

Redeveloping military land into affordable housing through a public-public partnership. The case of Valladolid's La Rubia barracks

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Abstract

This study examines the complex challenges inherent in the public-public partnership established by the Spanish government in 2023 between SEPES and the Ministry of Defence. The primary objective of this partnership is to repurpose decommissioned military sites for affordable housing, thereby fostering socially equitable urban regeneration. The transformation of these areas would necessitate enabling specific institutional aspects of planning governance (i.e. the rules, laws, and procedural requirements), as well as the possibilities opened by community practices and actors (co-)operating within these structural settings. By scrutinise the case of Valladolid's La Rubia barracks, the research uncovers the complex interplay between the stakeholders involved if ways forward are to be found in challenging the institutional capacity to achieve the public interest.

Keywords: urban regeneration; urban governance; institutional capacity; public interest; land-use planning.

Introduction

In recent decades, the progressive demilitarisation of certain territories, including Spain, has resulted in a significant amount of land left underused or abandoned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). These include different kinds of facilities (e.g., barracks, batteries, manoeuvre fields, and warehouses) spread across the territory, located in urban, peripheral and non-urban sectors, so their management has become a subject of increasing debate in the fields of territorial planning, urban sustainability and democratic governance (Touchton and Ashley, 2019). Due to the difficulties tied to the redevelopment of such land, often conceptualised as specific type of brownfields (Bednář et al., 2024), the institutional capacity of performing appropriate solutions for enabling urban regeneration processes plays a remarkable role to foster appropriate sustainable urban development (Ural & Severcan, 2022).

A solution for triggering public benefits from disused military land and unlock many initiatives currently in stand-by, the Spanish Government launched in May 2023 an innovative public-public partnership (Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana, 2023a). It regards the collaboration between two state entities, SEPES¹ and the MoD, for devoting currently abandoned military facilities for residential use, particularly aimed to increasing the presence of affordable housing across the country². The initiative encompasses the redevelopment of 8.25-million-m² 50 MoD-owned assets, facilitating the construction of 19,876 affordable housing units in 34 municipalities within 15 of Spain's 17 Autonomous Communities (Figure 1), with an estimated public investment of €620 million. This project aligns with the broader state-led "Affordable Rental Housing Plan," which seeks to utilize public land for social housing development, ensuring equitable access to adequate housing as enshrined in the Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution³. The implementation of this specific public-public partnership entails the transfer of MoD land to SEPES, which is responsible for enabling participatory and inclusive land readjustment while integrating private-sector stakeholders into the redevelopment process.

¹ SEPES is the State Public Land Entity, Entidad Estatal de Suelo in Spanish, was launched in 1965 and it currently depends on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda.

² This partnership, in turn, derived from the 2022 agreement between MITMA and SEPES to promote a national plan for affordable or social rental housing named "Affordable Rental Housing Scheme (Plan de viviendas para el alquiler asequible) (Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana, 2022).

³ Article 47 states "All Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish appropriate standards in order to make this right effective, regulating land use in accordance with the general interest in order to prevent speculation. The community shall have a share in the benefits accruing from the town-planning policies of public bodies" (Senado de España, 2024).

Successively, private investors are predicted to intervene to implement the project within the planning guidelines established for the former military land.

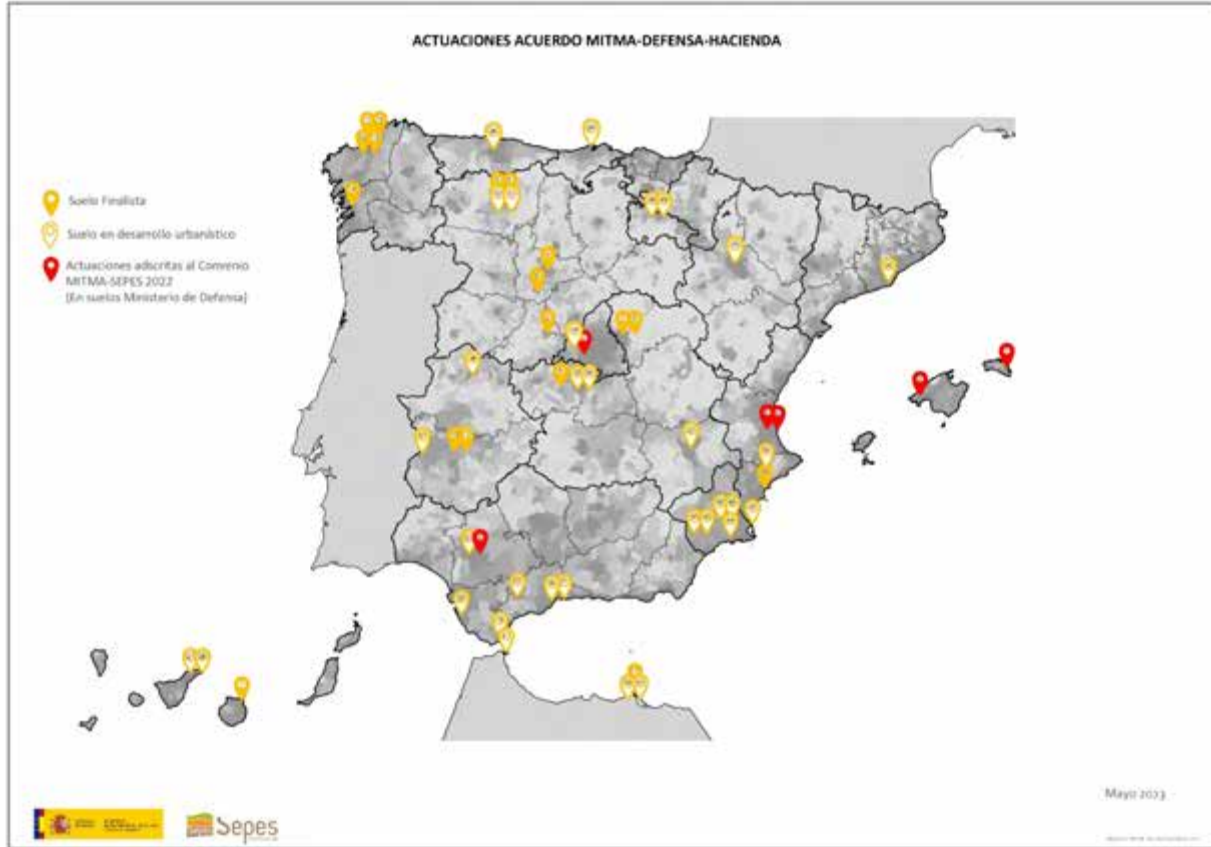


Figure 1. The map of the (*suelo finalista* is "land ready for urban development", *suelo en desarrollo urbanístico* is "land with ongoing urban development works", and *actuaciones adscritas al Convenio MITMA-SEPES 2022* corresponds to actions tied to the 2022 MITMA-SEPES agreement). Source: Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana (2023b).

This partnership constitutes a novel and paradigmatic example of how institutional capacity and the public interest can –and should– be articulated in the management of state assets, especially for the abandoned land that can be repurposed into sustainable and socially equitable housing solutions. This is even more urgent in the context of mounting territorial imbalances across Spain (Adalet McGowan and San Millán, 2019), along with real estate pressures and widespread challenges to accessing housing (Bonshoms-Guzmán, 2023).

In this context, both SEPES and the MoD occupy a position of considerable influence within the state apparatus, as they are equipped with legal, technical and financial resources that enable them to intervene in the territory with a strategic planning logic. Nevertheless, this capacity is neither uniform nor free of tensions, as it operates within a complex legal framework and in an ecosystem of actors, including local administrations, autonomous communities, private promoters and social entities, with diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. For instance, After the Spanish Ministry of Transport, Mobility, and Urban Agenda (MITMA) converted into the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda (*Ministerio de Vivienda y Agenda Urbana* in Spanish, MIVAU) in 2023, SEPES underwent a reorganisation process to become the State Public Land and Affordable Housing Entity focused on converting unused public land into public housing stock, which is still ongoing (SEPES, 2025). The consequence of this long-standing process is the delay in the implementation of the property transfer of the military land, thus undermining urban governance capacity (Healey, 1998).

The institutional capacity and the achievement of public interest in the conversion of military land into affordable housing

The 'institutional capacity' –i.e. the capacity of public administrations to effectively manage resources, coordinate actors and plan for the long term land-use of territories– has been identified as a determining factor in the success or failure for achieving the public interest in the conversion of military land to civilian uses (Ponzini and Vani, 2014). In Spain, this capacity has been affected by various structural factors, including the fragmentation of powers between administrations, the rigidity of regulations on state property and urban planning, and the absence of mechanisms for citizen participation in decisions regarding the utilisation of these lands after the military abandonment (Camerin and Córdoba Hernández, 2023b; De las Rivas Sanz, 2023).

One of the challenges of the institutional capacity is defining what 'public interest' is (Cassinelli, 1958) and this problem lies at the core of planning theories, addressing the fundamental question of the purpose and function of planning (Mazza, 1990: 48). However, the notion of the public interest is challenging to define (Moroni, 2004). Alongside the often interchangeably-used concepts of 'public good' (Deneulin and Townsend, 2007) and 'common good' (Mansbridge, 2013) the public interest can be understood as an essentially contested concept, "vague, imprecise and open to political manipulation" (Jade, 2017: 2).

By translating this to the real of military land to convert into new civilian uses, the public interest is thus manifested in the need to ensure that the redevelopment of military facilities responds to collective objectives, such as the provision of public equipment and services, the creation of affordable housing, the protection of the environment or the promotion of cultural and social activities. However, as demonstrated at both national and international level, a mercantile logic has been prioritised in these operations, driven by the search for fiscal profitability or market-oriented real estate operations (Christophers, 2018; Adisson and Artioli, 2020). This orientation has given rise to tensions with local communities, particularly in instances where opportunities to address social needs have been overlooked or spaces of high strategic and symbolic value have been privatised (Camerin, 2021).

These tensions are also at the centre of the debate between the supposed public/private dichotomy on temporalities, according to which the private sector's short-termism hinders public policy delivery, which should be all about long-term goals (Noring, 2019). However, despite the long-term goals of politicians in democratic regimes, it is important to acknowledge that these politicians are also constrained by the need to focus on short-term political goals. Such shortsighted behaviour and susceptibility to influences that go against long-term interests of the society often exacerbate the process associated with urban developments, whose process encompasses the timely execution of key tasks, including the endorsement of contracts, the initiation of projects, and the attainment of significant milestones (Hodge and Greve, 2019). This is imperative to ensure the timely delivery of planning-related programmes and the minimisation of procedural delays, which in turn will facilitate the mobilisation of the electoral support.

This is not only matter of political support, because it is pivotal to attract the private sector to the provision and management of affordable housing with an adequate balance of interests with the public sector (Canelas and Alves, 2024). This is true also for the case study of La Rubia barracks as the SEPES-Mod partnership targets the land ownership, but the redevelopment will involve private stakeholders, who will be responsible for the delivery of the project. As observed by Granath Hansson (2019), to guarantee a functional relationship, it is essential that adequate risk-return is offered to private actors to converge public and private interests, which significantly impacts delivery capacity. However, perceptions of risk-return vary due to several internal and external factors, such as the relationship between the public authorities involved and their continuous reorganisation (Adams and Tiesdell, 2010). Another salient issue is the correlation between policy stability and the attraction of private investment. The positive correlation that has been identified is partly explained by reasons related to investment planning, as well as by the upfront costs of learning to navigate new regulatory and fiscal frameworks (Raco, Livingstone and Durrant, 2019).

Methodology

The paper adopts a case study methodology to examine the changes occurred after the launch of the SEPES-Mod partnership in 2023 by the Spanish Government for the provision and management of affordable housing in the case of La Rubia barracks in Valladolid. We choose this case for three reasons. Firstly, although its innovative governance arrangement, that of a partnership between two public entities, this partnership has generated poor interest in the national and international literature. The analysis of this specificity can be relevant to understand the ways this partnership work and its impact on a specific case study. Secondly, the level of interest and

controversy this partnership generated in the public arena, as the state-led decision that may enter in conflict with Valladolid's spatial plan and the already settled agreements or procedures involved the redevelopment of the military land. Eventually, for reasons to do with data access and to keep updating the situation about La Rubia barracks after an initial attempt to approach this case study (Camerin and Córdoba Hernández, 2023a). A comprehensive understanding of the various objectives and timelines of the different stakeholders, and the manner in which these were influenced by each other, offers invaluable insights that transcend local idiosyncrasies, particularly with regard to institutional capacity, the concept of public interest, and the objectives and timelines of key stakeholders. The insights derived from this case study have the potential to inform the discourse surrounding the governance converting abandoned military land into affordable housing, thereby contributing to the enhancement of affordable housing delivery practices in the case of La Rubia and other contexts.

This paper draws on the semi-structured interview conducted in presence between January and April 2025 with two spokespersons of each Valladolid City Council, SEPES, Senate and the local grassroots association "La Rubia", culminated with the roundtable "Barracks in transformation: an opportunity for the La Rubia neighbourhood" (*Cuarteles en transformación: una oportunidad para el barrio de La Rubia* in Spanish) held at the University of Valladolid on 24th April 2025. Additionally, through desk-based research, we identified relevant legislation and other policy documents (e.g., the 2020 general master plan, the so-called *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana* in Spanish; PGOU), including meetings from the executive and deliberative Valladolid City Council, and other material from media outputs. We identified our research participants by targeting the main bodies involved in the management of the barracks at state and local level, along with local citizens. This constitutes the basis for the interpretation of the redevelopment process before and after the launch of the SEPES-MoD partnership in 2023 to identify the impacts it has had on La Rubia barracks transformation. In particular, we categorised the information acquired on the case study in five main themes. They are the following:

- General characteristics of the barracks. Here not only the specific features of the case study are provided, but also the abandonment process the current state of the plot, the buildability, as well as the triggering factors of the redevelopment processes, such as their respective locations in the real estate market;
- Conflicts between the actors involved, including the owner (i.e. the MoD), the City Council and the citizens, even their different interests regarding new uses;
- Definition of the redevelopment costs for the public for the municipal coffers and/or derived from its environmental rehabilitation;
- Temporal evolution of the disposal process according to well-defined stages, agreed with the interested parties and framed in the context of the real estate market.
- What has happened after the launching of the SEPES-MoD partnership for converting La Rubia barracks into new affordable housing compounds.

General characteristics

La Rubia barracks, built in 1945, is situated in a predominantly residential urban sector of Valladolid, between the railway line and the Paseo de Zorrilla Avenue, in close proximity to the city's southern inner ring road VA-20 and the Vallsur shopping centre. The barracks are located within an area characterised by high-density development, with a density of 109.80 dwellings per hectare, with two primary categories of housing: closed blocks and open buildings. The neighbourhood population reaches 8,716 individuals with an average per capita income of €16,341, as reported by the National Statistics Institute (INE) for the year 2021.

In 2007, there was speculation that the barracks would be closed in 2011 and that between 500 and 700 dwellings would be built, of which 30% would be designated as social housing (Álvarez, 2007; Álvarez & Alrrúe, 2011). However, the military personnel belonging to the *Agrupación de Apoyo Logístico* nº 61 Operational Logistics Support Unit officially abandoned the barracks only in December 2014, being relocated to the military base "El Empecinado" in the surrounding municipality of Santovenia de Pisuerga. This displacement occurred in accordance with

the provisions of the PREPIDEF⁴, which expected to benefit the military spending by saving €490,243 per year (Ministerio de Defensa, 2013b: 45). The situation of abandonment has persisted until the present day, resulting in the degradation of the built and open spaces within the military enclosure (Figure 2).



Figure 2. A view of the inside spaces of the military enclosure from outside. Source: photo by Federico Camerin (2025).

The surface area of the former barracks (106,866 m²) corresponds to approximately one third of that of La Rubia neighbourhood (366,475 m²). According to the current Valladolid's spatial plan approved in 2020 (Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León, 2020, pp. 2445-2447), the strategic importance of this urban void in La Rubia neighbourhood makes it a significant opportunity for territorial stitching on a city scale. In this particular instance, the barracks are located within the Urban Units no. 30 "La Rubia" (Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León, 2020: 19223-19226) and are conceived as the proper opportunity to improving the area to connect two relevant road axis currently separated by the disused military land, i.e. Paseo de Zorrilla and Carretera de Rueda. According to the 2020 PGOU, this strategic positioning facilitates also the introduction of new residential uses, tertiary activities and facilities, thereby generating a novel urban fabric comprising roads and pedestrian and coexistence roads.

⁴ The MoD set up in May 2013 the "Proposal for the rationalisation and efficient use of MoD estate" (PREPIDEF) to gradually abandon 163 sites in two steps, between 2014 and 2017 and 2018–2024 (Comisión de Defensa, 2013).

⁵ According to Article 85 of the Regional Planning Regulations (Reglamento de Urbanismo de Castilla y León in Spanish; Comunidad de Castilla y León, 2004), the 2020 PGOU incorporates the Urban Units as an instrument for urban regeneration. Urban Units permit a detailed approach to each part of the consolidated city, quantitatively and qualitatively specifying its urban planning parameters. By doing so, this facilitates the evaluation of actions that are executed in accordance with the PGOU, or that are proposed as modifications to it in the future.

Land-use planning and conflicts

There has been a notable change of opinion on the future of the old barracks on the part of the military that have accepted the unilateral decision taken by the City Council to assign a new use to the military land in the 2020 PGOU without a process of public participation nor with the residents or the MoD. Yet, there has been no demonstrations, protests or occupations of the area by citizens.

The 2020 PGOU classified the barracks as *suelo urbano no consolidado* (unconsolidated urban land) "SE(r).30.01 Acuartelamiento La Rubia" and as a *sector con ordenación remitida* (sector with remitted development) (Figure 3). This means that the 2020 PGOU establishes the overarching planning determinations (e.g., buildability and number of housing units), but the specific details remain to be delineated by a detailed plan, such as a special plan (*plan especial de ordenación urbana*) or a detailed study (*estudio de detalle*).

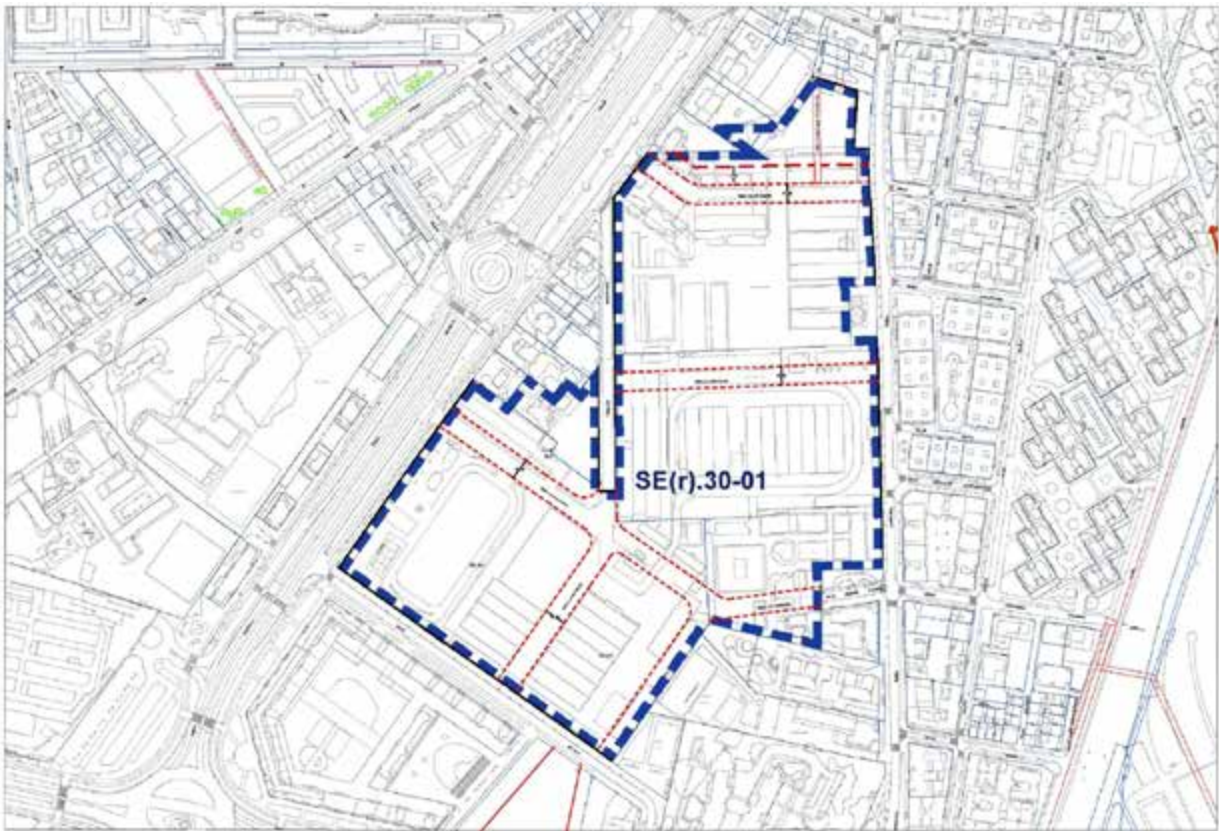


Figure 3. An image of the SE(r).30.01 Acuartelamiento La Rubia. Source: Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León (2020: 20456).

The objectives and criteria outlined in the 2020 PGOU included the establishment of new roads and pedestrian zones, with the intention of fostering social cohesion through mixed uses, mostly residential and productive. Three are the main contents. Firstly, the spatial plan establishes a new buildability of 64,119.53 m³, of which 50% would be used for new 338 housing units. Of this amount, 70% will be designated as free housing (22,441.83 m³), while the remaining 30% will be allocated for affordable housing (9,617.93 m³). The remaining buildability (25,647.81 m³) is earmarked for tertiary uses, including commercial and office spaces (Ministerio de Defensa, 2022, p. 14). Secondly, the developer obligations to transfer a part of the barracks to the City Council for local services (*cesiones mínimas de suelo para sistemas locales* in Spanish). A total of 6,411.95 m² of land would be devoted to a new equipment or facility, and 9,617.93-m² land to new uses –whether for additional housing or for other purposes– yet to be delineated by the local administration.⁶ Eventually, the developer obligations in terms of land transfer for general benefits at city level (*sistemas generales exteriores, adscritos al sector* in Spanish) reaches 60,319.40 m² to locate not within the barracks' surroundings,

⁶ According to the Regional Planning Regulations, the total amount of new open public spaces will be at least 14 m²/100 m³ (art. 105), and 10 m²/100 m³ (art. 106) for public facilities.

but rather assigned to the “EL 05/24 Riberas del Pisuerga-Soto de Medinilla-Michelín” sector.

The MoD initially rejected these guidelines in May 2019 as the buildability was considered too low (Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León, 2020, 18684) but eventually accepted it in June 2020 (Comunidad Autónoma de Castilla y León, 2021, 15953) and, in turn, provides for a period of eight years to establish the detailed planning, i.e. 2028.

Redevelopment costs definition

The MoD is still to provide an adequate detailed analysis with regard to the current state of the buildings and open spaces inside the enclosure of La Rubia barracks (Ministerio de Defensa, 2022b, 4-5). The MoD's report provides unclear indications regarding the presence of polluting elements from an environmental point of view and the definition of rehabilitation costs of existing buildings. Furthermore, no study on the potential opportunities for preserving existing buildings has been considered, nor an overall analysis of the redevelopment costs.

With regard to the presence of pollution, the barracks contain buildings potentially at risk, although not quantified in terms of surface area. These include a petrol station with two buried fuel tanks, two elevated water tanks, one buried water tank, seven buried fuel tanks (including those of the petrol station), a semi-buried shooting gallery for testing with a single shooter's post, and some of the roofs of the buildings are made of asbestos-containing fibre cement slabs.

With regard to the presence of buildings earmarked for preservation, none of the existing buildings, which collectively occupy a surface area of 42,434 m² and range in height from one to two floors, are not listed nor considered to be protected from demolition. Many of these buildings are in a state of disrepair, necessitating comprehensive rehabilitation measures, unless their demolition is deemed the more feasible option. The 2020 PGOU proposes the demolition of these structures for the purpose of facilitating the redevelopment of the sector. Moreover, the barracks is also surrounded by a concrete block wall, which is to be demolished in order to facilitate the permeability with the urban fabric. The process of obsolescence of the buildings and shortening of their life cycle has not yet reached the point of being declared a ruin, and the area is not yet affected by notable processes of renaturalisation.

Temporal evolution

The absence of a definitive and collaboratively designed temporary programme can be attributed to the speculative approach adopted by the MoD, whose strategic intentions were evident in the retention of land that had become redundant for military purposes. The owner, in fact, waited for the City Council to approve a land-use change of the area in the new spatial plan to provide the military with the highest possible financial returns. The objective of maximising profits was made clear since October 2019, when the military organised a meeting with local businessmen to present the ways in which La Rubia could be exploited (No Author, 2019). The primary option discussed was a direct sale in the real estate market, with the secondary options of temporary assignment or rental due to the high payment that the potential buyer would have to face in a not particularly positive period for the real estate market.

However, the main challenge confronting the operation appears to be the absence of interest on the part of private entities and the paucity of public funding to develop the real estate project, as it is anticipated to be less lucrative than the one proposed in the initial conversion advances of a decade ago. As a matter of fact, from the supposed 500-700 new housing units, the 2020 PGOU established the building of just 338 dwellings. This lack of interest is being confirmed by the failure of the first auctions promoted by the MoD, published on 5 July 2022, with a bidding price of €8,280,948.74 (Ministerio de Defensa, 2022a: 33151). By the stipulated deadline of 7 September, no tenders had submitted for the barracks (Arrúe, 2022), consequently resulting in a decrease of the bidding price for the subsequent auction to €7,452,853.87.

The SEPES-MoD partnership and how it affects the redevelopment of La Rubia barracks. What's next?

In mid-June 2023 there has been various novelties having an impact on the redevelopment process. Firstly, on 6th June 2023, the MoD received a request for a direct sale from a private individual equivalent to the amount set in the second auction. In the subsequent days, on 23rd June, the applicant was notified that the transaction could not be executed because the property was included in the agreement of the Council of Ministers of 9th May 2023 for its

sale to SEPES (Estrada, 2025). Secondly, following the establishment of the new Spanish government in July 2023, the MIVAU was formed and SEPES, as it depends directly on MIVAU, has since been in a process of reconfiguring its teams and strategic priorities. Thirdly, in May 2023 the new grassroots association “La Rubia” (*Asociación vecinal La Rubia* in Spanish) was constituted. The impetus for this initiative stemmed from the necessity to revitalise the neighbourhood, necessitating the mobilisation of resources in response to unmet urban and environmental requirements, such as those related to the former military barracks.

The situation remained static until December 2024, at which point the Valladolid City Council passed a motion requesting that the central government expedite the redevelopment process (PP Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2024). Concurrently, the Spanish government initiated the Omnibus decree measures, encompassing Article 89 on the transfer of public assets (including military ones) to SEPES for the development of its policy on affordable housing (Jefatura del Estado, 2024: 179321-179322). However, this decree was eventually not approved, and the SEPES did not become the owner of La Rubia barracks, which still remains the property of the MoD.

In the first half of 2025, SEPES, Valladolid City Council, and La Rubia grassroots association started a dialogue based on the academic interest raised within the local Technical School of Architecture (*Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Valladolid*, ETSAVA) belonging to the University of Valladolid, specifically in the subject “Urban rehabilitation and heritage” (*Rehabilitación urbana y patrimonio* in Spanish). The main goal of the subject has been developing specific urban policies to improve La Rubia neighbourhood, including the former barracks. The roundtable entitled “Barracks in transformation: an opportunity for the La Rubia neighbourhood” (Figures 4 and 5) took place at ETSAV in April 2025 with the aim of discussing the current state of affairs (Alonso, 2025). In this instance, the representatives of the public authorities involved (State Housing Commission and Valladolid City Council) converged on the idea that the redevelopment of the barracks should contribute to a state-led social housing policy, and therefore to the construction of affordable housing in this area (Estrada, 2025).

As a result of the discussion, the public authorities’ spokespersons agreed on the next two steps for initiating the redevelopment. The first one regards the free-of-charge property transfer of La Rubia barracks to SEPES once the internal reorganisation of the latter is completed. Only when the SEPES-MoD partnership will be executed, SEPES will be entrusted with the necessary competences to carry out the transformation process. However, this is not sufficient as the redevelopment process should also be detailed and even modified according to the fact that the 2020 PGOU can increase the urban density of the new city fragment by establishing a higher provision of housing units. Consequently, the second step is the establishment of a dialogue with the various parties involved as indispensable action for the formulation of the detailed guidelines of the redevelopment. This can take the form of an open participatory process with the local citizens to update the existing guidelines and the subsequent modification of the local spatial plan that includes the opportunity to increase the dwellings up to 600 units. This measure is expected to enhance the desirability of the real estate operation for private developers, but also to extend the benefits in terms of provision of affordable housing.



Figure 4. The poster of the roundtable *Cuarteles en transformación: una oportunidad para el barrio de La Rubia*. Source: University of Valladolid (2025)



Figure 5. The speakers of the roundtable during the event of April 2025. Source: La Rubia grassroots association (2025).

Conclusion: How does the institutional capacity evolve towards the public interest?

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing debates surrounding the potential of a new kind of partnership to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing. In order to achieve this objective, the present study has two overarching goals. Firstly, to uncover the rationale behind the utilisation of the SEPES-MoD partnership for the provision of affordable housing, and the operational requirements for such partnerships, including in terms of spatial planning. Secondly, to pinpoint the intertwine between the various stakeholders involved and to understand whether the 2023 partnership has been a game changer in unblocking the multi-decade abandonment of the La Rubia barracks.

The novelty of the SEPES-MoD partnership regards the property transfer from one public body (MoD) to another one (SEPES), so the intervention the private sector is going to be entrusted with the redevelopment and financing of public infrastructures through capturing land value increases in such practice (Alterman and Kayden, 1988). When it comes to providing affordable housing, one contentious issue is who is best qualified to do so, with debates often falling into three broad categories: public sector (Hodkinson, 2019), private sector (Ball, 2009), or partnership provision (Benedict et al., 2022). In the context of the SEPES-MoD partnership, the institutional capacity demands that the public sector assumes the role of supervisor. This necessitates a significant degree of freedom for action, but this action needs effectiveness (Peters et al., 2018). This means that having the capacities is not equivalent to executing them or making use of them, because the Spanish government should be capable of creating efficient and effective public policies to address the problem in question.

Cases such as the former La Rubia barracks demonstrate the lack of effectiveness in the institutional capacity to achieve the redevelopment of this abandoned site because the introduction of the SEPES-MoD partnership has blocked the previous procedure, but it has consequently opened new paths towards reaching a more appropriate public interest. The case study analysis shows also the diversity of intervention models that illustrate both the potential and the limitations of the current system of public asset management, including former military land. It is evident that, following a period of several years characterised by dialogue not always transparent to the general public, the local administration has successfully negotiated with the MoD in order to obtain its support for the future new utilisation of La Rubia barracks in the 2020 PGOU. The new local spatial plan established the incorporation of this space into its neighbourhood by an urban regeneration intervention, although it was established with no proper citizens' involvement. In fact, the absence of proactive planning in the SEPES-MoD partnership has resulted in opaque and non-participatory processes that have apparently obscured the public interest. The case of La Rubia is significant because it demonstrates the disconnection between knowledge and policy, between planning and management, insofar as a planning and social "window of opportunity" is not fulfilled. This failure is hidden among abstract debates and bureaucratic illusions, without a coherent and well-founded environment.

In light of these considerations, there is an urgent need to enhance institutional capacity for the management of disused military land. This should be achieved through the implementation of more flexible regulatory frameworks, the establishment of inter-administrative collaboration mechanisms, and, most importantly, the introduction of tools that ensure transparency and citizen participation. The urban regeneration potentially triggered by the redevelopment of these kinds of spaces should be guided by an integral perspective that considers not only economic profitability, but also social and territorial sustainability. Rethinking the future of La Rubia neighbourhood entails the assumption that military land, far from being an exclusively technical or functional legacy, is part of the collective imagination and can become a key resource for the articulation of new urban centralities at the service of the common good.

To conclude, this research constitutes another step towards a better understanding of how SEPES can expand its capacity to act in the field of affordable housing in connection with previous situations characterised by the challenging intertwine between institutional capacity and public interests materialised through the guidelines of spatial planning tools. Further research should focus on the implementation of SEPES-MoD partnership in the other cases across Spain. This will be instrumental in continuing this examination of the fundamental roles and values guiding both the private and public sectors involved in each case, as well as the nature of partnerships established to implement the planning guidelines for triggering urban regeneration processes.

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- Juan Luis de las Rivas Sanz: Conceptualisation; Data Curation; Software; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Writing – Original Draft Preparation (equal); Writing – Review & Editing (equal).

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