitioners to address and prioritise sectorial regulations instead of management capacity and spatial planning techniques. As de las Rivas mentions, the Spanish context is characterised by the primacy of the concept of ‘property’. Land classification comes first to the qualification, which could interfere with the aim of a good urban design or even condition it to inherited rights and their expectations. As a matter of fact, the reaction of releasing certain lands or even expanding current duties does not guarantee quality.

The fourth lies in the prevalence of a ‘rent-seeking approach’ in real estate development, which led to inefficient attempts to equally distribute planning rights.

Finally, the fifth difficulty refers to the widespread use of a ‘sectoral approach’ rather than an integrated approach to planning. Sectoral planning dominates most of the transformation processes in urban areas in terms of transport infrastructure and basic services, energy, the environment, cultural heritage and even agriculture.

ii. Urbanism and Architecture

There has been a longstanding parallelism between architecture and the production of the built environment throughout history—a process that continued until the canonisation of urbanism as a modern discipline in the early 20th century (Buras, 2019). The historical relationship between architecture and urbanism shows certain independence between the two fields, although the prevailing premise has been that urbanism is subordinate to the principles of architecture: ‘Planning was essentially and firstly a matter with which the architect was concerned’ (Adshead, 1911, p. 178), which is generally ‘a form of further education for architects’ (Holford, 1949, p. 265). Furthermore, the core knowledge of urbanism has expanded through new frontiers, aiming to ‘draw on the fields of geography, sociology, politics, economics, biology, geology, architecture, engineering, and estate management’ (Healey, 1991b, p. 183).

Urbanism and architecture, as disciplines and professions, claim the city to be a subject of both scholarly and practical influence. While architecture has worked rigorously on formal problems closely related to an autonomous conception of the projected piece, urbanism has been more concerned with establishing a relationship between the urban project and the challenges of society. Furthermore, architectural problems tend to revolve around aesthetic-formal issues, while urban issues are conditioned by social, political or economic variables. Their connection, mainly in academic circles, has flourished in a context in which both disciplines presumably hold hegemony in the design and development of projects and the city-making process. This has been the dominant bias that remains prevalent. Indeed, academics involved in the theoretical–practical production of architectural and planning methodologies have conceived architecture and urbanism as ‘applied disciplines’ over the object of their intervention: the city.

In this regard, Françoise Choay points out that the texts produced by urbanism attributed to themselves a scientific status that they did not deserve, considering their proposals based on unacknowledged ideologies. For example, this disciplinary imposture was very evident in a period of frenzied construction, such as the post-war period, during which this scientific character was unconditionally imposed. This has allowed reflection on an important issue: the discourse of urbanism is not [only] based on a scientific matter but a normative one. The discourse remains normative and can only be mediated by some form of scientific practice. In other words, their rightful and justified recourse to natural and human sciences is subordinated to ethical and political choices, specifically to objectives that do not solely belong to the realm of knowledge (Choay, 1965).

It is no longer merely a matter of identifying the deviations and derivations of urbanism writings from a known discursive type, such as scientific discourse. Instead, it is about uncovering their true essence, reflecting on them and defining their actual status. It is important to keep in mind that in societies without written language, the organisation of the built environment is determined by social practices and representations, and there is no single term to describe the concept of ‘urbanism’. The establishment of a discourse on this subject is relatively recent and of Western origin. Its spread became inevitable once the Western cultural model was imposed, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, largely due to the Industrial Revolution. In other words, it was not until the latter half of the 19th century that this discourse revealed its scientific intentions and identified its field of application using the term ‘urbanism’ (Choay, 1980). Choay (1994) even criticised the architect as an urban demiurge during times of great challenge, when the city is no longer viewed solely as an object for art and architecture.

Despite its relevance, the crucial aspect of understanding differences and similarities between both disciplines is not to verify the time and cause of the independence of urbanism from architecture; that is, the formation of a new discipline aimed at studying the urban phenomenon, which has been thoroughly scrutinised (Davoudi & Pendlebury, 2010). Instead, it is the vital knowledge of the city in terms of socio-spatial dynamics, real estate behaviours or socio-economic patterns. Cities are systems whose infrastructural, economic and social components are strongly interrelated and therefore difficult to understand in isolation (Jacobs, 1961).

Extant research on this issue refers to the work of Cerdá for Barcelona, as he conducted ‘social, demographic, housing, economic, public health and environmental surveys of existing conditions upon which he based his planning proposals [...] that also set the tone for [...] a practical image of the better city in the future that could be built, coupled with strong doses of technical mastery and political savvy directed toward realisation’ (Neuman, 2011, p. 118). Choay (1980) confirms this by stating that the term ‘urbanism’ was indeed coined by Cerdá (1867), along with the vocation of the ‘new urbanising science’.

Experiences of recent years demonstrate a model of urbanisation and a process of territorial construction in which the idea of the city as a well-defined and visually comprehensible physical artefact is diluted towards a complex and ‘heterogeneous magma in which large infrastructures, large built containers, and singular elements of the natural environment that remain visible, constitute the new differentiating, characterising, and referential landmarks of a new landscape’ (Terán, 2009, p. 253). Within this framework, researchers in a variety of disciplines have developed a new urban science devoted to exploring the social processes underlying urbanisation, mainly from empirical regularities that are common to both contemporary cities and past settlements. Insights are of the utmost importance in urbanism.

From de las Rivas’ perspective, which is deeply related to his understanding of the sense of places (de las Rivas, 1992) and his subsequent conception of landscapes, there are some reflections that are worth considering in examining this relationship between urbanism and architecture.

The first reflection regards the fundamental distinction between the disciplines. While the planners’ approach involves the spatial implications of social institutions, the architects’ scope is built solely on space. Such lack of a common, or at least an overlapping, definition of ‘space’, has been split by both disciplines through research, scholarly and practice agendas that do not share common languages or common methods (Dagenhart & Sawicki, 1992, pp. 5–7).

The second reflection concerns the output. On the one hand, it is essential to make architecture based on a good territorial project resulting from a spatial plan and a deep understanding of the territory. On the other hand, a poor spatial plan can prevent architecture from being properly implanted in its surroundings. These situations are caused by a lack of shared knowledge, by not taking care of the a posteriori effect of some ‘brilliant ideas’, or by imposing a sudden break in a place that has been carefully ordered in a long historical process.

The third reflection is that urban planning usually fails in the objective of making architecture on the ground of a good territorial project, and paves the way for a capitalist approach based on real estate dynamics, instead of providing spaces based on a better understanding of the common goods (Har-

vey, 2003). Therefore, this is the main ‘failure’ of urbanism: a uselessness demonstrated at the time of its rise as a proper conceptual and practical tool for the production of built environments and their management for enabling the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1968a).

The fourth reflection highlights the necessity of a collaboration between urbanism and architecture. As argued by many (e.g. Gregotti, 1983; Quaroni, 1981) and demonstrated by Campos Venuti (1996) in the case of Bologna, the quality of a city or territory is not a consequence of the predominance of an architectural culture over an urban culture but is due to the quality of the forms and contents that prevail in both disciplines, not to the real or apparent triumph of one over the other. Thus, the best notion of urban quality is stimulated by the existence of a positive dialogue between architecture and urbanism. In the specific case of Bologna, successful collaboration is demonstrated by urbanism’s (and planners’) commitment to urban quality through the active participation of architecture (and architects) by imagining spaces of this quality wherein neglected values are recovered in the corridor streets, especially in their capacity to host urban life (i.e. mixed uses, spatial identity and articulation with the existing grid).

Eventually, the need to enlarge the fragile and little field of knowledge of urbanism, whose theoretical contributions do not come only from architecture but from other disciplines, such as urban and human geography (Capel Saez, 1974, 2002; Sánchez Hernández, 1992), landscape (Mata Olmo et al., 2014), sociology (Castells, 2001, 2002), economy, ecology (West, 2017), urban law (Bassols, 1973) or complex systems (Berry, 1964; Batty, 2013).

iii. Urban Plan and Architectural Project

In the 1980s, the discussion between the supporters of reformist urban planning and those of intervention in the city through large-scale urban–architectural projects generated a disciplinary debate that had important repercussions, especially in Spain and Italy.

On the one hand, we have the defenders of the spatial plan as an essential tool for planning, which is an argument widely defended by many Italian scholars, including Campos Venuti (1984). On the other hand, there are those who defended the architectural project on an urban scale. Among the second group, it was Oriol Bohigas (1981, p. 24) who claimed that ‘every day, I find more and more reasonable the doubts about the remote effectiveness of urbanism in terms of municipal planning, also by the ways the legislation and the profession have reduced its impact’. He attributed this to the idea that ‘the most common municipal plans typically only include zoning principles, circulation systems, and regulations for density and volume. However, these regulations are often so abstract that they do not provide valid architectural references. Zoning, general circulation, and regulations are often established as a priority, but they can be anti-urban factors and are almost always alien to landscape realities’ (Bohigas, 2009, p. 9).

As argued by Sabaté Bel (2019), the debate was often reduced to a prolonged and unproductive argument about the superiority of the architectural project over the spatial plan while neglecting the

importance of urbanism and spatial planning. In other words, the exaltation of an interested polemic was driven by reasons of professional and political self-promotion, as well as a certain morphological and fractional dogmatism.

In the 1990s, the decline of comprehensive spatial planning was deemed a consequence of the difficulty of planning in achieving its goals within an increasingly unpredictable and unstable context. As spatial planning is the main instrument of European urban culture, its potential crisis can also bring the whole discipline into crisis, regardless of the uncertainty that any planning has to assume. Criticism can be submerged in the accusation of rigidity and inefficiency, thus highlighting its failure as an instrument of land rebalancing, speculation control and environmental quality creation (de las Rivas, 1999, p. 139).

According to Campos Venuti (1984, p. 56), 'de-planning' cities meant substituting the spatial plan for large-scale architectural projects. The former was considered an all-encompassing element, too ambitious and broad to generate good outcomes from public authorities and proper interrelations with private actors. Thus, the plan was criticised by supporters of the singular architectural project. They believed that an isolated building or an isolated area, whose significance cannot directly exceed the limits of the building itself, can have an indirect influence on the buffering zone where the project is carried out. Moreover, Lopez de Lucio (1993, p. 62) argued that the criticism of the plan was initially limited to the methodology of its elaboration and the scientific assumptions it contained. However, it soon extended to the plan as a global project of urban transformation—that is, to any rational possibility of planning the future coherently and collectively.

Consequently, the existing city, defined by great heterogeneity from the social, cultural and economic point of view, became a new field of economic operations, supported by a punctual and aestheticised intervention of an architecture that might easily be decontextualised from the urban environment and the urban model.

Since the 1980s, the transformations occurring at an urban and territorial level have increasingly relied on singular architectural projects, rather than comprehensive plans, not only in Italy and Spain but also abroad. This tendency relies on a specific common strategy for urban decision-makers to foster exceptional architectural projects, such as a new museum, a football stadium, a record-breaking skyscraper or a newly regenerated waterfront, which are typically designed by star architects and multinational design firms and mostly aim to improve a city's image and competitive position (Alaily-Mattar et al., 2020). Singular architecture fulfils the role of being the locomotive and, at the same time, the catalyst of urban transformation. However, as claimed by Harris (2019, p. 1), at present, we have arrived at a point in which 'urban and regional planning is often under-recognised, under-funded, and more regularly characterised as the problem than the solution. More broadly, we seem to live in an anti-planning age of accelerating short-terminism and profound pessimism in our ability to shape the future'.

The contemporary scene for planning practice can be painted in negative terms, thus pushing for a renewed reflection on the role of the planner (Sturzaker & Hickman, 2024). An interesting aspect worth investigating would be understanding how much a city or a region spends to elaborate a spatial plan and compare it to the expenditure for big architecture firms entrusted with the task of designing a single—and in many cases iconic—building.

Beyond the sensationalism of the new monumentality or the immediate effect of the great work of architecture, the eclipse of planning shows a deficit in urban policies. As de las Rivas has claimed (2023, p. 731), the difficulty of dealing with planning-related issues from a planning point of view is eloquent. It stirs up the need to solve the lack of specific training, taking into account the singularities of Spanish urban culture, not built neither in the academy nor in the regulatory authorities, but in actual, concrete experiences related to local cultures.

By already stating it in 1999, one of the keys to future urbanism is precisely the way in which it manages its own uncertainty, not its reference to impossible certainties; that is, the plan is suffering from a long-standing crisis to the extent that the city is in crisis (de las Rivas, 1999). In fact, the city is a space of crisis, and its instability is a variable associated with its vitality, making it a permanent imperfection. In this very fragile context for urbanism in Spain, de las Rivas has attempted to create a proper path to the discipline of urbanism from architecture, its culture and its traditions based on the idea of developing a specific *Baukultur*. This notion was initially introduced by the 2018 Davos Declaration, the principles of which were incorporated by Spain into the 2022 Architecture Quality Act. In this regard, as Prof. de las Rivas suggests, the aim should be to explore the urban dimension of *Baukultur* to determine the relevance and significance of the urban culture of European cities or a particular country from a local to a global perspective (de las Rivas, 2022a).

iv. Juan Luis' Approach to Urbanism

De las Rivas joined the UVA thanks to the invitation of Álvarez Mora. At that time, he did not have a recognized professional profile and was not yet interested in the practice of urban planning. The need to find solvent references, far from simple theory or retrospective analysis, encouraged Juan Luis to look for his own ones. While the School of Valladolid was deeply influenced by ideological discussions and traditional planning methods at that time, de las Rivas became intrigued by Campos Venuti's group, who advocated for the potential of urban planning techniques to foster quality and social advancement within cities. Moreover, in Arizona, Juan Luis pursued a quest for spatial solutions rooted in sustainability, ultimately uncovering insights from Steiner and San Martín that were steeped in the principles of landscape ecology.

In 1987, de las Rivas met Ivor Samuels, head of the Urban Joint Centre at Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University), when the latter visited Universidad de Navarra. Samuels was a relevant bridge of morphological urban planning approaches between Great Britain and Italy, and his introduction marked Juan Luis' first international link. After gaining his position as an associate professor in Valladolid (1990), Juan Luis travelled to London, Oxford and Glasgow, encouraged by his relationship with Ivor. He consolidated his experiences in Great Britain and Italy through travelling, attending conferences and completing two post-doctoral research stays —each lasting for two months— as a visiting scholar at the Faculty of Architecture of the Politecnico di Milano (Leonardo campus in Milan from 1990 to 1991) and the College of Architecture and Environmental Design of Arizona State University in Phoenix in 1995, respectively.

The first visiting period carried out with Valeria Erba in Milan resulted in his deepened knowledge of two main challenges. The first was the analysis of abandoned areas, conceived as *aree dismesse*

in Italy (Oliva, 1988), which proceeded from the shift towards post-Fordism and the increasing necessity to focus planning efforts on urban areas experiencing decline, a theme that remains unsolved to this day (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020). The second was an understanding of landscape and regional-scale environmental issues based on the 1985 Landscape Planning Act (also known as the ‘Galasso Act’), a pioneering regulation that established a framework and tools for landscape planning to characterise, protect and manage landscapes at the supra-municipal scales.

Meanwhile, in Arizona, Juan Luis aimed to explore the proposals of landscape architecture in urban and regional planning in the American context, with a focus on ecological principles (the quiet revolution). It was Ivor Samuels who recommended Arizona State University to him. It was there that the Spanish scholar was introduced by Ian McHarg’s disciple, Frederik Steiner (1991), and by Ignacio San Martín, a landscape architect trained at Berkeley, to the knowledge and method for incorporating the study of the territory–landscape into spatial planning.

Both visiting experiences meant the incorporation of a wider intellectual vitality at a time of changing ideas and new ways of approaching the territory and the urban from the perspective of sustainability. This was a period at the threshold of ecological planning and the promotion of local development, where the new urban culture and environmental concerns were imposed on a tense territory that seemed unmanageable. This was the basis from which de las Rivas started to develop an approach to establish continuity between analysis and proposal in spatial planning. Consequently, the goal of urbanism is to ‘make the invisible visible’ and to provide society with a proper tool and feasible opportunities to decide the future.

The way de las Rivas approaches urbanism draws on different insights proven by his theoretical and practical experiences, as he attempts to establish guidelines and patterns that are useful for working. The basic hypothesis is that practical disciplines are typically learned through experience, from which urbanism and planning are not exempted. The object of study, which is the city and the urbanised territory, is complex and multifaceted, thus making spatial planning an appropriate approach to addressing this complexity. However, given that spatial planning has been disappearing in favour of sectorial approaches, it needs to be reclaimed. Furthermore, experience has proven that it is better to address problems in a spatial context rather than through sectorial approaches. The experiences gave Juan Luis greater knowledge of spatial planning tools, city transformation and the environment, as well as the interrelationships between them.

The fundamental assumptions that constitute de las Rivas’ approach to urbanism can be summed up in five assumptions.

First, acquired knowledge has resulted in a comprehensive understanding of urbanism-related activities, ‘considered as a succession of theoretical and technical elaborations aimed at controlling the form and use of urban space and its restructuring, framed in the context of the actual processes of city transformation’ (de las Rivas, 1993, pp. 103–104). Planning is intended to be a critical and complex task that involves interpreting the city and the territory to provide benefits for society. This approach is pivotal because it highlights the dual aspect of urbanism-related knowledge: the comprehension of the city and the knowledge and mastery of intervention techniques to perform analyses of concrete urban phenomena. Urbanism should be based on urban facts and the perspective through which to face

them: the interpretation through the project—a task that certainly requires teamwork. Among others, de las Rivas is interested in the idea that urbanism is not an exact science but rather dependent on the context comprising urban life phenomena and the experiences of building technique (Piccinato, 1988). Indeed, according to de las Rivas (2021), urbanism is an art whose sources are mostly found in the accumulated historical experience of the urban planning practice itself. Consequently, today, urban planning is not only an essential task in city transformation and development, but also a reflective and critical activity that facilitates thinking about our cities in a broad sense with both vitality and effectiveness (de las Rivas, 1996a).

The second assumption is a concern tied to the recent history of urbanism, specifically the tendency to dissociate the ‘know-how’ (knowing) from the ‘action’ (doing) based on a false understanding of the relationship between analysis and proposal (de las Rivas, 1993). There seems to be a tendency to ignore the ideological character of interpretation that should be essential for connecting these two phases. Thus, there is a more analytical part of urban planning which generates the information phase in planning, and an artistic which corresponds to the proposal. The distinction between these two phases has also contributed to the distancing of the planner from the architect (i.e. the theoretician from the practitioner), each corresponding to a different phase of the work. This means that analytical approach and the creative actions are at times disconnected. While understanding the role of space can help bridge this gap, this factor is sometimes overlooked and is approached according to sectorial plans, such as the local action plans fostered under the Covenant of Mayor of smart-city planning, which are often disconnected from one another, thus leading to ongoing conflicts.

The third and consequent point is the conception of urbanism-related analysis as neither aseptic nor a simple justification, but as a preliminary phase leading to an ideological interpretation of a concrete situation (de las Rivas, 1993). Here, ‘ideological interpretation’ means knowledge of the historical evolution of a place and its actual character— an understanding conceived as a disposition for action. In this sense, history plays a relevant role because of its usefulness in constructing know-how based on accumulated experience and requires an interpretation of concrete phenomena. The specific analysis of the given situation through the elements of urbanism and architectural techniques makes the project possible due to the exercise of knowledge and the interpretation of a phenomenon. Therefore, the project will never be aseptic nor exclusively formal, as it is the committed response to a given situation. This idea is complementary to what Balducci argues when he states that urban planners should focus on establishing the agenda guiding urban government and providing proposals and options that are beyond the risk of turning participation into propaganda (Paris & Balducci, 2019). Instead, according to de las Rivas, it is crucial to maintain clear and objective communication between planners and politicians to ensure effective decision-making. This is because, when planners do not position themselves conceptually, there could be a serious risk of disconnection with politicians.

The fourth reflection is that urbanism and planning, using landscape as a spatial rule and tool, should be more related to nature (de las Rivas, 2013a). This implies the necessity of a deeper apprehension of the notion of landscape, which should be closer to the anthropological, geographical and ecological perspectives. In addition, introducing a landscape-based focus in planning can lead to a greater commitment to creating a better understanding of the environment and its spatial dynamics. However, urbanism has predominantly embraced a visual approach to landscape, emphasising the myth of the perfect relationship between the city and its surroundings. To better understand nature, de

las Rivas pinpoints the need to adopt a more nuanced perspective, such as by using the concept of 'wilderness' (Adhya & Plowright, 2017). Rooted in American culture, this notion offers a more robust framework for comprehending natural phenomena and their relationships to the broader landscape—an approach that can facilitate the evolution of urban areas towards greater adaptability.

The fifth and final point is that spatial planning has changed not by propelling a change within itself but due to the stimulation of digital and ecological transition. Planning practice is propelled forward by new technologies, including analysis and planning support systems, as well as by the need to establish concrete measures to address climate change in the context of a systematic environmental crisis. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted contemporary spatial planning to update its operational mechanisms and arguments to create healthier and more equitable cities for societies in crisis but seeking to move forward. However, while the digital and ecological dimensions of planning are complementary in theory, this is not always the case in actual practice. Although they are essential for any critical and viable reform, they cannot be limited to speeches without concrete results, nor can they be reduced to exceptional and demonstrative practices in subsidised programmes.

Video 4:
The practice as a learning process

<https://youtu.be/LHjGYHyqeA8>



Dialogue:

Federico Camerin (FC): During your time in Pamplona, as a student and graduate of Architecture specialising in Urbanism, what role did Alfonso Vegara play in your training process?

JL: I met Alfonso Vegara in the last year of my degree. Alfonso was an exciting teacher. However, it was Carlos Martínez Caro, then Chair of Urban Planning in the School of Architecture in Navarra, who allowed me to join the school as his assistant, just after finishing my degree, in the 1984–85 academic year. Carlos became the director of my thesis. Vegara, who knew that he was going to the USA with an Eisenhower fellowship, offered me to be his assistant in the 1985–86 academic year. In 1986, I wrote *Urbanismo de Ideas* with him as a result of our students' works and the lessons of Alfonso in the PhD programme. This book anticipated the materials of *Territorios Inteligentes*. After his return from the USA, Vegara founded *Taller de Ideas* in Madrid and began some works, such as the Regional Plan for the Basque Country, a pioneer work in Spain with which I collaborated at the beginning. There, I discovered a focus on the study and planning of the territory that would be decisive in my career. Without abandoning my interest in [a concept of] urban planning very close to architecture, the themes of the urban region and the landscape arise, causing me to make a greater effort to find more suitable planning. In any case, Alfonso Vegara has been a key figure in my career. Without him, I would not have dedicated myself so intensely to urban planning.

FC: You had a transition period between Pamplona and Valladolid after graduation. How did you survive without belonging anywhere?

JL: After graduating as an architect, I collaborated with studios and worked on small personal housing projects. In 1987, Alfonso Vegara told me that Alfonso Álvarez Mora, Chair of Urban Planning at the School of Valladolid, was creating a new teaching team, and he accompanied me to meet him. It was a great opportunity to start something impossible for me in Navarra at that time, an opportunity for which I am grateful to both Alfonso's. In the 1987–88 academic year, already in Valladolid, a new stage began for me.

With the first municipal elections after the Dictatorship in 1979, a very rich generation of urban plans emerged amidst a context of demand for the improvement of quality services and equipment in cities, all within a very participatory social framework. Then, town planning and political projects converged (MOPU, 1989). This was the context in which I began to train as an urban planner. The advantage [we had] in Valladolid was that we aspired to configure a space, in which research and planning practice co-existed. The idea encouraged me from the beginning, and, in fact, it was the seed of the IUU, where I became intensely involved in bringing it forward (Castrillo Romón et al., 2022).

FC: Your visiting stays took place between Italy and the USA. Why these two countries?

JL: They respond to different moments and interests. In the late 1980s, the Erasmus programme began, and we connected with Giuseppe Campos Venuti's group at the Politecnico di Milano because Álvarez Mora had great admiration for the writings of Campos Venuti. Since then, my relationship with the Politecnico di Milano Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (PoliMi-Dastu) has been constant. My way of understanding urban planning has matured there, where I also met Corinna Morandi, who for almost 30 years, helped me understand Italy and, with patience, to critically review both my own ideas and those of others.

Moreover, since the early 1990s, I was looking for a place where I could learn to incorporate the environmental and landscape variable into planning. I met Ivor Samuels during my stay in Pamplona, and it was him who recommended me to the Design School at Arizona State University. I contacted Frederick Steiner and Ignacio San Martín, then in Arizona, during a visit to Madrid, and they invited me for a brief stay as a visiting scholar in Phoenix. This was the origin of a friendly professional relationship.

In Milan, I had the opportunity to better understand European urban culture as I was introduced to Italian *urbanistica*, while in Arizona, I discovered an approach to spatial planning from a very specific ecological approach, with methods close to landscape architecture and its integration into urban design.

FC: During your first visit between 1990 and 1992, you were at the Politecnico di Milano to conduct research on *aree dismesse*. What did you learn, and how do you apply the lessons learned in Valladolid?

JL: In 1987, Giuseppe Campos Venuti, with extraordinary intuition and anticipating the concept of urban regeneration, published *La terza generazione dell'urbanistica (The Third Generation of Urbanism)*. After successive periods of reconstruction and expansion, European cities would need urban requalification. Campos proposed a leap in quality, with a social and environmental perspective, in urban planning. The capitalist economy, in its evolution, was immersed in a period of reconversion of the productive system, which affected large industries, ports and railway spaces. In the 1990s, Milan was very much affected by this process. In a framework of the evolution of urban regulation and transformation of the brownfields and to enhance the urban competitiveness of Milan, the *Documento direttore del progetto passante (Masterplan for the Bypass Project)* was approved in 1984, thus affecting the railway system. Then, the *Documento direttore sulle aree industriali dismesse o sottoutilizzate (Masterplan for the Abandoned or Underused Industrial Areas)* was proposed in 1990. They marked the beginning of an urban change in which this city is still immersed. The urban debates around the railway and industrial brownfields—*aree dismesse*—were intense but not limited to these. The role of planning tools in front of big urban projects, the deregulation context, the approach by negotiation and its limits...were all great materials for training.

Under the tutelage of Valeria Erba, I also learned that urban planning can be systematic. A continuity can be established between integrated analysis (not only morphological) and proposal, while considering both the city as a whole (its structure) and its parts (the project areas). Urbanism consists of a public project in which the way cannot be a single solution. The architectural approach is related to making the invisible visible and providing a tool for society to manage the future.

Upon returning to Valladolid, I modified the contents of my classes and developed research on the railways and the cities in Castilla y León. However, the most important thing I learned was to detect a direct association between the transformation of abandoned urban spaces and the environmental dimension of urban planning. Plan—in its various forms—and project converge in the city when there is a well-defined urban strategy, in a new context, that of sustainability, that proposes new objectives and requires the adjustment of ideas and tools. integration into urban design.

FC: From Italy to the USA, why did you choose Arizona and Texas for your visiting periods between 1995 and 2018?

JL: I have already anticipated something. Indeed, the ASU (Arizona State University) is a relevant centre in environmental studies. Thanks to the generosity of Fritz Steiner and Ignacio San Martín, I became familiar with a new universe of references (Aldo Leopold, Ian McHarg, J.B. Jackson, Richard T.T. Forman...) and discovered a new way of approaching urban and regional planning. I intensively studied Steiner's manual, 'The Living Landscape', and became interested in the new approach that landscape architects were taking to urban design in North America. It was a very fruitful relationship. Not only did they help me focus on landscape in the Spatial Planning Guidelines for Valladolid, but we were also able to translate McHarg's book, *Design with Nature*, a true classic of ecological planning, into Spanish. Fritz is undoubtedly one of the great disciples of McHarg, then already retired. With Ignacio, who maintained his friendship with this great man, they made possible the arrangements to edit the book with Gustavo Gili.

I returned several times to Phoenix and, on one occasion, to Tucson, where Ignacio was teaching, before moving to Minnesota. When Steiner was named Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, I participated as a visiting critic in 2006. Then, in 2008, I returned as a Visiting Resource Professor, selected by the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies. There, I met Juan Miró, an architect and professor with a very interesting professional career at Miró-Rivera Architects. An expression of my friendship with Juan and my stay in Austin is my text *Building a New Arcadia*, which gave the title to a book about his work (de las Rivas, 2021b). Juan and I started a collaboration that attempted to reflect on how to regenerate the urbanised territory—the urban in a broad sense—based on a comparison between the growth areas of Mediterranean cities and those of the Midwest in North America. The concept of 'landscape cities' proposes an open look at the density of what is built in its relationship with the environment, whether agricultural or natural, focused on the semi-consolidated peripheries and not only in the central neighbourhoods of the city.

With Juan, I also share my affection for Mexico. Starting in 1992, our institute began to collaborate with universities in Mexico in a doctoral programme approved by the UVa under the direction of Álvarez Mora. The programme was taught first in Guadalajara, at the Universidad de Guadalajara (UDG), thanks to the initiative of Daniel González Romero, and later in Puebla, at the Universidad Iberoamericana, due to the impetus given by architect Jose Miguel Fernández de Alvear. So, we have maintained contact for almost 20 years with the architecture schools of Mexico, visiting numerous cities and gaining interesting academic results. Teaching in Mexico also tested our work and verified its usefulness in other contexts. My last stay in Puebla was in 2012, already as a professor in their own programme. We have been able to find out the evolution and quality of urban studies in Mexico.

FC: And again, the Politecnico di Milano. Why look to Italy from Spain?

JL: The Polytechnic is a highly intense university space, with a very high degree of internationalisation and located in a large European city that, at the same time, is closely linked to its immediate regional environment. It is a demanding place, open to the world and well connected, where it is possible to detect changes and distinguish what is most relevant. For someone who comes from a minor school, the Polytechnic offers many opportunities for contrast and learning. Despite their differences, Italy and Spain have evolved in parallel, in territories highly conditioned by geography and history. Beyond economic or political circumstances, Spanish cities can learn a lot from Italian ones, and perhaps also vice versa. I am very interested in medium-sized cities, such as Bergamo and Brescia, where we are starting a promising collaboration. In the last years, I have paid particular attention to the intermediate territories, the rural spaces, where it is necessary to develop new ideas and propose better spatial planning, not only for [achieving] heritage preservation but also for boosting territorial adaptation, which can be dynamic and useful for a future project.

FC: Participation in conferences is a fundamental moment in which one presents his/her work and listens to other works. How have the conferences you participated in influenced your thinking and knowledge?

JL: I will distinguish, in my case, two moments. The first is formative, and the second is intended to contrast results. I have always been worried about isolation. Innovation in urban planning depends on the most dynamic territories where concrete solutions emerge from the debate on specific problems. Once my position in Valladolid was consolidated, I tried to intensify my participation in different forums. However, I have not been able to effectively disseminate our achievements. This has changed quite a bit in recent years. The extraordinary information to which new technologies give access facilitates another type of 'presence', largely virtual, but personal contact is essential to learn and mature. The contradiction is that today, superficial relationships are encouraged; there is a universe of magazines and other media that publish infinite private works without significance. It is all noise. I distrust conferences, and yet I long for the time when, as a young fellow, I arrived in an unknown place, without knowing anyone personally, as I tried to navigate between ideas and people.

FC: You have kept training to keep up with the times. What kinds of training have you done in your career after completing your PhD?

JL: A responsible practice, well founded in knowledge, is the first source of training. My first relevant work was planning for the Historic City of Segovia. I missed those early jobs, even though I was wrong about quite a few things. Without doing any harm, the main objective was to be prudent. In that process of learning by doing, the Institute's urban planning workshop emerged as my main task, to which I have dedicated the best years of my life. It became a source of applied knowledge in which we sought to learn from the best—often through collaborations. In this sense, my stays in Italy and Arizona were not theoretical; my studies were always focused on the methods, strategies and resources of spatial planning. The work we have done at the Institute has almost never been repetitive because it has always been linked to new topics and challenges.

The teaching experience in Mexico, but also in Venezuela, at the Urban Planning Institute of the UCV in Caracas, with professors like Marco Negrón and Frank Marcano, or in Rosario (Argentina) with Hector Floriani and his team, was an opportunity for me to explain what we were doing, contrast ideas and verify problems.

1.2 Teaching Experience In Urban Planning

Throughout his academic career, Prof. de las Rivas has consistently taught subjects on urban and territorial planning as well as urban projects, primarily in the final courses of the Architecture programme at the UVa. This teaching responsibility has been a vital component of his professional practice, allowing for a direct commitment to training future architects. The potential to work with young architecture students supports the development of a specific and challenging summary of current knowledge in the field. This ongoing task has facilitated the integration of incremental yet consistent advancements resulting from methodical and impartial research endeavours, thereby diverging from the exponential rise of the ‘publish or perish’ trend to remain competitive in academia.

After his teaching experience at the Universidad de Navarra in 1987, he began to collaborate with the School of Architecture at UVa as an assistant professor. Here, he took on the responsibility of teaching ‘Urban Planning Practices’ to 6th-year students from 1987 to 1989 while attending Álvarez Mora’s classes. In October 1990, he was appointed full-time associate professor at the UVa, where he taught urban and territorial planning with expertise in urban projects.

Since 1989, within the framework of the 1975 Study Plan, he has been in charge of the Urban Planning subjects, with variations depending on teaching needs. From the academic year 2000–2001, tied to the 1995 Study Plan, he organised and was in charge of the ‘Urban and Territorial Planning’ course, which included 15 credits (ECTS, European Credit Transfer System), 3 theoretical and 12 practical. This course was a core component of the 4th-year architecture curriculum and was designed to be a fundamental aspect of teaching urban planning within the programme. During this time, he also taught the elective course ‘Introduction to Architecture and Landscape Planning’ (3 credits) with the purpose of creating a proposal related to the 1995 Study Plan on ‘Applied Techniques in Planning’.

Royal Decree 1393/2007 enshrined the Bologna Process commitments to higher education reform, leading to the restructuring of the university education system. Consequently, the School of Architecture initially introduced the Degree in Architecture (2010 Study Plan) and later the current Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes in architecture (2014 Study Plan). His teaching task has remained anchored to the last courses of the B. Arch. programme focused on the topics of urban and territorial planning and urban projects and design. Currently, he is fully responsible for ‘Spatial Planning and City Project’ (4th year, theory and practical workshop; 5 credits) and also coordinates and teaches ‘Legal Foundations of Urban Practice’ for the Qualifying Master’s Degree in Architecture programme. He also intermittently offers an elective course called ‘Project, Environment and City’ (5 credits), the teaching guides for which he helped design (Universidad de Valladolid, 2022). This responsibility for teaching holds a significant priority for him. Training young architects and working with young architecture students has reinforced the development of a thorough synthesis of the current knowledge in the field of architecture through urban planning, thus enabling him to integrate minor research advancements into teaching.

Prof. de las Rivas plays an active role in third-cycle studies at the Universidad de Valladolid, which include doctorate and postgraduate courses. His duties involve coordinating local programmes (e.g. the PhD programme ‘Architecture and City: Materials for Architectural and Urban Analysis’, 1997–2004), teaching courses on urban and regional planning and serving as a guest lecturer at Spanish

and international universities, as well as institutions focused on providing specialised training. He currently leads the Doctoral Programme in Architecture and oversees Subject III, 'Research in Architecture and Urbanism' for the Master of Research and Innovation in Architecture programme offered by the UVa, which is focused on research training. Perhaps one of the most important results of his teaching work, close to research, is having supervised more than 20 doctoral theses, most of which have passed with a successful defence. His doctoral students are now professors at universities not just in Spain but also in Argentina, Italy, Mexico and Portugal.

A Research Experience in Valladolid, by Roberto Kawano

My encounter with Juan Luis occurred in Valladolid, where I was engaged to undertake doctoral research thanks to a scholarship from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation. During the 1990s, an inter-institutional agreement between the UVa and my alma mater was established, and it afforded me the opportunity to partake in preliminary instructional modules.

Throughout this period, my interactions were predominantly with Juan Luis, a circumstance that led me to choose him as my thesis supervisor. Notably, his methodological approach to scholarly enquiry exhibited a more scientific rigour than what one was initially accustomed to in architecture schools, at least in what was my usual academic environment in Argentina. For instance, one aspect that caught my attention was his use of precise terms, employed rigorously, as, until then, my experience was that they were used somewhat more loosely. Additionally, Juan Luis showed a confident and assured attitude towards certain topics of discussion that we shared.

One of them, precisely, was the thesis topic, which was a proposal from Juan Luis. The proposition, which centred on conceptualising the grid as a paradigm of urban settlement, presented a formidable challenge that I embraced forthwith. Fundamentally, I was able to establish a relationship between the idea of



Fig. 04 - Roberto Kawano, Architect, PhD
Professor in the Doctoral and Master's programmes at the Facultad de Arquitectura Diseño y Urbanismo of Universidad Nacional del Litoral (FADU-UNL) and the Facultad de Arquitectura, Planeamiento y Diseño of Universidad Nacional de Rosario (FAPyD-UNR) in Argentina

the grid as a mental structure and as a settlement pattern. His first guideline was to read everything that had been published about the grid and reflect on it. The progress of the research was the result of these reflections and the daily conversations I had with him. In the context of a thesis with a strong essayistic bias, the aspects he emphasised the most were bibliography (incorporating authors from diverse approaches and disciplines: Kostof, Corominas, Galantay, Reys, Norberg-Schulz, Pérez-Gómez, Choay, Piaget, Sennett, Koyré, Gombrich and Gibson) or the weak points of the argumentation. In his supervisory capacity, Juan Luis adopted a laissez-faire approach, affording me considerable autonomy, an aspect of his mentorship that I deeply appreciated.

I spent almost three and a half years in Valladolid and returned to Argentina in mid-2003 with the thesis practically finished, defending it in 2005 ('Grid, culture, and city. The various expressions of orthogonal layout as a principle of order', 2005).

Today, my professional development focuses on the academic field, and completing the thesis has been important not only as a progression in my career but also for the knowledge I acquired regarding a classic issue of contemporary planning.

From Planning Practice to PhD, by Mario Paris

When Federico and Ana asked me for an interview about Juan Luis, I was both thrilled and scared. For me, he represents several figures at the same time. He is my mentor, my severe but stimulating thesis supervisor, my demanding but kind boss when I worked in IUU-Lab, an expert and solid colleague and, of course, a friend.

I met him in 2008 in Milan when he presented the 10th issue of *Ciudades*. Suddenly, he proposed to me an international stay in Valladolid, where I started my PhD under his supervision. At that time, I had the opportunity to work with him, developing several analyses on the territorial and metropolitan scales. Since 2009, he pushed me to read an endless number of books and articles, to focus on several topics (i.e. the role of rural spaces, the landscape in the urban edges and the role of public spaces in the everyday life of a neighbourhood), and authors (Sorkin, Bergmann, Arendt and Putnam, among others), even though they were not mainstream yet—pushing me to become a more solid researcher and professional. Over the years, we worked together, we took part in several conferences and international events, we wrote many scientific articles, and we chatted a lot.

Based on these experiences, there are some qualities of Juan Luis' profile that I would stress. He is curious, and his curiosity emerges when you realise that he is a fervent reader with an exceptional memory. He is 'sciencey' and one of the most cultured people I have ever met. It is interesting to see how his learning process moves feverishly, often involved in his reasonings important authors in the field of urban planning and architecture mixed with historical biographies, novels, philosophers and historians. Thanks to his voracity, he developed a strong disciplinary knowledge that he uses in his academic, professional and social life. He is really talkative, and thanks to his innate empathy, he connected with several professionals, technicians and colleagues around the world. His

network includes the US, Latin America, Europe and Africa. Over the years, he explored different research hubs, not because he was attracted by their brand, but because he was looking for colleagues and experts, intrigued by their roles of excellence in their research fields. For him, every stay, exchange or conference is an opportunity to observe what is new in academia or in practice and to gain skills and competences. At the same time, he likes to live the cities he visits, strolling around, sketching and comparing the reality with the descriptions found in books and papers. I remember our walks in London, Belgrade, Bratislava and Milan, but also the journeys in Valladolid, learning something new, listening to his remarks, memories or a story about every corner. With his sagacious commentaries, he put in evidence how



Fig. 05 - Mario Paris, Researcher at Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Italy

the city evolves and the role of architects and urban planners in these processes, as well as civil servants and administrators. In this light, Juan Luis complements the reflective practitioners described by Donald Schön. He is an academic who has always practised and worked in the field of urban and territorial planning—moving from teaching, researching and supporting public bodies and institutions, conscious of the bottlenecks, frictions and mediations wherein the transposition of ideas and innovations must face off when switching from theory to reality.

Therefore, Juan Luis is a generous teacher and colleague, always ready to share ideas, to hear different opinions and, when needed, able to leave people to find their own solution, not imposing his opinion. He is a convincing and a good speaker because he thrills the audience with his words and reflections. In the middle of one of his conferences or during a meeting, you can feel disoriented because he is not simplifying complex reasoning just to indulge the viewers. He is pushing students, PhD candidates, collaborators and clients to open their minds, face challenging problems and work with attention and creativity. With his work, always supported by his example, engagement and passion, he is able to train the interlocutor to discuss critically the borders of the planning process and re-frame the questions in order to define new realities with a positive perspective.

Since joining this University, de las Rivas has recognized the importance of collaborating with various research and teaching groups in Spain and abroad to gain diverse perspectives, address concerns and advance urban planning knowledge. For example, he has participated in the Erasmus teaching exchange programme and taught in foreign institutions in Milan (Italy), Caracas (Venezuela), Oporto (Portugal), Puebla de Los Ángeles (Mexico) and Austin (United States). Among the most recent international teaching programmes, the European Joint Doctorate UrbanHist run by four universities from 2016 to 2021, shaped a new generation of researchers based on a transnational and interdisciplinary approach to the field of urban history in Europe (Camerin, 2023).

The way he has taught urbanism has been influenced by and has directly influenced the ways in which the School of Architecture of the UVa has dealt with urbanism. According to Gaja i Díaz (1995), the specific weight of teaching urbanism for architects is decisive in Valladolid, which —at least until the 1990s— has probably been the Spanish reality, in which a programme with a greater theoretical and analytical component is offered compared with other schools. Here, the interdisciplinary teaching of urbanism is characterised by a strong tradition of developing a framework for global reflections on the city and giving abundant weight to historical, social and economic reflections. However, this approach does not mean that urban planning interventions —even project-related ones— are less implemented.

i. The School of Architecture at Universidad de Valladolid as an Example

De las Rivas' full responsibility for the subject 'Spatial Planning and City Project' provides a clear vantage point through which we can understand what it means to teach planning in a Spanish school devoted to architecture.

This subject aims to train architecture students in one of the classic and fundamental activities that architects have always carried out: spatial planning and the design of urban systems and intermediate-scale urban projects. It is taught in the second semester of the 4th year of the B. Arch. programme and brings together the knowledge acquired throughout a student's career. This is because planning requires concrete knowledge prior to any intervention based on the ability to use and interpret data from different disciplines.

This course requires an understanding of the different and conflicting conceptions of the city and the profiles of the different urban agents. Due to the subject's complexity and the limitations of time and resources, this course cannot reach its full potential and can only be considered an introduction to spatial planning. Students interested in deepening their knowledge should, instead, seek out relevant coursework within the postgraduate programme. Based on the teaching syllabus (Universidad de Valladolid, 2022), undergraduate students must learn to contextualise spatial planning interventions in a wide social and cultural frame of reference and develop the ability to detect urban planning's contribution to a more sustainable and equitable societal project. Therefore, while spatial planning and urban projects are not new for 4th-year students, these themes have not yet been specifically addressed. The spatial plan and project are approached as a city and territory project from the municipal dimen-

sion. To this end, students focus on understanding the spatial plan and urban project as instruments directed from and towards the factors that condition the city's spatial configuration and its region or immediate territorial environment.

The specific goals and main outcomes for the students involved in this course are indicated below. Beyond consolidating the basic competency substrate in urban and territorial planning, with this subject, the future architect will become familiar with the rich European culture of the spatial plan (*stadtbau*, town planning, *urbanistica* and *urbanisme*) and the large-scale urban project, considering the main urban planning tools that have been generated around them. In turn, this will enable them to correctly interpret urban phenomena in propositional terms.

Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conceive and develop urban projects, as well as provide professional urban planning criticism. In both cases, the students will be able to recognise the social, technical and environmental aspects at stake, with heightened sensitivity towards the affected landscape and urban heritage. • To equip students with the necessary skills to design and implement urban layouts, urban development projects and civil works related to urban spaces and cities, as well as to draft and manage spatial plans at various scales. • To draft and apply spatial planning regulations, as well as conduct environmental, landscape and impact assessments, along with studies of social and urban needs. • To apply urban history to current situations and understand the basic concepts in planning traditions, including their theoretical, technical, economic, social, aesthetic and ideological foundations. • To understand the correlation between various cultural patterns and the social responsibilities of architects as urban agents, as well as to identify the urban implications of any building project, regardless of its scale.
Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance students' capacity to analyse the physical space at the urban and territorial scales. • Develop the ability to draft structures and project urban spaces following the criteria of efficiency and sustainability, while articulating diverse knowledge about the forms and functions of the various urban spaces, their components (environment/landscape, housing, work, leisure, services and facilities) and the infrastructures and resources available to meet the needs of urban societies. • Conceive complex projects at the urban scale, comprehend the main strategies of urban intervention and effectively interpret the main contents of spatial plans and projects.

*Table 1. Goals and main outcomes for students of the 'Spatial Planning and City Project' course.
Source: Elaboration by Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin, based on Universidad de Valladolid (2022)*

The establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has brought about a complete overhaul of university studies in Spain, which are now structured into the three distinct levels of bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees. Architecture provides access to a regulated profession and has specific guidelines for cultivating the competences mandated by the Spanish government (Ministerio de Educación, 2010). Indeed, the abovementioned approach taught in the 'Spatial Planning and City Project' course stems from a selective curriculum designed in each school of architecture. This curriculum is required to ensure the acquisition of several competences (first column), namely introductory, technical, design and thesis, within the framework of the different modules (second column).

Competences That Students Must Acquire	Modules and Credits
<i>Official undergraduate studies in Architecture, 300 credits</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the history and theories of architecture, as well as related arts, technologies and humanities. • Recognising the role of fine arts as a factor influencing architectural design quality. • Gaining familiarity with urban planning and techniques applied in the planning process. • Understanding structural design, construction and engineering issues related to building projects, as well as techniques for solving them. • Acquiring knowledge of physical issues, various technologies and building functions to ensure internal comfort and protection from climatic factors. • Understanding industries, organisations, regulations and procedures for translating projects into buildings and integrating plans into planning. • Understanding the relationships between people and buildings and between buildings and their surroundings, as well as the need to relate buildings and spaces between them based on human needs and scales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory: Basic Sciences and Drawing (60 credits) • Technical: Construction, Structures and Facilities (60 credits) • Design: Composition, Projects and Urban Planning (100 credits) • Bachelor's thesis (6 credits)
Official master's studies in Architecture, 60 credits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding research methods and project preparation for construction. • Creating architectural projects that satisfy aesthetic and technical requirements and user needs while respecting budgetary constraints and construction regulations. • Understanding the architect's profession and role in society, particularly by developing projects that consider social factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical: Construction, Structure and Facilities (8 credits) • Design: Composition, Projects and Urban Planning (12 credits) • Master's thesis (30 credits)

*Table 2. Definition of competences (modules and credits) mandated by the Spanish government.
Source: Elaboration by Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin based on Ministerio de Educación (2010)*

Moreover, as a regulated profession, membership in a professional association is a mandatory requirement for the practice of architecture. Since the creation of the first professional association in 1929, 26 professional associations have been actively operating throughout the national territory, comprising nearly 50,000 architects in Spain. Although the Spanish professional association framework may not differ significantly from that of other European countries, there are certain specificities to be mentioned. For instance, they are not the competent authority for recognising European degrees, nor do they establish standards for training and professional practice. Instead, their competencies in this area are limited to those of an advisory body.

ii. Key Concepts

In dealing with teaching, de las Rivas has shown a critical approach to urbanism and planning based on the following seven key concepts:

1. 'What is planning?' introduces municipal spatial planning and highlights the tradition, methods and models of this tool in Europe and Spain. Specific emphasis is placed on the legal framework in Spain and the Castilla y León Autonomous Community, interferences between standards and plans and the chimera of territorial planning. Dealing with spatial planning means (a) approaching a rich urban culture through a challenging process of properly defining 'city' and 'urban' and (b) looking at the spatial plan as an urban project (key concept 2), the transformation of the existing city and the relationship with the city in its region. The approach to a consolidated culture implies understanding various concepts, their problems and the contexts in which they have emerged, resulting in solutions and different ways to reach better comprehension.

2. 'The spatial plan as an urban project' involves the municipal spatial plan, including its nature, objectives and contents (planning documents); the principles of general and detailed planning; and the structural components of the plan, from the concept of 'urban structure' to the construction of urban fragments (urban project). Specific attention is given to the urban form through the exploration of urbanism and architecture based on space, history and design. Here, the main discourse is that urban form does not explain itself, but there are aspects of the city that can only be explained by its form.

3. 'A systemic view of the urban structure' features the characterisation and interaction of three urban subsystems: mobility and road network, public open spaces and park system and system of centralities and neighbourhoods. The other two themes are the integration of the (urban) landscape and the regional interpretation of the rural environment.

4. 'The city as an ecosystem' involves the analysis of the ecosystem, designing with nature, principles of urban ecology (beyond landscape urbanism) and the intertwining between geography (places), metabolism (processes) and design (projects) at different scales (from ecosystem services to green infrastructure and nature-based solutions).

5. Key concepts 3 and 4 regard the city and the territory as objects of study in **the landscapes of the city-region**. A basic criterion to provide deep knowledge states that 'to plan, one needs to understand'. This can be achieved in two steps: (i) the comprehension of the concept of urban structure is central to interpreting and designing the contemporary urban environment, and (ii) the explanation of urban models, with their explanatory advantages and applied disadvantages. Here, students can un-

derstand the urban structure through its systemic reading and go in detail until they arrive at the public space (a sort of 'game of scales').

6. 'Towards a new urban imaginary' deals with dynamics, ideas and tools conceived as implicit agendas to proceed with city and territorial transformation. This concept involves the nature of current cities in relation to size (from metropolitanisation phenomena to medium-sized cities); the city of the future and the contradictions of impossible projects; the sustainable city project, its conditions and related questions surrounding the Spanish Urban Agenda; and the human scale according to the paradigms of healthy cities, urban design and ecological intelligence.

7. 'Active learning approach' refers to a learning process of gaining mastery of the urban environment and understanding the resources of an urban project, which is incentivised by the change of teaching model implemented in a flipped classroom.

Urban planning rooted in society, by Agustín Hernández Aja

I believe that in their current situation, careers related to engineering and architecture do not fully meet the need to train professionals with full intervention capabilities in physical reality. University reforms in Spain have shown a preference for a model of teacher more typical of the experimental sciences or the humanities, implying that the profiles combining the academic dimension with professional experience are losing strength. In the case of teaching urban planning, the same phenomenon occurs, whereby scientific impact through publications, in which complementary fields to urban planning tend to take precedence over their actual practice, dominates experience in drafting or collaborating in planning documents. In the departments of our area of knowledge, a growing number of professors and researchers have never worked on or collaborated with others in a planning document or intervention on urban reality. However, I believe that at ETSAM (Higher Technical School of Architecture of Madrid in English), we try to keep the urban fact as the guiding thread of the teaching of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (*Departamento de Urbanística y Ordenación del Territorio, DUyOT*). In our department, there is a scalar sequence that gives coherence to the programme. In the 2nd year, the subject 'City and Urban Planning' (*Ciudad y Urbanismo*) deals with the existing city. In the 3rd year, the students go out into the territory thanks to the subject



Fig. 06 - Agustín Hernández Aja, Architect, Urban Planner, Professor Emeritus and Coordinator of the Research Group on Architecture, Urbanism and Sustainability (GIAU+S) of ETSAM (2017–24) at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

'City and Environment' (*Ciudad y Medio*), working on a broader scale. The 4th year is dedicated to 'Urban Project' (*Proyecto Urbano*), in which the main focus is on large-scale interventions. Finally, the subject 'Urban Planning' (*Planeamiento Urbano*) applies to all of the above. This is how at ET-SAM students learn how to manage and draft a municipal spatial plan. However, I am not convinced that a similar scheme is applied in all Spanish universities. Our commitment to the professional dimension is to ensure the training of future architects in the knowledge of the technical and legal framework of the Spanish model. To achieve this, we do not validate the subject of 'Urban Planning' to students who stay in the Erasmus programme, as we believe that acquiring knowledge of the legal and professional framework of Spanish planning is essential in their training.

I think that urban planning teaching should train the technician in the commitment to intervene materially in the territory and to act on space. Right now, it is difficult to raise awareness about the integrality of urban practice. We face a fragmented and complex cultural space, in which students do not have—when they come to our subjects—a specific interest in the construction of urban space and territory as they move in a world where it is difficult for them to find, among an overabundance of information, a coherent story about the city and its reality as a collective construction. Our work as academics is to provide this knowledge and disseminate it both among students and to the wider public through general and scientific dissemination tasks, without forgetting that we are training professionals whose ultimate goal is the intervention on physical reality. Our friend, Juan Luis, in this sense, has a very broad cultural and intellectual interest and has experienced many international stays, such as in Italy, Mexico and the USA. I am sure that he plays a fundamental role in establishing the priorities of applied research at IUU, which is a centre with great academic maturity. At the same time, he is capable of being concerned about the small scale of the villages within Castilla y León and the structure of the rural territory on which they are based. In the common experiences between our research groups, in our exchanges in applied scientific works or in our participation in different doctoral thesis committees, I found out that Juan Luis is a liberal intellectual in a deep sense—one who thinks that everyone has something to contribute and worthy of being heard. This is a fundamental virtue in the development of urban planning as a social practice, as our goal is to build a collective project based on the balance of forces and interests so that there are no losers and that the conditions of those who were worse off at the beginning of the process improve. Juan Luis is clear about this aspect: We must produce value for all citizens, emphasising intervention in the areas with the greatest deficiencies to provide them with conditions similar to those in which they are located. Therefore, he and I share this vision of urban planning as a practice that combines the social with the spatial.

Dialogue:

FC: What are the most needed competencies and tools required today in spatial planning?

JL: I couldn't answer because there are many tasks and approaches that converge in spatial planning. As an architect and urban planner, I would highlight—as urbanists as different as Patrick Geddes or Gordon Cullen have done—the capacity for relationships, with a sense that is both systematic and loaded with imagination. While urbanism is rooted in the past and needs to understand the present, it is a discipline of the future. To face the future [and] advance in its uncertainty, urban planning needs to make the invisible visible. It needs a wise look full of imagination. Simple erudition, technical virtuosity, ideology... [they] are rigid, often blind and tend to be uncreative.

FC: What have your main goals been in training academic researchers and professional architects?

JL. Over time, I have become more convinced of three conditions to answer this question. First, I teach urban planning at a school of architecture. The question of form is therefore a priority. It is true that the shape of a city does not explain itself; there are social, economic, cultural factors... But the key is not in that but in the view that the city can only be explained by explaining its shape. This is where the genius of the place begins to speak. A voice that we must learn to listen to and share with our students. Without a doubt, my doctoral thesis (space as place) influences this idea.

Second, it is very useful for urban planning teaching to incorporate concrete practical experience with its difficulties and limitations. I flee from abstract teaching, from staying in the space of social objectives and great ideas. The figurative character, founded on graphic representation, always helps. With the concrete, you learn. It is a dialogic work that goes beyond the idea, the abstract. It walks in the contradiction of everything that denies the idea itself and conditions it or materialises in a concrete result—a design formulated with precision. The work of a design teacher is 'maieutic' in Socratic terms; it has to help birth both ideas and solutions. In addition to the students in class, a large number of young architects passed through the Institute's workshop and collaborated on their work.

Thirdly, I have supervised more than 20 doctoral theses. The work in the PhD gives life to the university, loads it of expectations and always culminates in positive results, not only of research or discovery, but of personal training. In a field as broad as urban studies, doctoral research is highly disparate. The work of direction must always seek continuous learning and an intense commitment to the discipline itself.

FC: What are the most needed competencies and tools required today in spatial planning?

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FC: You have been involved in more than 20 PhD theses. What about this huge responsibility? How did your former students end up? Are they architects in professional studios, or are they working in universities?

JL: Completing the previous answer, their profiles are very different. I have directed some theses for non-architects, but few. Architects tend towards abstraction. If they do not advance in representation strategies, they run the risk of stagnating in the state of the matter or in a simple description, merely adding materials and documents. I am interested in the present, and the tendency is to look back because it makes things easier. In any case, the doctoral model has changed in Spain. Since the 2011 Decree Law, a strict model of complete dedication to doctoral research has been imposed. It requires some type of specific financial support, a scholarship or pre-doctoral contract. I have coordinated the doctoral programme at my school for several years, and I have been verifying it. In a process of professionalising the academic career, the doctorate needs to be embedded in the universities or in the R&D [departments] of private companies.

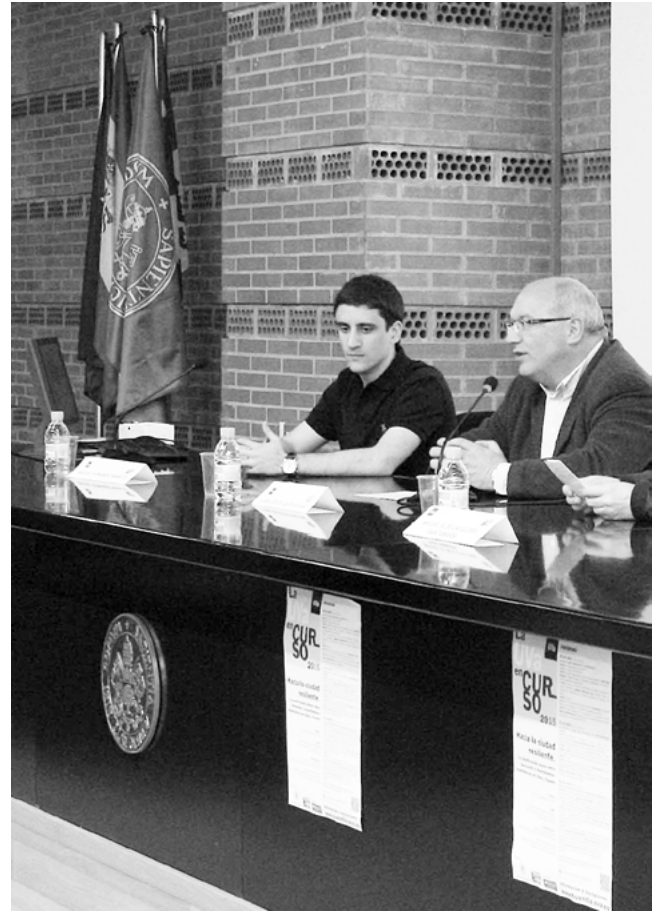
Working at the Institute of Urbanism, by Miguel Fernández Maroto

Based on my personal experience working with Juan Luis, I can confidently identify three major aspects.

Firstly, Juan Luis has always tried to promote collaboration between academia, institutions and companies oriented towards public service. This fact has significantly contributed to building an image of the IUU as a leading engine of innovation in urban and land use planning at the national and international levels. The starting point could be the drafting of the DOTVaEnt, a crucial tool not only for the city of Valladolid and its surroundings, but also for the Castilla y León Autonomous Community, as many guidelines applied in the Valladolid urban area were later applied in the guidelines of Segovia or Palencia, as well as in other collaborations in the drafting of urban planning in the municipalities of Castilla y León. The guidelines applied in Valladolid's urban area have been widely adopted in other municipalities throughout the region, including Segovia and Palencia, as well as served as a foundation for other collaborations in the drafting of planning instruments across Castilla y León. For instance, DOTVaEnt introduced emerging and novel elements, such as the under-

standing of landscape as a rule for planning. The attempt was to coordinate urban development in an area such as Valladolid, whose closest municipalities experienced exponential growth from the 1990s onwards. Another example is the modification of Valladolid's municipal spatial plan, in which I began to collaborate with Juan Luis. There was an attempt to build a broader context where small urban regeneration operations could fit together according to a unitary vision and orderly logic. This effort has been relevant and contributed something more to the city as a whole than the mere application of what the 3Rs Act (i.e. the 8/2013 on Urban Rehabilitation, Regeneration, and Renewal Act) has established a priori. In short, Juan Luis' leadership has led to spatial plans that have been approved and executed, that have not been left in a drawer and have even contributed disciplinary innovations, and that is very difficult to achieve in current urban planning practice.

Secondly, in addition to this professional work, Juan Luis has been able to lead and promote the relationship between the IUU and its closest territory to try to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in Castilla y León. In addition to the urban planning work, among the tasks carried out by the IUU include numerous studies and works applied to peripheral realities outside the most relevant urban centres, such as the criteria for urban planning standards for smaller municipalities



*Fig. 07 - Miguel Fernández Maroto, Architect, PhD
Associate Professor at UVa and Director of the IUU
since 2024*

and the guidelines for the deployment of the Spanish Urban Agenda at the regional level. Through collaboration with regional and provincial institutions (e.g. *Junta de Castilla y León and Consejo Económico y Social, Diputación de Valladolid*), the IUU has built a perspective committed to regional reality and has made an effort to provide guidelines and ideas aimed at improving public action in cities and territories.

Thirdly, from a more personal point of view, I have a positive and grateful experience and vision because, in relation to the previous topics, Juan Luis has made it possible that, with all the works carried out at the IUU, it has simultaneously become a training school for urban planners. The ability to build a changing team over time and make it work is noteworthy, [and] there have always been young people who have been trained both professionally and academically. We can say that the IUU has successfully served as a transition phase for many individuals from the university to the working world. This [transition] has been achieved through scholarships for students and contracts for recent graduates, providing them with an initiation into professional urban planning practice. The work carried out at the IUU has been a valuable form of training, providing a 'professional teaching' experience for young people in a pleasant work environment that is not easily found in the professional world. Likewise, working at the IUU has not only allowed a first approach to the professional field but also to the academic field. In my case, as a result of my involvement in the modification of the Valladolid municipal spatial plan, I began to be interested in another perspective of work that is more related to research, which led me to my incorporation into the Master's in Research in Architecture programme, where Juan Luis served as the director of my Master's Final Project and then my doctoral thesis. His help and collaboration were fundamental to my attainment of a doctoral fellowship and my understanding of how teaching works by accompanying him to his classes. In general, Juan Luis has been deeply concerned with the training of dozens of young professionals and new researchers and teachers at the university, who either remain in Valladolid or have moved to other destinations, even outside Spain, as in the case of Mario Paris. Although Juan Luis' authority is indisputable due to his outstanding career, training and applied work in the academic and professional fields, he is an open-minded person eager to debate, to listen to and value other people's opinions and to provide support and help. His generosity, his consideration for young researchers and his openness to surround himself with people whose opinions do not always coincide with his own is not easy to find in the academic world, so he deserves full recognition for this.

1.3 Current Challenges

In the spring of 2023, the coordination team of YAs from AESOP, which was established 20 years before (in 2003), published a paper to voice their take on the question of what planning challenges dominate and what can be done to better prepare YAs for the future (Varış Husar et al., 2023). From their perspective, future challenges deal with six main issues that must be tackled by urban planners, although they are interrelated considering their real-life impact (climate change, unstable population dynamics and political and economic instabilities), the contextual boundaries from planning (spatial injustice and social inequality) or the external limitations to planning research (emerging digitalisation technologies and accessibility).

The interpretations of how planning can respond to these challenges depend on the context in which it is being developed, as planning has historically been used as a tool for political powers to promote their ideas and certainties. This is significant because it endures over time and, in a way, shapes society. For these reasons, the understanding of the regional differences in the interpretation of planning and its role in society is essential to developing effective and contextually appropriate planning strategies.

The experience that Juan Luis' path provides is important precisely because it covers a historical period of Spain characterised by the act of addressing, to a large extent, the main challenges that have previously been identified by YAs or by setting clear directions for development that have consolidated a growing concern for these challenges. Indeed, his academic career is extensive, spanning over three decades since attaining the established position of associate professor at the UVa. Consequently, he is one of the most active professors with the most experience in the field of urbanism in the Spanish national context.

His trajectory reveals certain singularities that must be considered to better understand his stance towards the main challenges faced by spatial planning faces, which he seeks to address through his work.

Firstly, it is worth highlighting an important aspect. He pursued his education at a prestigious university (Universidad de Navarra) where leading architects of the time in Spain, mainly from the schools of Madrid and Barcelona, were teaching. There, he formed friendships with several classmates and senior students with whom he would collaborate in the future. However, he did not stay there for long. Soon, the opportunity arises to fill a teaching position at a young School of Architecture (Universidad de Valladolid), established in 1970 and located in Valladolid, the capital of the Castilla y León Autonomous Community. He makes a change and arrives at a place where he has no family or professional ties. While it is not common and requires effort, it also comes with rewards. Over the years, he has been able to carve out his own path, serving as an observer in academic environments from which he has learned and through which he has been able to construct his own field of interest, centred around people and ideas—first in Pamplona and Valladolid and subsequently in various national and international academic forums where he has engaged as a teacher and researcher.

Secondly, due to the years of education and the trajectory he has followed, his journey has allowed him to witness how the discipline has evolved in Spain, including the major developments in

the regulatory framework. In fact, his early years of university education took place during the political transition to a parliamentary democracy and monarchy. He also experienced the years in which the autonomous communities were established, and the map of competencies in urban planning began to take shape, witnessing the implementation of various planning instruments. It is also a period marked by widespread population growth, particularly intense in urban areas and even excessive in urbanised environments. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was an average growth of 400,000 housing units per year (Ministerio de Obras Públicas, 1996). Within this context, he participated in theoretical and practical reflections of the urban planning debate from that time. Indeed, he is also familiar with some national practitioners and theorists, as well as their different perspectives and reflections on what urban planning means to them: personally, with Manuel Ribas Piera (1925–2013), Javier de Mesones (1932–2016), Ramón Lopez de Lucio (1939), Carmen Gavira (1948–2000) and José María Ezquiaga (1957) and, more indirectly, with Manuel de Solá Morales (1939–2012) and Fernando de Terán (1934).

Thirdly, while developing his academic activity, Juan Luis continues a diligent and constant reading of the main references in the international context, nurturing his thinking by spanning various disciplines, from those authors he had access to and who captured his attention (Norberg-Schulz, 1971; Alexander, 1979; Choay, 1965; Lefebvre, 1968b; Lynch, 1981) and those who have increased his reflection on certain concepts that characterise his approach to spatial planning (Berman, 1982; Campos-Venuti, 1978; Odum, 1989; Forman, 1995; Latour, 1991; McHarg, 1969, 1996; Secchi, 1984; Sennett, 1991). He is likely one of the academics of his generation whose rich urban culture most prominently manifests in his own writings. The most valuable assets are self-knowledge and experience. In this regard, it is noticeable that the influence of the research undertaken by Juan Luis is often retained. For example, during his Italian stay, he grasped the idea that urban planning could be systematic (following Campos Venuti's approach), while during his North American stay, he came to understand the importance of nature as a normative reference for urban planning.

Fourthly, if we consider all his years of teaching, he has instructed over 2,000 architecture students and delivered classes in various programmes. He has witnessed changes in the architecture programme curriculum within the university context, transitioning from the 1975 curriculum (in which he was educated) to the 1996 version (which reduced the architecture training by one year) and the current bachelor's and master's degree programmes. He has also been acquainted with different frameworks of association within the discipline: official associations (for practical application by practitioners), such as *Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Castilla y León Este* (COACYLE, Official Architects Association of Castilla y León, East area), International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISO-CARP, Fernández-Maroto et al., 2018; de las Rivas, 2013b), and *Asociación Española de Técnicos Urbanistas* (AETU, Spanish Association of Spatial Planners), providing some continuity to specialisation studies in urban planning so that students could maintain initiatives related to urban planning. More recently, he has also participated at ISUF.h, the Hispanic section of the International Seminar on Urban Form (de las Rivas, 2018a), and *Asociación de profesores de Urbanística y Ordenación del Territorio* (AOUT, Association of University Professors in the Field of Urbanism and Territorial Planning). One of his goals is to address some of the challenges in teaching urban planning in local (Spain) and international contexts. He is also focused on the professional recognition of formal education in urban planning in Spain, considering a perspective in which the number of architecture schools has increased considerably (Santalla Blanco, 2019).

Dialogue:

A R: Times have significantly changed. Faced with the challenge of climate neutrality and the energy self-sufficiency of cities and territories, what is the role of spatial planning in the coming years?

JL: Indeed, the advantage is that I have begun to work almost from the beginning with an environmental perspective, which in its spatial, territorial and local dimensions, very soon brings me closer to the landscape. *Our Common Future*, the Brundtland Report published in 1987, arrived with a certain slowness towards urban planning. The first was Agenda 21, but the Leipzig Charter dates back to 2007. In the context of evolution towards more sustainable urban planning, we had the opportunity to participate in the consolidation of the regional administration in Castilla y León. We collaborated in the preparation of the new legislation for the *comunidad autónoma* in matters of territorial planning (1998) and urban planning (1999) and in its progressive improvement, where sustainability takes centre stage. An extraordinary time began in which we had a certain role, with some innovative plans.

However, we now live in a much more confusing time. Beyond our responsibility in a world of limited resources and our conviction of circular savings and consumption reduction, we are immersed in the paradigm of the fight against climate change, where urban planning does not work well. It has become tautological; it asserts itself but loses effectiveness. A great part of the territory is transformed by complex activities (logistics, energy, transport, new industry, etc.) in ways unrelated to usual urban planning, and the main urban actions have returned to large projects. Although it is claimed, comprehensive and/or integrated planning is absent. Even eco-neighbourhoods are proposed as isolated urban projects. The growing contrast between large cities or the most dynamic metropolitan territories, which remain ungovernable, and small cities or abandoned rural spaces is symptomatic. The challenges of climate neutrality and energy efficiency in cities and territories remain in official Western policies, increasing normative changes and requirements, while the rest of the world seems deeply unstable.

A R: About your career and your work, what are your plans? What are the goals you would like to achieve in the coming years?

JL: The advantage is that the usual architecture and urban design have taken a real leap in quality in the last two decades. Above all, this has taken place in the richest countries, although this is not exclusive to them. They are subjects closely linked to urban planning in optimistic ways with good health. At the same time, the urban agenda for the coming years has been well outlined in terms of principles and objectives. Achievements will depend on the know-how in each case. I increasingly trust local and regional cultures. Where a collective project is consolidated, things improve. Urban planning regains prominence in this context, as indicated by Peter Hall, when he stated that Europe re-discovered the lost art of urbanism (Hall, 2014). Urban planning must serve to improve people's living conditions with equity, thus achieving better

cities. However, when there is no collective project, urban planning is limited to managing real estate. This is the risk faced by many cities.

Personally, today, I am focused on a notion of urban planning that is capable of a better understanding of nature. It is not only a matter of [designing] bioswales, but a task that begins in the correspondence between urban structure and local geography. The patterns of water, the relief, the vegetation, the agricultural uses...what we traditionally consider empty spaces are all transcendental for an integrated city project. In my region of small or medium-sized cities and rural areas, the city–countryside relationship has emerged as a new framework of opportunities. Urban plans emerged amidst a context of demand for the improvement of quality services and equipment in cities, all within a very participatory social framework. Then, town planning and political projects converged (MOPU, 1989). This was the context in which I began to train as an urban planner. The advantage [we had] in Valladolid was that we aspired to configure a space, in which research and planning practice co-existed. The idea encouraged me from the beginning, and, in fact, it was the seed of the IUU, where I became intensely involved in bringing it forward (Castrillo Romón et al., 2022).

2. PLACES AND LANDSCAPES, AN OPEN DIALECTIC

As a scholar and practitioner at an urban planning research institute, Prof. de las Rivas has written extensively. His production is wide-ranging in terms of number and subject matter. Interestingly, his books and published contributions are, for the most part, collaborative. His unique contributions take the form of chapters in international monographs, scientific articles or his recent discourses as an elected academic member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Valladolid (de las Rivas, 2021c).

This fact reflects his particular interest in dedicating his time to advancing the quest for his own path of practicing urbanism. An analysis of his writings reveals his ability to observe, construct ideas and make progress. Juan Luis possesses a rich mental map of authors and concepts. Engaging in conversation with him is a clear demonstration of this, and a careful analysis of his production provides insights into the current Spanish urbanistic landscape. Certainly, the analysis of his writings unveils key concepts within a broad urban culture to design a city project that addresses contemporary issues. Upon analysing his written works, we can distinguish four key aspects of his production, which comprise this section.

2.1 Space as a Place

On July 1, 1988, Juan Luis obtained the title of Doctor Architect under the guidance of Carlos Martínez Caro, defending his doctoral thesis, *'El lugar recuperado en la ciudad otra. La idea de lugar en la relación entre análisis urbano y proyecto arquitectónico'* (The recovered place in the other city. The idea of place in the relationship between urban analysis and architectural project). Carlos was the advisor for several doctoral theses on urbanism and the city development at the School of Pamplona, including that of Alfonso Vegara, which had been defended five years earlier.

Juan Luis' doctoral thesis became his first independently authored book, published four years after obtaining the doctorate. This book, *El espacio como lugar. Sobre la naturaleza de la forma urbana* (Space as a place: On the nature of urban form), published by the UVA in 1992, is the result of his work on the concept of 'place' within the context of the relationship between architectural projects and urban analysis. In this text, he introduces his reflections on the city as both an object and a source of architecture. With extensive references to European and American urban cultures, he establishes the theoretical foundations of urban and architectural practice, in which he considers space as something transcendent.

There is an interest in conducting a coherent analysis of what, for him, constitutes the concept of place. This reflection is undertaken through an engagement with readings that were accessible to him at the time and which significantly influenced his development as an architect. Foremost among these influences is the work of Norberg-Schulz, particularly his conceptualisation of place and the 'genius loci' denoting the spirit or essence inherent in a location, thus representing a profound sense of belonging (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). As a matter of fact, he points out that life cannot just unfold anywhere but rather in a system of meaningful places, and it is the architect's mission to shape those places. Furthermore, through the analysis of place developed by other authors, Juan Luis also explores this reference to the notion of living that goes beyond physical space. In particular, he focused on the works of Kevin Lynch and Christopher Alexander, both of whom served as foundational references for probing this condition of place and the involvement of human beings and their environment.

Christopher Alexander (1936–2022) and Kevin Lynch (1918–84) were two prominent thinkers in the mid-20th century, whose works coincided during the same period. In the 1960s, Christopher Alexander earned his PhD in Architecture from Harvard University (1963), while Kevin Lynch was engaged in work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). During these years, Lynch had just published his book, *The Image of the City* (1960). Indeed, references to the works of Christopher Alexander become crucial in Lynch's thinking two decades later, as evidenced in his subsequent publications (Lynch, 1981).

In his work, Alexander explores the idea that the quality of a built environment is determined by the degree to which it embodies certain timeless, life-enhancing patterns. This approach refers to the idea of a timeless way of creating environments that are alive and adaptive. This adaptation process constitutes a pivotal element in discerning the significance of elements within one's daily experiences concerning the design of the environment. Thus, in this context, 'significance' denotes an objective and precise quality that, although not easily named, is characterised by studying the patterns of events that occur regularly (Alexander, 1977, 1979). This notion of 'pattern languages' involves creating a set of design principles that respond to the specific needs, culture and context of a place. Each pattern expresses a relationship between a precise context, a problem and a solution. In other words, it constitutes a connection between a particular context, a certain system of forces recurrently manifesting in that context and a specific spatial configuration that enables these forces to resolve themselves. This means that everything occurs in relation to a place and that space lacks significance unless it is associated with the identification of those forces present in the given situation. Juan Luis' approach (i.e. space as a place) gains prominence here. An essential consideration is that the relationships defining these patterns are spatial and, therefore, can be clearly depicted.

In this sense, according to Juan Luis, one of the key elements in defining a place lies in Lynch's contributions when delineating the elements that structure the image of the city. By focusing on the realm of defining a place and describing the characteristic elements, Lynch's insights become instrumental. This conception of place enables the recognition of a location as distinct from others, given its unique, lived character (Lynch, 1981). As Juan Luis suggests, this perspective, while rooted in the visual domain, gains the capacity to form a foundational framework for a project. Beyond understanding a place, it is imperative to propose it. The place becomes a distinctive material for the project as it is an interpreted place (de las Rivas, 1992, pp. 33–37). Certainly, one of the key reflections in his research centres on urban analysis and its potential to impart logical content to the project (Aymonino, 1975), which can be achieved through a precise understanding of specific issues and an exploration of the 'real' (de las Rivas, 1992, p. 122).

Dialogue:

A R: At the time you were working on your doctoral thesis, you were employed at the University of Navarra as an assistant professor and, in the final stretch of the doctoral period, as an assistant professor at the UVA. To what extent have the people around you been able to influence your interest in research and the topic developed in these first years of research activity?

JL: When I published my thesis in 1992, which was defended in 1988, I dedicated it to Carlos Martínez Caro, my tutor, and also to Alfonso Vegara and Alfonso Álvarez Mora. The first was because he was the one who really encouraged me to dedicate myself to urban planning, and the second was because he was the one who opened the door for me in Valladolid. The three not only had different personalities, but also very different approaches to urbanism. Carlos represented traditional urban planning practice, well founded but focused on current techniques. Vegara was already an innovative urban planner; he was also an economist and had great interest in the role of planning to energise cities and territories. Álvarez Mora was characterised by his historical approach.

The truth is that my thesis was a solitary and theoretical work and was very autonomous. It was heir to its context, the Pamplona School, which was focused on architecture and urban design, without concern then for the practice of urban planning. Thanks to Vegara, I met Ivor Samuels, who was very committed to the British morphological approach, and I even spent a pleasant day with Edmund Bacon in La Coruña. In my first years, I only went to Valladolid one or two days a week, and I focused on discovering an approach more linked to conventional urban planning, while also attending Álvarez Mora's urban history classes at the same time.

A R: There is an in-depth study of the meaning of place. This is a piece of knowledge that is acquired through a tenacious exploration of references, not only from authors, but from practical experiences as well. In the exercise of urbanism, you refer to this sense of an informed place, and you developed it through a scientific exploration of the territory. Which authors have allowed you to characterise this concept more solidly and apply it in your projects?

JL: My PhD research, I insist, was very personal, carried out in relative isolation and with great intensity in 1987 and 1988, the years in which I began to go to Valladolid. I have always been interested in the fundamentals, in how thought and culture are related to the city and its architecture. My thesis was rooted in readings that I had access to at the time; today, I would add relevant references then unknown to me. The research was based mainly on Aldo Rossi and Christian Norberg Schulz, also on Gordon Cullen, Kevin Lynch and Collin Rowe, with some references to Tafuri and others... typical of the time.

My work, not always insightful, was based on the question posed by Rossi about the relationship between theory and practice in architecture. In our discipline, there is a knowledge problem that is difficult to avoid. This brought me closer to some thinkers. First, those who have reflected on space, like O.F. Bollnow and Gaston Bachelard, or on the functional city, like Thilo Hilpert. However, I soon made a double discovery in the fields of hermeneutics (H.G. Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*), related to the dialogue between theory and action, and political philosophy (Hanna Arendt, in *The Human Condition*), related to the public realm and its representation. Today, [they are] almost essentials, but at the end of the 80s, few referred to them in Spain. These are two works that transcend my thesis and have profoundly determined my way of thinking.

AR: Now that you have reached a full professor position, if you could reflect on your career, what is the meaning of the thesis considering all the trajectory you have gone through so far? How do you evaluate your thesis topic; has there been continuity in your academic development?

JL: Indeed, when I wrote my thesis, I did not have access to works that I consider key today, such as the first work of Richard Sennett, influenced by Arendt, and other relevant sources to explain the sense of place, such as the first French regional geography or Anglo-Saxon studies on landscaping. I was also not attentive enough to the work of Christopher Alexander, so relevant to me today, or to works such as those of Bernard Rudofsky. They allow us to understand the interaction between architecture and place beyond the academicism of Norberg-Schulz. Yet, after years of personal disagreement, I have a good opinion of my thesis, and I have been able to verify that it has been, in the long term, an instrument of reflection.

The topic of the thesis—both the interaction between theory and practice and place as a source of meaning—remains very relevant in architecture and continues to be a living field of study.

2.2. Ecological planning and the international turn

Juan Luis' initial readings about the concept of 'space' gradually evolves towards a comprehension of the biological processes that shape a place. In this regard, Ian McHarg serves as a fundamental figure for Juan Luis, enabling a turning point in his thought, which is now oriented towards understanding a place as a more natural process.

This was the focus of Juan Luis when, in the fall of 1995, he undertook a research stay at the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Arizona State University in Tempe, Phoenix, USA. The 1990s became a turning point for him, a time when he solidified his position in the university and allowed himself to continue his education through readings and international stays. This two-month visit (October and November) as a visiting scholar was funded by a grant from the research commission of the UVA. This stay was the result of careful consideration, following recommendations from several colleagues, driven by Juan Luis' interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the environmental dimension and furthering his education in ecological thinking within the realm of urban and territorial planning. The analysis of his trajectory reveals a need to establish disciplinary ties with the North American sphere. Ivor Samuels advised him to go to the US because in England, the predominant approach at that time was dedicated to forestry and agronomy education, while in Edinburgh, gardening studies prevailed over landscape architecture. In particular, the figure of Ian McHarg stands out as a trigger that pushed him to seek a path that would guide his activity and interests. Ian McHarg (1920–2001) is one of those individuals whose trajectory is worth knowing, not only for the relevance of the principles he advocates, but also for his involvement and the manner in which he consolidated his position in the academic field.

Ignacio San Martín, who recently passed away (Tucson, 2019), worked as an associate professor at Arizona State University. He received his education in the 1970s and 1980s with an undergraduate degree in the sciences from Portland State University and later pursued postgraduate studies in city planning and landscape ecological planning at the University of California, Berkeley. He was one of the key figures during Juan Luis' stay, a colleague and a friend from whom he learned and built shared knowledge about applied ecology in cities. During his time there, Juan Luis also crossed paths with Frederick Steiner, the current dean and Paley Professor of the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. Prof. Steiner is one of the most prominent disciples of McHarg and is also a current co-executive Director of The Ian L. McHarg Center for Urbanism and Ecology. It is through Steiner's manual, *The Living Landscape* (1991), that Juan Luis discovered Ian McHarg and his approach.

As a result of this stay, Juan Luis was able to work on what would be considered one of his most recognised contributions: the Spanish translation and edition of a classic text in ecological planning, *Design with Nature* (McHarg, 1969). Simultaneously, he drafted the introductory study that opens this edition in collaboration with American professors Frederick Steiner and Ignacio San Martín. Since its publication, this work has become an indispensable reference in the fields of urban, environmental and landscape planning. Following the effort of translating and editing it, landscape gradually became the central theme, source and integrative tool for his research on urban planning and design. This shift reflects his growing interest in the crucial role of the relationship between nature and the city.

Design with Nature was first published in 1969. It emerged during a period of technological and scientific progress, when the world was simultaneously looking towards space with the arrival of the first human on the Moon while also turning its attention to our own planet. The discovery of global warming brought the subject of our planet's environment into prominence, and the emergence of the Gaia hypothesis by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis may be considered one of the most significant events of that time.

Throughout the 1970s, environmental concerns reached unprecedented levels, and in the 1980s, a novel concept emerged, in which scientists no longer viewed the world as either smaller or larger but recognised the Earth as a living being called 'Gaia'. This perspective became more crucial than issues, such as nuclear war, nuclear winter, global warming or cooling, flooding, drying, ozone depletion, soil erosion or air and water pollution. In this hypothesis, the world is perceived as an ancient superorganism that has transformed the primal Earth, continuously making it more conducive to life. The traditional separation between people and the environment no longer exists, and a new unity has been established. Gaia seems to have developed self-regulating mechanisms through trial and error, shaping and maintaining the oceans, atmosphere, lithosphere and hydrosphere in an ongoing evolutionary quest for more adaptive conditions:

The earth and life are more than unexpected. They are improbable: do we sense that we live by the sun, that only its arrested energy fuels our system and ourselves? Do we fully appreciate the miracle of photosynthesis? Do we understand that life largely depends upon plants? [...] Perhaps, instead of turning to the skies, we should address the Earth, Gaia [...] Forces or Nature affect our destiny. Should we turn our backs to the sky, turn our eyes downward, sense the ground below us, view the creatures, hold the soil in the hand, raise the head, feel rain in the face and pray? Probably not. All these phenomena are real, tangible, palpable and identifiable, but mute. Of course, volcanoes, great waves and wind all produce sound but, of a language, not one we understand. Yet, there clearly is a language or languages. Plant and animal parts obviously communicate; their activities are not random but highly organized and purposeful. There must be communication. Given the extraordinary interactions between organisms in ecosystems, there must be communication at work here too. I suppose all language is chemical-electrical, but only animals process meaning through sound. Can we learn the mute languages of creatures? Should we be able to do so, we need not pray but communicate. (McHarg, 1996, p. 5)

This understanding of natural processes and their implications for human use constitutes McHarg's ecological science-based method and a clear reference to Juan Luis, thereby providing a basis for the practice of landscape architecture and regional planning. Parallel to these advances was the effort to develop computerised ecological planning and, ultimately, design. Certainly, the idea that the environment should be monitored and regulated to protect human health and well-being is a laudable intention.

The American Experience, by Juan Miró Sardá

I met Juan Luis in Austin in May 2006, when he was invited by Fritz Steiner to the final reviews at the School of Architecture of the University of Texas, where I was already teaching. Juan Luis arrived, tired from his long journey, but over dinner, we connected immediately, and we have been in constant dialogue ever since. I am indebted to Juan Luis because he is a cultured and generous person, and our ongoing conversations about urbanism, architecture, history, culture, etc. have enriched our intellectual and personal growth. Juan Luis is also an effective teacher who has successfully combined a sustained activity both in the academic and research field and in urban planning practice.

Beyond our academic relationship, we have become friends, bringing our families together in the summers for the past 15 years. The excursions, where we explore remote regions of Spain's interior, have allowed us to keep our conversations alive and for me to benefit from Juan Luis' profound knowledge of both the European and American continents.

Austin was the place of our first encounter, and it remains today the focus of many of our reflections. Founded in 1839 near the Colorado River, it is a fascinating city (a sort of aspirational Arcadia, according to Juan Luis) with a growth model based on a grid layout and a population of around 1,000,000 inhabitants. Its population density of 1,000 people per square kilometre is significantly lower than in European cities, such as Barcelona, Paris, Madrid, Rome or Copenhagen. Austin's low-density urban development has prioritised the protection of natural resources and the integration of city and nature. This is precisely the leitmotif guiding the line of research that we have been working on from our first conversations until today.

We have developed the concept of the 'landscape city', an urban model that has guided North American cities, in contrast to the European compact city model (de las Rivas & Miró Sardá, 2014). This relationship with nature in American cities from pre-Columbian times to the present day allows us to draw valuable reflections on urban design.

There are indeed important lessons to be learned from the American experience, based largely on the central role nature has played in defining the built environment across the Americas. In

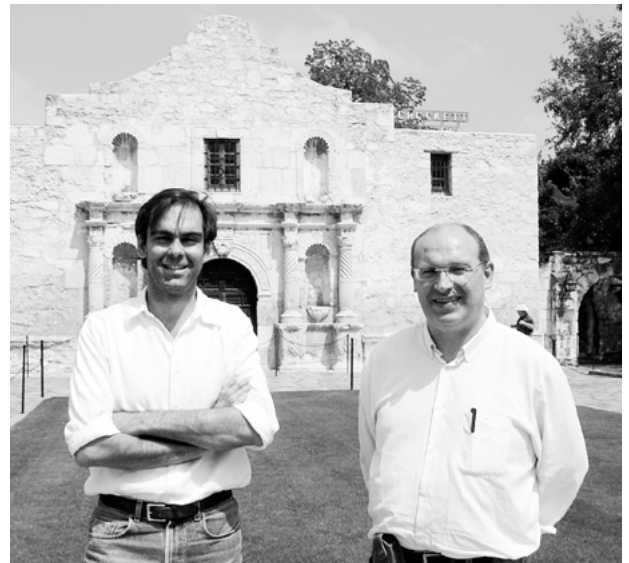


Fig. 08 - Juan Miró Sardá, Architect (ETSAM, UPM, Spain), Post-Professional Masters (Fulbright Fellowship, Yale University, United States), Founder of Miró-Rivera Architects and Distinguished Professor at The University of Texas at Austin

American cities, there is a specific and structural relationship with nature that is both culturally and historically significant. In the American experience, the discourse about land uses includes references to 'man and nature', to 'ancient cultures' lost in the wilderness, to 'endangered life-support systems', to the 'restoration of disturbed harmonies' and to 'designing with nature'. Even in North America, despite the significance of industrial landscapes, is often present the idea that the human-made must be involved with nature in the construction of cities.

With the premise that there is no unique approach to addressing urban form, we find a valuable source of urbanity in American conceptions of 'nature' and 'wilderness'. This has great potential to generate ideas that can improve urban design, for example, the protection of aquifers and the prevention of flooding through regulations requiring generous amounts of pervious surfaces in urban lots, or the reduction of the heat island effect and CO2 levels through the systematic creation of urban forests in cities. In this context, protecting trees, even when in private properties or protecting waterways and aquifers, are urban design decisions that are as pertinent as the traditional focus on buildings.

Acknowledging that there are many challenges in contemporary urban design practice, we continue to journey down this shared path. We believe it is important to rediscover the urban legacy of the Americas. Indeed, our latest line of enquiry is exploring Anglo-America and Latin America through their similar arcs of history and the similar challenges they face.

We also believe that it is important to introduce innovative urban design principles offered by the history of the Americas to Europe. Juan Luis is a natural bridge for promoting these new perspectives in the European context.

Dialogue:

A R: One of these references is the work that encompasses the translation and edition in Spanish of *Design with Nature*. What did you learn from it?

J L: The Spanish edition is from the year 2000. Ignacio San Martín, with the support of Fritz Steiner, facilitated the connection between the editors, Wiley and Gustavo Gili. Although there were some professional translators, they were unrelated to urban planning, so I had to do a lot of proofreading work. McHarg died in 2001. I have a letter from him in which he was happy about the edition. Thanks to Ignacio and Fritz, I discovered McHarg in late 1995 at Arizona State University. It was a revelation because he opened a clear path, but why was the usual urban planning practice still so far from the natural environment? Some Spanish experts, such as Ángel Ramos, linked to forestry planning, promoted an environmental planning manual with the Ministry, which was complicated and did not cite McHarg. Others, such as the ecologist Fernando González Bernáldez or the geographer Eduardo Martínez de Pisón, had brilliantly defended a comprehensive approach to landscape but without much echo among urban planners. Agenda 21 was already beginning to proliferate in Spain, the first tool for environmental improvement in cities. The problem is that it either lacked a specific spatial dimension or barely interfered with urban planning, except for the increase in some standards, density, use or green spaces. Nature knows how to create quality from quantity (as explained by E. P. Odum, the great master on ecology and friend of McHarg), but we do not. Quality can only be generated in the city in an integrated way; I like to say ‘by design’ to explain it. It is not about repeating general principles, but about knowing how to do things [and] about acting correctly and responsibly. To anyone who has doubts, I recommend reading just the *Design with Nature* chapter on dunes. In an applied discipline, such as urban planning, knowledge must be accessible and operational.

A R: If we review your scientific production, there is clearly a growing interest in the relationship between nature and the urban. Has this always been the case? Have there been certain experiences that have served as catalysts for your interest? Is *Design with Nature* one of them?

J L: It is a very difficult topic, which is fashionable today (green infrastructure, ecosystem services, nature-based solutions, etc.), but it is not at all simple. This complexity is evident, precisely, in its applied dimension.

Little by little, the nature–city binomial absorbs my work, even more so my study, which is still in process. I’m working on it, with limited results. What has allowed me a positive transition is the landscape, in its conceptualisation and in its condition as a tool. Just returning from Arizona, by invitation of Javier Maderuelo, I made the first effort, *La naturaleza en la ciudad-region* (*Nature in the City-Region*) (de las Rivas, 1996b), where I tried to link landscape culture and urbanism. The intensity of my work in planning with the IUU_Lab did not make things easier for me. The aforementioned book on the Advancement of DOTVaEnt in 1998 was also key. When

I started again in 2012 with an urban planning job in Valladolid, I discovered that the theme of landscape was already mature. Since then, landscape has taken centre stage on the urban and territorial scale, as we began to investigate more in-depth about the rural environment. With Juan Miró, an architect and professor based in Austin, I wrote a text titled 'Landscape Cities.' Thanks to a teaching assignment I received in 2018 at the Politecnico di Milano, I made an effort to organise materials and ideas (de las Rivas, 2019). However, the 2020 pandemic and personal health problems have delayed a publication that I hope to finish soon.

AR: One of the most notorious aspects raised by Ian McHarg is interdisciplinary thinking in the practice of spatial planning, which is somehow an operationalization of ecology as a foundation for understanding the processes that shape the landscape. This is a much talked about but perhaps less well-understood issue. To what extent has McHarg's work, and the influence it had on people like Dangermond, helped in the development of a more mature planning discipline?

JL: McHarg's influence is indisputable. Recently, the Lincoln Institute published an edition of *Design with Nature* to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and a study centre associated with the figure of Ian McHarg was created at Penn. At the root of the ecological approach, there is a will that is not only multidisciplinary but also collaborative. Today, we talk about the metabolism of cities after years of experiencing difficulty in consistently calculating the ecological footprint of the urban environment. Despite the big data of the new technological tools (the GIS of Dangermond), I insist that the configuration of an integrative framework of objective knowledge about the city remains unfinished. McHarg's lesson was to roll up your sleeves and get to work.

The perspective must be exosystemic, but in our case, as architects, rooted in the spatial dimension. How can we integrate the knowledge that we can achieve about the built environment? McHarg's suitability analysis anticipated a strategy of integration. However, to the extent

that planning aims to serve decision-making, which is largely political, knowledge tends to be simplified. We trust that the city and the territory are collective projects. We try to advance in participation processes, in improving governance, because we inhabit complex and plural societies in a democratic context. However, participation and propaganda are often confused, and the struggle in urban politics is frequently transferred to the citizens, simplifying the arguments; there is little trust in civil society or collaborative work. McHarg's grand goal, to facilitate an objective understanding of the natural processes that are affected by urbanisation, remains.

A R: There are some notions that erase from the lecture of this and other writings and are recurrent in your scientific production, such as landscape, ecological approach to planning and behaviour as an adaptive strategy to interacting with the environment. Are you interested in building some knowledge on these concepts? Is it also supported by your readings and reference authors?

JL: The interest in these ideas or concepts is evident. As I have said, I am slowly writing about my particular understanding. The question is that there is so much of a gap between the three groups of agents, not including those who make the decisions. Sometimes, I think that this is an uncrossable border.

On the one hand, there is a large and diverse group of urban scholars, highly specialised and largely without practical experience, who are distant from contemporaneity and without effective interest in the real processes and praxis that 'build' the city and the territory. Second, we have experts in urban planning and management who are very busy, dedicated to solving specific problems and devoting all their efforts to the study of what is useful to solve them. Finally, there are the citizens and urban agents who, with their everyday interests, are the ones who give life to the urban and who, with their concerns, drive its transformation. Which of them is close to the great picture; who can guarantee a useful overview?

The advantage of architects is their affinity with space. In the city, everything 'takes place' in a specific place. Bill Hillier acutely argued that 'space is the machine'. I agree. The ability to spatialise phenomena and project spaces and to solve problems there, in one way or another, is very close to a comprehensive affinity for the urban. I mentioned previously that I have been reflecting for some time on what urbanism should be taught in a school of architecture. If we are able to bring our students closer to useful knowledge, without utilitarianism and with an operational vision aimed at correctly posing some problems and providing them with the tools to solve them, we will advance. Today, such classic concepts of urban planning as 'density', 'enclosure' or 'mobility' are poorly understood and manipulated through abstract debates. Thinking about the architecture of the city, the issue is not only in the 'what' or the 'why'. In the end, the key is going to be in the 'how'. Quality is always specified in the 'how'.

2.3 Collective Culture and Intelligence Applied to Cities and Territories

Since the 2000s, Juan Luis has been developing and maturing a vision of urbanism that provides ideas and references to face the collective challenge of designing cities and contributing to their territorial development in the present and the future: cities and territories require collective culture and intelligence. It is a vision that he currently consolidates and maintains by relying on two fundamental references.

The first one lies in his interest in detecting the territorial transformation of cities and settlements and identifying spatial areas capable of developing a city project, along with an intelligent balance between their economic strategy, social cohesion and development and environmental sensitivity. This was first explored in the CITIES project and the Cities Laboratory developed together with Alfonso Vegara within the framework of the *Fundación Metropoli*. However, a fundamental output of this approach was the book *Territorios Inteligentes* (Vegara & de las Rivas, 2004), the publication of which was supported by *Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias* (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces) on the occasion of the 25th year of its institution. This publication was later translated into other languages and reissued in 2016 under the title *La Inteligencia del Territorio. Supercities* (Vegara & de las Rivas, 2016), receiving the Gerd Albers Award for the Best Book in 2017 by ISOCARP.

Secondly, and also since the 2000s, Juan Luis has dedicated more and more time to a crucial area of study and research, the region where he has secured his position as a full professor at the UVa. This time, the fragility of the rural environment, which is the spatial dimension of a growing issue, has become the focus. This commitment to the regional environment has resulted in an increasingly profound understanding of the greatest emerging problems, which are metropolitan and rural rather than urban. Thus, in 2017, Juan Luis concluded a stage with the publication of the book *Paisajes Menores* (de las Rivas, 2022b), which compiles research on territorial organisation and urban planning, particularly focusing on the least populated municipalities located in the rural areas of Castilla y León.

There are valuable reflections resulting from numerous works in that territory (de las Rivas, 2007, 2009, 2022c; de las Rivas et al., 2022), in which he states that a consensus exists regarding the idea that rural abandonment, with depopulation as its main structural feature, is one of the main factors of regional imbalance in Spain. In fact, rural areas have gained unexpected prominence, manifested in the emergence of initiatives affecting public policies. According to Juan Luis, there is no urban planning that is truly adapted to rural areas. Changes are not promoted; rather, actions are taken within the constraints of each competence. Therefore, the potential of the spatial dimension to support an integrated approach is ignored. In this framework of action, Juan Luis, along with his team, proposes a definition —minor landscapes (*paisajes menores*)— for those less populated and visible rural spaces, wherein the natural or cultural heritage is not extraordinary and where the vulnerability that is typical of less dynamic places accumulates. However, these are places that, beyond their fragility, acquire extraordinary value today. They are common, habitable and inhabited landscapes. Without them, one cannot speak of sustainable territories, of the fight against climate change or of the aspiration of a society to be resilient. Thus, the precise objectives should be to recognise, measure and understand these fragile spaces.

Research and Innovation Applied to Territories, by Alfonso Vegara

Juan Luis has always been a very studious person with an extensive bibliography. In his first years of collaboration in urbanism subjects at Universidad de Navarra, we produced significant publications (e.g. *Urbanismo de Ideas*). These publications were characterised by a theoretical approach, and even over the years, useful reflections on the role of spatial planning and urban design as instruments for the improvement of built environments can be extracted.

In the 1980s, I met Alfonso Álvarez Mora during my lecturing years at the *Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid*. It was during this period that Alfonso obtained his professorship (1984) at the Universidad de Valladolid. Undoubtedly, Álvarez Mora strengthened the team that was already forming in Valladolid with Juan Luis' arrival. He was extremely hardworking, diligent and inquisitive. He has tracked the entire academic path and has undertaken a spectacular role within the Institute, initially as a member and subsequently as a director. He has made a notable effort to develop truly impactful projects, implemented from academia, with a foundation in territorial analysis through a landscape approach.

The common focus of these projects is the territory of Castilla y León, which has been studied with great rigour to identify its strengths and work towards achieving a scenario of opportunity. One notable project is undoubtedly the *Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno* (2002), with the central objective of introducing the criteria of rationality and efficiency into an urban system conditioned by developments conceived exclusively at the local scale and without precise territorial references. In a way, it is a shared vision for which there are shared precedents. Years earlier, I led the *Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco*, in which Juan Luis was also involved. It was an example of coherent regional planning in Spain, and the first document at a regional scale aimed at organising its territory into functional areas for the definition of a polycentric urban region, an authentic city-region within the international context.

These are innovative approaches, and both received the ECTP European Planning Award. It is precisely within this framework of innovation in cities and territories that Fundación Metrópoli emerged years earlier. This occurred in 1997 at the University of Pennsylvania, which was an international setting fostered by my studies conducted thanks to the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship

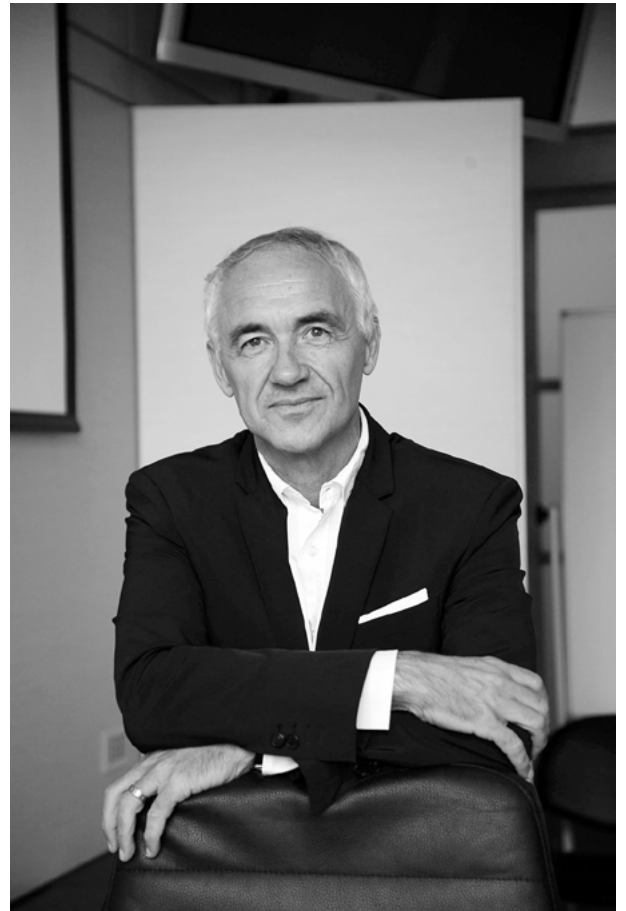


Fig. 09 - Alfonso Vegara, Architect, PhD (Universidad de Navarra, Spain), Economics (Universidad de Valencia, Spain) and Sociology (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain) Founder and Honorary President of Fundación Metrópoli, Former President of ISOCARP, Fellow and Trustee of the Eisenhower Fellowship, Honorary Consul General of Singapore in Madrid since 2005

(1987). For me, it is important to compare cities, apply the case study method to different territories and cities and explore this component of innovation. Juan Luis is an active part of the Fundación Metropoli as a member of the International Advisory Council, and he regularly collaborates on urban and territorial projects at this institution.

Indeed, this foundation published the book *Territorios Inteligentes* (Vegara & de las Rivas, 2004). This contribution emerged with a joint purpose of research and exchange of experiences involving cities from five continents and with several strategic partners at the international level, such as the University of Pennsylvania, the Urban Land Institute and ISOCARP. It serves as a laboratory for cities, with a strong focus on case studies as a means of explaining the concept of smart territories. The findings have significantly enriched our understanding of cities as we continue to work towards applying this concept in our projects. The book has been reissued under the title *Supercities: The Intelligence of Territory* and translated into multiple languages. New examples have also been introduced.

With ISOCARP, we have had active participation. For instance, in 2015, Juan Luis and I presented Spanish examples that highlighted 50 Years of City and Regional Planning in Spain. This effort to disseminate city and regional planning activities in Spain is significant. Juan Luis' perspective regarding the Spanish planning system is holistic and comprehensive. In the academic realm, he is perhaps the most knowledgeable urban planner in Spain at the moment, with an open and integrative attitude bridging the academic and professional worlds. His noteworthy commitment to the institution ensures continuity in his university work. Undoubtedly, he has influenced urban planning in Valladolid, particularly through various European research programmes, thus facilitating an enriching dialogue between administration and academia, which is not always easy to achieve.

Dialogue:

A R: There is an interdisciplinary requirement in urban planning that the city cannot be explained without the study of its region, where biological, sociological, geographical and other approaches have emerged. This relationship between natural and urban processes, territory and city and the work of man shaping nature is frequently referred to in your production. Is there a need to understand these territories based on this background?

JL: The Italian urbanist Alberto Magnaghi recently passed away. I heard him in Milan in the 1990s and bought his book, in which he proposed the 'local project.' He was one of the first to care about sustainability, but in the context of political crisis, he conceived the municipal environment, charged in Italy—in Europe—with identity, as the ideal environment to renew spatial planning. However, Magnaghi evolved towards the bioregion. His last book had the eloquent title of *Il principio territoriale* (*The Territorial Principle*, 2020), in which he explored how the territory is not only a common good, but is the planning rule. Illuminating.

Encouraged by McHarg's reading, Frederick Steiner's *Living Landscape* and other key readings, such as Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* or J. B. Jackson's *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, I prioritised the regional dimension of landscape in my work and reflection about cities. In Spain, a geographical tradition already existed that was very attentive to the regional dimension of the settlement. The advantage of geography is that it has a culture of analysis that allows for integrating knowledge of the physical environment and the rural or urban environment. But it is a descriptive discipline, not projective; it is not aimed at anticipating the future.

Today, no one disputes the regional perspective accentuated in the sustainable city project. However, it is something that we tend to take for granted, and what seems so obvious is ignored. It worries me that the literary vision predominates in the manner of Alexander Pope, when he recommended that 'we listen to the genius of the place'. Who does it? Without an effective and dynamic regional vision, the territory is transformed in a disjointed manner, project by project. In this sense, there is a specific architectural culture of the city insertion in its region, close to [the ideas of] Howard, Geddes and Mumford, but also to the four ecologies of Banham's LA or to Alberti's *Re aedificatoria*. Detecting their strengths and weaknesses is a priority, often rescuing forgotten or lesser-known episodes and figures. The problem is that, in the theoretical field, architecture draws from many sources and sometimes does so superficially. The city is a reality that lives between nature and culture. There, success or failure is also cultural [and] collective.

AR: One of the main ideas underlying the reading of your studies on smart territories and minor landscapes is the understanding of the territory as a learning laboratory. What are the main challenges to achieving it? How important is it to measure and characterise those territories?

JL: If we compare the intentions and content of *Territorios Inteligentes (Intelligent Territories)* and its reissue, *Supercities*, with my most recent work on the rural environment, or what I call *paisajes menores*, it could seem that they belong to two opposite worlds. However, I think they both belong to a common field in spatial planning. The first aims to show that there is a vigorous and useful urban planning culture. On the other hand, the work on the rural environment of Castilla y León, in the ‘empty Spain,’ aims to show that a systematic knowledge of the landscape and adapted urban planning can help generate a higher quality of life. It is not just about understanding the situation but about seeing how [we can] activate viable improvements. Thus, the global and the local are connected.

Measuring and characterising a territory is the first task of planning. To do this, the task must rely on knowledge that already exists. In its preparation, the urban plan must add knowledge and perspectives. The quality of a plan is [its ability] to detect opportunities, not just problems. An urban plan, as a project, seeks to make the invisible visible. If it succeeds, it must serve local leadership, which is the collaboration capacity of a specific society. The plan goes out if it is not added to a collective commitment.

AR: What is the role of technology in the knowledge of the place, of the territory and of the urban dynamics that take place there?

JL: Today, with new, very powerful tools, we talk about planning support systems. New technologies and instruments, as they evolve, are increasingly useful. Perhaps soon, we will be able to compose precise images of the environment, loaded with relevant information, in the manner of holograms from Star Wars. But there are no automatisms in planning; yes [we have] approaches or methods. The big journals are full of partial studies, some very valuable, but...? Descriptions of the particular characteristics and phenomena of the built environment enrich us. However, we remain dissatisfied with our urban reality, detecting problems that are often very old, with a permanent demand for improvement.

For example, complex systems of indicators are proposed to ‘measure’ the city and its processes, accumulating a lot of information. The hit is that its monitoring is ineffective. We are unable to reliably evaluate what has been done, its effects, what is happening now and its externalities, except in the big numbers, so we continue talking about it.

In nature, we know magnitudes or numbers that guarantee certain situations—temperature, pressure, volume...proportion in certain substances, etc.—and we can infer what is hidden behind it based on Brian Greene’s ‘elegant universe’ (1999). However, not in the built environment, not even in factors as basic as density. Raymond Unwin linked his garden suburb to 12 homes per acre (30 per ha). Are we facing a low or medium density? Without avoiding the

relevance of dimensions, quality urbanism depends more on the arrangement of the elements and less on quantity. It depends on what Leon Battista Alberti called *concinnitas*, in the art of layout, in which nothing is left over or missing. In this sense, in urban planning, as in other creative activities, the quality of the results is obtained 'by design'. I have a certain conviction that a good solution to an urban problem is always elegant. In any case, I am overwhelmed by the knowledge that is generated about cities and the territory, and many times, I feel incapable of evaluating, even classifying, it based on its applicability.

A Shared Journey: De Las Rivas' Trajectory Seen From a Public Servant's Perspective, by Ángel Marinero Peral

Throughout the course of (almost) four decades, I have listened to Juan Luis de las Rivas. I have also read his papers; I have also quoted him, hired him, praised him—even admired him. And I have worked with him, argued with him and even agreed with him. We have shared thoughts, concerns, ideas. All of that, of course, it's not to be told; there is no time, there are no pages, memory falters, youth withers and, at my age, many other things happen—those that Horace spoke of, so long ago.

So, it was in 1986, give or take a year, when Juan Luis gave (to my class) his first lesson. Not like I remember a word he might have said. An assistant professor doesn't speak to 22-year-old students—he lulls them. Nor do I remember what Carlos Martínez Caro or Alfonso Vegara were explaining next door, and that doesn't prevent me from evoking them as excellent professors. Because, just like Juan Luis, they instilled in us an enthusiasm for planning, curiosity about everything urban, concern for all kinds of territorial issues, rigour and perseverance as a method [and] being useful to society as an objective.

Five years later, a young planning professor at the UVa doctoral programme welcomed me warmly, guided me with generous advice and put into perspective the otherwise alarming reprimands of a college staff whose hospitality for outside students fuelled the legend about the character of the city that so welcomed us. Everything changes, and we are all



Fig. 10 - Ángel Marinero Peral, Urban Planner
Chief Secretary of Environment, Housing and Land Use
Planning of Castilla y León Government

agents of change. The School of Architecture of Valladolid is now a friendlier institution, more open to the outside world, as well as to the city itself, and—as they say now—more empathetic. With the aim of improvement, questioning the status quo [and] asking questions. It has come to resemble Juan Luis more.

Five years later, and it's been ten, I was at the head of the Urban Planning Service within the Regional Government of Castilla y León, trying to set in motion a process to write and pass the normative support for urban planning. At the same time, a first generation of regional planning in a region with no previous experience in self-regulation—even in self-definition; quite insecure and always attentive to whatever was sent from Madrid. It was then that the University Institute of Urbanism was established and began its journey—still the only one in the region. From the very beginning, it turned out to be a key support in all the paths we were taking. Being selective, I would recall Juan Luis' role in devising and designing the Planning Guidelines for the Urban Area of Valladolid, which even today, having endured subsequent cycles of expansion, depression and recovery, with a deep social and territorial evolution, keep being a factor of territorial stability and balance.

Five years later, and it's been fifteen, Javier Arribas, who sadly, is no longer with us, was the Regional Director of Planning. With vision and knowledge, he managed to get the Valladolid Planning Guidelines passed. The following year, we received the 4th European Urban and Regional Planning Award in Paris. The fact that the local press gave more space to the contemporary edition of a tyrophile contest played at home slightly discouraged me, at which point Juan Luis came to the rescue with an ironic reflection on the invisibility of what is most important. But we were already onto other matters: with the Urban Planning Act passed and its regulations about to follow suit, the process of updating local urban planning, spurred by the strength of real estate investment in those booming years, demanded our attention in day-to-day affairs. So did the urge to devise and develop planning tools and standards, the need to clarify regulations, the requirement to enforce quality in urban issues, to foster knowledge of urban planning [and] to train the professional planners and officials required.

Five years later, that's two decades, the impact of urban sprawl was already conspicuous on the landscape, and there it remains. A less visible impact was the lack of land to build social housing, and there it also remains, for other reasons. We then came up with a programme of public land-developing actions for social housing in urban areas, seeking, at the same time, a relevant, long-lasting planning outcome, exemplary for its positive impacts on every site. Said programme was implemented through a coordinated set of Development Plans, devising tools for each one, with a common logic yet adaptable to the case. For this, we designed an articulated, sequentially phased process and a system of quality-evaluation criteria for planning, management and construction. All that effort was swept away by the big depression—save for some isolated success. Anyway, it was later recognised with a Special Mention in the 9th European Urban and Regional Planning Awards. This time, the award ceremony was fraught: a slip on the wintry ice led my arm to a Brussels operating room, with Juan Luis acting as amateur nurse and assistant.

Five years later, in the depths of the big depression, society is discouraged; some were even distraught with indignation. Juan Luis was among the very few who believed it was time to work and reform. These are the years when, on a local scale, he was involved in the revision of the municipal spatial plan of Valladolid, and on a territorial scale, trying the same with the questionable and questioned structure of the local administration of Castilla y León—always from the perspective and with the tools of regional planning. I participated indirectly in those operations, let's say from afar, sensing in either case the hallmark of hyperactivity that defines Juan Luis' work: giving more than you're asked for, as we were taught to do in the University of Navarre; anticipating all kinds of needs and demands; and simultaneously listening patiently and politely to the agents who wished to have a voice in the decision-making process.

Five years later, and it's been thirty so far. It seems we've come out of the depression; regardless, its impact had become obvious in the neighbourhoods built during the decades of industrialisation and the exodus from the countryside. It was time, we thought, to conduct renovations and neighbourhood regeneration. All this was often heard loudly in academia—not that much in the technical sphere; it was frequently received with more interest by the civil service than by the business culture. The truth was, we didn't know where to start—not even how. Experience was lacking, a 'renovation culture' was as scant as it was lacking, and regulation tools all turned out lacking. Once again, we turned to the University Institute of Urbanism—we wanted an 'Urban Regeneration Strategy' in Castilla y León and we would have it. So we were ahead of other territories, with not much attention paid to us, you know, it is not expected to see planning avant-garde from Valladolid. Ten years later, it is an experience studied and replicated throughout Spain.

Five years later, almost yesterday. We had not fully understood that we were in the midst of an energetic transition—then without knowing it at all, on the verge of an energy crisis. What do urban planning and energy have to do with each other? For some years, we've been hearing that question while talking about how to integrate both fields, or at least bring them closer, take them into account. Once again, I am amazed by Juan Luis' patience in the face of incomprehension, less so of ignorance. It won't be long before they understand him when a not-so-distant war makes everyone, not just urban planners, worry about energy. In the cities of Castilla y León, the idea of developing district heating networks fuelled by the biomass of our forests—yes, that one—no longer used for traditional purposes and still behind much of the wildfires ravaging our forests, was received as though we were proposing sending satellites into outer space, that is, if they were not alarmed by its potential for pollution. In record time, it has become a starring promise in election campaigns, with the industry not being able to meet an exploding demand.

Well-intentioned friends remind me that Juan Luis has done and said many more things than I have told of—even within the strict framework I have imposed around a civil service perspective. Jorge Luis Borges told us that a man has the right to be judged by his clearest page. I just intended to evoke here some memories—a handful of pictures on the album of a shared journey.

2.4. Strengthening His Path. From PhD to Today

International openness is essential not only for creating and consolidating networks of work but also for showcasing a territorial framework from which the specific knowledge of a discipline (spatial planning) is generated—something that Juan Luis has practised and intellectually reflected upon for almost four decades. His intellectual production is the result of a lifetime dedicated to urban planning, explained from a triple perspective: by training in the school, where he studies, works and conducts research; by returning to that same school and specialising in teaching and research with the coordination of a laboratory and numerous research directions; and by reading.

Over the years, the internalisation of his production has been linked to the territory from where he originally developed his actions. In Spain, this territorial framework is characterised by certain singularities that undoubtedly condition the approach to problems and the proposal of a solution from a spatial planning perspective.

Spain is an extensive territory, slightly over 500,000 square kilometres, with a population of nearly 48 million inhabitants unevenly distributed across the territory. This territory is characterised by its high elevation, with an average altitude of 660 meters above sea level. It is quite mountainous compared with other European countries and has 14 designated national parks, showcasing a diverse range of ecosystems. The population is sparsely settled within the territory, primarily concentrated in the national capital (Madrid) and the main coastal cities, as well as thinly distributed across inland areas.

If we consider the functional areas that have established the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, Dijkstra et al., 2019), the total municipalities in Spain are classified into large metropolitan and metropolitan areas (10 percent; 816 municipalities) and medium-sized cities and small cities (5.4 percent; 442 municipalities). However, in terms of population, 54.4 percent (25,318,313 inhabitants) of the total population live in large cities and metropolitan areas, while 15 percent (7,352,638 inhabitants) live in small and medium-sized cities. This means that up to 84.5 percent of municipalities (6,866) are not included in these functional urban areas, representing almost 30 percent of the total population (13,901,181 inhabitants). Indeed, considering the main functional areas where 20 percent of Spain's population is concentrated, only the functional areas of Madrid and Zaragoza are located outside the coastal perimeter.

Moreover, the locations of medium-sized cities and small cities are scattered across the territory, playing an important role in terms of providing infrastructure and services to the population, including those municipalities that do not belong to functional urban areas. However, in contrast to the need-based account that underlies the connection between the municipalities not belonging to functional areas and the small- and medium-sized cities, the population trends reveal that these categories have experienced a loss of population during the last decade. Indeed, there is a continuous trajectory of municipalities losing their population, with only large metropolitan and metropolitan areas during the last decade experiencing a slight increase in population (Ruiz-Varona et al., 2022).

In terms of housing and urban development, there are currently more than 26.6 million households in the country, of which 70 percent are primary residences. Primary residences are those that are used all or most of the year as the habitual residences of one or more persons. Moreover, important issues regarding population and household trends in the last decades have emerged. Firstly, in the

last decade, there has been a mismatch, with the number of houses continuing to increase as population growth stagnates at the same time. This trend is particularly divergent in areas not belonging to any functional area. Secondly, the average age of housing in Spain is over 43 years old, with a peak in growth detected during the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s and in the first decade of the 2000s. These are two important factors that help explain the aggressive urbanisation process that has characterised the country, even as the population has experienced a shift in trends: from the baby boom generation of the 1970s to the current increase in population ageing. Additionally, there is an undeniable characterisation of the type of residential building that is most produced, corresponding to detached single-story houses and four-story apartment blocks, accounting for 26.5 and 12.9 percent, respectively.

The trends described above account for an unbalanced territory, with a unique urbanisation process in which the issue of boundaries must be considered, as there are realities that must be addressed inseparably from its wider environment. This is the reality in which Juan Luis has been formed as he carries out his professional trajectory. Indeed, these singularities have been some of the reasons that have led him to dedicate himself to spatial planning.

We acknowledged that a quantitative assessment of an entire lifetime dedicated to urbanism may not be of particular interest unless it is conducted through the analysis of its content, which this book seeks to account for. However, for those who wish to understand its magnitude, his extensive research output amounts to approximately 200 published documents, including books (21), contributions to collective works (61), articles in scientific journals (48) or other publications (61), as well as having supervised a total of 21 doctoral theses, throughout the course of four decades devoted to academia. A specific aspect of his career is his involvement as a director or member of the drafting team for various *planes parciales*, *planes generales*, or other planning instruments for different sectors, municipalities and territories, primarily within the Castilla y León Autonomous Community. Overall, he has contributed to over 56 works in the fields of urban planning and territorial organisation.

A detailed analysis of his works allows us to point out that his international path is characterised by continuing a broad effort that can be summarised in three essential themes: urban history, planning and cartography; Spanish urban design and architecture; and nature and the city.

i. The School of Architecture at Universidad de Valladolid as an Example

Firstly, the research and cartography work generated through the analysis of spatial data primarily focused on the region of Castilla y León. As already mentioned, one of the aspects that stand out in Juan Luis' collective work is the connection with the territory from which he works as a full professor. Although the contributions are studied in detail later (3. *Planning practice and urban culture in a peripheral region*), it is worth highlighting that it has been possible to obtain valuable cartographic information as a result of the development of future projects to better understand the territory and thereby design valuable instruments for its development (de las Rivas, 2003; de las Rivas & Paris, 2013). In this sense, *Atlas de Conjuntos Históricos de Castilla y León* (Atlas of Historical Sites of Castilla y León), commissioned by the General Directorate of Heritage and Cultural Assets of the Regional Government of Castilla y León, constitutes an example. This cartography brings together the urban ensembles declared as cultural heritage sites with the category of historical ensemble until December 2007. Each of these ensembles provides, from a popular and systematic perspective, concise infor-

mation allowing us to understand the characteristics and main features, facilitating the visualisation of the unique traits of each urban settlement and subsequent comparisons with other areas. The individualised studies and documentation of each ensemble are complemented by an extensive introductory study, in which these settlements are related to their landscape environment, their historical configurations are analysed, and the tools and instruments of urban planning for their protection and conservation are highlighted.

The objectives of providing tools to understand these ensembles and promoting a commitment to achieve active and sustainable conservation of the territory are also present in the report *El estado de las ciudades de Castilla y León* (The State of the Cities of Castilla y León). This work examines the urban areas of the autonomous community at various levels, from the entire urban area and the central city to the neighbourhood. It represents an analysis, largely statistical, of demographics, the economy and prevailing social conditions. The collected data are related to size, structure and economic results as well as competitiveness criteria. This approach facilitates the conduct of surveys to compare the state of the cities of the Castilla y León Autonomous Community to the European context, resulting in a better understanding of their situation and the provision of a useful and operational working tool, especially for the agents responsible for local and regional decisions.

ii. Spanish Urban Design and Architecture

Secondly, his work focused on understanding, from a more historical perspective, the configurations and forms of cities (especially at an urban scale), while considering the social, political and economic factors that help understand this history. In this sense, this work has facilitated the international dissemination of experiences that used to be innovative and pioneered by practitioners and theorists involved in urban planning in Spain, especially during certain periods of high intensity in city production.

There are two recent scientific contributions that provide evidence of his interest in Spanish urban design, in addition to his contributions in specialised books and international conferences, especially within the European context (Fernández-Maroto et al., 2022; de las Rivas, 1990, 1996c, 1997, 2013b; de las Rivas & Fernández-Maroto, 2016; de las Rivas & Marinero-Peral, 2017).

The first one (de las Rivas & Fernández-Maroto, 2023b) explores a unique and decisive aspect of the Spanish urban system: to what extent do the goals of economic planning broadly adopted during the growth period—between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s—influenced the performance of urban planning tools? Indeed, among the mechanisms for urban expansion, we find interesting references to the influences developed in the international framework, such as the theory of communities (Durán-Lóriga, 1964) and its application to the new Spanish municipal spatial plans or the Urgent Urban Development Actions (the so-called *Actuaciones Urbanísticas Urgentes*, ACTUR).

The second one (de las Rivas & Fernández-Maroto, 2019) focuses on another period of intense urban growth, from the 1980s to the first decade of the 2000s. This contribution aims to clarify how specific planning tools enabled an alternative approach that mitigated the effects of the real estate boom and its unsustainable urban expansion. Indeed, Juan Luis explores the resilience of the urban fringes as a key feature that contributes to this alternative approach in some Spanish inland cities.

As part of his commitment to showcasing the rich urban culture of the Spanish experience, Juan Luis also advocates for the role of urban design as a fundamental concept guiding his stance on the main challenges currently facing urban planning. Indeed, in *Urban Design Practice: An International Review* (de las Rivas, 2012), he provides a review of how contemporary Spanish urbanism deals with designing cities in a context that is once again characterised by urban growth strategy. Here, he also confronts ‘the international success of urban creativity in cities such as Barcelona, connected to the 1992 Olympic games, or Bilbao, with its urban regeneration symbolized by the Guggenheim’ (p. 81), which are probably the main contributors to Spanish prestige in the design of new public spaces, to the ‘numerous anonymous new neighborhoods in urban peripheries, and the banal and immense built frontages along the Mediterranean coast’ (p. 81).

Some years later, in his entrance speech to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of the *Purísima Concepción de Valladolid*, Juan Luis decided to focus his argument on the city’s aesthetics in a broad sense and on the art of urbanism in a more restricted sense. Right from the beginning, he asserts that the city is not a work of art, nor is it nature—although it is inserted into it—but rather an artifact (de las Rivas, 2021c). In his effort to reflect on the city’s aesthetic interest from their profession, he defines a notion of ‘negative aesthetics’ based on the duty to adapt to the environment and the duty of ornamentation, which are inherent in urban practice with a clear normative link: ‘fundamental arguments such as respect for the scale and dimension of the new are replaced by a limiting vision, compatible with abuses in the built environment [...] where it is ignored that the old Hippocratic rule—first, do no harm—is only a containment wall, far from the necessary creativity to heal and preserve life’ (p. 51). Therefore, Juan Luis warns that ‘the risk of managing change is that nothing changes: the coexistence between new buildings and old cities requires collective culture and intelligence’ (p. 51). It is these intelligent territories and their environmental value, as well as their logic of adaptation to the environment, that should be the focus of a significant and dynamic design pattern.

This idea of negative aesthetics is followed by a defence of urban design as a visual order and a city project. Indeed, he argues that ‘we are experiencing a renaissance of urban design, a discipline that has barely been deployed in Spain; a slow but progressive resurgence of human-scale design, in the heart of the city and on its edges, compatible with the ambiguity of contemporary space’ (de las Rivas, 2021c, p. 53). It might be excessive to think about the limited deployment of this discipline in Spain, considering the operations to improve the quality of life in almost every medium-sized city and provincial capital (improvement of riverfronts, urban edges, park systems or urban centres). Undoubtedly, there is still a long way to go in terms of advocating for ‘planning by design’, from his understanding of an urban design culture that demands knowledge (de las Rivas, 1993) and a convergence of expertise at the intersection of architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture (Sert, 1956).

iii. Nature and The City

Thirdly, Juan Luis' work has facilitated the exploration of the significance of nature and territory in spatial planning, from the perspective of an architect. The triggers for this exploration are, on the one hand, his stay at the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Arizona State University in Tempe (Phoenix, USA) and, on the other hand, the effort of translating and editing *Design with Nature*. This is the moment when the landscape gradually becomes the argument, source and integrating tool of his research on urban planning and design.

A few years later, he deepens this study and consolidates his position by publishing the article *La naturaleza en la ciudad-región: paisaje, artificio y lugar* (Nature in the City-Region: Landscape, Artifice, and Place) (de las Rivas, 1996b), in which he analyses the understanding of the landscape and a possible path regarding its cultural and precise meaning. Drawing on key references in the Anglo-Saxon and Northern European contexts regarding the effective development of urban planning methods that globally take nature into account (McHarg, 1969; Steiner, 1991), Juan Luis also points out that the relationship between natural processes and the urban is still clumsily addressed by urban planning. The underlying idea he defends, which continues in his other writings, is that the true sense of progress lies in increasing our capacity to understand and be aware of the extent of what we do. In this sense, addressing nature in the city-region today implies building cities without ignoring their interrelationships with the environments to which they belong, but rather understanding their patterns, rules and limits. Although he has several contributions (de las Rivas, 2006a; Vegara & de las Rivas, 2021), perhaps one example where his position is best observed is his valuable text *En los paisajes de la ciudad-región* (In the Landscapes of the City-Region) (de las Rivas, 2001). Here, he defends the creative and intelligent actions of humans in the relationship between nature and the city—an action that corresponds to humans' adaptive capacity to manage the growth and values of the landscape.

Thus, Juan Luis expands his knowledge of valuable reference experiences through his travels and readings. In addition, he develops an intense but intermittent line of work in collaboration with the Spanish architect Juan Miró, based in Austin, where he works as a practitioner and university professor. Together with Miró, Juan Luis continues to explore this path of interaction between city and nature by publishing suggestive contributions (de las Rivas & Miró-Sardá, 2014; Miró-Sardá & de las Rivas, 2016) and conducting specialisation courses upon the invitation of several colleagues from his international framework (de las Rivas, 2018b; 2021d).

Dialogue:

AR: Why is it so important to disseminate Spanish planning practice in international forums?

JL: Spanish urban planning has been known for its results, the Spanish cities, as is the case in architecture. With exceptions, such as perhaps Manuel de Solà-Morales i Rubió, there is no international presence of Spanish urban planners, nor are there any Spanish texts on urban planning with international influence, beyond those produced by the urban sociologist Manuel Castells. It is quite surprising that two of the most influential Spanish texts in recent urban culture have been short essays that are unrelated to urban planning and written by architects during their stay in the USA: 'On Typology' (Moneo, 1978) and 'Terrain Vague' (Sola-Morales, 1995).

However, the urban planning projects of Barcelona and Bilbao and, more recently, of Vitoria, with its green project, have gone around the world. It is also evident that, in addition to Barcelona, large cities such as Madrid, Valencia or Seville have had greater international presence. But what scope does Spanish urbanism have in the international context? It is significant that the traditional figures of Ildefonso Cerdá and Arturo Soria retain their prominence. It was François Choay who highlighted the inaugural role of Cerdá's work in European urbanism. In contrast to the great presence of Spanish architects in the world, only a handful of urban planners, among whom would be Joan Busquets and Alfonso Vegara, have relevant international presence.

Disseminating in international contexts the Spanish experience in urban planning, with its singularities, is an important work and, in my experience, very well received. First, it is not a well-known issue. In a neighbouring country like Portugal, with its historical and geographical parallelisms, I believe that the Spanish experience in urban planning is well known, but in France or Italy, which are Mediterranean countries very close and inter-related with Spain, it could be better. In our Institute, with its great limitations in size and resources, I believe we have carried out dissemination work of a certain scope, also in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Colombia and Argentina, specifically thanks to different doctoral programmes.

Today, we maintain good relationships with the Paris Urban Planning Institute and with various universities in Lombardy. Our participation in EU H2020 programmes has also brought us closer to other European countries. These are intermittent relationships, altered by the [COVID-19] pandemic, that we try to preserve, although it is not easy beyond the personal relationships of each professor or researcher.

AR: From your experiences in these international forums, what are the singularities of the scientific advances in spatial planning in Spain with respect to other contexts?

JL: Urban planning in Spain depends largely on two factors, which might be strange in other contexts. Our Constitution establishes that powers in urban and territorial planning are exclusive to autonomous communities or regions. The consequence is a puzzle of localisms that is difficult to understand. At the same time, the legal status of urban planning practices in Spain is very different from that of other European countries.

The model emerged in the Francoist period and has remained over time with its own profiles: a legal statute—land regime—that establishes fixed rights and duties for landowners and very rigid planning instruments that are difficult to modify. The administrations of the state and the autonomous communities have attempted to moderate urban planning designed to serve properties without modifying the root model, but rather introduced requirements aimed at avoiding speculation or promoting sustainability. In fact, the economic crisis, with its great impact on the real estate growth machine, has marked a new context to which we are reacting slowly.

It is true that such a rigid model served to facilitate urban growth, mainly relying on expansion masterplans—the *planes parciales*. In this case, urban planning charges were imposed beyond urbanisation itself, providing land for equipment, open spaces and social housing. Beyond ideological and technical debates, everything exploded after the 2008 financial crisis. I think that what happened in Spain, well explained, can be very useful in understanding both the nature of urban planning and its limits or constraints.

We live in a changing era—an attractive time that requires imagination. In Spain, there is a desire for change and improvement. Proof of this is the 2019 Spanish Urban Agenda, which is full of interesting ideas and good intentions. The European framework has facilitated an evolution of urban planning towards sustainable postulates—one that is attentive to the ecological challenge and the new social demands of fighting poverty and inequality and promoting the digital transition. Urban planning today is clearly recognised as necessary and is working in very different ways, with new unconventional instruments, strategies and actors.

A R: The sense of progress is in increasing our capacity to understand and to be aware of the scope of what we do. With the experience of a life dedicated to urban planning, what would you say have we learned, and what we still must learn? What are the main challenges, and how could we face them?

JL: I like your approach to the 'sense of progress'. Awareness. The future will not depend on what we already know but on what we do not know and are not yet aware of. Progress is not linear; it moves forward and backward. That manifests in the chiaroscuro of our societies and their mirrors in the territories, in the spaces of abandonment, in the problematic spaces that we do not know how to solve, or that we are not willing to solve because they do not seem urgent or necessary. We do so without contradicting the conviction that the built environment needs an ecological transition. The good thing is that this transition favours demand for what we do. Urban planning and architecture should be negentropic agents. Using the concept that McHarg proposed, this 'negative entropy' would generate order and balance. Negentropy goes beyond simple resilience, instead requiring greater intensity in adaptive improvement. But any adaptation process requires sacrifices. It is a trip in which not all our luggage fits. In a built environment with lights and shadows, urban planning can help to choose, select and prioritise. Out of simple prudence, sometimes it is better not to intervene, because the transformative action is irreversible and must be well-oriented and well-carried out.

In *Building and Dwelling*, Richard Sennett (2018) tried to show that design can either enrich or diminish the 'everyday experience' of those who dwell cities. Our cities do not have to be perfect; they cannot be. Sennett affirms that they are, in the best case, cracked, open and modest. There has always been grandiloquent urbanism, without humility, without defects. But real cities show their differences in a universe of features. The tension that Sennett raises between 'ville' and 'cité', highlights the difference between the physical space that is the city and the life that it hosts. The Romans, Saint Augustine told us, distinguished more precisely between *urbs* and *civitas*, between the materiality of the city (*urbs*) and the community that inhabits it (*civitas*). Cité has conditions of a closed, specialised or heterotopic space, of a citadel within the city. Can Cité serve as a refuge for the urban project? In any case, the challenge of urban planning, yesterday and tomorrow, is to help materialise a solvent, adaptive and sustainable physical support for the complex society that inhabits it. The viable mechanisms and the available tools are all relative—they depend on each context and circumstance. They also evolve and must be adapted.

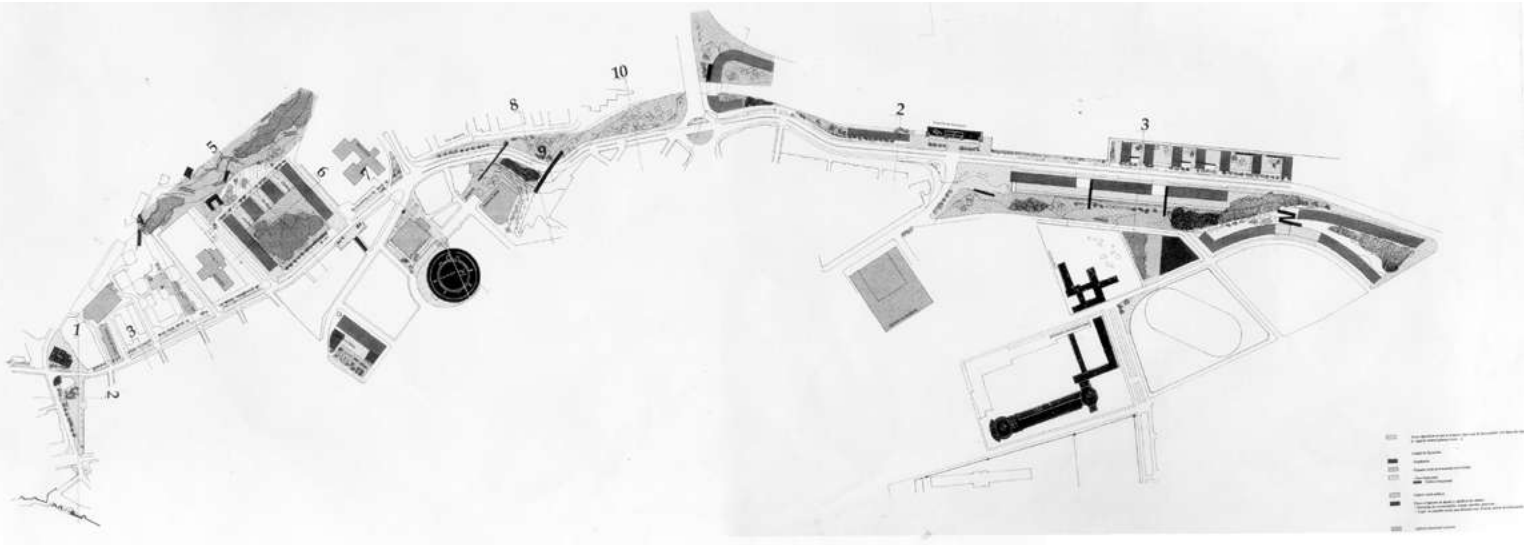


Fig. 11 - Urban regeneration of Villalpando corridor, Zamora Master Plan. Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas & Marina Jimenez, 2002.

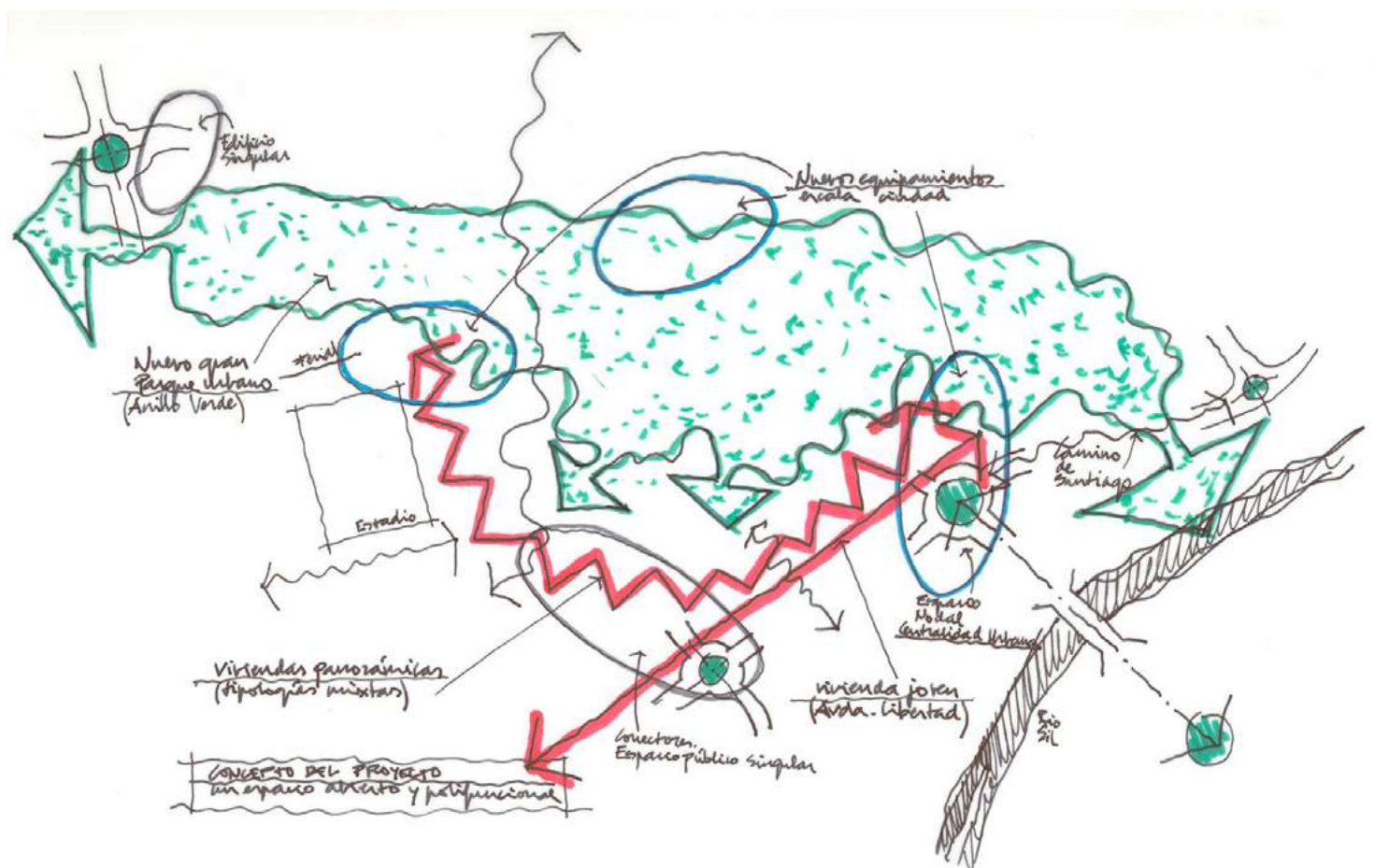


Fig. 13 - Conceptual scheme for the "City of Youth", Ponferrada (León, Spain). Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas, 2006

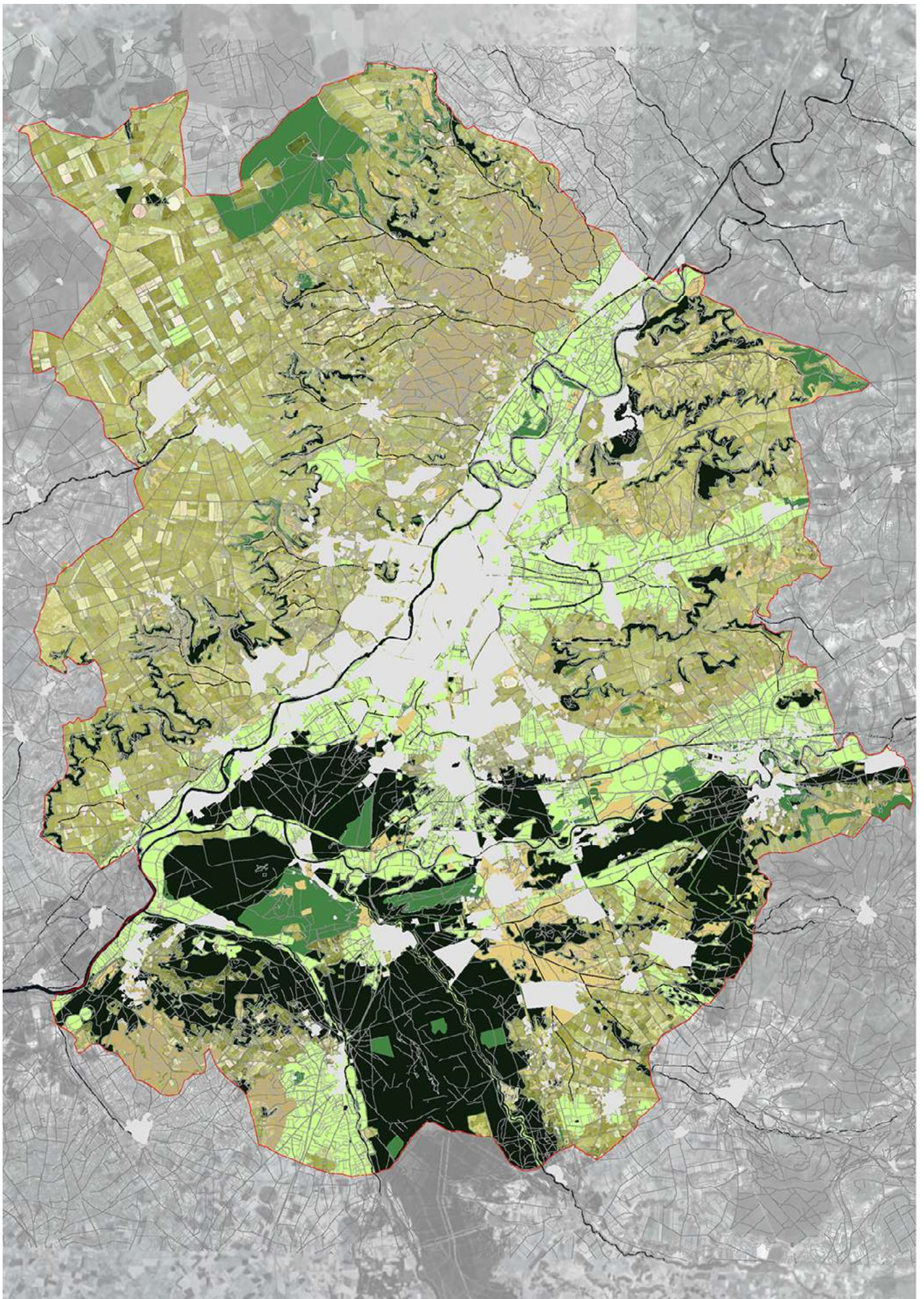


Fig. 14 - The rural and the urban; Guidelines for the Valladolid Urban Area. Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas & IUU-Lab, 2000.

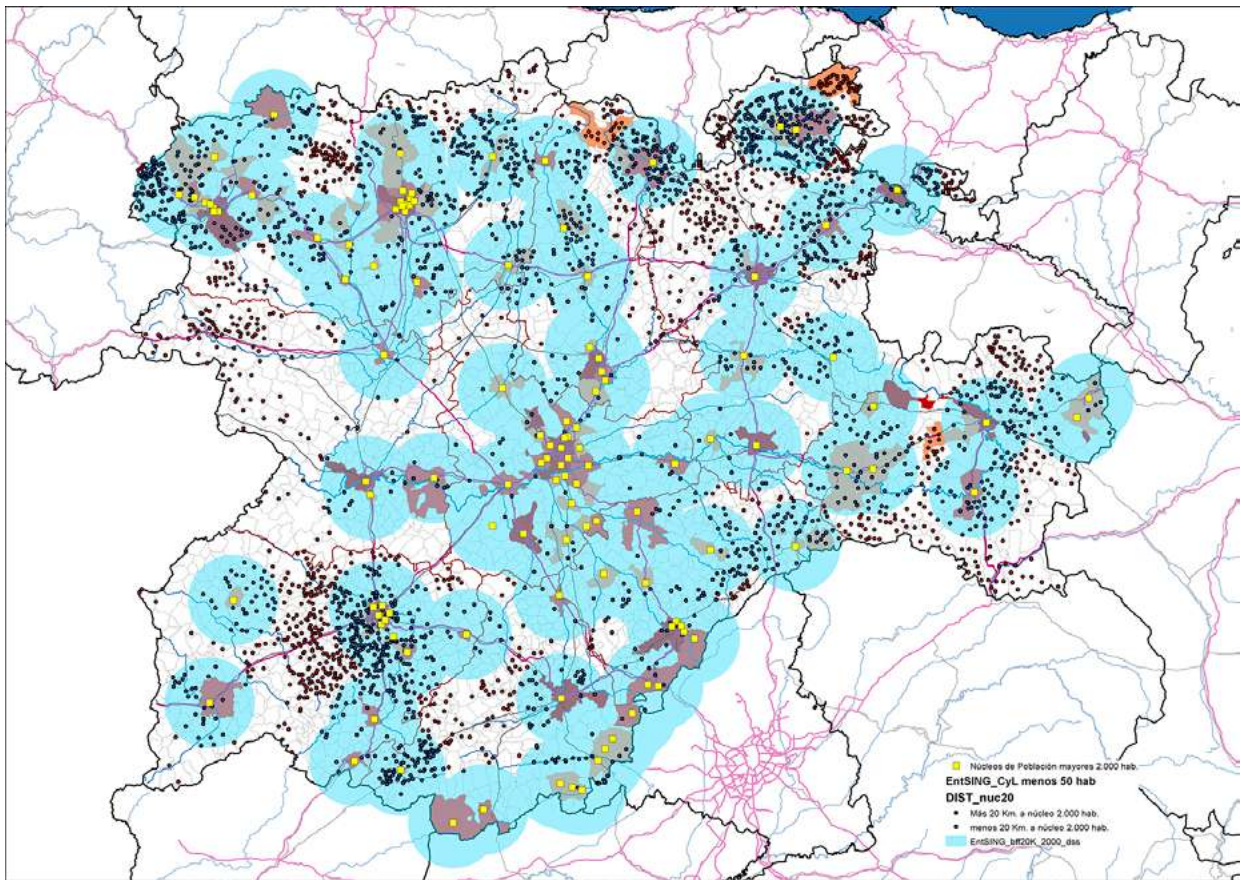


Fig. 16 - System of minor populations. The Minor Landscapes in Castilla & León (research).
Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas & IUU-Lab, 2020.

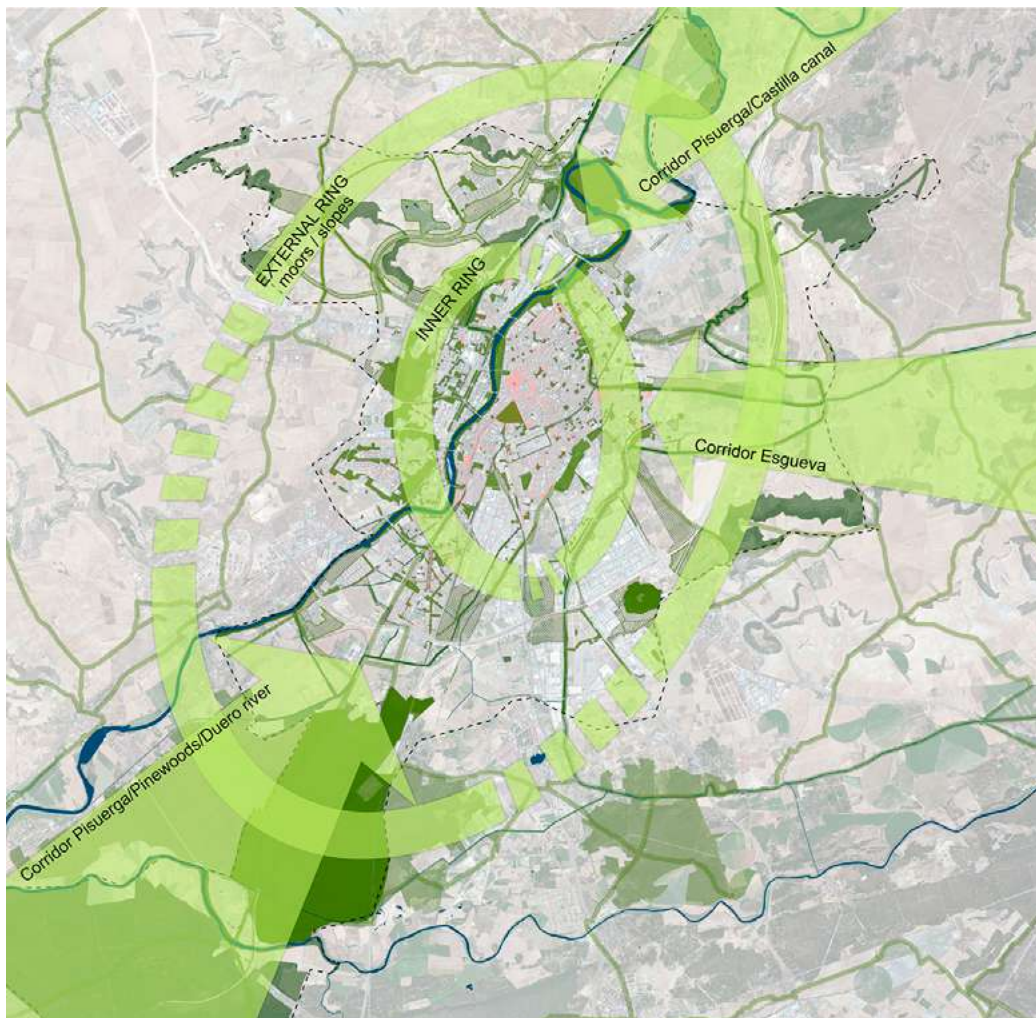


Fig. 16 - Ecological Corridors. Valladolid Master Plan.
Source: Juan Luis de las Rivas & IUU-Lab, 2014.

3. PLANNING PRACTICE AND URBAN CULTURE IN A PERIPHERAL REGION

The potential of academic research to influence and shape the decision-making process in spatial planning is highly recognised (Hordijk & Baud, 2006), along with the complexities of bridging these two separate tribes (Durning, 2004). As demonstrated by Balducci (2004), the problem of the interaction between theory and practice in planning is pervasive. The Italian professor referred to the idea of Melvin Webber, a colleague with whom he worked in Berkeley, according to which most urban issues tend to be ‘wicked problems’. This term, coined by Webber and Rittel (a German professor of architectural design), refers to problems that cannot be precisely formulated due to the complexity of urban phenomena and the presence of variables that cannot be controlled (Rittel & Webber, 1973). However, recognising the limitations of their answers and anticipating potential issues that may arise, planners should refrain from providing subjective evaluations or biased solutions.

In general, enquiries on the relationship between planning academics and practitioners can be conducted through different lenses that aim to provide insights and test possibilities for elaborating planning theories for practice or finding practical ways for academic work to impact the practice directly. The possibilities of bridging gaps rely on various measures, including promoting international exchange and comparison (Hurley et al., 2016), reducing academic jargon and obscure language and inserting more practitioners to teach in planning programmes (Goodman et al., 2022), and ensuring learning based on local experiences and issues (Chang & Huang, 2022). These can be achieved by, for example, promoting living labs (van der Knaap, 2022), to potentially reveal novel lessons towards more effective exchanges between research and practice.

A starting point for comprehending the works carried out by research groups and centres (in this case, the IUU) in the midst of academia and practice is the work of Patsey Healey (1991a), who identified four types of research relationships with planning practice. The first type is research being an integral part of practicing planning, in which items of knowledge are produced as direct inputs to particular planning tasks focused on substantive issues (i.e. the ‘what’ questions) in the form of evaluation, project appraisal, transport modelling, market analysis and preference surveys. The second type is evaluation research to understand whether plans, policies and actions work or have worked, specifically focused on the ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions. These two practice-related research types are part of the general task of developing ‘knowledge for action in the public domain’ (Friedmann, 1987), and their critical task is to define the practical context for the research.

The third type involves research on planning practice, which aims to develop proposals for practice that investigate specific dynamics and/or trends to discover ‘what is going on’ and develop interpretive frameworks. Here, the critical task is to define the research question, the context within which it is relevant to ask such a question and the terms in which it can be addressed. A major problem, however, is reaching the policy community that frames and carries out policy (Elkin, 1974; Simmie, 1981). Eventually, the fourth type is research to help practitioners improve their practice is characterised by a strong normative agenda to enhance performance, the output of which can be the production of principles to achieve better work performance. The outcome of such research may provide management practices that are linked to the ideal of developing more progressive and democratic forms of planning practice (Forester, 1989).

3.1. The Role of The Research Groups in Advancing Planning Academic and Practice

The [IUU](#) is a research centre funded by Prof. Alfonso Álvarez Mora in 1991, in collaboration with Manuel Saravia and Juan Luis de las Rivas. It is widely recognised as a university institute by the 'Regional Decree 181/1997 establishing University Institutes at the Universities of Salamanca and Valladolid.' Its peculiarity stems from the fact that it is the only Spanish university research institute dedicated to the field of urbanism. The main objectives of the IUU have focused on implementing scientific and technical research and providing specialised postgraduate and doctoral teaching and lifelong learning in the field of urban and regional planning. The achievement of these objectives involves an interdisciplinary approach aimed at planning the future of cities and territories (including analysing, designing, managing and building), with a remarkable connection with various disciplines, such as architecture, economics, geography, history and law. The main activities have been carried out by its research group '*Planificación Territorial y Urbanística*,' coordinated by Alfonso Álvarez Mora until 2017 and subsequently handled by Juan Luis de las Rivas thereafter. From the beginning, de las Rivas led its workshop, called the 'IUU_Lab,' which is open to collaboration with other sectors of society and serves as the main resource for the group.

Additionally, the *IUU_Lab* organises training courses and seminars, as well as other dissemination activities, such as IUU's Fridays and the maintenance of the IUU Blog and social media accounts. Foremost of its tasks, however, is to serve as the editorial office for the IUU, overseeing the editing and layout of the scientific journal [Ciudades](#) and other publications, such as the book series [DOSSI-ER Ciudades](#). In the first years of the Institute, de las Rivas coordinated Issues 2 and 3 of *Ciudades*, which focused on the teaching of urban planning in Europe (1995) and on the vitality and limits of the urban plan (1996). An interesting group of urban planners from Italy, France, England and Spain, comprising a group that has been consolidated since 1994, participated in the seminar 'Urban Planning in Community Europe', which Juan Luis coordinated with one of his first Erasmus students, Giovanni Muzio.

After more than 30 years, the IUU has attempted to combine research and practice by conducting formal research work (18 R+D+i projects appointed based on competitive calls and 7 PhD programmes resulting in more than 40 PhD successfully defended theses) and applied work in urban and territorial planning, with particular emphasis on scientific and technical advice aimed at innovation and/or development (50 contracts and agreements with public authorities). The IUU has specifically dealt with four main themes: 'Reformist urbanism', with a specific emphasis on historic centres and heritage; 'Urban and regional planning', especially in terms of managing urban growth and landscape; 'Urban rehabilitation and regeneration'; 'Rural environment', a typical character of Castilla y León, 'Mobility'; and 'Urban energy'.

In the attempt to better understand the research relationships with planning practice of the works directly supervised as main researcher by de las Rivas within the IUU, these works have been classified according to the four types of relationships claimed by Healey (1991a) on the grounds of the materials found in the IUU's website (see Annex 1).

Types of work	Themes	Research as practicing planning	Evaluation research	Research on planning practice	Research with practitioners	Total
R + D + i projects	Reformist Urbanism	/	/	1.1; 1.2	/	2
	Urban and regional planning	/	/	2.1	/	1
	Urban rehabilitation and regeneration	/	/	/	/	/
	Rural environment	/	/	4.1; 4.2; 4.3	/	3
	Mobility	/	/	5.1	/	1
	Urban energy	6.1	/	6.2	/	2
Total		1	/	8	/	9

Table 3. The intersection between activities carried out by the IUU and their specific themes.
Source: Elaboration by F. Camerin and A. Ruiz-Varona (2024), based on P. Healey (1991a), de las Rivas et al. (2022) and the official website of the IUU (<https://iuu.uva.es/inicio/>).

For the R+D+i project, Juan Luis served as the main researcher and coordinated 9 out of 18 projects awarded to the IUU by various competitive calls at the European, national and regional levels. Research on planning practice stands out as the majority of these activities (8 out of 9 projects; more than 88 percent), of which three projects regarded the rural environment and two focused on reformist urbanism. On the contrary, no projects tied to evaluation research or research with practitioners were directed by de las Rivas. The data indicate that, over the years, his main focus was on designing and developing knowledge to improve the quality of life across Castilla y León through specific methods and actions in both urban and rural environments. Research as practicing practice was carried out once (less than 12 percent) on the theme of ‘Urban energy’ to produce knowledge as direct inputs to enhance, complement and integrate the approaches available concerning sustainable energy and climate planning. In this type of research, there is always an important focus on the diagnosis of a current situation and relative practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of policies at the local and territorial levels.

Types of work	Themes	Research as practicing planning	Evaluation research	Research on planning practice	Research with practitioners	Total
Applied work	Reformist Urbanism	1.3	/	/	/	1
	Urban and regional planning	/	/	2.4; 2.5; 2.9; 2.11; 2.16; 2.19; 2.31	2.2; 2.3; 2.6; 2.7; 2.8; 2.10; 2.12; 2.13; 2.14; 2.15; 2.17; 2.18; 2.20; 2.21; 2.22; 2.23; 2.24; 2.25; 2.26; 2.27; 2.28; 2.29; 2.30; 2.32; 2.33; 2.34	33
	Urban rehabilitation and regeneration	/	/	3.1; 3.3	3.2; 3.4	4
	Rural environment	/	/	4.6; 4.7; 4.8; 4.10	4.4; 4.5; 4.9	7
	Mobility	/	/	5.2; 5.3; 5.4	/	3
	Urban energy	/	/	6.3	/	1
Total		1	/	17	31	49

Table 4. The connection between de las Rivas' coordinated applied work and the types of relationship between planning research and practice. Source: Elaboration by Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin based on P. Healey (1991a), de las Rivas et al. (2022) and the official website of the IUU (<https://iuu.uva.es/inicio/>).

In terms of applied works, most of the projects are embedded in the category 'Research with practitioners' (31 out of 49, approximately 63 percent) due to the basic nature of scientific, technical and/or artistic works related to the practice of urban and regional planning through contracts or agreements signed with both public and private entities. The main characteristic of the applied works is their normative agenda, which aims to enhance performance in planning practice. A total of 17 projects performed research on planning practice (35 percent), while one project was dedicated to research as practicing planning. No study was devoted to evaluation research.

The contributions made by de las Rivas to the main themes can be summed up as follows:

i. For **Reformist urbanism**, he led a project resulting in the Atlas on the Historic Sites across Castilla y León (2009), which aimed to provide an objective, comprehensive and educational overview of one of the most prominent features of our historical and artistic heritage in the regional territory: the Historic Sites.

ii. In terms of **Urban and regional planning**, de las Rivas contributed to both scales. Castilla y León gradually became the main study area due to the urgent need to provide the Autonomous Community with its legal framework in 1997. The outputs of this effort were Law 10/1998 on the Regional Planning Act and Law 5/1999 on the Urbanism Act, which were largely promoted by Ángel Marinero Peral, then the Chief Secretary of Environment, Housing and Land Use Planning of the Castilla y León Government. The shift to the local scale occurred on the grounds of these two regulations to effectively promote the implementation of spatial planning instruments and verify their feasibility in addressing the processes of scattered and dispersive urban growth. Through the efforts of the team led by de las Rivas, the resulting 'Land Use Planning Guidelines Document for Valladolid and its Surrounding Area' applied the lessons learned from his Milan and Arizona visiting periods in terms of a landscape-shaped urban-territorial planning method, eventually winning the 4th European Urban and Regional Planning Awards 2002 granted by the European Council of Town Planners. Since the early 2000s, both urban and regional planning works have focused on spatial interventions based on the landscape as a strategy for the integration and enhancement of environmental and heritage resources.

iii. In terms of **Urban rehabilitation and regeneration**, the variety of urban transformation perspectives acquired by the international visiting and network gradually created by de las Rivas and other IUU members, such as Alfonso Álvarez Mora and María Castrillo Romón, were translated into Castilla y León. The accumulated experiences propelled increased international visibility, helped establish new national networks and provided the basis to publish a report commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Housing on 'Urban Regeneration in Europe'. This task included the 'Questionnaire on Integrated Urban Regeneration Policies' sent to the 27 member countries as part of the preparatory work for the Toledo Declaration on Integrated Urban Regeneration (2010).

iv. The **Rural environment** is one of the core characteristics of the Castilla y León region. In relation to this theme, the IUU contributed to generating research on planning practice, along with practitioners in both R+D+i projects and applied works at the municipal and regional scales (de las Rivas, 2022b, pp. 17–49). In light of the socio-territorial and economic challenges of 'rural shrinkage' and the 'empty Spain' phenomenon, the IUU accelerated its involvement in this theme, with a focus on the local scale and built heritages based on an integrated landscape perspective. This project gradually evolved into the recently applied work on a pilot project for the Urban Agenda Action Plan of the rural municipality of Peñafiel and the R+D+i-led design and development of a Living Lab that aimed to promote sustainable innovative initiatives in the rural environment of Castilla y León (2020–23).

v. & vi. Two less-developed fields of research include **Mobility and Urban energy** in the form of most research on planning practice. On the one hand, the elaboration of transport-related research provided a detailed diagnosis of current road, rail and airport infrastructures in Castilla y León from a regional perspective, with a specific focus on its relationship with urban development. On the other hand, a recent interest in energy has emerged based on two European-funded projects. In particular, the INTENSSS-PA (2016-2018) and 2ISECAP (2021-2024) both applied the Living Lab methodology and framework for providing public administrations in Castilla y León with the capacity to integrate energy sustainability into spatial planning, using new planning and decision-making methods based on technical advice, along with the cooperation and creative participation of all actors involved.

A Common Teaching Experience, by María Castrillo Romón

I started teaching at the *Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Valladolid* in late 1991, as an assistant to Juan Luis de las Rivas, in two 6th-year subjects: 'Urban and Territorial Planning' (*Planeamiento urbano y territorial*) and 'Urban Planning Practices' (*Prácticas de urbanismo*), in which I had also been a student of the young Professor de las Rivas a few years before. I continued to work with Juan Luis in 'Urban and Territorial Planning' (later 'Urban Planning and City Project' (*Planeamiento urbano y proyecto de ciudad*)) until the 2015–16 academic year. After working with him for many years in teaching urban planning, I must admit that his influence on my training as a teacher has been significant. I am grateful to him for his generosity in understanding my need to balance my initiation to university teaching with my doctoral research when I was his assistant. It was not common for assistants in Spanish universities in the 1990s to have such opportunities. Juan Luis assigned me tasks with a light teaching load, which allowed me to complete my thesis while continuing to develop as a professor.



Fig. 18 - María Castrillo Romón, Architect, PhD
Full Professor at UVa and Member of the IUU

What influence did Juan Luis have on me as a teacher? What did I learn from him that I still practiced after so many years? Undoubtedly, I learned many things, but there are two (very different from each other) that seem particularly clear to me. The first has to do with the way he approached master's classes. Juan Luis always insisted that, for a one-hour lesson, you should focus on developing just one idea. One effective approach is to contextualise, discuss and illustrate a single idea. This maxim has proven useful to me when preparing my classes. Another aspect that has greatly influenced my teaching, which I 'inherited' from Juan Luis, is his method of planning how students should approach the conception of an urban or territorial intervention. He always asked them to think logically based on three 'layers': the systems of free spaces, mobility, and 'centres and places' (or 'centres and neighbourhoods'). Students were required to consider the interrelationships between these layers and their relationship with the physical matrix of the territory (i.e. the topography). Undoubtedly, this approach is fundamental in planning, although it is important to acknowledge the many nuances and new interpretations that have emerged. Society, cities, and urban planning have evolved significantly in recent decades. New concepts and different issues related to these three layers have already been incorporated, such as the diversification of centralities and their relationship with urban mobility, the importance of pedestrianism and the rise of non-motorised mobility or the relationship between the system of open spaces and green infrastructure. Although urban planning has become more complex over time, I believe that the methodological tool I learned from Juan Luis is still effective in addressing spatial proposals for urban planning.

Moreover, I would like to acknowledge Juan Luis' influence on our research group, particularly in the research area. During his research stay in Phoenix (USA) in the mid-1990s, he initiated the Spanish translation of Ian McHarg's book, *Design with Nature*, which was eventually published as *Proyectar con la Naturaleza* by Gustavo Gili in 2000. Knowing about this groundbreaking work was a real revelation for me. However, I think that, in general, the influence of the research on landscape that Juan Luis developed during his stay in the United States with Ignacio San Martín can be extended to our entire research group and to the IUU. Juan Luis successfully incorporated these innovative ideas and reflections into the Spatial Planning Guidelines of Valladolid and its surroundings (DOTVaEnt). This groundbreaking work marked a milestone for the IUU and its future research path. I believe this moment was captivating. Under Juan Luis' leadership, the research group experienced a significant and positive development by confidently expanding its conceptual framework to include landscape and urban-territorial scale approaches, in addition to urban and heritage-related issues.

Finally, an aspect in relation to Valladolid and, in general, to the medium and small municipalities of Castilla y León is worth mentioning. I think it is important to underline Juan Luis' contribution to the construction of planning knowledge about this type of settlement, which, with a clearly metro-centric bias, is sometimes defined as 'secondary' but are actually the majority in our urban systems. Due to contextual reasons, Juan Luis has accumulated extensive experience conducting planning research and projects in small- and medium-sized urban centres, as well as the entire urban system of Castilla y León. In addition, in recent years, he has been the driving force behind the reactivation of research on issues specific to rural areas within the IUU. The territorial context of Castilla y León has a significant influence on the work of Juan Luis and the IUU in general. This influence is particularly relevant in the current academic momentum of urban planning, where the focus on large cities often overshadows other urban realities. Juan Luis' work significantly contributes to our understanding of urban culture in medium-sized and smaller cities, which has been developed largely on the outskirts of large cities.

Dialogue:

FC: What did it mean to you to devote your career exclusively to work at the University in an attempt to combine town planning in academia and in practice?

JL: The answer is very simple. We have had the opportunity to do it. The Institute project incorporated a practical dimension, which is why I joined it from the beginning. Research in urban planning is not basic research, but an applied one. The regional context of the 1990s made it [the research] viable.

FC: You launched the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística with Alfonso Álvarez Mora in 1991. How has the institute and its regional, national and international roles evolved over more than 30 years?

JL: The Institute adheres to legislation that seeks to link universities and society. As an academic institute, it is responsible for conducting third-cycle research and teaching (specialised and doctoral). To the extent that the research is open to professional work, from the beginning, we tried not to interfere with the conventional work of architects. We mainly addressed the studies demanded by the public administration. Planning work arises with concrete opportunities and always with an innovative dimension.

Over time, with the improvement of official research funding mechanisms, the Institute's professional profile has almost disappeared, reduced to collaborations or singular works. The Institute has always collaborated in national and international research, creating a network of fellows that comprises its main wealth. In the last decade, it has participated in several European projects, such as H2020. However, we have restricted the planning work to the region of Castilla y León, in a responsible commitment to our immediate environment. We have never had the profile of a consulting company.

FC: What can distinguish academic research from town planning practice?

JL: It is obvious. I have largely already explained my approach [cf. *Building an academic and professional identity*], but they can converge to the extent that urban planning not only needs to understand reality but also improve as a specific technique to understand its foundations and introduce new tools. We are, for example, pioneers in Spain of the use of GIS in spatial planning. One of the first subregional territorial planning guidelines approved in Spain is ours. Furthermore, both research on the evolution of regulations and urban planning techniques and research with a comparative method, such as those with case studies, are essential to understanding the nature and meaning of urban planning.

FC: What is the trait d'union of the town planning projects developed in the framework of the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística?

JL: It would have to be someone outside the group who can answer this question. However, I would highlight that in our work, there is a very clear territorial dimension. Urban planning is scalar in a game of scales that delimits both problems and solutions. It's not just about starting from the big picture. The work always begins with the insertion of the scope of the plan into its regional context. Here, the landscape, the physical geography and the evolution of the settlement system become even more relevant than the infrastructures. Without defending a strictly morphological approach, everything can be integrated into the landscape approach. I place a lot of importance on representation. We have a particular interest and taste in cartographic reworking. On the other hand, we have never defended the status quo; there is a constant critical factor in our work, without reviling what others have done, but starting from it [instead]. The urban analysis that we try to promote is always oriented towards the objectives of the work. It does not pretend to be omni-comprehensive; it cannot cover everything. It must be guided by priorities. Another factor is collaboration. In general, we have fostered large, multidisciplinary teams.

FC: What have been the critical societal challenges that influence the functioning of the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística?

JL: Of course, there are many multifaceted challenges in transforming cities and regions. The most obvious is the abandonment of trust in urban planning in a context that I consider to be a hidden institutional crisis. Quick solutions are prioritised in the territory; investment is made in urgent actions, without long-term goals or the evaluation of results. Today, we prioritise research not only out of conviction but also out of necessity. In 2012, in collaboration with a Madrid company, we started the municipal spatial plan of Valladolid. There were two years of intense work, during which we generated very rich knowledge about the city, and we reviewed the urban model without excessive criticism. However, when we had the opportunity to abandon it, we didn't hesitate. Without real debate, all dialogue was reduced to private interests and particular issues.

I would like to think that social intelligence is growing, that concrete improvements will continue to be demanded [and] that society trusts in a more sustainable project. However, we must not fail to see that institutional didacticism and a lack of leadership are obvious obstacles.

FC: What does it mean for an architect within academia to work specifically on town planning practice?

JL: I tend to insist on my own profile as an architect. It is a mental attitude that affects my way of approaching problems, asking questions and [searching] for solutions. Project training induces this, but it is also a state of mind that I associate with always being open to a better solution. Architecture is creative if it is demanding, if it maintains tension, if it doubts. The academy is here to help understand, to improve knowledge [and] to avoid superficial approaches to complex topics. It is a critical space, yes, but above all, [it is] a learning space. The School of Architecture must be open to professionals to enrich their work in a permanent process of formation and innovation.

A great difficulty is that in Spanish architecture schools, there is no specialisation in urban planning. In the degree of *Fundamentos de Arquitectura*, urban planning barely constitutes 10 percent of the global teaching (about 30 credits). In the enabling master, less so. Yet, the architect still has planning powers. In this context of a lack of training, there are also no relevant postgraduate studies, except for some with legal profiles. In the end, most of the professionals who direct urban planning are self-taught and lack specialised knowledge.

3.2. Conducting Research and Practice: Main Themes, Challenges and Impacts

Dialogue:

FC: What were the main concerns of the IUU in terms of research and practice? How important was the building of a national and international network?

JL: In the last years, we are much more focused on applied research than on urban planning practice. Although the research group I lead is called 'Territorial and Urban Planning' (based in our IUU-Lab), since 2015, we have focused on a series of specific projects. The topics involve urban history (European Joint Doctorate Urban Hist, coordinated by María Castrillo), sustainable urbanism (two European H2020 projects on energy and the city) and the rural environment (with a sequence of projects in national and regional R&D programmes). Both in these projects and in others in which we collaborate, a rich network of scholars and professionals is present and enriched.

FC: The social commitment of researchers and practitioners has been at the core of the IUU philosophy since its inception. What has been the impact of this approach at the international and national levels?

JL: There is no simple answer. The commitment consolidated over time with the region in which Valladolid is the capital is the first step. Collaboration with public administrations is key. Although urban planning has not been a central topic in architecture schools, in our context it is. Some of our researchers, such as Alfonso Álvarez Mora on the issue of historic centres, María Castrillo Romón in relation to social housing, and Luis Santos Ganges in industrial heritage, have obvious recognition. I have been promoting a renewed interest in the relationship between cities and nature for a long time. At the same time, we carry out the very important work of disseminating knowledge, using the journal *Ciudades* as the 'locomotive'. The doctoral theses and researchers, especially Latin Americans, who develop their work and stay with us are at the heart of our ability to influence at both the national and international levels. After the [COVID-19] pandemic, during which there was a shrinkage of activity, we had the misfortune of losing great friends and collaborators, such as Ignacio San Martín and Corinna Morandi (de las Rivas & Morandi, 2018). However, we are recovering the rhythm.

FC: How is the young generation incorporated into the IUU? What are the specific challenges in combining consolidated expertise with the new generation?

JL: There are chiaroscuros. In a long period of funding crisis, we have lost well-trained researchers who are rooted in our group. However, we have consolidating professors, such as Marina Jiménez Jiménez, and increasing youth with brilliant young professors, such as Miguel Fernández Maroto. We also [have] an interesting group of researchers in training. At the same time, an innovative GIS working group has materialised around our colleague Enrique Rodrigo, the technical soul of our workshop, with great expectations. In general, we have aged without efficiency in the replacement of personnel. The main challenge in research is always to increase our capacity to attract valuable young people. We are working on this perspective.

FC: One of the main strengths of the IUU has been the capacity to carry out collective work in almost every activity, even though it is a relatively small dimension in terms of members, poor financing and researchers and technicians with no fixed positions. How should one deal with situations like this today? Is there a perspective for a better future?

JL: The only idea I can think of is to insist that we work hard and that, being a cohesive group, we remain open to ideas and exchanges. Urban planning is an art of relationships, of themes, of knowledge, of strategies... that requires a great capacity for adaptation. Let us displace these two principles of interrelation and adaptation as basic praxis, and we have a path. About the future, we can always aspire to improvement, to a better future, but this is not predictable. Ernst Bloch associated utopia with the 'principle of hope'. I try to respond with hope in an increasingly difficult context for small universities or smaller cities, immersed in the risk of being irrelevant.

FC: What are the current and next challenges for the IUU in terms of research and practice?

JL: First of all, [we have to] guarantee what has been achieved. In general terms, we have short-term stability. In the long term, we need to rejuvenate. It is not our problem, but rather that of Spanish universities as a whole, in areas far from basic sciences and some engineering. These are becoming better, in my opinion, although they run the risk of talent drain as we do. We export architects and researchers.

As already mentioned, the truth is that the city and the territory, thanks to the challenges of sustainability and climate change, are a priority today. There is a lot at stake. Very often, we are required to develop studies that we cannot undertake because we are small. I do not see a problem in this to the extent that we are maintaining a research tension capable of being useful and serving as a lighthouse in our context. Having a relatively well-defined official agenda from Europe (the Leipzig Letters, etc.) and from the State as a whole (the Spanish Urban Agenda) offers the advantage of concentrating on more specific problems, providing the urban planning technique and its tools with an innovative aspiration. The IUU is working in this direction.

If we take into account how urban planning is evolving today in the West, the idea of C.P. Snow published in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1959) serves me well, which the Israeli urbanist Juval Portugali took up forcefully in *Complexity, Cognition and the City* (2011) to establish two non-convergent currents in urban studies: one with a humanistic profile and the other quantitative. Significantly, Portugali undervalued the technical dimension, let's say, of applied urbanism, which materialises in urban planning and which is directly related to the construction of the city. [This is] beyond the idea of a third way, where the complexity of urban matters is evident in any responsible planning effort. At the Institute, it has been this technical dimension—alive in our interest in spatial planning—that has allowed a certain convergence between scientific and humanistic knowledge, and I believe that I have been responsible for it, in an immediate academic context disinterested in real practice. Losing interest in urban planning practice, as is happening today in several architecture schools, distances us from knowledge that is capable of illuminating reality and its contrasts. However, to paraphrase Bruno Latour, we have never been modern. Attentive to the social construction of scientific knowledge, Latour knows that it is impossible to return to a pre-modern stage, but he sharply criticises the lack of support in experience for much of post-modern criticism. In urban studies, there is an excess of preconceived ideas that are presented without a solid contrast with the reality of the city and the territory. Urban planning and project work require getting closer to the precise dimensions of what happens and the real processes that support them.

i. Urban and Regional Planning

Urban and regional planning is a practice that anticipates, represents and regulates how a neighbourhood, city or region will develop and has the tendency of becoming more precise and coercive as the area covered becomes smaller. It represents a practice that has continued to evolve over the last century while following societal dynamics and principles (Van Assche et al., 2023). It is not just the mere result of public planner expertise but the outcome of the confrontations among various actors (public and private) at different levels (state and territorial). It coordinates spatial organisation by articulating concrete activities, such as infrastructure programming, land reservation and land use regulation, as well as intellectual activities, such as analysing and forecasting social and economic trends. In general, planning regulations become more precise and coercive as the area covered becomes smaller. This applies both to regulations and to planning strategies, especially due to the shift triggered by post-Fordism, on which basis spatial planning started to aim not to regulate economic growth but rather to activate it (Amin, 1994; Healey et al., 1997).

Based on this evolution, and in constant reference to public interest, spatial (urban or territorial) planning today pursues two often juxtaposed objectives: promoting economic development and preserving the environment (de las Rivas, 2006, p. 14). Achieving economic development requires the construction of various infrastructures, while preserving the environment requires long-term quality and diversity in the habitat. The first goal pertains to the concept of economic competitiveness, which requires an efficient urban system to support economic growth. The second goal relates to sustainability and requires responsible behaviours towards the environment, which include controlling the negative impacts of human activities and, in some cases, questioning their necessity.

Dialogue:

FC: Is it possible to merge economic development and environmental preservation?

JL: There is a certain tendency to think that it is possible to make these two objectives compatible, given that man has always been a transformer of the environment in which he lives—a creator of artificial places that are essential for his survival in nature. The role of culture and technology is insisted on for their ability to find viable ways for man to coexist with nature. However, we avoid remembering how our complex civilisation is capable of overcoming most of its conflicts, even coexisting with them. The evidence is that the dominant development model continues to generate unacceptable externalities in the long term. From an urban point of view, spatial planning tries to guide the use of land. Here, there is already a first disturbing indicator: Land consumption in urban systems is increasing incessantly and, in European cities, often without correspondence with the increase in population. Despite the priority given to ‘urban recycling’, the rehabilitation of obsolete and degraded areas remains irrelevant when compared with the current size of our cities.

ii. Urban Regeneration

The notion of ‘urban regeneration’ is approached as a heterogeneous process, though not always well defined, that acts on a larger scale than a single building and constitutes a specific kind of urban policy implemented starting from the last third of the 20th century (Huete-García & Merinero-Rodríguez, 2022). The literature on the topic is extensive and has dealt with many facets and a conceptual evolution towards the ‘integrated urban regeneration’, which incorporates other areas of public policy that are not necessarily related to physical intervention in the territory. In this sense, the EU has played a fundamental role, as it has launched multiple programmes and tools since the 1990s (e.g. URBAN I and II). By doing so, the EU has significantly contributed to the development of national urban policy frameworks (Couch et al., 2003; Zimmermann & Fedeli, 2021) and to the shift from place-based policy thinking and practice to integrated sustainable urban development strategies (Navarro Yáñez et al., 2023).

Although ‘urban regeneration’ lacks a single universal definition, it can be defined as a ‘comprehensive integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about lasting change in the economic, social, physical and environmental condition of an area that has been the subject to change’ (Roberts, 2000, p. 17). Meanwhile, Leary and McCarthy (2013) defined it as an ‘area-based intervention which is public sector initiated, funded, supported or inspired, aimed at producing significant sustainable improvements in the conditions of local people, communities and places suffering from aspects of deprivation, often multiple in nature’ in which ‘there may well be a significant role for the private sector, voluntary sector or community enterprise’ (p. 9).

The purpose and scope of urban regeneration have gradually varied over time, passing from the physical rebirth of a faded or deteriorating area (a sector of one or more than one) in inner-city neighbourhoods, to a broader set of goals and intervention areas. With such changes came the evolution of accompanying tools and strategies. This is why urban regeneration goes beyond simple spatial transformations and reorganised social and power relations. The debate is still occurring today, with international organisations discussing current and future challenges for more inclusive and sustainable actions, especially after the pandemic outbreak, as the centrepiece of recovery plans (UN Habitat, 2021).

For its part, the IUU has intervened in the international debate on urban regeneration by investigating its ‘integrated’ character. The research group identified how urban regeneration strategies and policies have been developing in European countries as part of preparatory work for the ‘Informal Meeting of Ministers of Urban Development’ during the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010. This questionnaire provides an overview of integrated urban regeneration approaches across Europe to determine their alignment with the objectives outlined in the 2007 Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. The investigation mainly dealt with the many facets of urban regeneration and its relationship with urban planning, with outputs that contributed to advancing the state of the art in the field of study.

First, two of the most frequently applied urban regeneration operations emerged. On the one hand, actions targeting central areas, including historic districts and declining neighbourhoods, are generally considered operations that result in processes such as gentrification (which often displaces original

inhabitants) and the establishment of new centralities and specialised functions (sometimes at the expense of traditional or daily activities). On the other hand, actions enabled by various programmes and policies for social and housing are often taken to improve vulnerable or disadvantaged areas.

Second, urban ‘regeneration, whether fully or partially integrated, has become a tool for carrying out housing policies. Although it can have a significant impact on urban expansion, transportation, efficiency, social cohesion and democratic quality, the principles and setting of urban regeneration do not properly guide policies at the city level’ (Álvarez Mora & Roch Peña, 2010, p. 53).

Third, what is often lacking is an approach that ensures real integration; thus, urban regeneration plays a role in contributing to a segregated organisation of space. These operations proceed with the conversion of the previous socio-economic characteristics into more profitable functions in the short term but economically less sustainable in the long term at the city scale.

Eventually, the link between urban planning and urban regeneration is often lacking or inadequate. Nevertheless, the latter appears to be a practice that cannot truly impact the prevailing city model—that is, an alternative to the current extensive land occupation-based model.

Dialogue:

FC: The notion of ‘urban regeneration’ has changed its meaning over time, being on the main agenda of many cities over the last decades. How does the IUU approach this concept today?

JL: Spanish legislation itself includes it when talking about rehabilitation, regeneration and Urban renewal—the three Rs. The Institute has been promoting a qualitative evolution related to urban regeneration not only in its work but also through its publications, specifically in its journal, *Ciudades*. In 2010, we collaborated in the preparation of the Toledo Declaration, which coincided with the Spanish presidency of the EU, a commission from the Ministry of Housing based on a broad understanding of the meaning and content of urban regeneration in each of the member countries. It was a great team effort led by Alfonso Álvarez Mora and Fernando Roch, a professor at the UPM and a great friend, whom we miss. The cited regional urban regeneration strategy was another concrete result in this issue. In its writing, we tried to disseminate what we consider good practices, while facilitating a mechanism to detect the most fragile areas in the region, the most in need.

Today, we live with the omnipresent concept that we try to promote in all our research and work. For example, to promote urban regeneration, we detected and defended the reinvention of the ‘neighbourhood’ concept (de las Rivas et al., 2017). Another variation is its development in rural areas. I coined the concept, indicated before, of ‘minor landscapes’, to refer to the most fragile and least dynamic rural environment. We have published the first results of a couple of investigations, but we continue at it, with a clear intention of detecting the extent to which urban planning can be a useful tool in the service of a better future.

FC: In terms of regional and local planning in the context of multiple crises and growing socio-spatial inequalities in Spain. How does the IUU deal with the current tendencies and the main challenges faced by such planning?

JL: I disagree with the generic statement that there is greater social inequality in our cities today. A simple walk down memory lane through the different cities in which I grew up in the 1970s or 1980s would prove it without difficulty. What is happening is that society has experienced a period of extraordinary improvements that now seem to be stagnating. In a system of expectations, if things don't get better, they get worse. Social vulnerability and inequality today have complex nuances; they are capillary, detectable only in their broad features and difficult to distinguish and resolve. Often, urban vulnerability studies show that the most vulnerable spaces do not evolve, even after concrete actions for improvement.

In this sense, in our works about territorial planning and urban regeneration, we have defended the need for selective, strategic and integrated action. But we have not been heard. Not infrequently, politicians tend to give up prioritising to maintain their crony networks. We have verified this with the Urban Regeneration Strategy of Castilla y León, which we have done twice, in 2009 and in 2014, and which has barely been applied. The improvement of the already built environment and the selective intervention of growth and reform are key to the urban future. The greater or lesser sustainability of the urban environment depends on it. [The same is true for] the housing problem, which is deeply related to urban regeneration. In our group, housing has been a constant work topic, which we have also tried to focus on at the regional level (de las Rivas, 2018c). We are still learning how to conduct integrated and integrative urban planning, with multi-level, collaborative and well-coordinated actions. In our European projects, we talk about it a lot, but urban managers are barely making progress.

iii. Minor Landscapes

According to de las Rivas (de las Rivas, 2022b, p. 15), since the primordial first study on ‘lost villages’ carried out between 2006 and 2008, and as a result of the experience gained in the various spatial planning-related works in Castilla y León, the IUU has oriented towards a specific type of research tied to the regional rural environment, calling it ‘minor landscapes’. These are the less populated and less visible rural areas, where the natural or cultural heritages are not exceptional compared with others and where the vulnerability of less dynamic places accumulates. However, minor landscapes are places that, beyond their fragility, acquire extraordinary value today. They are common landscapes that are inhabited and used every day. Without them, it is impossible to speak of sustainable territories, of the fight against climate change, of a society’s quest for resilience. By its very nature, the IUU has sought to emphasise the spatial dimension of Castilla y León’s territory in terms of urban and regional planning by proposing a landscape-centred approach. Such an attempt considers the existing populations living in these areas for their potential and not only for their traditional or current trends. It does so through the triple perspective of governance, resilience and quality of life, which thinks of the countryside as a habitat for the future.

There is no universally accepted definition of ‘rural’. Each country may have its own definition, which can range from a simple distinction between urban and non-urban areas to a more complex classification based on several factors, such as primary economic activity, farming or tourism. According to Dasgupta et al. (2014, pp. 618–619), the term ‘rural’ generally refers to open country and small settlements, intended as the contrary or opposite to the term ‘urban’. However, the definition of rural areas is often taken for granted or left undefined in both policy-oriented and scholarly literature, resulting in a process of definition that is fraught with difficulties. In Spain, Article no. 3 of the 45/2007 Act for the Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment indicates that a rural environment is intended as ‘the geographical area formed by the aggregation of municipalities or smaller local entities, defined by the competent authorities, with a population of less than 30,000 inhabitants and a density of less than 100 inhabitants/sq.km’, while a ‘small rural municipality’ is a ‘municipality of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants and integrated into the aforementioned defined rural environment’. A significant datum is the fact that a total of 5,877 out of 8,131 Spanish municipalities (72 percent) have less than 2,000 inhabitants (de las Rivas, 2022b, p. 184).

While the definition of ‘rural environment’ depends on each country, the term has become the focus of public debate in Spain and abroad, especially concerning two of its main problems: depopulation and economic deterioration (ESPON, 2020). Since the mid-20th century, the loss of population in rural communities has been analysed in its various facets and related imbalances, accompanied by a parallel process of abandonment of the built environment. The decline of the most vulnerable and least accessible rural areas in Spain did not stop, even during the expansionary economic cycle. This negative trend and the increase in ageing are evident today, leading to the deterioration of numerous areas with significant heritage and environmental values. Many built complexes are at risk of disappearing. Thus, the quality of conservation in the rural environment, with its diverse situations and values, serves as the primary indicator of its state, extending beyond purely demographic factors. On the one hand, it is not just a question of density; on the other hand, we should not confuse rural with agrarian. For example, in inland Spain, there are very sparsely populated regions with strong agrarian economies.

Contrary to a negative vision of the rural world focused mainly on its problems, other narratives identify the rural milieu as a space of future opportunities. In the wake of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rural environment started to be conceived as a healthier habitat, marking a shift in the debate that promotes an idealised vision while avoiding limitations, such as the weakness of the economic fabric, the scarcity of services or the difficulty of gaining access to housing. For instance, the '130 measures to face the demographic challenge' linked to the Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan advocate that public action in rural environments constitutes a great opportunity to achieve sustainability in all its dimensions: environmental, territorial and human and new opportunities through the ecological and digital transition. Moreover, rural environments comprise a wide variety of situations, and not all rural areas are in decline. In less dynamic rural territories, the crisis is reflected in job and population losses that seriously compromise their future demographics. In some cases, the implementation of new activities, such as housing, can create tensions that lead to imbalances in ecological responsibility and social development. Overall, it is striking to address these imbalances to ensure a sustainable outcome. This is the meaning of the recent research conducted by the IUU, such as the recently completed project, *Territorios Activos*, and the commitment to some places, such as Paredes de Nava, where Prof. de las Rivas has concentrated his interest in the idea of a rural environment that considers the future (de las Rivas, 2022c).

Dialogue:

FC: The rural environment is a challenging theme for spatial planning for several reasons (e.g. it is a place for agriculture and usually suffers from degrowth in population).

JL: We are immersed in a research project that we call 'active territories'. I hope we continue to have financing. I insist that one of the starting ideas is not to confuse the agrarian with the rural. To a large extent, in Spain, such as in Castilla y León, agriculture works. Except in some deeply sloping environments, fields are cultivated, and forests are well maintained. Nevertheless, the villages remain almost empty; they lose population. This is not an isolated phenomenon, as it has been reproduced in most of the cities of inland Spain and in other European countries in the last decade. They are small and medium cities, while some are provincial capitals without great dynamism and with dwindling populations. These cities are deeply linked to their regions. They are part of the rural environment to which they provide a network of services, and their future is transcendent for the future of their regions. In our work, we are increasingly focused on small and medium cities.

FC: Is there a unifier among these four main themes? (It's the landscape.)

JL: Undoubtedly. We are dedicated to spatial planning and insist that landscape leads us directly to the physical and perceived dimensions of space, the territory and the city. However, as González Bernáldez (1981) explained, the landscape is in what we see, but its explanation is in what we do not see. Building upon this explanation in an operational and useful way is our job. We do not see the landscape from [the perspective of] nostalgia or from a simple conservationist desire. While the landscape is a tool for understanding that is connected to territorial analysis, it is also a project tool because the landscape is dynamic and often changing. At the same time, the landscape provides stability to any urban project, rooting it in nature and culture, starting with local geography and history [and] also with people.

As I've said before, I give a lot of value to a small recent work dedicated to a municipality in the county of Tierra de Campos in Palencia, Paredes de Nava. There, a path undertaken in my stays in Milan and Arizona in the 1990s is consolidated through the idea of a 'landscape plan', where, starting from geography, local urban history and ecology, an opportunity arises to think about the territory in an operational manner. I work with my students using this approach.

3.3. Spatial Planning as a Committed Project at The Urban and Regional Scales

The IUU is a provider of innovation in spatial planning tools and applied research in Castilla y León. In an overview of the strategic role of spatial planning, we consider the specific territory of Castilla y León, with a review of the most outstanding works developed by the Institute and how they have generated new knowledge since 1991.

The hypothesis is that the significant issues tied to the evolution of Spanish spatial planning and urban development patterns over the 20th century have led to the elaboration of ideas and works that have served as a turning point in the IUU's trajectory. In fact, despite the adoption of four (1956, 1976, 1992 and 2007) land use planning national laws since the mid-20th century (Calderón, 1994; Keyes et al., 1993; OECD, 2017) and countless regional acts, the design quality has not been the centre-piece of municipal spatial plans across the country, including Castilla y León, due to the rent-seeking approach applied to spatial planning (Fernández Maroto, 2021; de las Rivas & Fernández-Maroto, 2023a). The IUU's reflection on the outputs of such evolution, namely, excessive growth characterised by fragmented urban development and city-making unrelated to the cultural values associated with the spatial and formal dimensions of the territory, has triggered a specific production of knowledge, both theoretical and applied, ultimately shaping the evolution of the research group over time.

Castilla y León is the largest Spanish region located in the centre of the inner plateau, occupying over 18 percent of the country's territory (94,224 km²). It comprises 2,248 municipalities (28 percent of all municipalities at the state level) organised in 9 provinces and has a population of 2,372,640 as of 2022, representing 4.9 percent of the total Spanish population. It has one of the lowest population densities in Europe (25.18 inhabitants/km²). The settlement pattern demonstrates a clear correlation

between the regional geomorphology, including mountains, riverbanks and central plains, and the location of major urban centres. Valladolid, the regional capital, along with the other three largest cities in this system, León, Burgos, and Salamanca, form a virtual tetrahedron that encompasses the most significant regional nodes, thereby structuring its central space. The concentration of its population in a few mid-sized urban areas around the main cities resulted in the gradual depopulation of rural sectors whose economic activities traditionally centred on the cultivation of cereals, with the exception of certain specific locations that are connected to historical corridors and/or strategic infrastructures (de las Rivas, 2010).

The singularity of this territory is reflected in several advantages and disadvantages, such as the rich network of medium-sized cities, a society averse to innovation and the prevalence of a conservative profile, limited economic and urban dynamism and a vast rural environment, all of which have played significant roles in the IUU's activities. At the research centre, de las Rivas has engaged in spatial planning work at various scales across Castilla y León, including leading teams in developing applied research and drafting municipal plans and development plans, with the introduction of new tools. The applied interdisciplinary effort has occurred in collaboration with other professionals, and from their efforts, the research centre has achieved small successes in its commitment to the regional scale. During the 1990s, the establishment of the autonomous government in Castilla y León created an environment conducive to new ideas and planning experiences. The IUU, based in the regional capital, was able to develop new work opportunities. Certain regional officials, such as Manuel Tuero (head of the studies service of the Ministry of Development of Castilla y León Government) and Ángel Marinero Peral (chief secretary of the Environment, Housing and Land Use Planning of Castilla y León Government) recognized the IUU's potential and enlisted its help in studying and addressing critical issues in Castilla y León.

The initial projects, such as the municipal spatial planning regulations in the province of Burgos and Valladolid, the Special Plan of the Castilla Canal (Álvarez Mora, 1992) and the railroad system, were primarily regional in scope. This led to an interest in territorial planning on different scales. In the wake of the need to launch a legal framework for urban and regional planning, the IUU collaborated in drafting the 10/1998 Act on regional planning and the 5/1999 Act on urbanism. However, the most significant effort was to promote the implementation of spatial planning instruments at the metropolitan scale and verify their feasibility or effectiveness in the emerging context of accelerated peri-urban growth. Parallel to the Regional Planning Act, the Castilla y León Council entrusted the IUU to draft a pilot plan for Valladolid and its urban area named 'Territorial Planning Guidelines for Valladolid and Surroundings' (DOTVaEnt). The DOTVaEnt applied the landscape dimension to physical planning learned by de las Rivas (1998) from its experiences in Italy and the USA. This primordial experience triggered the capacity of the IUU to develop thematic works on different scales, such as the Segovia Territorial Planning Guidelines (de las Rivas, 2006c) and the Commercial Equipment Plan (de las Rivas, 2007), as well as the presence of historic centres within the region (de las Rivas, 2009). At the same time, the IUU drafted municipal spatial plans (Villamuriel de Cerrato, 1993–95; Peñafiel, 1994–98; Zamora, 1996–2000, 2004–05 and 2008–09; Ávila, 2002–04; and Ponferrada, 2000–07), contributing to the modification of existing ones (e.g. Valladolid Municipal Spatial Plan 2012–15) and thematic spatial planning works (Management Plan for the Old City, 2008–10). These were all conducted by extended teams involving professionals trained within the Institute and received external

support from specialists, such as the applied statistics company Cylstat and engineering companies like COTESA.

The contents of these were inspired by the critical (and theoretical) perspective on the extensive urbanisation processes that occurred in Spain in the last part of the 20th century until the 2007–08 real estate bubble. The fundamental goal was to provide sustainable interventions based on the landscape as a unifying element, along with the preservation of values associated with the cultural and natural heritage of the region. All of the projects were mainly implemented at the supra-municipal scale.

In fact, the Institute's work has run parallel to the evolution of urban planning in Castilla y León. At first, it was linked to the development of regional legislation, the Territorial Planning Act (1998) and the Urban Planning Act (1999), and with these, the deployment of its tools. Secondly, after the financial crisis of 2008, the IUU attempted to collaborate in the prudent reactivation of the real estate sector with public action on land through the Urban Action Plans. However, its prominence is acquired through the impulse of urban regeneration, in which, as has already been seen, it actively participates.

In its commitment to the fight against rural decline, the IUU also collaborates in territorial planning initiatives. Indeed, in 2011, the Castilla y León Council launched a new planning model in the context of transversal crisis and lack of resources due to the austerity policy and structural reforms at that time (de las Rivas & Marinero-Peral, 2017). This model is based on two main assumptions. The first is the impellent need to strengthen the weakest element of the system (i.e. the minor centres in rural territory) in order to support a new regional governance that is more suited to the contingent socio-economic conditions of the region. The second is the discovery of the opportunities tied to the integration of spatial planning and inter-municipal cooperation to overcome the obsolete administrative organisation based on municipalities, counties, provinces and regions, as well as the inflexible and too generic and/or sectorial planning instruments. One of the great territorial problems of Castilla y León derives from its municipal map. The region has 25 percent of the municipalities in Spain but has less than 5 percent of its population. More than 1,700 municipalities have fewer than 500 inhabitants. In this context, the reflection on the grouping of municipalities to provide their services more effectively is permanent. This is a difficult debate loaded with political and cultural nuances. This challenge was dealt with by de las Rivas in his research for supporting the region in the elaboration of new inter-municipal structures based on territorial patterns, which are oriented to local collaboration in their services management across Castilla y León (to provide, e.g. solid waste or water supply management). The proposal of the so-called Basic Units for Territorial Governance and Services (*Unidades Básicas de Ordenación y Servicios del Territorio*, UBOST) responded to this need, thereby completing a map of territorial units that have received a great deal of resistance in its implementation (Paris & de las Rivas, 2018).

Dialogue:

FC: Two of your most outstanding ideas have been the conviction that (i) the evolution of urban regeneration objectives should be at the forefront of spatial planning and (ii) the rediscovery of the ways in which the territorial dimension of contemporary urban space needs a broad adjustment of spatial planning. How has the IUU integrated these two aspects into actual practice at the urban and regional scales?

JL: The notion of urban regeneration was already implicit in works as diverse as those of Colin Buchanam, William H. White or Campos Venuti. Patrick Geddes himself, when speaking of urban 'surgery', thought at the beginning of the last century of a prudent transformation of the old centre of Edinburgh. The same could be said of Gustavo Giovannoni's *diradamento* (lightening or thinning out). The priority of any urban intervention is regenerative transformation. Without questioning the need to create new neighbourhoods, always present, the euphoria of urban expansion hid the regenerative practice, which resurfaced in the 1970s as a reaction to the destruction of historic centres. The expansionary model fails when its socio-economic foundation fails. Today, the question of sustainable and higher-quality urbanism finds an opportunity in this failure. We are in it.

But the territorial dimension of urban planning is late, with brilliant antecedents in Spain, although in the minority. In Spain, since the 1979 town council elections, urban planning has been an issue led by town councils. We were pioneers to the extent that the context of consolidation of the Autonomous Communities favoured the regional scale. Both in this matter and in that of urban regeneration, we were simply attentive to what was happening. The research on historic centres encouraged particular attention to existing urban heritage. Regional logic led me to propose some work to those responsible for the Autonomous Community. So, in the second half of the 1990s and thanks to Ángel Marinero Peral (who is responsible for urban planning in the region), we can approach the intermediate, metropolitan or urban area scale using an experimental approach.

FC: The IUU was established in Valladolid, the largest city of the Castilla y León Autonomous Community. How did the characteristics of this city and this region influence IUU-led research and practice?

JL: Valladolid is a city of a certain size; it is in the physical centre of Castilla y León, the administrative centre and largest city of the region. Castilla y León is the largest region (autonomous community) in Spain; it is a region full of historical heritage, from the Camino de Santiago to cities and landscapes included in the world heritage list. But it is a rural region with medium or small cities. From the beginning, I made the personal decision to concentrate the work of what has been the IUU_Lab on the territories and cities of this region, with an unformulated but firm commitment. Faced with a great variety of studies and planning works, the territory and the cities of Castilla y León have provided them with unity and coherence. It has not meant a reduction of objectives, but a concretization in the study field combined with broad, global and innovative research, which is attentive to the themes and problems of the discipline.

FC: Going deeper into this aspect, what were the main advantages and disadvantages of working in a peripheral region, such as Castilla y León?

JL: The main advantage was derived from the void that existed in our field within the region. While history and geography have had long traditions of regional studies in the universities of the region of Castilla y León (Salamanca, Valladolid, León, etc.), territorial and urban planning have always depended on external groups and professionals who are almost always from Madrid. Creating a specialised research centre at the heart of the community was a success. Consequently, accumulating a list of works and a baggage of knowledge has been viable and generally welcome.

But it is also true that working on the periphery of large cities and large knowledge centres makes it difficult not only to recognise but also to carry out the simple dissemination of results. Beyond the specialised journals, whose readerships are limited to small groups of specialists, the field of urban planning in the architecture and engineering schools in Spain is very small when compared to that in Italy or France. Thus far, urban geography has led to research in urban studies. The technical perspective has been closely linked to specialists in administrative law, while the practice of architects and engineers has concentrated on development planning. In any case, there has been a group of professors in Madrid, some already deceased, such as Fernando Roch and Miguel Ángel Troitiño, or active ones, such as Ramón López de Lucio, Agustín Hernández Aja, José Fariña and Rafael Mata, who have valued our work and helped spread it.

FC: Would you say that the IUU-led research and practice has created an innovation in the urban culture of the Castilla y León region? DOTVaEnt?

JL: I am not impartial here. The Valladolid Territorial Planning Guidelines (DOTVaEnt) project is not only a great team effort but also an innovative project recognised with the ECTP award. The experience of coordinating this work was formative for me. It created in our immediate environment the conviction that we could tackle complex work, that there were ways to introduce the environmental dimension into the heart of spatial planning and that interdisciplinary cooperation was viable. If we recover the book of DOTVaEnt, published in early 1998, we can see the scope of the work. It is something unrepeatable due to the intensity of the effort and the ambition of the objectives; [it is] full of naiveté. At first, they were barely valued, but over time, they were, thus recognising their usefulness and influence in improving local urban planning.

Local environments are often rarefied by disputes and ideological clichés. In the case of the guidelines, some who showed enthusiasm for their ecological substrate try to subject them to oblivion today. But this has not led to a relevant local debate on specific techniques and solutions, apart from exceptions generated by our own team. Therefore, national and international recognition has been key. The guidelines are still valid and useful, particularly as a source of ideas for developing initiatives to improve the peri-urban landscape.

FC: The IUU has been awarded many prizes over the last two decades. What are the most innovative works that the IUU has provided at the national and international levels?

JL: I have already answered in part. Our peripheral condition weighs a lot when it comes to measuring our possible influence. However, our simple existence shows that it is possible to work rigorously without great human and economic resources. Timely recognition serves to provide the Institute with credibility. As I said, the challenge today is to incorporate younger generations into our project. It is not easy; we cannot grow excessively. Yet, this is an advantage, and for it, we continue and will continue to be small. In the face of a globalised world where large urban agglomerations remain victorious, we are trying to demonstrate that small is beautiful.

The soul of Europe cannot be understood without its extraordinary network of small and medium cities, without its rich and intense population, which is deeply rooted in the territory. Europe is not a cultural, gastronomic or theme park. In Castilla y León, despite the demographic decline of what has been called ‘empty Spain’, we are working towards the possibility of greater and better interactions between rural and urban. The 2020 pandemic strengthened a different reading of sustainability—one that is allied to a more resilient quality of life. Territories like ours can be territories of opportunity for different development models—allies of a more responsible, better-adapted future. What type of innovation do we need? We keep working.

4. EPILOGUE: A QUIET LOOK AT CURRENT URBAN PLANNING

It is not easy to conclude a lengthy reflection that has been intended to be panoramic. Urban planning and urban studies in general work in a changing framework. We are experiencing the deployment of tools that are capable of relating and spatialising large amounts of information (Big Data). However, given the disruptive expectation of artificial intelligence, the evidence is still the generation of partial knowledge without progress in an innovative and integrative understanding of urban phenomena. There does not seem to be a greater capacity for action or improvement in decision-making to the extent that urban intelligence seems subject to a situation of analysis paralysis. At the same time, the reality of an urbanity overwhelmed by its territorial dimension encourages the reading of the city as a great infrastructure, thus supporting a heterogeneous urban reality while displacing its architecture towards the landscape.

For the closing segment, Ana Ruiz and Federico Camerin proposed that I think about some topics and ideas that they considered useful. These issues have already come up in the conversation. It would try to provide a glimpse, just briefly, into the factors that characterise urban planning today and perhaps in the immediate future.

The role of architects in spatial planning is the first consideration. In my opinion, this is a resolved issue. Cities need architecture. Habitats take place in spaces, and societies and individuals aspire to shape them. Another issue is that the contemporary city does not seem to have any formal control strategy, even if it happens in a context overloaded with rules. The apparent formal disorder coexists with a regulatory universe that conditions any activity in the city. In Western cities, chaos is apparent; it depends on factors of scale and perception. For this reason, new technologies are very useful but also comprise an architecture loaded with new sensibility and capabilities. A neo-baroque scheme can no longer imagine the city; instead, a geographical and ecological approach is essential, with a landscape dimension capable of playing with the scales of the city, its structure and its components. Beyond applying the physics of chaos or complex systems to the urban, we must understand the phenomena without confusing them with their appearance. Reyner Banham intuited this more than 50 years ago in Los Angeles with his 'four ecologies' of infrastructural and landscape dimension. Architecture offers overall readings and envisions the future to the extent that it works in space. The time dimension, which is more related to planning, is another thing.

But how should we act? This omnipresent question does not have a single valid answer. I respond to Ana and Federico's concerns by highlighting E. F. Schumacher's well-known notion that 'small is beautiful'. Far from the new monumentality of authoritarian capitalism, the architecture of the city must be rooted in a powerful collective culture for it to be relevant. The main place of architecture is the society that makes it possible. In 1996, economist Alfred E. Kahn coined the idea of the 'tyranny of small decisions', which was later proven useful by ecologist W. Odum to demonstrate the causes of environmental deterioration. The strategic reality for the future, within a framework of scarcity of resources and environmental responsibility, inhabits the ordinary, thus providing a coherent, precise and efficient response to each daily issue or problem. It is a common conviction that European cities already have a shape and that the priority action must consist of their improvement (urban regeneration), which requires a responsible intervention model. Without denying large projects, when necessary, the key in the city is not to neglect the 'small'.

At the beginning of our conversations, we asked ourselves what we understood today by 'urbanism'. In our schools, I perceive at least three ways of approaching that are not always convergent. First, there is the scholarly path, in which figures such as Richard Sennet stand out, who with great insights opened up to concrete proposals in his latest work. Less attractive are those of critical geography, perhaps descriptive in excess. His paradigm would be the ideas of David Harvey, who adheres to urban problems that tend to ignore concrete solutions, except the conclusion of the capitalist model.

Second, we have the technical path, that of practical urban planners, with its poles in the service to the public administration and in the exercise of the profession, dominated today by large companies. The tools are the technologies of the construction industry, the real state economy and administrative law (with its bureaucracy). Architects largely remain in the service of the current system, conditioned by official policies and their paradigms. Thus, it is quite moving to witness architects of the stature of Renzo Piano or Norman Foster talk about the sustainability of unsustainable projects, such as the Shard in London or the Masdar in Abu Dhabi.

Finally, we have a third intermediate approach, which is related to innovative knowledge and real achievements. Let us think about results with limited influence but with broad recognition. I think of the document *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (1999), led by Richard Rogers, or of the journey that goes from *Design with Nature* (1969) by Ian McHarg to *Urban Ecology* (2014) by R.T.T. Forman. I do not just refer to the best of urban culture, to the pioneers of sustainability, such as Christopher Alexander, Ralf Erskine, Frei Otto or Salvador Rueda, but also to good examples of city policies in Europe, such as Barcelona or Bilbao, or to the neighbourhood regeneration spearheaded by Vauban or Hammarby, among others. Certainly, I also think of the latest works of great urban planning thinkers, such as Peter Hall, Patsy Healey or Alberto Magnaghi, in their intelligent re-discovery of the 'lost art of urban planning', as Peter Hall stated.

The magazine 'Progressive Architecture', with the title 'Urban Design' (1956), collected the debates of an interdisciplinary meeting organised by José Luis Sert at Harvard, in which he proposed the need for urban design as a new discipline resulting from the meeting of three fields of knowledge: urban planning, architecture and landscape architecture. This meeting is still necessary. As an architect, I have always defended the potential of 'planning by design', which is supported by the Sert convergence proposed. For me, relying on urban design means relying on the best aspects of urban culture. It requires a deep sense of said culture and a profound knowledge of urban history. The city form is not spontaneous; it does not explain itself. Specific problems in different societies, animated by motivations and knowledge, led to each of the urban ensembles that we admire today. This process imposes a heavy burden on urban design (on any project in the city), usually resolved by architects with trained intuition, experience and talent. We tend to overvalue the form and avoid criticism. However, in the academe, knowledge and critical reflection must prevail. For this reason, beyond situation analysis, we try to defend the integrated study of the diverse urban context features and its complex nature.

In my teaching, I try to explain urban design at the service of the 'architecture of the city'. With knowledge and talent, isolated architecture resolves a programme or a situation. The results, effects or impacts are assumed. However, as it is responsible for the results, the architecture of the city demands something more. With a long-term commitment to society and its future, the architecture of the city must collaborate with planning and landscaping. In this regard, glossing, via Isaiah Berlin to the Greek poet Archilochus, neither the great fox's talent (tactic) nor the intensity of the hedgehog's goal (strategic) is enough... the city is a collective project.

Annex 1. List of R&D&i Projects, Works and Collaborations

1. Reformist Urban Planning

R&D&i

1.1 *Las Áreas de Rehabilitación Integrada y sus efectos en la Recuperación de los Espacios Urbanos Históricos* (in English: Integrated Rehabilitation Areas and their effects on the Recovery of Historic Urban Spaces) (2014-2017)

1.2. *Sauvegarde et développement des abords des monuments et sites protégés en Europe* (in English: Safeguarding and developing the surroundings of protected monuments and sites in Europe) (2000-2001)

Applied Research

1.3 *Atlas de Conjuntos Históricos de Castilla y León* (in English: Atlas of Historical Sites in Castilla y León) (2005-2007)

2. Urban and Regional Planning

R&D&i

2.1 *Políticas de comercio, renovación urbana y mejora de la calidad de vida en las ciudades* (in English: Commercial policies, urban renewal and improvement of the quality of life in cities) (2002-2003)

Applied Research

2.2 *Elaboración de documento de Directrices para la adaptación e impulso de la Agenda Urbana Española en Castilla y León en un contexto de recuperación y resiliencia* (in English: Preparation of a document of Guidelines for the adaptation and promotion of the Spanish Urban Agenda in Castilla y León in a context of recovery and resilience) (2021)

2.3 *Redacción de las Normas Urbanísticas Territoriales de Ávila* (in English: Drafting of Ávila's Territorial Urban Development Regulations) (2019-ongoing)

2.4 *Estudio de Estrategias para el impulso de un nuevo modelo de política de vivienda en Castilla y León* (in English: Study of Strategies for the promotion of a new housing policy model in Castilla y León) (2017)

2.5 *Colaboración en la Revisión del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Valladolid* (in English: Collaboration for the Modification of Valladolid municipal spatial plan) (2012-2015)

2.6 *Redacción de un Estudio Técnico de Soporte para el proceso de negociación de un Pacto para la Ordenación del Territorio de Castilla y León* (in English: Drafting of a Technical Support Study for the negotiation process of a pact for the Regional Planning of Castilla y León) (2012)

2.7 *Coordinación, desarrollo y gestión del Programa Regional de Actuaciones de Urbanización (PRAU)* (in English: Coordination, Development and Management of the Regional Program for Urbanization Actions) (2009-2011)

2.8 *Plan de Gestión de la Ciudad Vieja de Salamanca* (in English: Management Plan for Salamanca's Old City) (2008-2010)

2.9 *Elaboración de una Auditoría Urbana sobre el estado de las ciudades de Castilla y León* (in English: Elaboration of an Urban Audit on the State of the Cities of Castilla y León) (2008-2009)

2.10 *Finalización de los Trabajos de Revisión del PGOU de Zamora para su Adaptación al Reglamento de Urbanismo de Castilla y León* (in English: Completion of the modification of Zamora municipal spatial plan for its adaptation to the Castilla y León Regional Planning Regulations) (2008-2009)

2.11 *Revisión del Documento de Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno (DOTVAENT)* (in English: Revision of the Land Use Planning Guidelines Document for Valladolid and its Surrounding Area) (2006-2009)

2.12 *Elaboración de las Directrices Complementarias del Documento de Directrices de Ordenación del Territorio de Castilla y León* (in English: Elaboration of the Complementary Guidelines to the Castilla y León's Planning Guidelines) (2006-2012)

- 2.13 *Dirección Técnica de la Revisión y Adaptación del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Ponferrada (León)* (in English: Technical Direction of the Modification and Adaptation of the Ponferrada's municipal spatial plan) (2005-2007)
- 2.14 *Servicios Técnicos de Adaptación del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Zamora en el ámbito del Suelo Rústico* (in English "Technical Services for the adaptation of the Zamora's municipal spatial plan in rural land") (2004-2005)
- 2.15 *Adaptación del Plan General de Villamuriel de Cerrato (Palencia) a la Ley de Urbanismo de Castilla y León* (in English "Adaptation of the Villamuriel de Cerrato municipal spatial plan to the Castilla y León's Planning Act) (2004-2005)
- 2.16 *Estudio Previo para la Redacción del "Plan General de Equipamiento Comercial de Castilla y León"* (in English Preliminary study for the drafting of the General Plan of Commercial Equipment in Castilla y León") (2003-2004)
- 2.17 *Adaptación del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Ávila a la Ley de Urbanismo de Castilla y León* (in English: Adaptation of the Avila municipal spatial plan to the Castilla y León's Planning Act) (2002-2004)
- 2.18 *Documento final de las Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Segovia y Entorno* (in English: Final document of the Land Use Planning Guidelines for Segovia and its Surrounding Area) (2002-2003)
- 2.19 *Bases para un Plan Director de Mejora Urbana y Puesta en valor: Gamonal 2003* (in English: Bases for a Master Plan for Urban Improvement and Enhancement: Gamonal 2003) (2001)
- 2.20 *Directrices de Ordenación del Área Funcional de Palencia (DOAPa)* (in English: Planning Guidelines for Palencia Functional Area) (2000-2003)
- 2.21 *Directrices de Ordenación del Área Funcional de Zamora (DOAZa)* (in English: Planning Guidelines for Zamora Functional Area) (2000-2003)
- 2.22 *Guías Urbanísticas para la Adaptación y Mejora de las actividades comerciales en el Centro Histórico de Valladolid* (in English: Planning Guidelines for the Adaptation and Improvement of Commercial Activities in the Historic Center of Valladolid) (2000-2001)
- 2.23 *Modificaciones Puntuales del PGOU de Villamuriel De Cerrato (Palencia)* (in English: Specific Modifications of the Villamuriel de Cerrato municipal spatial plan) (2000-2001)
- 2.24 *Documento Final de las Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno (DOTVaEnt)* (in English: Final Document of the Land Use Planning Guidelines for Valladolid and its Surrounding Area) (2000)
- 2.25 *Proyecto de Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Segovia y Entorno (DOTSE)* (in English: Project for the Land Use Planning Guidelines for Segovia and its Surrounding Area) (1999-2001)
- 2.26 *Plan Parcial P-3: "Virgen Del Milagro" en Villamuriel en Cerrato (Palencia)* (in English: Partial Plan P-3: "Virgen del Milagro" in Villamuriel de Cerrato) (1996-1998)
- 2.27 *Avance de Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno (DOTVaEnt)* (in English: Progress of the Land Use Planning Guidelines for Valladolid and its Surrounding Area) (1996-1998)
- 2.28 *Asistencia Técnica para la Redacción del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana en Zamora* (in English: Technical assistance for the drafting of the Zamora municipal spatial plan) (1996-2000)
- 2.29 *Revisión del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Peñafiel* (in English: Revision of Peñafiel municipal spatial plan) (1994-1998)
- 2.30. *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Villamuriel de Cerrato* (in English: Villamuriel de Cerrato municipal spatial plan) (1993-1995)

2.31 *Competitividad industrial y medio urbano en la ciudad de Valladolid* (in English: Industrial Competitiveness and the Urban Environment in the City of Valladolid) (1992-1993)

2.32 *Normas Subsidiarias de Serrada (Valladolid)* (in English: Subsidiary Norms of Serrada) (1991)

2.33 *Normas Subsidiarias de Planeamiento Municipal con Ámbito Provincial. Provincia de Valladolid* (in English: Subsidiary Norms of Municipal Spatial Planning with Provincial Scope. Province of Valladolid) (1991-1994)

2.34 *Normas Subsidiarias de Planeamiento Municipal con Ámbito Provincial. Provincia de Burgos* (in English: Subsidiary Norms of Municipal Spatial Planning with Provincial Scope. Province of Burgos) (1991-1994)

3. Urban Rehabilitation and Regeneration

R&D&I

3.1 *Diseño y propuesta de una herramienta de desarrollo I+D+i de la Estrategia de Regeneración Urbana en Castilla y León* (in English “Design and proposal of an R&D development tool for the Urban Regeneration Strategy in Castilla y León”) (2018)

3.2 *Modificación del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Segovia para desarrollar el Sector de Suelo Urbano No Consolidado denominado “NC-G-09-S Acuartelamiento Leones de Castilla”* (in English “Modification of the municipal spatial plan of Segovia to develop the Unconsolidated Urban Land Sector called NC-G-09-S Acuartelamiento Leones de Castilla) (2016-2022)

3.3 *Elaboración de la Estrategia de Regeneración Urbana en Castilla y León (ERUCYL)* (in English “Preparation of the Urban Regeneration Strategy in Castilla y León) (2014-2015)

3.4 *Plan de Rehabilitación Integral de Castilla y León (PRICYL)* (in English “Integral Rehabilitation Plan of Castilla y León”) (2009-2010)

4. Rural Environment

R&D&I

4.1 *Territorios activos. Diseño y desarrollo de un Living Lab para la caracterización e impulso sostenible de iniciativas innovadoras en el medio rural de Castilla y León* (in English “Active territories. Designing and developing a Living Lab for the characterization and sustainable promotion of innovative initiatives in the rural environment of Castilla y León) (2020-2023)

4.2 *El Paisaje Urbano Histórico como recurso de planificación en los conjuntos históricos menores de la España interior* (in English “The Historic Urban Landscape as a planning resource in the minor historic areas of inner Spain) (2019-2022)

4.3 *El paisaje como estrategia de integración y puesta en valor de los recursos ambientales y patrimoniales en los municipios menores del medio rural de Castilla y León* (in English “Landscape as a strategy for the integration and enhancement of environmental and heritage resources in the smaller rural municipalities of Castilla y León”) (2018-2020)

Applied Research

4.4 *Proyecto piloto del Plan de Acción de la Agenda Urbana de Peñafiel* (in English: Pilot Project for the Action Plan of Peñafiel’s Urban Agenda) (2022)

4.5 *Una estrategia innovadora de vivienda rural: por un pueblo vivo* (in English: An innovative rural housing strategy: for a living village) (2019)

4.6 *Proyecto de revalorización del municipio y su patrimonio (Valbuena de Duero)* (in English: Project for the enhancing of the municipality and its heritage – Valbuena de Duero) (2019)

4.7 *Aplicación de la Normativa Urbanística de Castilla y León en los Municipios Menores de 500 habitantes. Criterios de Ordenación Urbana* (in English: Application of the Town Planning Regulations of Castilla y León in Municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants. Planning Criteria) (2016)

4.8 *Análisis sobre los Principios de Ordenación y los Instrumentos Urbanísticos para la Protección de la Arquitectura Tradicional en Pequeños Municipios Rurales de España* (in English: Analysis of Management Principles and Urban Planning Instruments for the Protection of Traditional Architecture in Small Rural Municipalities in Spain) (2016)

4.9 *Redacción de un Estudio Técnico de Soporte para el proceso de negociación de un Pacto para la Ordenación del Territorio de Castilla y León* (in English: Drafting of a Technical Support Study for the negotiation process of a pact for the Castilla y León's Regional Planning) (2012)

4.10 *Inventario Cultural en Tierra de Campos* (in English: Tierra de Campos cultural inventory) (2001)

5. Mobility

R&D&I

5.1 *Universidad, Ciudad y Transporte en Valladolid: Estrategias de Movilidad Sostenible asociadas al desarrollo y consolidación del Polo Universitario Norte* (in English: University, City and Transport in Valladolid: Sustainable Mobility Strategies associated with the development and consolidation of the North University Pole) (2008-2010)

Applied Research

5.2 *Realización del estudio denominado: Transporte público y desarrollo urbano en el Espacio Metropolitano Central Asturiano* (in English: Study entitled: Public Transportation and Urban Development in the Central Asturian Metropolitan Area) (2005-2006)

5.3 *Informe "Desarrollo Territorial E Infraestructuras de Transporte en Castilla y León"* (in English: Report: Territorial Development and Transport Infrastructure in Castilla y León") (2001)

5.4 *El ferrocarril y las ciudades en Castilla y León* (in English: Railroads and cities in Castilla y León) (1994)

6. Urban Energy

R&D&I

6.1 Institutionalized Integrated Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (2ISECAP) (2021-2024)

6.2 A Systematic Approach for Inspiring and Training Energy-Spatial-Socioeconomic Sustainability to Public Authorities (INTENSSS-PA) (2016-2018)

Applied Research

6.3 *Elaboración de documento base de la Estrategia para la Transición Energética en las ciudades de Castilla y León en consonancia con el desarrollo del proyecto INTENSSS-PA* (in English "Elaboration of the base document of the Strategy for Energy Transition in the Castilla y León's cities in accordance to the INTENSSS-PA project") (2019-2020)

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TABLES

Table 1. Goals and main outcomes for students of the ‘Spatial Planning and City Project’ course.
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Table 2. Definition of competences (modules and credits) mandated by the Spanish government.
Source: Elaboration by Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin based on Ministerio de Educación (2010)

Table 3. The intersection between activities carried out by IUU and themes. Source: elaboration by F. Camerin and A. Ruiz-Varona (2024), based on (P. Healey, 1991; de las Rivas et al., 2022), and the official website of IUU (<https://iuu.uva.es/inicio/>).

Table 4. The connection between de las Rivas’ coordinated applied work and the types of relationship between planning research and practice. Source: Elaboration by Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin based on P. Healey (1991a), de las Rivas et al. (2022) and the official website of the IUU (<https://iuu.uva.es/inicio/>).

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This booklet was conceived and carried out collaboratively by the three authors, with constant updating and consultation. In this context, Section 4 is attributed to Juan Luis de las Rivas, Section 2 to Ana Ruiz-Varona and Section 3 to Federico Camerin. In addition, Section 1 is equally attributed to Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin. The roles played by the contributors to the research outputs according to the categorisation of CRediT are as follows: Juan Luis de las Rivas (JL), Ana Ruiz-Varona (AR) and Federico Camerin (FC): Conceptualisation: JL, AR and FC; Data curation: JL, AR and FC; Formal analysis: AR and FC; Funding acquisition: JL; Investigation: AR and FC; Methodology: AR and FC; Project administration: JL; Resources: JL; Software: AR and FC; Supervision: JL; Validation: JL; Visualisation: AR; Writing – original draft: JL, AR and FC; and Writing – review and editing: JL, AR and FC.

AESOP YA Conversations in the Planning Booklet Series

Juan Luis de las Rivas, Ana Ruiz-Varona and Federico Camerin

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Juan Luis de las Rivas Sanz is Full Professor of Urban Planning and Design and Director of the School of Architecture at the University of Valladolid (Spain). He frequently collaborates with regional and local authorities as a planning consultant and currently leads the IUU_Lab, a research group specializing in spatial planning and urban design. The group has carried out projects for various cities and urban regions—including Burgos, Ponferrada, and Zamora—as well as for several Spanish autonomous communities such as Castilla y León, Asturias, and Extremadura. Additionally, IUU_Lab has been involved in initiatives commissioned by Spanish ministries and regional governments, with a focus on innovation in sustainable urban and regional planning.

Professor de las Rivas is the author or co-author of over ten monographs in the fields of regional planning, urban design, and architecture. He is also the Spanish translator of Ian McHarg's seminal work *Design with Nature* (Barcelona, 2000). He has served as a visiting professor at numerous universities across Europe, the United States, and Latin America, participating in undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs.

His research explores the interplay between nature and urban design, grounded in the architectural foundations of planning. In 2002, his project *Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno*—urban guidelines for the metropolitan area—received the Fourth European Urban and Regional Planning Award from the European Council of Town Planners (ECTP). Another of his projects, involving the regeneration of two postwar neighborhoods, received an honorable mention in the 2003 Gubbio International Prize.

This booklet emerges from a series of discussions held over the past two years between the authors and Professor de las Rivas. At the early stages of their academic careers, the authors had the opportunity to engage with him on critical topics such as the dialectic between place and landscape, the contradictions inherent in planning practices and urban culture, and the renewed vision of urban planning as a creative and interpretive discipline.

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