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To cite this version:

Charlotte Vorms, La Découverte. Madrid in the 1950s: The Issue of Shacks and Shantytowns. Le Mouvement social, In press, 245 (4), pp.43-57. 10.3917/lms.245.0043 . hal-01958010

HAL Id: hal-01958010

https://hal.science/hal-01958010v1

Submitted on 7 Jan 2019

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La Découverte | *Le Mouvement Social*
2013/4 - No 245
pages 43-57

ISSN 0027-2671

This document is a translation of:

Charlotte Vorms, « Madrid années 1950 : la question des baraques »,
Le Mouvement Social, 2013/4 No 245, p. 43-57.

Translated from the French by Cadenza Academic Translations

Available online at:

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http://www.cairn-int.info/journal-le-mouvement-social-2013-4-page-43.htm

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How to cite this article:

Charlotte Vorms "Madrid années 1950 : la question des baraques",
Le Mouvement Social, 2013/4 No 245, p. 43-57. DOI : 10.3917/lms.245.0043

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Madrid in the 1950s: The Issue of Shacks and Shantytowns[1]

Charlotte Vorms*

Between the mid-1950s and the early 1960s, housing became a major political issue in Franco's Spain. The genuine deterioration of living conditions among Madrileños, brought about by the influx of people from the countryside, was identified as a crisis. As the situation developed, all eyes turned to the precarious dwellings erected without building permits in the outskirts of the capital, which were commonly known as chabolas. *Analysis of the archives of the General Directorate of Urban Planning in Madrid shows that the notion of a crisis was reached both because of the potential threat posed to public order and also because the occupation of large areas of land was an obstacle to new housing policies aimed at kick-starting construction (which were key to Franco's social project for the protection of workers). The old problem of self-built housing in deprived areas had been growing in significance, and now the problem of the shacks and shanties became a foremost social concern. This problem provided grounds for an interventionist housing policy with a threefold economic, social, and political goal. The schemes that were devised to curb the development of shacks led to the production of key documents to understanding the* chabolas*, thus paving the way for a specific policy of re-development. While the administration organized the demolition of such dwellings, the citizens of Madrid began to organize in the background.*

In Spain, as elsewhere, housing had been a matter of concern since the end of the nineteenth century. It was one of the social issues the Franco regime tried to address at the end of the civil war. The groundwork of its housing policy was first laid out in 1939. By the mid-1950s, the housing situation for poorer households was considered so dramatic that the capital was once again felt to be facing a "housing crisis" like that of the 1920s.[2] The matter was put on the agenda of the fourteenth Semana Social (Social Affairs Conference) held in Burgos in 1954.[3] The semantic field which pervades the description of this crisis is one of emergency. Thus, "Social Emergency Plans" were put in place from 1957 on to mitigate the seriousness of the problem in the main cities: housing became a public-policy issue of the first order.

The causes of the crisis are well known: as in other southern European countries, a rural exodus—occurring later than in northwestern Europe—combined with the impact of the civil war. The damage wrought by the war had reduced the housing stock of some of the cities, especially Madrid. After a dip in the years of economic

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1. Translator's note: All quotations from Spanish-language source documents have been back-translated from the French-language version of this article.

2. The frequency with which this diagnosis was given can be gauged in the national newspaper *ABC*, now completely digitalized. The use of this expression, however, remained relatively rare in Spain until the 2000s.

3. The proceedings of this conference have been published as: *Semanas Sociales de España, La crisis de la vivienda,* (Madrid: Secretariado de la Junta Nacional de Semanas Sociales, 1954).

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crisis, during and just after the war, migration towards the cities picked up again around the middle of the 1950s, increasing the demand for housing.[4] The arrival en masse of migrants in the cities led to overpopulation in the old city centers and to the erection of makeshift dwellings without legal permission on the outskirts. In both cases, the population lived in poor material and sanitary conditions, and their chance of remaining in their home was under threat because of their tenuous legal status. The practice of *realquilado* (the subletting of part of the home) and the *chabola* (shack) were the two key features of the crisis.[5] In order to give an account of this situation we will need to consider how it was portrayed in the official documents of the time. We will explore the way in which the problem was expressed, described, and analyzed by various public bodies, in order to reveal the issues associated with these various portrayals. We will first seek to identify the moment when, in the official discourses and legal texts, the diagnosis of a crisis emerged. Subsequently, we will analyze the reasons for this development with reference to the debates of the Madrid Urban Development Commission (Comisión de Urbanismo de Madrid; CUM), an interministerial authority representing the principal organizations concerned with the planning and development of the city. Finally, we will investigate how the information produced in order to document the crisis affected the way in which it was then represented.

From "Housing Problem" to "Social Emergency"

The Labor Charter, adopted in 1938, was the regime's first fundamental law. It stated that "the state assumes the task of increasing and making available to all Spaniards those forms of property essential to the life and livelihood of a human being: a family home, the inheritance of land, and the goods and tools necessary for daily work" (article 12). Fascist in inspiration, this emblematic text of Falangist ideology from the early stages of Francoism aimed to publicize the strong social policy of the new state,[6] in which a major role would be accorded to housing.[7] From 1939 onward, the regime thus approved the first measures to aid construction, and in order to put them into practice created the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda, the INV (National Housing Institute). However, Spain's economic and diplomatic isolation prolonged the penury of the war years, and against this background, practical achievements were limited.

4. Ángel Cabo Alonso, "Valor de la inmigración madrileña," *Estudios Geográficos* 22, 84–85 (1961): 353–374.

5. Henceforth in this article, the Spanish term *chabola* will be translated as *shack*; *subletting* will be used to translate *realquilado*.

6. On the social policies of the Franco regime, see Carme Molinero, *La Captación de las masas: Política social y propaganda en el régimen franquista* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005); Á. Cenarro, *La Sonrisa de Falange: Auxilio Social en la guerra civil y en la posguerra* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006).

7. On the housing policy of Francoist Spain, we refer the reader to Céline Vaz, *Le franquisme et la production de la ville. Politiques du logement et de l'urbanisme, mondes professionnels et savoirs urbains en Espagne des années 1930 aux années 1970, (Phd dissertation, Université Paris Ouest*). For a synthesis: Céline Vaz, "Le Régime franquiste et le logement populaire: Avènement et limites de l'aide publique," *Histoire et Sociétés* 20 (2006): 54–66; for a thoroughgoing study of the development of measures in the 1940s and 1950s, by the same author: "Una Década de planes: Planificación y programación de la vivienda en los años cincuenta," in *Cien años de intervención pública en la vivienda y el urbanismo*, ed. C. Sambricio (Madrid: Asociación española de promotores públicos de vivienda y suelo, 2008), 145–171.

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Arising from the political maneuvering of the Cold War, which saw Franco transferred from the side of the dictatorships into the anti-Communist camp, the end of isolation changed the game decisively. Access to foreign capital brought Spain's financial asphyxiation to an end, allowing the country to return to a period of growth, particularly through the development of "sun and sand" tourism and construction. The Francoist coalition moved toward a political third way, embodied by a Catholic Right that was liberal in economic matters and supportive of modernization, and carried forward by a new generation of experts with connections to Opus Dei. The fifties represented a period of transition, in which policies of strong state intervention typical of the politics of national self-sufficiency of the 1940s alternated with the liberalization of the economy following the Stabilization Plan of 1959.[8] Throughout this period, housing remained under the control of the interventionist Ministry of Housing; created in 1957, this ministry was the last to be run by a Falangist at a time when the Falange was being marginalized on all sides.

The Measures of 1954 and the National Housing Plan (1956–1960)

Throughout 1954, a number of important measures were adopted, which grew out of the discussions on the housing issue that had been running in various circles since the beginning of the decade.[9] Two national plans were launched, in parallel, in May. The Social Housing Plan put forward a program for the construction of housing intended for "families which, drawn to the large urban and industrial centers, . . . live in extremely inadequate conditions" and whose "low earning power . . . , lack of stable working relationships with companies, private individuals, or other organizations, and other particular characteristics have placed them beyond the reach of the protections offered by the state on the basis of current housing legislation."[10] This was the first measure to target a specific population sector not defined on a professional or corporatist basis: in this case, the poorest. It brought the authorities directly into the process of building very small housing units of 42m^2. In parallel, a Trade Union Housing Plan was launched by the Spanish Trade Union Organization, with the aim of building housing for their worker members.[11]

A few months later, in July, the law on "price-controlled housing" recast the existing legislation and based the new framework for aid policies around construction. It aims were threefold: to boost economic growth, to encourage private initiative, and to set in place a social policy for housing. The decree of July 1, 1955, launched a National Housing Plan to build 550,000 dwellings with "controlled prices"[12] in five years (1956–1960); the plan contained specific measures for the capital—the Madrid Housing Plan. This sought to make up for the housing shortfall registered by the first postwar national building and housing survey, which began in 1950

8. Carlos Barciela et al., *La España de Franco (1939–1975): Economía* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2001).

9. For a detailed analysis of these measures, see Vaz, "Una Década de Planes."

10. Decree-Law of May 14, 1954, by which the National Housing Institute is charged with the development of a plan for the construction of "social" housing projects.

11. The Spanish Trade Union Organization, also known as the Vertical Syndicate, under the stewardship of the Falange, was at this time the only authorized trade union.

12. We have not translated this expression by "rent-controlled housing" because the majority of the housing provided under this arrangement was not leased, but marketed as freehold property.

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and whose results were published in 1953.[13] When, in the capital, this data was cross-referenced with local municipal statistics on construction and population, it brought to light a particularly alarming situation: a housing deficit that was growing by eight thousand units a year. This explains why the secretary of the INV, Javier Martín Artajo, gave a lecture in May 1953 entitled "Housing in Madrid: The Size of the Problem, and its Solutions."[14]

Can we therefore say that it was this diagnosis of a crisis that explains the national effort of 1954? The speech with which the minister for employment, José Antonio Girón de Velasco, presented the law on price-controlled housing to the Cortes appeared rather to indicate the opposite: "We have overcome a difficult period,"[15] he declared. A member of the hard-line wing of the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (JONS),[16] Girón was the architect of the social policy of the early days of Francoism (the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s), which professed to be building a new society. It was in the context of this social project that he presented the new law. It was all about building "homes for the shepherds guarding the national household;" "homes, that is, for the multitude of men whom we will stand in ranks to fight the battle of production that lies ahead of us; but there will be no battle if there are no homes for the soldiers." This policy was intended to resolve the ongoing problem of housing in the towns of the industrial age, a problem apparent since the nineteenth century, just as the Instituto Nacional de Previsión (National Forecasting Institute) was supposed to remedy the precarious nature of the workers' lives. It made the solution to this social problem subject to the imperatives of industrial policy, and placed the work force wherever it was needed. This approach explains why the INV was put under the direction of the Ministry of Labor:[17] housing policy was conceived as an aspect of the social protection of workers and economic policy. In contrast, responsibility for the reconstruction and redevelopment of Madrid was given to two bodies reporting to the Ministry of the Interior: the Servicio Nacional de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones (the National Service—later, Directorate—for Reparation and the Devastated Regions), created in 1938; and the Comisaría General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid y Alrededores (CGOUM, Commission for the Development of Madrid and the Surrounding Area), created in 1946.

13. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (National Statistical Institute), *Censo de edificios y viviendas de 1950,* 2 vols. (Madrid, 1953).

14. Javier Martín Artajo, *El Problema de la vivienda en Madrid. Su magnitud y remedios* (Madrid, 1953).

15. Speech of the minister for employment, José Antonio Girón de Velasco, given to the Cortes on July 14, 1954, reproduced in the published version of the law: Ministerio del Trabajo, Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda, *Viviendas de renta limitada y primer Plan nacional de la Vivienda* (Madrid, 1955), 9–19.

16. The Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, created in 1931, represent a fascist-style revolutionary nationalism, and advocate direct action. Their leaders hoped it would be able to compete with anarchosyndicalism for support among the workers. They merged with the Falange in 1934, creating the Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (FE de las JONS), and were later incorporated into the Francoist single party.

17. The INV was originally an autonomous body reporting to the Ministry of Organization and Trade Union Action, but it very soon came under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor. See Vaz, "Una Década de planes."

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The Social Emergency Plan (1957)

As of 1957, however, the housing question came to be formulated in a new way. The previous year, an institutional crisis rooted in disagreements over the way in which the future of the regime was to be assured had divided the various political "families" within the Francoist coalition, which at the time was facing economic, social, and political crises. The state was on the verge of bankruptcy, and social discontent was reaching a critical threshold. It gave rise to a huge wave of strikes—the second since the end of the war—and to the first large-scale student protest movement in Madrid and Barcelona. The settling of the institutional crisis was accompanied by the formation of a new government in 1957, the government that would go on to produce the Stabilization Plan. A new Ministry of Housing was created, led by José Luis Arrese, who had recently been removed from the ministry attached to the General Secretariat of the Movimiento (Spain's only political party) after his plan for the reorganization of power around this all-powerful party was blocked. This episode constituted the Falange's last attempt to reappropriate the regime; from this point on they were definitively marginalized, as José Antonio Girón de Velasco's departure from the government highlighted. Arrese's appointment as head of the Ministry of Housing amounted, therefore, to a demotion to the periphery of political power. The reorganization did, however, allow the tasks of two bodies which, until then, had closely collaborated—the INV and the CGOUM—to be brought together under the auspices of the new ministry.

In the year it was created, the Ministry of Housing launched the Plan de Urgencia Social de Madrid (the Madrid Social Emergency Plan; PUS), an initiative that was heavily publicized in the media. In his speech presenting the plan, Arrese declared that

> this is about confronting the housing problem in Madrid . . . , not in order to address the contribution made to it by the city's normal growth, but that made by another element which, over the years, has accumulated in our city and which today, between the shacks, the sublets, and the ruined buildings, adds up to the very serious figure of sixty thousand homes.[18]

It was important to put an end to the existence "of shacks built like pigsties out on open land, to sublets with shared kitchen access, to this tragic communal life, and even to the sordid buildings." Referring to the reasons for the plan, Arrese explicitly evoked the need for public order. The tone had changed by comparison with Girón de Velasco's 1954 speech: it was no longer a question of moving ahead on the path to progress, but of bringing to an end a scandalous and potentially dangerous situation. After the failure of 1955's national plan to address the full scale of Madrid's housing problem,[19] emergency measures had become necessary. Here indeed was a diagnosis of crisis, one inscribed in the particular context of the years 1956–1957.

18. Speech of Don José Luis Arrese, minister for housing, delivered in the Cortes on November 6, 1957, reproduced in the published plan: Ministerio de la Vivienda, *Plan de urgencia social* (Madrid, 1958), 11–34.

19. On the relative failure of the National Housing Plan, notably due to a lack of finance, and then its revival by the PUS, see Vaz, "Una Década de planes."

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The principal manifestation of this crisis, described at length in Arrese's speech, was the "problem of the *suburbio*[20] [which] has weighed the cities down for years, and Madrid in particular:" "As Madrid was not prepared for this avalanche of new arrivals . . . the terrible blight of the *suburbios* has formed around the city." Madrid's housing problems were thus presented as a "social emergency" and, in 1957, it was the unauthorized construction of self-built shacks on the outskirts of the city that epitomized these problems.

The PUS had three aims: to encourage private initiative in the house-building sector, to limit speculation on land, and to slow the growth of the *suburbios*. It made provision for the construction of sixty thousand homes in two years, which was expected to cover the shortfall. A decree of August 23 developed the third element of the plan: it aimed to close off access to the city by prohibiting anyone migrating to the capital who could not demonstrate that they already had housing arranged in the city. It invested the CGOUM with police powers, enabling it to immediately destroy any buildings constructed without permission and, should it be necessary, to return the occupants to their town or village of origin. To carry out this policy, members of the Civil Guard were seconded to the organization and formed a "surveillance corps around the periphery of Madrid."

Essentially, then, the 1957 plan was an attempt to boost construction. Only a minority of the homes built under the plan were earmarked for rehousing the people currently living in shacks, and the only measure expressly dealing with unauthorized housing was a repressive one. The PUS was successful in boosting construction overall, particularly in the private sector. It was less effective, however, in resolving the housing problems of the poorest households. The specter of the shacks and the threat they represented to social order were, however, certainly useful in justifying the heavy public investment in the program, which went against the grain of the new government's policies, geared as they were toward liberalization and financial and monetary stabilization.

What happened between 1954 and 1957 to turn the perennial problem of housing, within official discourse, into a social emergency? And why was it specifically associated with the *suburbios*, a term soon replaced by that of *chabolas* in the experts' vocabulary to refer to the ramshackle dwellings built on the outskirts of the city and in a legal gray area? The crisis of 1956 and the changing balance of power within the Francoist coalition, along with the administrative reorganization that this entailed, offer a partial explanation for the increased focus on the housing issue. A subsequent analysis was later published by the Ministry of Housing in 1969. It was meant to stimulate debate at a seminar on the improvement of shacks and shantytowns organized by the UN in association with the Colombian government, which was scheduled to take place in Medellín the following year.[21] It traced the development of the shacks and the beginning of the crisis back to 1954 and the legislation on price-controlled housing. In order to make the point, rather than producing population figures the anonymous author chose to present tables showing

20. We have taken the decision not to translate this relatively uncommon word, which is only used in scholarly or expert circles. A *suburbio* is a poor population center on the outskirts of a town. The word carries negative connotations.

21. "Examen general del problema del chabolismo en España," in *Absorción del chabolismo: Teoría general y actuaciones españolas* "(Madrid: Ministerio de la Vivienda, 1969).

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the growth in construction. This interpretation effectively linked the acceleration of migration toward Madrid to the economic upturn, the natural momentum of which overcame the impact of the 1954 law. At the time, the regime was driven by an overarching political desire to revive the economy of the capital. However, the association of the law of 1954 with the growth in the number of shacks is perhaps a clue to another link between the two phenomena, one which will come into view if we analyze the debates over the redevelopment of the city.

The Invention of the Shacks

The Madrid Urban Planning Commission (CUM), chaired by the chief commissioner for the urban development of Madrid, was comprised of representatives from several ministries, from Madrid city hall, from the provincial government, from the provincial council, and from a range of public bodies involved in the development of the capital. It was charged with assisting the CGOUM. The minutes of its meetings make explicit the interests and motives of the actors involved in the redevelopment of Madrid.[22] They contain the keys to understanding many of the mismatches between the *plan general* of 1946 and the local plans and other projects adopted and published in the CGOUM report *Gran Madrid*, as well as occasional discrepancies between these projects and their practical implementation.

The Long History of Unapproved Building on the Edge of the City

The appearance of the word *chabola* shortly before 1956 in the discussions of the commission does not mean that such constructions did not exist prior to that date. They were the subject of discussion, for example, in a debate that took place in December 1949 on the plan for the improvement and regeneration of the *suburbios* on the outskirts of Madrid[23]. This project tried to prevent the growth of "*cuevas*,[24] huts [*chozas*], and other categories of inadequate housing" by creating focal points for satellite development. In 1950, the technical director of the CGOUM and author of the 1946 plan, the architect Pedro Bidagor, drew attention to the liberties being taken in numerous current building projects with regard to the prescriptions laid down in the *plan general*.[25] This was also an opportunity for the commissioner to bring up "the serious problem represented by the continued building of *cuevas* and shacks in the immediate vicinity of Madrid. It seems necessary to undertake the complete demolition of these buildings, with the necessary support of the authorities."[26] The problem provoked a long discussion, at the end of which the commission decided to submit "the measures deemed necessary by the commission for the demolition of these unauthorized buildings" to the minister.

It was often the visibility of the buildings that caused disquiet: ramshackle buildings give a bad impression in places which should be emblematic of the grandeur

22. These minutes are held in the library of the town-planning department of the Comunidad de Madrid, the name of which has changed a number of times.

23. Minutes of the Comisión de Urbanismo de Madrid (henceforth *Actas de la CUM*), 22 December, 1949.

24. We have chosen to retain the Spanish word—whose literal meaning is "cave"—as caves have been a form of marginal housing in numerous Spanish towns.

25. *Actas de la CUM*, October 25, 1950.

26. *Actas de la CUM*, October 25, 1950.

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of the capital, particularly along the main routes into the city. This was the official reason behind the first repressive measures taken against them, which were adopted by decree on August 11, 1953. It authorized the Directorate for the Devastated Regions to "destroy the *cuevas*, *chabolas*, *barracas* [cabins], and other similar inhabited constructions."[27] The preamble to the decree was explicit: it was a question of "embellishing the approaches to certain cities, along with the areas close to tourist routes." Article 2 stipulated that "in cases where these are inhabited, a way should first be found to provide shelter for the occupants." The document also required the local authorities to prevent the construction of such buildings in future. There was now an outline framework in place for dealing with the shacks. On November 11, 1953, the representative of the directorate announced that "in line with the decree of August 11 last, regarding the demolition of *cuevas* and shacks in the environs of Madrid, we are now proceeding to an ordered clearing of these *suburbios*."[28]

Why is it, then, that analyses have traced the problem of illegal construction in the outskirts to 1954, when it evidently existed before that date? Firstly, by explicitly outlawing the constructions, the decree of 1953 made it obligatory to identify and point them out. Thus, in 1954, the mayor of the Vallecas district, in the south of Madrid, submitted a report to the CUM on "the clandestine buildings, consisting of shacks and other buildings of the same category that are being built in this district."[29] In the same year, the "illegal parceling out" of a huge area of land by its owner, Pedro Orcasitas (whose name was given to one of Madrid's most emblematic shack districts), was likewise reported to the authorities.[30]

In the great majority of cases, Madrid's shacks were not built on illegally occupied land, but were put up without permission on legally acquired lots. Very often, these lots were in areas designated "not for construction" by the 1946 plan, and the owners of this devalued land were trying, despite the circumstances, to make a profit from their property. When the PUS and other official documents denounced speculation, they were primarily targeting these unlucky landowners. Around the edges of Madrid, the sale of these nonserviced lots to poor households—often building workers who built their houses themselves—was well known to the various local and national administrations, and the practice dated back to the middle of the nineteenth century.[31] Interrupted for a time by the war, this practice then rapidly returned. The adoption of the *plan general* of 1946, which regulated the concession of building permits according to various zones, forced construction out into those areas designated "not for construction," that is, the cheapest areas. It thus heightened the precarious legality of those districts, which were all henceforth built without permits; it thereby also exacerbated their material precariousness. This legal and material degradation doubtless explains the change of vocabulary used to refer to this type of building, which from this point on were described as *chabolas*.[32]

27. Decree of August 11, 1953.

28. Decree of August 11, 1953.

29. *Actas de la CUM*, *acuerdo* 357, September 15, 1954.

30. *Actas de la CUM*, *acuerdo* number and date illegible.

31. Charlotte Vorms, *Bâtisseurs de banlieue: Madrid: Le Quartier de la Prosperidad (1860–1936)* (Paris: Créaphis, 2012).

32. On the history of this word, see Isabel Rodríguez Chumillas, "Chabola," in *L'Aventure des mots de la ville à travers le temps, les langues, les sociétés*, ed. C. Topalov et al. (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2010), 272–276.

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The use of this term also has to do with the new populations involved: the war had interrupted the rural exodus and with its end came a change in the style of the buildings constructed. Like the *casas bajas* (literally, "low houses"[33]) of the prewar period, Madrid's shacks were largely brick built. While French usage dictates that *barrios de chabolas* be translated into French as *bidonvilles* (in English, *shantytown*), the "shack districts" of Madrid are noticeably different from their contemporary French equivalents.[34] Despite being unauthorized, these buildings were tolerated because, as in the prewar period, they continued to offer a way out of the housing problem for working-class households. In 1954, a member of the commission explicitly defended this toleration, on the grounds that "there are reasons, relating to the lack of available housing for a great number of those families who require it, which explain why such buildings, which provide temporary solutions for those in need, come to be constructed." [35]

The Shacks: An Obstacle to Construction

In addition to the decree of 1953, which certainly contributed to heightening the visibility of the shacks, the second reason why 1954 came to constitute a turning point in the official understanding of the issue is perhaps to be found in the law passed in July and in the Madrid Housing Plan, which tasked the CGOUM with preparing areas of land for the plan's price-controlled homes.[36] The CGOUM's experts frequently ran into the problem of finding areas of land that were already built on and inhabited. So, not only did they have to expropriate the land and prepare the area, but they also had to demolish the shacks and rehouse their occupants. In the words of the CGOUM's 1964 records: "With the aim of providing the land necessary for the construction of price-controlled housing, the areas were cleared, and the residents transferred and rehoused in a number of absorption villages."[37] These "absorption villages", which thus appeared in 1954, were the first of a number of forms of dwelling built to absorb the population of the shacks and other expropriated properties. A long list of other solutions was to follow, the Francoist authorities never being short of ideas for new terminology to describe them. Negotiations were well under way between the various parties involved—the CGOUM, occasionally the Directorate for the Devastated Regions, and public and private contractors—in order to calculate the cost of transferring the occupants of what by this time were called *chabolas* (now a generic term, used without heed to the particular style of the buildings concerned or the ownership of the land they were on), in order, in turn, to determine which body would be responsible for carrying this out—in most cases it was the CGOUM—and setting a deadline for each operation.[38] From June 1955, "faced with the extent of the unauthorized building

33. On the "*casas bajas*," see Vorms, *Bâtisseurs de banlieue.*

34. This is true in several respects: their shape, the materials used, their legal status, their number in relation to the housing stock of the city, and the population living in them.

35. *Actas de la CUM*, *acuerdo* 356, September 15, 1954.

36. L. Galiana Martín, *Suelo público y desarrollo urbano en Madrid* (Madrid: UAM, Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, 1995).

37. Ministerio de la Vivienda, Comisaría General para la Ordenación Urbana de Madrid y de sus Alrededores, *Memoria General*, 1964.

38. See for example (specifically for 1955): *Actas de la CUM*, *acuerdos* 34, dated January 26, *acuerdo* (number illegible) dated April 15, and *acuerdo* 255, dated June 1.

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currently being carried out . . . , which is noticeably impeding the execution of the Urban Redevelopment Plan and the area plans," the commission decided to "prohibit the use of such constructions . . . , to suspend those under way, and to propose to the interior minister [to whom the commission reported] to demolish what has been built without permission."[39] The 1956 law on land tenure, which laid the groundwork for modern urban development in Spain,[40] provided the CUM with a further legal argument by making the sale of lots on an area of land subject to prior authorization (article 79). In 1956, the commission therefore decided, "in virtue of the mission entrusted to the CGOUM under the auspices of the Madrid Housing Plan, and of the role that [the] law gives to the development commission in the encouragement of house building:"

> 1. To expropriate and occupy with the utmost urgency all land in which non-agricultural lots are found, for which no development project has been approved.
>
> 2. To likewise expropriate all land already occupied or in the process of being occupied through the construction of *cuevas*, shacks, or other buildings of this type, without a permit.
>
> 3. To complete the expropriations of unenclosed spaces or plots at risk of occupation by constructions of the aforementioned types.[41]

The link between the law of 1954, the housing plan, and the suppression of the shacks is explicit. From this point on, the CGOUM would no longer need a zonal plan in order to appropriate land; it would be enough for the land to have been subdivided into lots without express authorization, or for there to be a risk of it being so divided. In this way, the shacks served as a pretext for the establishment of very fast expropriation procedures, which left a great deal to the discretion of the authorities.

From 1954 to 1955, then, the government's housing policy turned self-built properties on cheap lots from a previously tolerated fact into a major public problem. The shacks represented an unacceptable extra cost to the public purse. Uncontrolled building inevitably had an inflationary effect on land prices, and also added the cost of demolition and, in principle, of rehousing, to the existing costs of expropriation and land clearance. These activities also carried a high political price: there are many eyewitness accounts of the violent demolition of shacks and of the opposition roused by it. The sense of "social emergency" associated with the shacks in the second half of the 1950s, to use the official expression, was therefore also caused by the housing and construction policy put in place in 1954. The double argument of the need to make building land available on the one hand and the social threat posed by the evicted inhabitants of the shacks on the other was useful to the town planners of the CUM in their attempt to make the fight against unauthorized building a central official concern. Is this interpretation biased by the sources used? The censuses and the demographic data do indeed highlight a worsening of the

39. *Actas de la CUM, acuerdo* 410, July 27–28, 1955.

40. On this law, and more generally on the legal framework for the disposal of building land in Spain, see Luciano Parejo Alfonso, "L'Évolution du cadre juridique de la production de la ville depuis 1956," in *L'Urbanisme espagnol depuis les années 1970: La Ville, la démocratie et le marché*, ed. Laurent Coudroy de Lille, Céline Vaz, and Charlotte Vorms (Rennes: PUR, 2013), 25–38.

41. *Actas de la CUM*, *acuerdo* 487, September 19, 1956.

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housing problem in the 1950s that can in no way be denied. Nevertheless, merely accentuating an old problem is not enough to turn it into a headlining political issue. The debates of the CUM, in which the various interested public parties were represented, reveal one of the reasons why this dramatic situation became a public priority (the *chabolas* were an obstacle to construction) and why all eyes turned at that point to the shacks rather than to the equally dramatic issue of subletting. In fact, social surveys from the 1960s show that most households preferred the shacks to subletting.[42] Although some were already worried about living conditions in the shack settlements in the early 1950s—Catholic organizations became active in these areas from this point, and the first parishes were created in them[43]—they had little success in making their voices heard until the 1960s.

Investigating the Occupants of the Shacks

In 1961, the ministry adopted a new plan, this time entirely centered on the question of the shacks, whose eradication it was to authorize. The absorption plan for the shacks provided for the construction of thirty thousand homes over five years, exclusively for the purpose of rehousing. This shows how the problem of unauthorized building had climbed to the top of the list of official concerns; and now the response was no longer conceived only in repressive terms, but also included a social dimension. The Unidades Vecinales de Absorción (Rehousing Projects; UVA), groups of theoretically temporary dwellings for the rehousing and education of the poor households evicted from the shacks, were the poorest and most defective forms of accommodation built by the Spanish authorities. They can be compared to the *cités de transit* in France, to which they were roughly equivalent. They were soon referred to as "vertical shacks" ("*chabolismo vertical*"). In their day, however, they nonetheless constituted a social policy. The 1961 plan was the first of a series of measures implemented over a period of twenty years; it marked the beginning of an era of reabsorption policies, which would eventually lead to the most emblematic municipal program of the early years of the post-Franco democracy, the Plan de Remodelación de Barrios (the Neighborhood Restructuring Plan) in Madrid, which began to be implemented in 1979.[44]

The 1961 plan was a response to the failure of the PUS's repressive measures to put an end to a phenomenon that was being driven by the growing demand for labor. It was no doubt also the result of improved knowledge about the size of the problem and its human dimension; indeed, the focusing of attention on the illegal lots used for building shacks, and the police measures implemented in 1957 to prevent their expansion, led to the production of a significant body of documentation on the issue.

42. Cáritas diocesana de Madrid-Alcalá, Sección de estudios y planificación, *El Chabolismo. Investigación sobre el problema de la vivienda en los suburbios de Madrid* (November, 1961).

43. José Sánchez Jiménez, *Cáritas Española, 1942–1997: Acción social y compromiso cristiano* (Madrid: Cáritas Española, 1998).

44. On this plan, see Julio Alguacil, "La Mobilisation citadine dans la transformation des quartiers périphériques de Madrid," in Coudroy de Lille, Vaz, and Vorms, *L'Urbanisme espagnol*, 85–110.

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Families of Spanish Workers

From 1956 until the winding up of the commission in 1963, the "social information" service of the housing section of the CGOUM collected extensive data on the buildings being used as dwellings in zones marked out for expropriation, as well as on their occupants. The earliest of the forms used to record this information dates from 1956, which shows that they were produced in the wake of the National Housing Plan rather than after the suppression decree of 1957. This is not the place for an analysis of this archive; we will concentrate here only on how it affected the way the authorities dealt with the shacks.[45]

Where the physical condition of the housing is concerned, the forms are not very forthcoming; they mainly tell us about the inhabitants of the shacks, who were almost always families that had recently arrived in Madrid. The men were laborers, generally in the construction sector; few of them were without work. In short, they were the working classes of Madrid—the masses that the new regime wanted to snatch from the jaws of Marxism, the honest Spanish workers to whom they professed to be doing justice. The preliminary memorandum to the 1961 plan was very clear that those concerned were not "a collection of beggars and people seeking a life outside the law."[46] Amounting as it did to forty thousand forms in 1961, the archive revealed the scale of the phenomenon.[47] This corpus of documentation is still a telling source of information today, first and foremost thanks to its size. It bears direct witness to the number of Spanish households condemned to live in poorly equipped and rudimentary buildings from which they might be evicted at any moment.

The reports produced by the CGOUM's social workers likewise helped to draw the authorities' attention to the social implications of the housing crisis. Social work, which had developed in the interwar years,[48] gained a new importance under Francoism. The housing section of the CGOUM had a social worker, Fuencisla de la Haro,[49] who visited the housing projects built to rehouse the shack dwellers, accompanied the latter when they were transferred, informed the administration of the validity of any demands made, and made suggestions as to who should be accorded priority in the allocation of housing. Around five hundred of her reports have been preserved; produced between 1958 and 1964, they detail her visits and her interviews with individuals.[50] These short, handwritten notes provided information on the members of the household, their previous housing, and how their current living arrangements accounted for their request, as well as any particular circumstances affecting their lives (health, family matters, and so on). Most of them

45. This archive is currently being studied.

46. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, *252414/1, Plan de absorción de chabolas, memoria*, signed by Carlos Trias, January 2, 1961.

47. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 251414/71, *Informe sobre el problema del chabolismo en Madri*d, signed by Luis Martos Lalanne, May 5, 1961.

48. Roger-Henri Guerrand and Marie-Antoinette Rupp, *Brève histoire du service social en France, 1896–1976* (Toulouse: Privat, 1978); Annie Fourcaut, *Femmes à l'usine: ouvrières et surintendantes dans les entreprises françaises de l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1982); Delphine Serre, *Les Coulisses de l'État social: enquête sur les signalements d'enfant en danger* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2009).

49. We have not found her personnel file in the CGOUM archives and therefore have no further biographical information about her.

50. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 25238.

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have similar residential histories:[51] the households started out living in sublet accommodation, then moved into a shack, either through choice or because they were moved on from their previous place of residence. All of them talk of overcrowding and dreadful sanitary conditions. When threatened with eviction—including from government housing, a part of which they were illegally renting from the official tenants—some ended up pleading for leniency on the part of the CGOUM. Others had seen their shacks demolished by the CGOUM as a result of the August 1957 decree. The recommendations made by this young lady from a well-to-do family, who was officially tasked with enquiring into the poverty of the conditions in which so many families lived, and who strode around the shantytowns and visited the slum dwellings, seem rarely to have had any effect. In any event, just like the enormous archive of the social-information service, her reports kept the authorities informed; and they surely contributed to an increased awareness and a better understanding of the social problems associated with the shacks.

Quantifying the Problem

Before this social tragedy could be dealt with, it first had to be measured. The technical commissioner therefore asked the head of the housing section to provide him with a tally of the "expropriations and shacks"[52] concerned. The confusion between buildings placed on land marked out for expropriation and "shacks" remained. The widespread use of the term *chabola*, which had become an officially recognized category,[53] did not follow a specific definition, much to the chagrin of the head of the housing section of the CGOUM, Luis Martos Lalanne, who expressed his regret over the point in a later report.[54] In order to fulfil his superior's request, Lalanne chose to turn to the Civil Guard personnel seconded to his team rather than to the social-information service, thereby favoring the definition of a shack as a building erected in contravention of the 1957 decree.

The commander of the Civil Guard detachment immediately provided the data requested, drawing on "the unit's existing records, along with a count conducted by his personnel."[55] He added that "also included is the approximate number of buildings erected in areas designated as green spaces, those expropriated or under consideration for expropriation, and buildings observed in certain zones prior to their being designated 'not for construction.'" The figures that Lalanne in turn passed on to his superior were collected according to patrol zones, areas chosen for policing purposes, which did not match the zones marked out for redevelopment. For each

51. As this body of documentation is currently being researched, we have not provided any numerical data in the present article.

52. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 251208, letter from Luis Martos Lalanne to Antonio Perpiña, technical director of the town-planning commission, October 11, 1960.

53. On the construction of a comparable administrative and legal category, we refer the reader to the particularly well-documented case of the *favelas* in Brazil: L. Valladares, *La Favela d'un siècle à l'autre: Mythe d'origine, discours scientifiques et représentations virtuelles* (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2006), and R. Soares Gonçalves, *Les Favelas de Rio de Janeiro: Histoire et droit, xixe–xxe siècles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

54. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 251414/71, *Informe sobre el problema del chabolismo en Madrid*, signed by Luis Martos Lalanne, May 5, 1961.

55. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 251208, *Memoria informe del estado en que se encuentra el problema del chabolismo*.

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zone there was a list of districts, each with its columns of "shacks," "*cuevas,*" "*fortines*" (literally, "small forts"), and "other constructions." These categories, which are the same as those listed on the social-information forms, are no more clearly defined here than they were there. These were the figures, however, that were accepted at the time, and then in later research, without anybody asking themselves about the origins of a terminology whose dubious relevance had nevertheless already been pointed out.[56] When this tallying up was complete, the CGOUM at last had its figures: Madrid: 31,223 shacks, 819 *cuevas*, twenty-nine *fortines*, and 40,171 other constructions (doubtless those which did not fall under the 1957 decree, but which were on land marked for expropriation). The important figure—the one giving the number of makeshift homes needing to be replaced—is the sum of the first three categories: an approximate total of thirty-two thousand. In passing this on to his superior, the head of the housing section urged the commissioner not to be

> alarmed by the total number of shacks in Madrid because that figure is simply the amount that is always there; at least it is the number in the reports I request each year from the Civil Guard—always thirty-two thousand, *cuevas* and shacks combined.
>
> This Civil Guard work is simply a baseline.[57]

A figure had been needed, and this report produced one. It is certainly the origin of the thirty thousand homes to be built in five years under the 1961 plan. This report, which was directly based on the data available in the offices of the Civil Guard, was undoubtedly subject to corrections: the final figure used in the preparation of the 1961 Rehousing Plan was 28, 284, though it was still reached on the basis of the same territorial divisions and the same nomenclature for describing the buildings concerned. It was therefore police data that formed the basis for the 1961 plan.[58]

The CGOUM passed these figures on to the Cáritas Española, [59] which was entrusted with the task of carrying out a social survey of the populations that were to be rehoused. This organization, which belonged to the Catholic action movement, and whose political leaders had taken the side of Franco from the beginning of the civil war, had been nurtured in the bosom of the regime.[60] The authorities turned to it because it was now doubly blessed with specialist insight: a firsthand knowledge of poverty, gained through its charitable work, and rapidly developing sociological

56. J. Montes Mieza, M. Paredes Grosso, and A. Villanueva Paredes, "Los Asentamientos chabolistas en Madrid," *Ciudad y Territorio* 2–3 (1976): 159–172.

57. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 251208, letter from Luis Martos Lalanne to Antonio Perpiña.

58. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, CGOUM collection, 252414/1, *Plan de absorción de chabolas, memoria*, January 1, 1961.

59. At present there is only one historical account of Cáritas Española, which was commissioned and published by the organization itself on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary: Sánchez Jiménez, *Cáritas Española, 1942–1997.*

60. For the history of Catholic social action under Franco, and of the development of a critical, then a dissident strand within it, we refer the reader to the work of Feliciano Montero, "El Catolicismo social durante el franquismo," *Sociedad y utopía. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 17 (2001): 93–113; Montero, *La Iglesia: De la colaboración a la disidencia (1956–1975): La oposición durante el franquismo*, vol. 4 (Madrid: Encuentro, 2011); Montero, *La Acción católica y el franquismo: auge y crisis de la acción católica especializada en los años sesenta* (Madrid: UNED, 2000).

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expertise.[61] The inquiry into the existence and nature of the phenomenon of shack dwelling (*chabolismo*)[62] in Madrid, the results of which were passed to the CGOUM in confidence in November 1961, was then one of the first empirical sociological studies undertaken in Spain. Based on the use of questionnaires, it was concerned not only with investigating the social and demographic characteristics of the shack dwellers and their living conditions, but also their sociocultural profile. This combination of social action and empirical sociology led the members of Cáritas to reconceive the problem of the shacks in terms of the problem of *chabolismo*—the way uprooted migrant families actually lived. From that moment on, it would not be enough to give decent housing to these families; they would also need to be educated and provided with the means of establishing a "community" in the city. There was nothing very original about this discourse: it was similar to that which was dominant in France at the time in respect of areas of slum housing [*bidonvilles*], and is part of a long tradition of according an educational function to social housing. The document did, however, mark the dawn of a new, more scientific way of looking at social issues. The areas of unauthorized building around Madrid were the prime location for this approach to the lifestyles and the culture of the city's poor. The role of the Catholics in the emergence of an empirical urban sociology with close ties to social work was not exclusive to Spain.[63] Nevertheless, the wider political context adds something particular to the Spanish example: the development of Catholic social action took place in the context of a close association with the Franco regime; in the field, however, out among the shanties and the poorer districts of the city, Catholic social activists gradually came to construct a critical discourse. It was on this basis that, in the 1960s, a dissident current emerged in the Church, which joined the underground Communist parties in the anti-Francoist opposition.

Between the middle of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, housing in Spain became a major political issue. The very real decline in the living conditions of the inhabitants of Madrid, exacerbated by the influx of rural migrants, led to the diagnosis of a crisis. Against a generally unfavorable backdrop, this helped to legitimize an interventionist policy which had both economic and social aims. The description of the crisis focused particularly on the unregulated building of poor housing on the outskirts of the city, doubtless due to the threat such areas posed to public order, and because the occupation of large areas of land was an obstacle to the implementation of the government's plans to boost construction. The importance given to these areas of land in official discussions, and to the methods devised for limiting their expansion, brought about the production of detailed documentation on them, which allowed for a greater understanding of the problem and its true scale. This then led to the enactment of specific policies for rehousing the inhabitants of the shacks.

61. On the genesis of Spanish sociology, see Élodie Richard, "L'Esprit des lois: Droit et sciences sociales à l'Académie royale des sciences morales et politiques d'Espagne (1857–1923)" (PhD diss., Université de Paris-I, 2008).

62. Cáritas diocesana de Madrid-Alcalá, *El chabolismo.*

63. On the case of Lyon, see Olivier Chatelan, *L'Église et la ville: Le diocèse de Lyon à l'épreuve de l'urbanisation (1954–1975)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).

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The urgency of these measures subsided under the influence of two factors: changes in housing policy, which were themselves linked to the reorientation of the regime's economic policy in the 1960s; and the emergence of a social movement in the working-class districts. Construction was successfully boosted in the 1950s: from the 1960s on, contractors in the private sector began to participate in the construction en masse of large subsidized-housing projects, taking over the task of building from the government. The economic liberalization of the 1960s was then extended to the construction sector. After mass expropriation and direct state involvement in the building of homes came the mainly organizational role of the Comisión de Planeamiento y Coordinación del Área Metropolitana de Madrid, Coplaco, (the Planning and Coordination Commission for the Metropolitan Area of Madrid), which replaced the CGOUM in 1963. From that point on, it was less a question of reabsorbing the population of the shanties than of granting the developers the leeway they needed to get to work on the most useful areas.[64] In response to these new projects, the residents became more politically organized. Sporadic attempts to prevent shanty demolitions, supported by the parish priest, gave way to a collective effort to mobilize all the professional resources available, in an attempt to redefine the plans for a given zone. The "shack question" became a matter of concern for whole working-class neighborhoods; the people in the social-housing projects built in the 1950s and 1960s soon joined those of the shacks in the struggle for their "right to the city."[65] A new era had begun.

64. Montes Mieza, Paredes Grosso, and Villanueva Paredes, "Los Asentamientos chabolistas en Madrid."

65. The theories of Henri Lefebvre were introduced into Spain by Mario Gaviria, who was his student in Paris, and who published a Spanish translation of his book, *Le droit à la ville* (*The Right to the City*), in 1975. From the 1970s, Manuel Castells and Henri Lefebvre shared a long period of intellectual leadership in Spanish urban studies.

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