

Experience of Sprawl Control in a Spanish Region

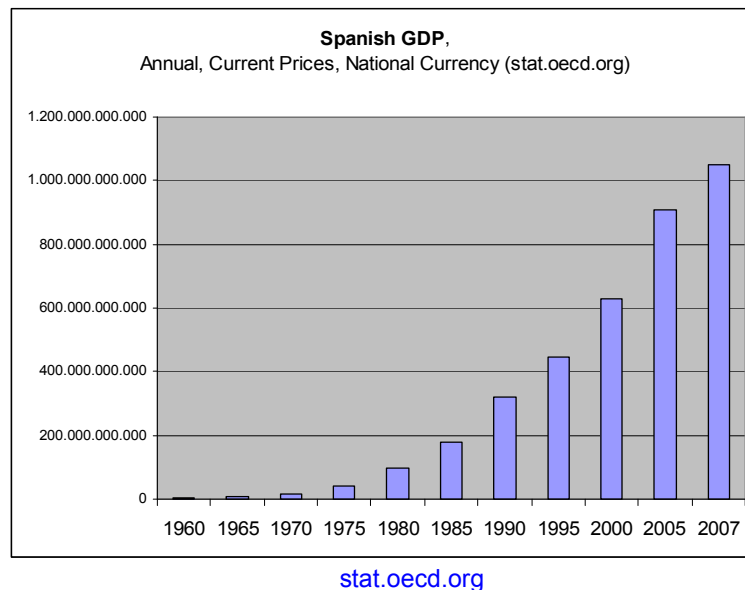
1. Perspective

This paper's aim is a 10-year process through which the Regional Government of *Castilla y León* has implemented a planning regulatory framework openly oriented to sprawl control, and the reaction of local authorities and market operators.

In a switch from older regulations, development-oriented and focused on local authorities' powers, landlords' rights and formal procedures, the Regional Government of *Castilla y León* has made of sustainable development the core issue of planning legislation. An option with technical difficulties, to-be-proved effectiveness, mixed reception in the public debate, subtle resistance in administrative practice and -as best- delayed success. Anyway an option which may well not be an option at all, if no other rational options are there to be chosen.

1.1. Perspective: sprawl in Spain

A sprawl *tsunami* in Spain is the obvious background. As economic growth in the last 30 years has been faster than in most European countries, quickly reducing the development gap with Central-Western Europe, so have we got an accelerated –by European standards- sprawling process, displaying its well-known effects such as frog-leap, low-density, flood-prone development, loss of natural areas, gated communities and so on.



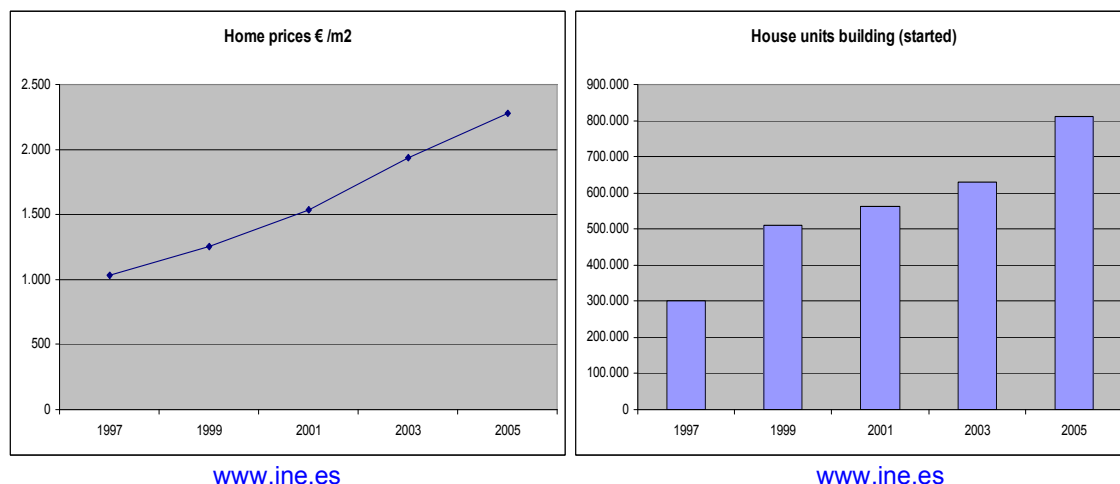
The main source of sprawl has been the real state boom, fuelled by an unprecedented house prices escalate. Of course both facts must be understood as a derivation of the worldwide real state boom, but anyway data shows Spain well in pole position:

- In Spain as a whole, up to 1997 slightly more than 300.000 new housing units were built per year. In 2005 the number of new housing units built peaked at 812.000, 1 for every 50 people in a year. More than any other country in Europe –in fact, more than most of them combined.

- In the fifteen years from 1990 to 2005, roughly 6.800.000 new housing units were built throughout Spain. That means more or less 1 house for every 6 people, or 1 house for every 2 families!
- According to National Accounts data, the weight of construction in GDP in real terms has moved from 13.5 % mean between 1985 and 1995 to 16.2 % in 2004 -for home construction the move has been 4.5 % to 8.3 %.

There are economic reasons, both structural and cyclical, which explain this especially acute real state boom: between 1996 and 2006, a 12 % reduction of nominal interest rate, sixfold-multiplied foreign investment in residential property, and significant increased households spending capacity.¹

House prices kept to the race, or actually fuelled it: taking 1997 as a basis, by 1999 the prices were 21 % up, by 2001 48 % up, by 2003 87 % up and by 2005 a top 120 % up. From 1,036 € / m² in 1997 to 2,280 € / m² in 2005.²

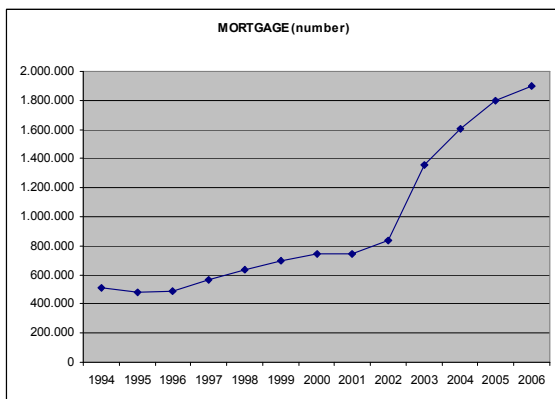


Meanwhile mean home surfaces have been growing too. An often bypassed fact, there is a slow but consistent –and speeding up- tendency to build larger homes, although medium-surfaces still predominate:

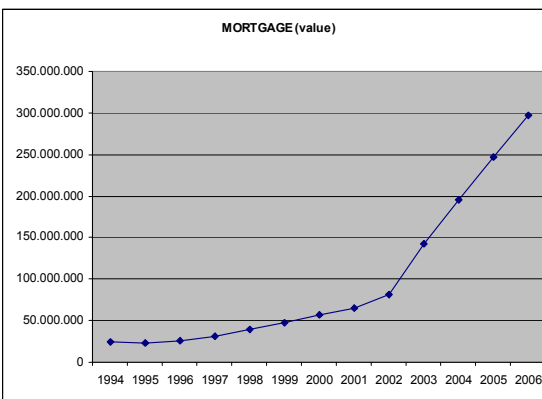
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1981	21.30 %	48.60 %	30.30 %
1991	16.90 %	52.90 %	30.20 %
2001	15.30 %	50.70 %	34.00 %
2003	14.17 %	48.05 %	37.68 %

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To the contrary, mortgage growth –as in numbers as in value, as seen below- is one of the most remarked economic facts of the last years, highlighting the side financial risk assumed by our society as a whole, with consequences that remain to be fully understood. From this paper's perspective, it's only the quantitative side what minds.



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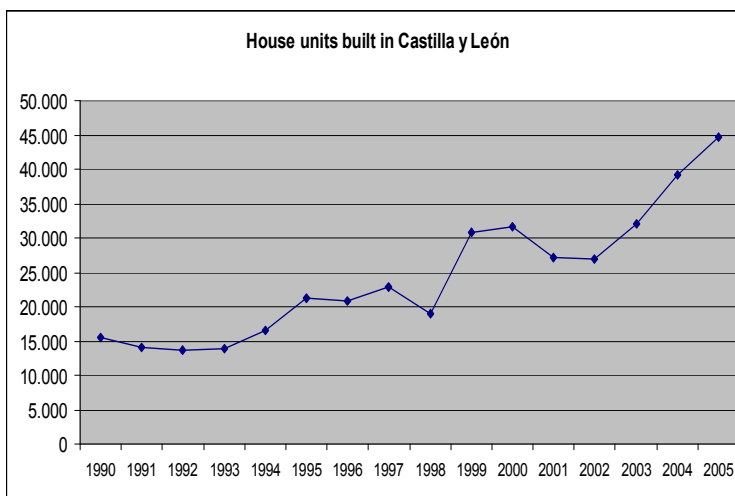
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In the inner-Spain region of *Castilla y León*, where we are going to focus, the global trend towards diffuse, land-consuming and car-dependent urbanization is represented enough, supplying the market of congested neighbouring regions like Madrid and Basque country, where little non-protected land is left.

Here, with 6.25 % of the total Spanish population –a roughly and rather stable 2.5 million– from 1990 to 2005 we have built 5.74 % of all Spanish housing units –not a major difference given hard weather, no major cities and absence of any seacoast.

Anyway that's near 400,000 new housing units, more or less keeping to the nationwide proportion, 1 for every 6 people, or 1 for every 2 families.

Just as surprising is the year-by-year race to build more and more houses, as shown below. A race fuelled by national and foreign investors willing to get a share of what looked like an endless *fiesta*, but a race that raised concerns about a real state bubble. By 2005 we were building 3 times as many houses as the annual average at the beginning of the '90s.

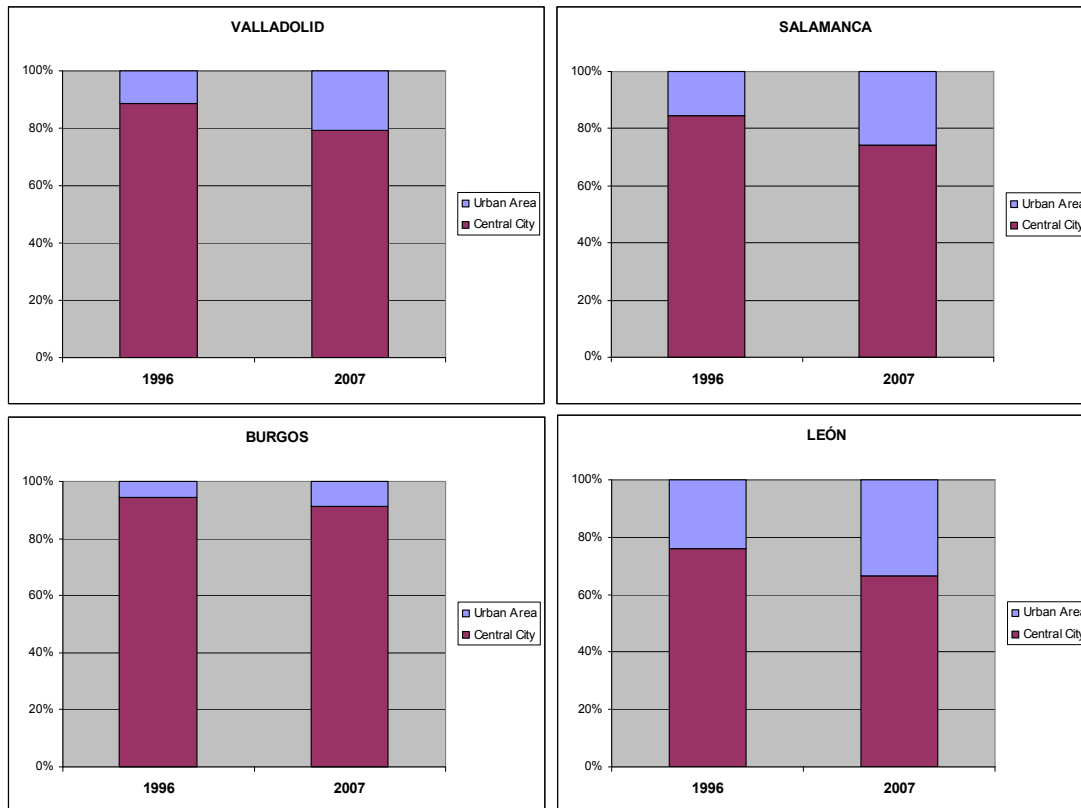


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In 2003, at the middle of the building boom, a national minister quoted that all those were neither too many houses, nor too expensive ones, because people were actually buying them. We can agree, but in this Congress' context, our concern is not *how many* but *where* have the houses been built.

In fact, demographic data confirms the new houses' predominantly suburban location. In *Castilla y León*, Valladolid is the most important urban area, with roughly 400,000 people living in 23 municipalities, over 980 km². As near as 1996, 88 % of the population lived in the central city. Ten years later this number is down to 79 %, with actual population 5 % down. In the rest of the urban area, population has nearly doubled, growing a 92 % -and up to 115 % in the inner core.

In the 3 other main urban areas of *Castilla y León* –with roughly 200,000 people each- we find the same tendency: in Salamanca urban area, outer municipalities grew from 15 to 26 % of the total population. In León urban area –where a decentralization process started earlier- they grew from 24 to 33 %. And in Burgos urban area –where to the contrary the central city has kept until recently all the agglomeration strength- outer municipalities grew from 6 to 10 % of the total population.



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Nationwide data from the CORINE LAND COVER Project show a 5 % population growth between 1990 and 2000, and a 21,8 % housing units' growth in the same lapse –well before the real boom peaked. During the same years surface occupation data show a 29,4 % growth for artificial land, confirming the growth is taking place in greenfields. Additional checking comes from disaggregated data: in the cities over 500.000 inhabitants, artificial lands growth was only 19 %, against values over 30 % in every other population level.³

1.2. Perspective: Spanish planning framework ⁴

Planning in Spain operates in a decentralized framework set up 30 years ago, when a new Constitution empowered 17 Regional 'Autonomous Communities' in every urban & territorial issue. Anyway, until 1997 only minor changes were made in the previous 1976 Planning Act. Then a major nation-wide reform passed in 1992 –in order to fight the late 80's real state

boom- was ruled unconstitutional –the Central government lacking power on planning. This implied that each Region should pass its own planning regulation from then on.

Starting 1998, 16 regional planning laws have been passed so far (the Balearic Islands still waiting) with some yet of second generation. But an overall perspective gives a picture very familiar to prior normative: it is still possible to study them all giving little importance to their differences. An obvious conclusion: fragmentation is more apparent than real, more formal than substantive. Moreover, under the plurality of regulations, Spanish urban development principles formulated in 1956 and newly outlined in 1976 and 1992 have survived.

The 1956 Land use planning and urban organization Act was a surprisingly complete text, integrating many planning-related matters. Inspired by the '40s legislation of Italy, France and the United Kingdom, it stated the two principles that have governed Spanish urbanism the last 52 years: land private ownership vs. land use subject to public decision. Integration of these formally contradictory shaped the conception of urbanism as a public service: open to private initiative but subject to collective intentions.

Neither the political system nor the socioeconomic environment favouring its implementation, this 1956 Act went almost silent for 20 years, apart from main cities and some coast areas. Then in 1975-76 a reform was passed, completed with 1978 bylaws, successful as it lasted until 1990 with only minor changes, despite the power transfer to the Regions. In fact it was passed just before the first local election in 1979, and newly elected Town Councils were keen to use the reform to draw up new local plans. Those plans -the '80s generation' were successful themselves because of their opportunity –they could control an economic boom after 1986, their contents' quality and the political commitment to urban renewal.

At the beginning of the '90s, the real state boom running from 1986 motivated the Central government to pass a second reform of the 1956 Act –now searching to free development power from landlords' hands rights, charged on monopolistic attitudes. That 1992 Act was deemed –and 5 years later ruled- unconstitutional, *de facto* limiting Central government's powers to property rights regulation and a few related issues, the most outstanding being land's value in case of compulsory purchase. All in all, that 1997 Constitutional Ruling marks the beginning of present-time Spanish legal planning framework.⁵

- Central government remains in charge of property rights' regulation and related issues such as land's values: those powers were displayed in 1998 Land Act, whose motto was: 'every non-protected land is fit for building' –the so-called 'Land liberalization', intended to cut prices acting on the supply side. Learning from the opposite outcome, 9 years later Central government has changed course, the 2007 Land Act proclaiming sustainable development as a central objective for every public authority.
- Regional governments are fully empowered in town and country planning and management, as long as planning and management can go under a common property rights' regulation. They have displayed those powers in a set of Planning Acts, which we can classify in 1st, 2nd and 3rd generations:
 - We call 1st generation planning acts those passed before the 1997 Constitutional Court Sentence: Catalonia (90), Navarre and Valencia (94), Madrid (95) and Galicia (97). All of them already repealed and replaced with new acts. However, Valencia 1994 Act keeps still great influence because of its innovative management system commonly known as '*urbanizer agent*' –or simply '*urbanizer's*'- enabling non-landlords to get a public concession –always through a selective procedure- to develop some land replacing the owners. Anyway these owners are not deprived of their property: at the end they shall get their share of the new fit-for-building urban plots, but the urbanizer shall be paid for his work. Maybe in cash, but more usually with urban plots.⁶

- After the Constitutional Court Sentence, a handful of 2nd generation planning acts were passed in 1998-1999: La Rioja, Castilla-La Mancha, Aragón, the Canary Islands and *Castilla y León*. The others having been repealed too, *Castilla y León* Act is at nine the oldest in Spain, an example of a trend that has been called 'Express Legislation'
- After a brief pause, from 2001 onwards arouse a 3rd generation of Planning Acts, many in Regions that already had got one: in 2001 Extremadura, Murcia, Cantabria and Madrid, in 2002 Andalusia, Asturias, Catalonia, Navarre and Galicia, in 2004 Castilla-La Mancha, in 2005 a Valencian new Act, in 2006 the Basque Country and La Rioja.

In this paper's context, it is worth to remark that every Act preface start claiming the 'common ground' of Spanish planning system, rooted in the 1956 Act –even to speak about something called 'Spanish planning culture'. An obvious inertial tic is the reproduction of comprehensive mammoth texts –regulating property rights, planning, management, public land and every issue concerning or related to planning.

More important seem some subtle trends we can detect as the Acts go passed, expressed in their explicit objectives. Replace complexity for flexibility, adaptation to regional character and affirm local protagonist role being rather ritual passwords than believed-in goals, we can focus indeed on the incorporation of new social values –some of them aroused in the '80s, like environment and heritage protection, some in the '90s, like social cohesion, free access to information and urban renewal, some in this century, like gender and generation equity.

2. Sprawl control

By the end of the 20th Century, the impact of sprawl in *Castilla y León* urban landscape was conspicuous enough to become a major issue in the –first professional, then political– planning debate. As a result, the early 1999 Planning Act and its 2004 Planning Regulation were openly intended to control some of sprawl's worst effects by means of a number of Norma and criteria.

2.1. Sprawl control: *Castilla y León* Planning Act, 1999-2004

An early outcome of the quoted devolution process, politically-stable *Castilla y León* was in 1999 among the first Spanish Regions to pass a Planning Act. Among its four top goals, the most long-term relevant was to make planning practice aware of new social concerns, such as social cohesion, environment and heritage protection, or gender and social equity.

Another explicit goal of **1999 Planning Act** was to move planning from a formal-, sometimes procedure-obsessed approach, focusing instead on a set of more substantive criteria, such as priority to inner-city, brownfield development, control of densities and effective reserve of land for social housing, public facilities and green areas.

Obviously all those are issues never easy to write down as normative, and definitively not if many in a not-so-long-ago mostly rural society still thinks of development as concrete and glass urban areas connected by brand-new roads. Nevertheless the regional government's political option was to address social cohesion and sustainable development as objectives.

Summing all up, the Act preface states that land –territory is the term most widely used– is a collective heritage to be used in a balanced, sustainable way in order to be passed upon next generations. Thus the Act's Article 4 thus proclaims that '*according to the social and economic constitutional principles, public activity shall be guided to the attainment of these objectives... b) to favour *Castilla y León*'s balanced and sustainable development, the quality*

of life and social cohesion of its inhabitants, environment and heritage protection and, specially, the attainment of the constitutional right to enjoy a decent home.'

A conclusion from those principles, the Act preface contents a reflection over what **territorial structure** should be the best for *Castilla y León's* future. Nowadays we've got no less than 6.168 villages rounded up in 2.248 local authorities, and that to bring them decent urban services –and to entertain those services in the future- means no minor budgetary effort. That's why to-be-developed areas make more sense if well connected to current urban areas: as much in terms of public budget, as to keep a stable territorial structure.

Act's Article 34.2 translates this principle into clear normative: *'Planning shall guide urban growth to complete existing urban tissues and to solve conflicts in degraded areas, favouring the recovery and reuse of derelict buildings, with priority to discontinuous or external urban extension process'*

Thus in this paper's context, this article 34.2 is the most important provision, setting up clear objectives for planning –all levels:

- to complete existent urban tissues,
- to solve conflicts in degraded areas,
- to prior recovery and reuse of derelict buildings,
- and to justify –at best- urban frog-leap growths.

A second set of provisions concerns **rural land regulation**: if any land's attributes get it due to be protected, these positive values means it is worth to protect it above any other consideration. The Act also displays some basic criteria of protection:

- Prior protection: land subject to some special protection –based on sectoral regulation, incompatible with urban development.
- Objective values: land with values justifying limits to its use –being natural (landscape, environmental, ecological), cultural (historical, archaeological) or productive.
- Objective values recovery: land that, having offered some of the values cited should be protected to enable its recovery.
- Risk prevention: land threatened by natural or technological risks –flooding, erosion, subsidence, fire, pollution, incompatible with its development.
- Inadequacy for urban development: land that is objectively not suitable, due to physical characteristics, pollution, or for any other objective special circumstance.

To get the correct degree of protection, local plans must check any land's particular values before allocating it into any of eight proposed categories. Each category bears a special regulation, forbidding some uses and allowing others, some of them subject to a special permission procedure. This regulation can be developed by local plans, but only to detail it or to get it more restrictive due to particular circumstances, never to get it more permissive.

1999 Planning Act set up several other criteria on urban growth, sustainability, environment protection, urban quality and social cohesion. Quoting Campos-Venutti's thought about future planning's challenge –its ecological-oriented evolution- the Act set up new top densities and sustainability standards –such as a permeability index, related of percent of land actually green-covered. Enough land provision for communal uses and priority to mixing of social groups –by means of a compulsory reserve for social housing in new developments- focused the Act into the social cohesion concerns.

Outstanding to the Congress' core issue, **environment protection** provisions are another compulsory goal for planning –article 36.2:

- In urban areas, in order to reduce traffic pollution, road and streets provisions must be designed to meet public transport needs, making public service profitable –this means enough-density areas suitable to be linked in a rational way.
- New urban areas must protect landscape and vegetation valuable items, and integrate them in the planning process.
- Remaining rural areas must be preserved by local plans, a priority been given for its recovery.

More detailed provisions came up with the **2004 Planning Regulation**, passed by Regional Government to foster 1999 Act implementation.

One of the most outstanding –in terms of public reception, was the embodiment of European Union Directive 2001/42/CE, regarding the inclusion of a true **Environment Assessment** process into the planning procedures. This Directive had not been incorporated to Spanish Law and it was not until 2006, but anyway its deadline was July 24th, 2004, and from then on it could be enforced.

According to the Directive, Planning Regulation order an EA for every local plan of municipal scope –‘General Plan’ in major cities and ‘Local Planning Rules’ for minor towns- excepting only Local Planning Rules in rural areas, and only if they agree not to allocate too much new urban land. Anyway no exception is possible within Nature 2000 Ecological Network –that is, in a 26.15 % of *Castilla y León* total surface, up to 24,638 Km².

According to the Directive, too, Planning Regulation states that local plans must include an environment report, to be submitted to public scrutiny with the whole local plan. Later the Regional Department of Environment shall review and the whole plan and especially how the environment report's advices had been integrated in the plan's frame.

Subtle but effective provisions regarding sprawl control are those limiting or conditioning the local **powers to modify** its planning through punctual private-proposed adjustments. From 2004 any change in a local plan's provisions can only be adopted if it justifies minor scope – no more than a 50 % growth in house numbers or urban surface- and no major influence on the existing urban structure, or in the provision of public services. Otherwise that change must be considered only within a complete review of the local plan. But if anyway it stays below the limits and thus can be adopted, it must be object of environmental assessment in every case the development is not connected to existing urban land.

2.2. Sprawl control: *Castilla y León* Planning Act, 2008

As a reaction to an ever growing sprawl, a number of complementary control measures are displayed in the Planning Act Amendment now in the Regional Parliament, scheduled for adoption on September 2008. Its preface remarks that urban planning must be conceived as a tool for social programs –the right to housing including not only a decent home, but an adequate environment too, well served by public services.

So new article 4 states that planning must be guided by the **sustainable development principle**, in order to favour:

- Balanced town and country development based upon natural resources' rational use and oriented to territorial articulation and integration.
- Environment protection, comprehensive of conservation and recovery of air, water, natural areas, fauna, flora, and general environment conditions.
- Control of pollution's effects on health and environment, through energetic efficiency, public transport, renewable energies and compact urban development.
- Rural land protection and *mise-en-valeur*, even of cultural and historic landscapes and ethnologic heritage.

In this Congress' context, new article 13 is remarkable as it reinforces the **compact urban development** legal promotion. According to this provision, all new urbanizable land must be contiguous with existing urban land –among allowed exceptions: industrial areas or special development areas provided with Regional government permission.

This normative line ends up at article 34, which restrings the possibility to alter the territorial structure through a local authority's unilateral decision. Besides, there is an exigency to plan public services' display in a rationally simultaneous way with demographic growth:

So far, this article states that 'planning shall guide urban growth to complete existing urban tissues and to solve conflicts in degraded areas, favouring the recovery and reuse of derelict buildings, with priority to discontinuous or external urban extension process'.

Now it shall go on this way: *'...to this end, unless regional planning stating other criteria, local planning can't generate new settlements nor modify existent ones as to risk public services' networks' capacity and functionality'.*

Minimal density is a new legal statement, critical to sprawl control.

In fact, it was in 1999 Act that maximal housing and building densities were introduced, as a reaction to the overcrowding of the Spanish urban landscape of the '60s and '70s. Back then very fast industrialization moved huge volumes of rural population into the cities, where high-density, under-equipped, often-substandard residential complex were built to host them.

There are the roots of a social attitude rejecting high densities both as speculative as derogatory. 1999 Act echoed this view stating a maximum of 70 housing units and 10.000 m² per hectare in big cities, and of 30 housing units and 5.000 m² per hectare in towns. Since then high density social-rejection has been joined with low density eco-rejection, which justified introduction of minimal densities in the 2004 Planning regulation.

Now new article 36 makes density control compulsory for any planning procedure, setting levels both maximum and minimum:

- In the inner city planning must keep its current average standards of building height and volume, land occupation and other parameters.
- Also in the inner city, where over-densification have yet been reached –areas with more than 100 housing units or 15.000 built m² per hectare- no planning modification can be adopted that further increases those levels.
- To-be-developed, urbanizable areas bear more strict legal tops:

- Between 30 and 70 housing units per hectare –and a 10.000 m² building top, in cities over 20.000 inhabitants.
 - Between 20 and 50 housing units per hectare –and a 7.500 m² building top, in towns with less than 20.000 inhabitants, but provided with a General Plan.
 - Between 10 and 30 housing units per hectare –and a 5.000 m² building top, in all the other towns with less than 20.000 inhabitants.
- Some complementary provision set a frame for the planning to take into consideration special situations, as the convenience of allowing minor densities for landscape protection, or higher ones in case of inner-city renewal operations, or an exception for public facilities.

Last, article 38 remarks that planning should not be a bureaucratic practice in order to get an urban-land condition, thus without limitations set up in new areas. So the standards adopted with every new development are more than numbers –they imply a public compromise with the people living and to live in the area, with no expire date. That's the reason why this article forbids future 'minor' modifications intended to reduce those standards.

3. Reactions to sprawl control

The 1999 Planning Act, its 2004 Planning Regulation and the 2008 Planning Act Amendment have been all submitted to several-month long public consultations, always with special calls for participation to local authorities, and also to professional, labour unions' and companies' associations. The opinions reflected in those processes seem somehow homogeneous at first sight over the ten years passed, but some subtle changes are worth to remark.

So this third, last part will deal with the perceived reaction to these regulations –the new ones and those not so much.

3.1. Reactions to sprawl control: local authorities

An easily understandable local tic, a **cry for municipal freedom** has been often the first and last argument of any local authority claim on the consecutive legal reforms. Thus the argument exceeds this paper's concerns, as it was applied to every planning issue, but the '*we know what's best for ourselves*' argument sounded especially angry discussing density limits and pro-compact-development measures.

In fact, it was not until this Century that Courts have started ruling in favour of environmental arguments when the cause was presented as a matter of local autonomy. The precedent pro-local freedom iurisprudencia was an obvious reaction against the Town Councils' limited powers under the 1939-75 autocratic *régime*. And through the last 25 years any claim for greater local self-determination was so automatically the winner party, so it is still no surprise when any local representative mistakes Constitutionally-recognised local autonomy with sovereignty –the last granted in fact to the Spanish people as a whole.

This first, rather ritual argument left behind, more substantive objection from local authorities focused on the **risk of generalization**: not a few saw the statement of compulsory limits on housing and building density as correct in some or most places, but claimed for special-circumstance exceptions –even proposing that a density limit should be accomplished in the municipal territory as a whole. Although concerning specially the density limits issue, this point of view was applied to other sprawl control measures, appearing in the end to be just a subtler version of the first quoted argument.

To the contrary, some major Town Councils –those with greater technical support- spoke in favour of the medium-density mandates and other sprawl control measures, which they saw as allies in their effort to channel market pressures.

These kind of Town Councils have usually been in favour of **greater Regional control** on local planning, obviously not thinking in themselves but in the suburban little town's much more flexible approach, which they often see as unfair competition, by means of avoiding strict controls on private initiatives –or of avoiding controls at all. Thus it's no surprise when they even propose the exigency of complementary documents or procedure, such as traffic analysis –an issue often bypassed by local planning, as it is not compulsory.

Back to local opinion mainstream, **rural land regulation** is also seen as a clear example of over-regulation, with the risk of limiting local development opportunities or –in their words- compromising the town's future.

This attitude explains the logics of some plans, where the legal minimal-protection approach becomes a maximal: those are the plans that protect the only land that is unavoidable to be protected, or that is ordered to be protected by any sectoral department –thus in fact avoiding actual implementation of most of legal criteria.

This way we arrive to one of the most negative attitudes than undermine Planning Act's effectiveness: local authorities and local plans that seem to understand only numerical rules or clear, measurable standards, or step-by-step procedure regulations.

For them, it seems, **non-numerical criteria** belong to the world of abstract principles –or maybe of international declarations: nice words, fit for prefaces, but with no actual connection to the reality of urban planning and building.

Getting into procedures, **Environmental Assessment** has been a major source of criticism, as far as it becomes often enervating long and slow process.

An unwanted outcome, many local authorities tend to think of Environmental Report as a completely independent document and procedure, with on-paper only relation with the Plan itself. Environmental authority does not help very much to fight this tendency, insisting on Environmental Report's correction and quality, but often by-passing the need to check the Plan's coherence with it.

3.2. Reactions to sprawl control: market operators

Opposite to local authorities, building and real state companies' associations tend to favour the statement of **clear, general rules**, which they perceive as an effective barrier in front of Town Councils' discretionary powers and even corruption risk.

Nevertheless a more critical approach emerges when discussing specific rules, especially all those somehow limiting private land's building possibilities –by means of general density limits, or protecting some land's values, or when it comes to natural risk protection –flooding always prevalent in mostly flat *Castilla y León*.

Most marked aggressiveness has been shown:

- Against pro-compact urban development measures, mostly against those perceived as actual obstacles to new development on greenfields, out-of-town areas, such as the general prohibition provided by the new 2008 Act.

The Planning Guidelines for Valladolid and its surrounds faced a change in the urban model, still in process: the transition from a compact town to a complex system of urban areas with sprawled development, within an unstable global context, and linked to profound changes, not only of economic and technological scope, but also concerning the values and lifestyle.

The proposed Territorial Model is based on the actual evolution of current trends in the urban area, as described in this paper's chapter 1.1. The aim is to make the most of the current positive trends and to find acceptable alternatives for more negative aspects. So we interpreted the town and its region by combining two basic criteria for a sustainable development:

- the preservation and enhancement of outstanding areas, locations and landscapes and,
- the search for the greatest possible efficiency in the urban-regional system; a capacity which is related to the creation of competitive advantages.

Valuable areas must be preserved since they have certain features that support the system's global quality, whereas the urban developments should efficiently provide all infrastructures and equipments. Therefore, each new urban development requires, both adequacy of the activities to the essential character of the area while at the same time providing the infrastructures and services required in each case.

To control urban sprawl the urban system has been divided into a "*Continuous Urban System*" and a "*Discontinuous Urban System*", the aim was to reinforce the compactness of the former and to control the dispersion of urban uses within the area. The Guidelines foster a multinuclear urban development: this is related with the strategies defined in the European Territorial Strategy, as multi-centrism, protection of the rural and agrarian areas with a close relation between town and countryside, promotion of an efficient public transport, constitution of dynamic and attractive urban regions, and conservation of the historical and natural heritage...

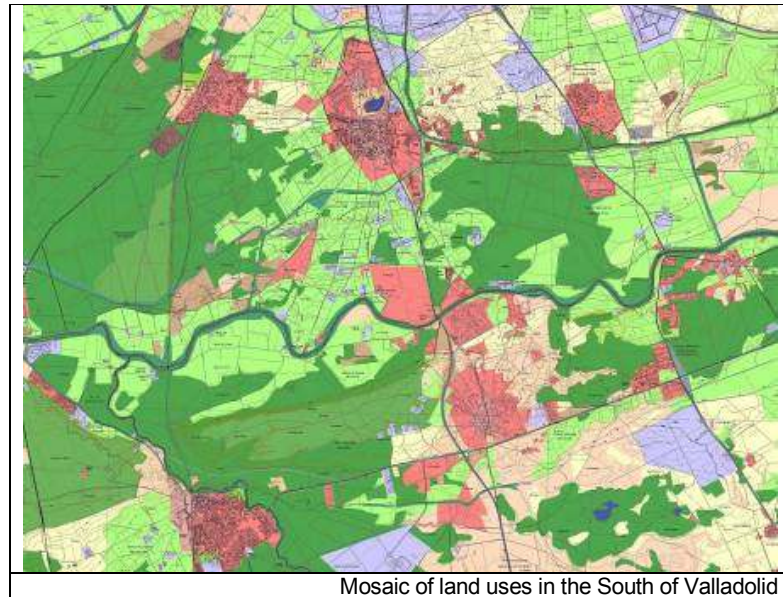
So the Guidelines establish intermediate centres in the existing villages and around the main city centre. Likewise, some strategic areas have been defined as linked to existing areas of development –the town centre, the technological park, the airport...- and to the development of the many decaying urban areas that have fallen into disuse, transforming them into future opportunity areas for the town. The new great equipments on a town-region scale should be concentrated there, with quality urban design interventions.

The improvement of the road network, the fostering of an integrated transport system and the building of the infrastructure associated to the High Speed Train (AVE) to Madrid –connected December 2007, all will considerably affect the articulation of future projects in Valladolid.

The image aimed at by the Guidelines is a complex territorial whole, similar to a *mosaic* in which urban areas combine with a productive agrarian landscape and with a varied range of natural areas, woodlands, plateaus and riversides. The infrastructure and services network system articulates these areas, providing them with accessibility and functional quality. Both control and guarantee of the required infrastructure must be deemed as a key tool for the control of urban development. We also proposed the establishment of a basic structure of criteria for the spatial management on lower scales, with the objective of achieving long-term quality.

This idea of *land mosaic* has been definitive in our perception of the metropolitan area, for the ecological role of different kind of our countryside spaces and their articulations –creeks, slopes, forests, the canals network, rural structures... We can read our landscape applying the Richard T.T. Forman nomenclature⁸: *patches, edges & boundaries, corridors & connectivity, mosaics & networks*. But, today, our countryside is in crisis and the 'urban point of view' is dominant. For it we have a great concern about the application of the Guidelines, six years after of their approval. Beyond the necessity of regional planning, the social consensus belongs to the will for

preserving the environmental quality of existing spaces. It is above all in the commitment with this preservation where our society can accept the new transformations.



But in the running of the Guidelines there is a risk, because new urban uses impose a different perspective: local economy needs urban growth. Agrarian uses in the outskirts are disappearing and natural areas –pineland, riverfronts...- are transformed in the best argument for developers. Also the productive activity is in a risk, because the developing of new enterprise parks seems a responsibility of the public sector, meanwhile the private sector prefers to produce residential areas. Between 1987 y 2000 the “artificial surfaces” have occupied the 49% more of land in the Valladolid urban area, a quantity over the average, similar to Madrid and only below Alicante and Murcia urban areas, in the Mediterranean coast⁹.

In this process we need to clarify the Guidelines role for controlling new urban areas. So we propose a specific taxonomy for the different situations in the Valladolid urban/metropolitan area, in three circles around the central old urban area:

1. the compact capital city,
2. the boundaries of the urban area and the real outskirts,
3. the wide spaces of the countryside with the traditional villages in a definitive changing process.

In every case we select ‘type situations’ considering the principal urban uses: residential, enterprise zones and great facilities or infrastructures. But the sprawl in Valladolid has a residential character yet. In the last 10 years the housing production in Valladolid city – without population growth- is the 4.000 every year, with little variations, and around 2.000 more in the surrounding municipalities.

We detect four general kind of urban growth typologies in the residential areas:

- new dense neighbourhoods in continuity –theoretical, founded in the planning previsions- with the compact city, as new ‘*ensanches*’;
- new dense autonomous neighbourhoods, with public housing and collective homes;
- new autonomous neighbourhoods with family homes, and
- spontaneous growth with very little size and profiting contact with other similar growths.

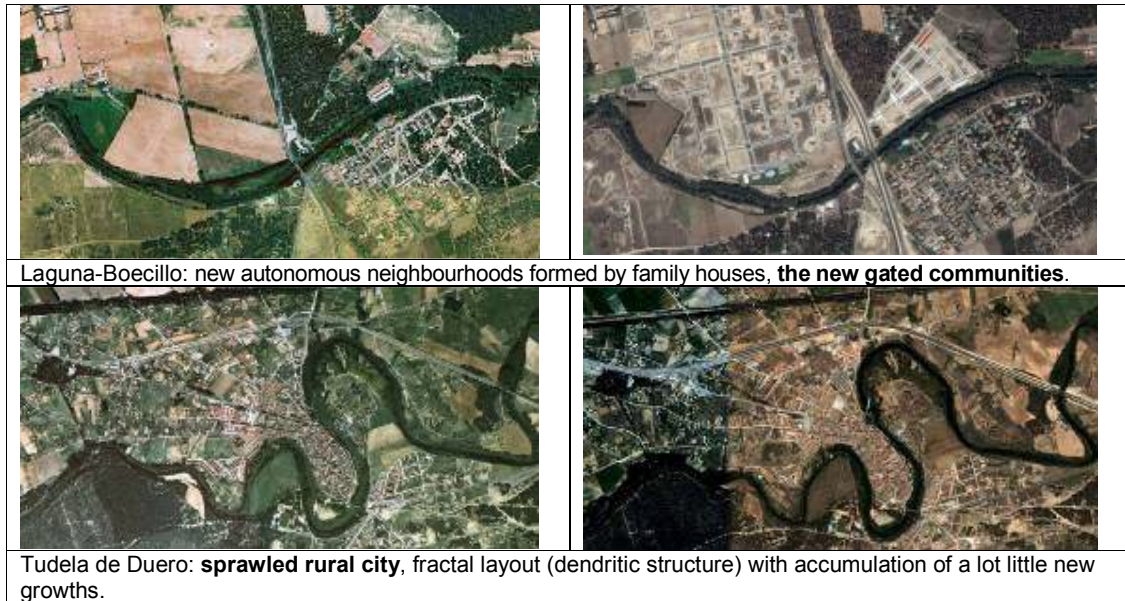
There are little variations in home typology because real state business do not like experiments. The quality of materials and construction is usually better than the architectural innovation. But we want to stress some two morphological conditions:

The real regulators of the urban growth are the existing road network and the property conditions. The developers, with the help of local authorities, are always looking for 'competitive advantage'. The results are the systematic *increase of congestion* of main roads and other infrastructures (water supply etc.), the lack of public transport solutions and the *random timing* of effective urban construction.

The geometry of the new urban developments trends towards the *landscape autism*, with very little adaptation criteria and with the imposition of regular layouts, only linked with the economy of builders and very far of the sustainable planning. Sustainability seems a question of technologies or new infrastructures.

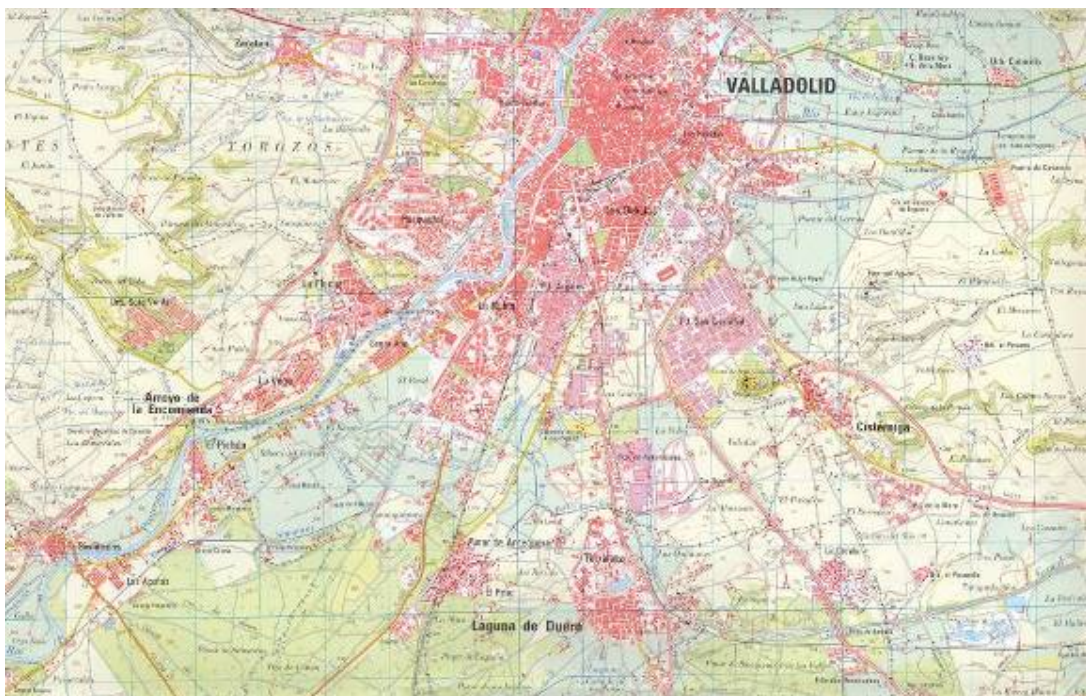
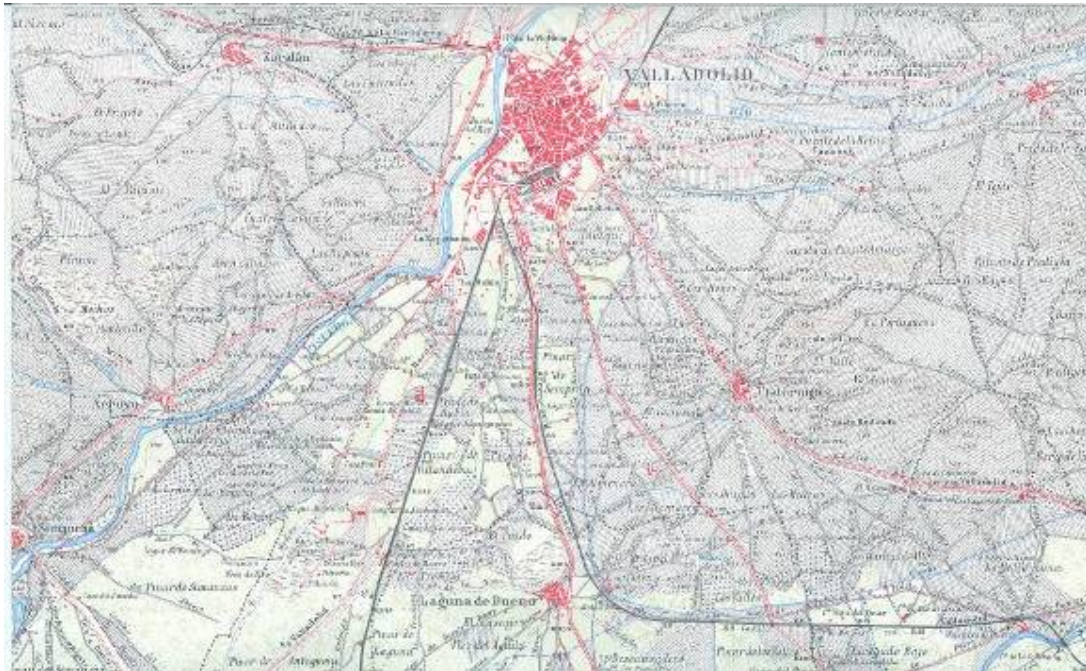
We propose in the next scheme, with images, a selection of the detected urban situations in the outskirts of Valladolid urban area, comparing the image of singular residential areas in the year 1996 with the year 2006:

Zaratán: new compact, continuous and geometrical 'ensanches' in a village -5000 people- combined with the effects of a urban corridor: the Valladolid-León road.	
Boecillo: urban growth as 'tache d'huile' (oil stain) , morphology founded in continuity with rural streets and paths, but without facilities for the new urban scale and without renewal of the little centre.	
Arroyo: new town for accumulation of new autonomous neighbourhoods , the freeze sprawl without synapses.	



In the updating of the Valladolid urban area guidelines we are reinforcing several tools of the 2001 document and also trying to introduce new perspectives. Related with the sprawl control, and according with a great effort in the understanding of land use changes, the local trends and the performing of legal conditions, we are proposing the following ideas:

- To strength the preservation of natural and rural landscapes and to enhance the outstanding areas, with a more detailed regulations and cartography, and clarifying the possibilities of translation of this protective system to the local planning.
- To create a new hierarchy of urban centres related with the equipments and facilities required: the central city, little cities, urban villages and rural villages; in connection with new polarities and enterprise zones.
- To establish new references for saturated areas, in a more clear connection with the Landscape Units and with a more clear system of indications for landscape management
- To introduce a new typology of urban areas, improving the performance conditions and reviewing the constraints related with the existing infrastructures, including the conditions for existing and news autonomous neighbourhoods.
- To develop strategically five categories of projects around the landscape features –five rivers system and land mosaic elements-, urban a rural centres, new systems of public transport and the park system and the greenways proposals. These projects will be oriented and adapted to the central city and its two concentric zones.



Urban blooming (Valladolid South), between 1931 and 2004.

Conclusions

In the last 20 years the sprawling, car-dependent urban growth typical of North-Western Europe and North America has become the standard development also in Spain. Knowing other countries' experience has been a major incentive to display sprawl-control legislation, even if anticipative Norma is a typical applicant for social misunderstanding.

Castilla y León 1999 Planning Act, its 2004 Planning Regulation and the 2008 Amendment now being passed have pioneered this path in the Spanish context. Priority to protection of rural land, planning environment assessment, limits on modification local powers, promotion of compact urban development, minimal housing densities... all those measures are in fact a deepening of the sustainable development criteria that has become nation-wide compulsory only under the 2007 Land Act –and even ambiguously enough to be ignored if any Regional authority would prefer to do so.

The prior 1998 nation-wide hands-off policy –now widely rejected- has not been a major help, but indeed, market pressure strength comes mainly:

- First, from the competitive approach that city managers show when potential investors are around –although nobody forgives a call to sustainable development.
- In the long run, from an ever growing urban middle class, willing to get *status* through a move from high-rise flats to suburban homes.

Thus the paper just try to provide lessons about how far an eco-conscious regional authority can go to control urban sprawl, in a context where local authorities, private companies and not a minor part of the whole social corpus do not share that eco-conscious view.

¹ National Reform Program, part II –Diagnosis & challenges of the Spanish economy. Office of the Presidency of the Spanish Government, 2005.

² Sources: INE, Ministerio de Fomento, Ministerio de Vivienda, Consejo Superior de Colegios de Arquitectos de España.

³ *'Relaciones entre cambio de modelo urbano-territorial y consumo de suelo en los municipios españoles'*. Marian Simón Rojo & Agustín Hernández Aja

⁴ A more detailed report was published in the ISOCARP 41st Congress Bulletin: *'Spanish Urban Development Laws: Historical evolution and new trends'*

⁵ The 1997 Constitutional Court Sentence caused an earthquake in Spanish urban planning: as a result, the pre-constitutional 1976 Act recovered strength but without the possibility of being reformed by a State deprived of competence in urban affairs. In addition, it should coexist with post-Constitution sectoral legislation –environment, heritage... and even more confusing, with the 1996-97 "liberalizing measures". Consequences of the Sentence varied from one Community to another, depending on their characteristics and relation to the repealed legislation.

⁶ Resolution of the European Parliament about the claims of improper application of the 1994 Valencia Planning Act (LRAU) and repercussions for European citizens (Petitions 609/2003, 732/2003, 985/2002, 1112/2002, 107/2004 and others). This Resolution was based on a report by Member of European Parliament Janelly Fourtou, so it is usually called 'Fourtou's Report'.

⁷ See *"Avance de Directrices de Ordenación Territorial de Valladolid y Entorno"*, Junta de Castilla y León, 1998. The Guidelines got the 2002 *European Urban and Regional Planning Award*, conceded by the *European Council of Town Planners, ECTP*.

⁸ See Richard T.T. Forman *"Land Mosaics. The ecology of landscapes and regions"*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

⁹ See the Study comparing Corine Land Cover information, data of 2000: *"Cambios de ocupación del suelo en España. Implicaciones para la sostenibilidad"*, Sustainability Observatory for Spain, Alcalá de Henares University and Ministry of Environment, Madrid 2006