

THE URBAN IMAGE OF FRANCOISM

From patriotic exaltation to new forms of collective habitat in the *Peña* neighborhood proposals of Zamora (Spain)

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ABSTRACT

The Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) was the stage of greatest constructive development in contemporary Spain. Understanding this inherited landscape requires an analysis of the historical context in which the regime operated during its existence. In this paper, we conduct a formal analysis of the planned projects for the Peña neighborhood of Zamora. We argue that the urban proposals elaborated for this area between the 1940s and 1970s reflect different visions of the Francoist city at successive stages of its evolution. Our objective is to examine the relationship between the historical framework and urban form, and to offer a unique case study that complements or contrasts with existing research on this global phenomenon. Based on primary sources, we have analyzed the projected interventions, allowing us to construct a clear perspective on the urban dynamics of the period that supports our initial hypothesis.

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1. Introduction

In the opening passages of *Breve historia del urbanismo* [Brief history of urbanism], Chueca (1968, p. 24) highlighted the necessity of situating each urban form within a historical context to understand what it has been, what it is and what it can become. Expanding on this issue, Terán (1999, p. 16) stated that there are many ways to explain how urban reality has been formed and transformed, but these processes cannot be understood without the support of general history. According to the author, all political, economic and social events must be involved in the explanation sought. Considering the argumentation of such authoritative voices, we must assume that urban forms should be analyzed in the light of the historical and cultural framework in which they were produced, beyond autonomous processes and independent dynamics.

This consideration is essential when approaching the study of Franco's urban planning, a period in which Spanish cities experienced unprecedented development. It is crucial to examine the various stages through which the dictatorship evolved, initially established by the military and ultimately sustained by the interests of international capitalism. Thus, after an initial phase of autarchy with obvious fascist influences, the country experienced rapid demographic growth and significant economic development, with the issue of housing shortages as a constant underlying problem (Beltrán, 2002, pp. 36-37). These changes in social and financial structures had a profound impact on municipal and territorial organization, marking a turning point in the history of architecture and urban planning in Spain (Terán, 1999, p. 223).

Sambricio (1977, pp. 21-22) found that the reconstruction strategy initiated in 1939 by the new government was not limited to the physical restoration of the towns but was designed as a financial restructuring and political propaganda tool, turning the city into a symbol of the newly established state. Box (2012, p. 151) agreed that the architectural and urban planning work of the new regime became a political instrument serving the needs of the New State. Therefore, one of the priority actions of the Reconstruction Plan¹ was the identification of Madrid as the "capital of the Empire", promoting a return to autochthonous forms and a timeless monumentalism capable of representing the new established order (López, 2023; Rábanos, 2006, p. 277). The construction of the *Cornisa del Manzanares* [Cornice of the Manzanares], included in the General Urbanization Plan of Madrid approved in 1946 (Terán, 1999), and the *Valle de los Caídos* [Valley of the Fallen], commemorating the victims of the national side during the Civil War and used for the pomp and ceremony of the regime and large gatherings (Ciriri, 1977), are clear examples of this objective.

The process of renovation of Spanish architecture began in the late 1940's. Pérez (2014, p. 26) pointed out that throughout this transition period, there were works clearly aligned with the formal pattern of the dictatorship, alongside other that recover the modernity interrupted by the conflict. For his part, Capitel (1986, p. 17) pointed out the existence, at this stage, of architectural models that were more moderate than those of previous years, with a language far removed from the preceding academicism but still relied on traditional values or alternative figurations to the Modern Movement. An instructive example of the effort to renew old compositional and constructive methods, especially in representative buildings, is the Trade Union House in Madrid, by Cabrero and Aburto (1957). Despite this, in 1955, de la Sota warned that Spanish architecture was still lagging behind the European avant-garde and stressed the need to recover the modern principles explored during the pre-war Republican years (Cárdenas, 2022, p. 13).

The International Style, free of any eclectic historicism, did not fully arrive in Spain until years later, and it continued to evolve throughout the following decades, adapting to the revisions that developed outside the country. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by pioneering projects driven by a relentless pursuit of novel forms, ambitious heights and the disruption of established paradigms. This was a period of experimentation and significant diversity across all sectors, particularly in the residential

¹ The ideas were collected in the booklet entitled *Ideas Generales sobre el Plan Nacional de Ordenación y Reconstrucción* [General Ideas on the National Management and Reconstruction Plan], published by Technical Services of FET de las JONS —*Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* [Traditionalist Spanish Falange and of the National Syndicalist Offensive Boards]—in 1939. This document, with a distinct pamphlet-like quality, outlines a comprehensive strategy for nation-wide reconstruction through a unified plan. It presents a "true" theory of urbanism based on a clearly defined hierarchy that will guide the chaotic development of cities under the previous liberal principles.

architecture, as a response to increasing urban overcrowding and the expansion of informal settlements. Notable projects such as the *Unidad de Absorción del barrio de Hortaleza* [Absorption Unit of the Hortaleza neighborhood] by Higuera and Miró (Di Mele, 2024), the *Torres Blancas* [White Towers] building by Saénz de Oiza, (Guerra, 2021) and the *Gaudí* neighborhood by Bofil (Mestre, 1974), exemplified the transformative potential of architectural design in reshaping societal life, rethinking the spatial organization of houses, and establishing dynamic relationships between the home and the city².

Although the major Spanish capitals such as Madrid and Barcelona were the main experimental workshops, concentrating some of the most recognized works of each of these trends, we can find local manifestations of this global process in cities throughout the country.

In this paper, we approach the formal analysis of the projects conceived for the area popularly known as *Peña* neighborhood, situated in a privileged location of Zamora's twentieth century expansion. This case is presented as an exceptional example due to the diversity of urban development proposals that were put forth for this site between the 1940s and 1970s. We argue that each of these interventions reflected a representative image of the Francoist city at different stages of its evolution. The objective is, on the one hand, to verify the initial statement about the relationship between the historical framework and urban form, and, on the other, to offer a new case study that, in addition to its particular interest as a singular example, can complement or contrast with another research on this Spanish phenomenon.

2. Design and methodology

The following sections will provide a general overview of the historical context of Zamora under the dictatorship, as well as a detailed analysis of the specific circumstances that shaped the city during this period. Additionally, the boundaries of the study area will be defined, and a detailed morphological evaluation of the planned urban development proposals for this zone will be done. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the urban dynamics that occurred during this cycle.

Given the historical focus of the study, the methodology is based on the consultation of primary sources, primarily derived from the examination of archival collections. First, the municipal records of the Zamora City Council for the specified reference period have been consulted. The minutes of the various local governments responsible for municipal management and discussions on urban planning issues were documented therein, given the significant collective impact of these interventions. The information obtained has been invaluable in confirming the existence of these proposals, supplementing the existing documentation, and even unveiling initiatives that were never realized but nonetheless contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the process.

The information gathered enabled us to identify the specific projects planned for the area, as well as to determine relevant dates and other particulars. While some of these records were obtained from the Provincial Historical Archive of Zamora, where they had been transferred from the Municipality several decades ago, there is a notable absence of records from after 1950. After numerous consultations in various local and national institutions, the missing records were ultimately located in the General Archive of the Ministry of Public Works in Madrid.

Moreover, several additional sources have been consulted to provide a broader context for the data. These documents include the local press, which offers contemporary views and perspectives, as well as a review of complementary catalogues and bibliographies that are directly relevant to the study. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough understanding and supports the reliability and depth of the research findings.

3. Historical context

3.1. Brief notes on the Spanish situation between 1939 and 1975

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) led to the establishment of a military dictatorship that centralized power in the hands of the *caudillo* Francisco Franco. This was accomplished through the control of the Church and the implementation of a comprehensive propaganda campaign promoting traditional values. The creation of a single political party *FET de las JONS* —*Falange Española Tradicionalista y de*

² <https://lacasadelaarquitectura.es/recurso/1960-1969/32a411e4-c3ec-4301-b148-ac92a8d3e15a> (August 29, 2024).

las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista [Traditionalist Spanish Falange and of the National Syndicalist Offensive Boards]—, along with the enforcement of political repression, eliminated all forms of independence. Additionally, economic interventionism caused the collapse of the industrial sector during the Autarchy period (Barciela et al., 2001, pp. 9-13). This system hindered financial development during the 1940s, making it the period of the most significant economic recession in national history, further exacerbating the effects of the conflict (García & Jiménez, 1999, p. 16).

At the beginning of the following decade, this "Falangist economy" was gradually replaced by alternative economic ideologies that, while still conservative, were perceived as more progressive by the international community. The influx of American capital and the Concordat with the Holy See contributed to modest economic progress, which accelerated in the ensuing years. Nonetheless, the need for a comprehensive economic restructuring became apparent. In 1959, the Stabilization Plan was implemented based on the recommendations of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which helped avert the country's bankruptcy (Fernández, 2005, p. 63). This marked the beginning of a period of economic growth in the context of global expansion, which continued until the early 1970s. During this time, Spain benefited from substantial foreign investment, a surge in tourism, and a decline in unemployment due to population migration to other European countries (Bassols, 1973, pp. 525–526).

It is important to note that the unequal distribution of wealth was influenced by the specific interests or agendas of various political factions, leading to a significant divergence in regional economic opportunities and an extensive reshaping of the country's population distribution patterns. While considerable migration from the countryside to the city occurred throughout the dictatorship, the initial influx of people from rural areas mainly went to provincial capitals. However, from the 1950s onward, migratory flows shifted towards specific regions —Madrid, the northeastern Iberian Peninsula, and the Valladolid-Burgos axis in *Castilla-León*— where industrial activity was increasingly concentrated.

3.2. Zamora during Franco's dictatorship

As evidenced by Preston (1987, p. 81), Zamora, like numerous other municipalities in *Castilla-León*, exhibited a striking absence of resistance to the July 1936 uprising. While some instances of resistance emerged in the province, the capital demonstrated an unwavering allegiance to the rebel forces from the outset. Nowadays, it is now known that Zamora played a pivotal role in the planning of the armed uprising, with prominent military officers stationed at the *Viriato* Cavalry barracks (Mateos, 2008, p. 109). Consequently, Zamora, like Salamanca and Burgos, becoming a symbol of the new regime that Franco quickly established, exerting control over various aspects of daily life (Dios, 2002, p. 47).

The new government rewarded support for the cause by incorporating into its ranks a notable elite of military personnel and political figures from Castile. Zamora was one of the regions with the greatest representation in these new ranks. Nevertheless, this disproportionate representation did not lead to a corresponding influence of the region in the political sphere, as Blanco (1998, p. 371) asserted.

Conversely, the urban environment of Zamora, the setting of everyday life, became a primary focus of the propaganda policy of the New State, which employed various strategies to shape the city in alignment with its core messages. The regime exercised its paternalistic authority through the construction of numerous official buildings and the establishment of the first social housing colonies. The considerable number of projected interventions during the post-war period required the formulation of an urban development plan for the expansion of the city, which was approved in 1943 and subsequently extended in 1949 (Frechilla, 2021, pp. 200-202).

Notwithstanding these initial measures, the province of Zamora maintained its preexisting socioeconomic structure in the wake of the conflict, with 60% of the population residing in rural areas and engaged in agricultural activities. The aftermath of the crisis, along with widespread hunger and the emergence of a black market in the immediate post-war period —especially given the proximity to the Portuguese border— helped prevent the depopulation of rural areas, which experienced a high rate of provincial growth, reaching 315,885 inhabitants by the middle of the century³.

The shift in national economic orientation that began in the 1950s had devastating consequences for the territory of Zamora, which was isolated from the reindustrialization centers favored by the General Government. The abandonment of rural areas worsened after the implementation of the development

³ National Institute of Statistics (Spain). <https://www.ine.es/> (September 5, 2024).

plans, and the agricultural sector's contribution to the province's total income dropped from 46.1% to 28.8% (Mateos, 1995, pp. 663-664). This situation led to the early stages of a demographic exodus from the province. Most of this population was forced to migrate to South America, to inland areas where the secondary sector was concentrated in the center of the peninsula, or to the coastal regions of Vizcaya, Asturias, and Barcelona, which had benefited from significant state investment.

Notwithstanding the prevailing circumstances, the capital continued to attract a steady influx of new settlers throughout the entire period. In 1950, the locality recorded a 50% increase in population with respect to the 1930 figures, an upward trend that continued during the following decades, reaching more than 50,000 inhabitants at the end of the cycle⁴. This phenomenon can be attributed to the city's status as a regional administrative center, which led to a notable expansion of the tertiary sector, reaching figures comparable to the national average by the early 1970s. As might be expected, the increase did not occur in the most dynamic areas such as tourism, transportation or commerce. Instead, it was driven by an increase in the number of civil servants in public administrations and the appointment of medical professionals and educators to meet the needs of the region.

In the context of the services boom, the various initiatives of the local authorities to promote the installation of factories in the capital were largely ineffective due to the lack of private initiatives and the central administration's disinterest in promoting industrialization in the municipality (Mateos, 1995, pp. 750-752). In the early 1940s, but especially after overcoming the hemisphere of the century, municipal leaders implemented economic incentives to encourage the establishment of factories in the city⁵. However, these initiatives did not yield the anticipated outcomes. Similarly, the creation of industrial estates for the installation of manufacturing facilities from 1963 onwards did not significantly contribute to the growth of the local economy⁶.

4. Location and characteristics of the *Peña* neighborhood of Zamora

In order to locate the area popularly known as the *Peña* neighborhood and to comprehend its strategic location within the city of Zamora, it is first necessary to provide an overview of the contemporary urban development of the Castilian town.

It is well known that the capital features a significant Romanesque complex (Roda, 2008), primarily constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries on a high plateau along the *Duero* River. This geographical context was crucial for its role as a fortress until 1868. However, the location also significantly influenced its expansion with the onset of industrialization. Between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the capital experienced moderate urban growth (Calderón, 2012), which inevitably led to its expansion eastward.

In this process, the city's incorporation into important commercial routes played a decisive role in both the region's economic development and the evolution of the new urban fabric, which was shaped by these infrastructures. Without delving into specifics, as this is not the focus of this discourse, we will refer only to the road that, starting from the *Santa Clara* Gate at the eastern end of the fortifications, ran through the center of the plateau toward Valladolid, becoming one of the main axes for future expansion. It was inaugurated in 1854 to complete the itinerary between the capital of the *Duero* —as the town is known— and the port of Santander (Guerola, 1985, p. 224). Before the end of the century, a kilometer-long promenade called *Las Glorietas* was created on both sides of the road. This place soon became a popular spot for strolling and leisure among the people of Zamora, who were weary of the confinement imposed by the city walls.

By the end of the 19th century, the idea of diverting traffic and pedestrianizing the area was already under consideration, an intervention that was eventually implemented at the beginning of the following century (Ávila, 2009, pp. 114-116). The exceptional nature of the site becomes even more evident when we consider that it was chosen for the construction of magnificent hotels catering to the local bourgeoisie and, more importantly, for the first public buildings erected outside the traditional enclosure. We are referring to the Technical Institute of Secondary Studies, designed by Miguel Mathet

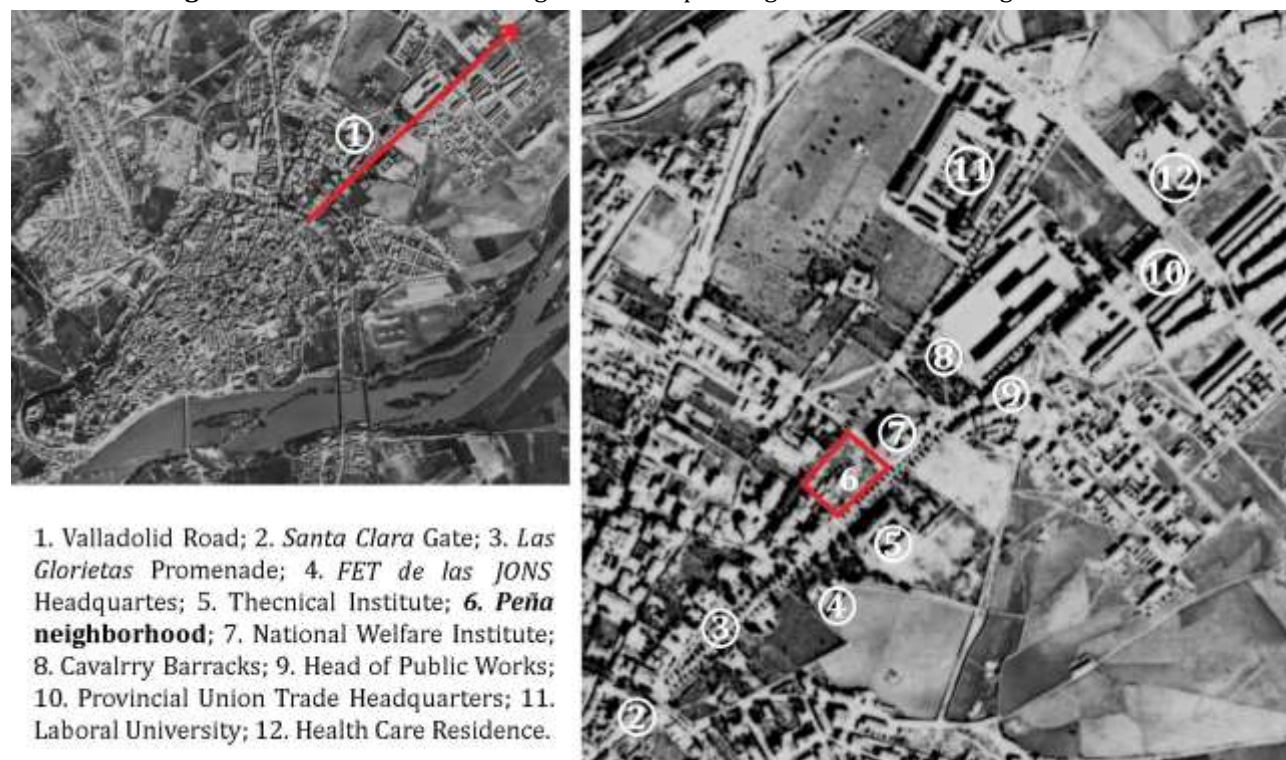
⁴ National Institute of Statistics (Spain). <https://www.ine.es/> (September 7, 2024).

⁵ Provincial Historical Archive of Zamora (PHAZ); Municipal Funds (MF); Minute Books (MB) from 1942 (L/1844).

⁶ PHAZ; MF; MB from 1964 (L/1847).

Coloma in 1901, which today houses the *Claudio Moyano* High School (Rodríguez, 2014, pp. 192-200), and the Cavalry barracks, designed by Francisco Vidal Planas in 1919, now the *Viriato* campus of the University of Salamanca (Rodríguez, 2014, pp. 325-340). The land of the *Peña* neighborhood—so named because it originally belonged to Ángel de la Peña—is located in front of the school building, bordered to the south by this main entrance to the city—which was called *Italia* avenue until the 1980s, when it was renamed *Requejo* avenue—and to the north by the *Bodega del Torrao* road, which was known as *Generalísimo* avenue during the dictatorship and is now *Príncipe de Asturias* avenue. The current *Regimiento Toledo* street—called *Heroes de Toledo* when it was incorporated in 1929⁷—, formed the eastern limit (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Zamora in 1956. Photograms corresponding to the American Flight serie “B”.



Source: National Geographic Institute (Spain).

http://ftp.itacyl.es/cartografia/01_Ortofotografia/1956/Ortofotos/ (August 17, 2024).

Figure 1 also illustrates the growing significance of the Valladolid highway increased from the 1940s onwards, as it housed the main institutional and representative buildings of the government: the Head of Public Works designed by Enrique Crespo in 1941, the Provincial Trade Union Headquarters projected by Jesús María Carrasco in 1945⁸, the National Welfare Institute traced by Eduardo Garay in 1949⁹, and *FET de las JONS* Headquarters, built in the same decade. Important facilities were also constructed in the surrounding area, taking advantage of the existence of large vacant lots: between 1941 and in 1948 Luis Moya Blanco began drafting the proposal for the Laboral University¹⁰, considered the "little sister" of the one designed by the author and his team in Gijón, *alma mater* of this type of Spanish institutions (Díaz, 2017, p. 197). In addition, in 1952 Martín José Marcide presented the project for a new Health Care Residence, which was inaugurated in 1955¹¹.

⁷ PHAZ; MF; Public Works and Urban Planning (PWUP) section; signature (sig.) 740/14.

⁸ PHAZ; Provincial Housing Office (PHO); sig. 10/23.

⁹ PHAZ; MF; PWUP; sig. 771/15.

¹⁰ PHAZ; MF; Maps, Plans and Drawings (MPD); sig. 39/01.

¹¹ PHAZ; PHO; sig. 23/02

5. Urban proposals between 1940s and 1970s

5.1. The *Ensanche* [Expansion] square project (1943)

As previously mentioned, at the outset of the dictatorship, Zamora benefited from significant urban developments, which constituted an integral element of the New Regime's propaganda strategy. One of the earliest projects was the construction of a new City Hall, located across from the existing one in the *Plaza Mayor*. The design was overseen by the municipal architect at the time, Enrique Crespo (Ávila, 2009, pp. 465-473) and, although it dates back to 1936, the new building was not inaugurated until 1950¹².

In any case, the creation of a new representative space, *Imperio* (Empire) square, to house these and other delegations and offices of various official bodies, was the most ambitious interventions planned for the city of Zamora in the immediate post-war period. The proposal aimed to expand the *Plaza Mayor*, located in the historic center, with the dual objective of beautifying the city and promoting popular demonstrations. The implementation of this plan required the demolition of the church of *San Juan de Puerta Nueva*, located in the main square, and the removal of an entire block of residences (Ávila, 2000, pp. 243-244). However, the significant financial burden of the expropriations necessary for its execution led to the abandonment of this ambitious project, shifting the authorities' promotional efforts towards the emerging urban fabric in the eastern part of the city.

As stated, to implement the planned interventions in line with the New State's guidelines, it was deemed necessary to draft an urban plan for the expansion of Zamora. This was designed by Rodolfo García de Pablos' team, under the supervision of the General Directorate of Architecture. The preliminary document was submitted in June 1942, and the final project, following the clarification of objections, was presented in January of the following year. The scope of the proposal covered the eastern part of the plateau, with its extension limited by a road running parallel to the wall's ring road at the level of the Cavalry barracks (Figure 2). As detailed in the project report, the solution was formulated in a realistic manner and tailored to align with the city's available resources and capabilities¹³.

The centrality and straightness of Valladolid road, along with the presence of certain facilities in the area, emphasized its role as the main axis of development. In the new urban layout, a new open space called *Ensanche* square, located in the study area, stood out. Around this free space, the construction of several public buildings was planned, designed with both a program and aesthetics aligned with the dictatorship's propaganda strategy: *FET de las JONS* Headquarters—which, as shown in Figure 1, a few years later was located on another site next to the secondary school—, a parish church and its annexes, as well as a series of commercial and bureaucratic buildings. This intervention aimed to provide the city's expansion with a new urban center, similar to the role of the *Plaza Mayor* in the historic city.

Although a detailed study of the conditions to which the buildings in this enclave would be subjected was necessary, the general layout included several perspectives that offered a clear idea of the intended atmosphere. Sober buildings with homogeneous facades and arcades on the ground floor, reminiscent of traditional squares, were common in the plans drawn up by the General Directorate of Architecture during this period. These design elements aimed to impart a sense of unity and identification with the values of the New Order. This approach not only emphasized architectural coherence, but also reinforced the intended ideological unity (Figure 3).

¹² *El Correo de Zamora*, July 30, 1948.

¹³ Ministry of Public Works and Transport General Archive (MPWTGA); Urban Planning (UP) section; dossier 8381; sig. 1932/01.

Figure 2. Zamora Urban Expansion Plan (1943).



Source: Provincial Historical Archive of Zamora; Municipal Funds; Maps, Plans and Drawings section; folder 45.

Figure 3. Perspectives of various buildings in the *Ensanche* [Extension] square, included in the Zamora Urban Expansion Plan (1943).

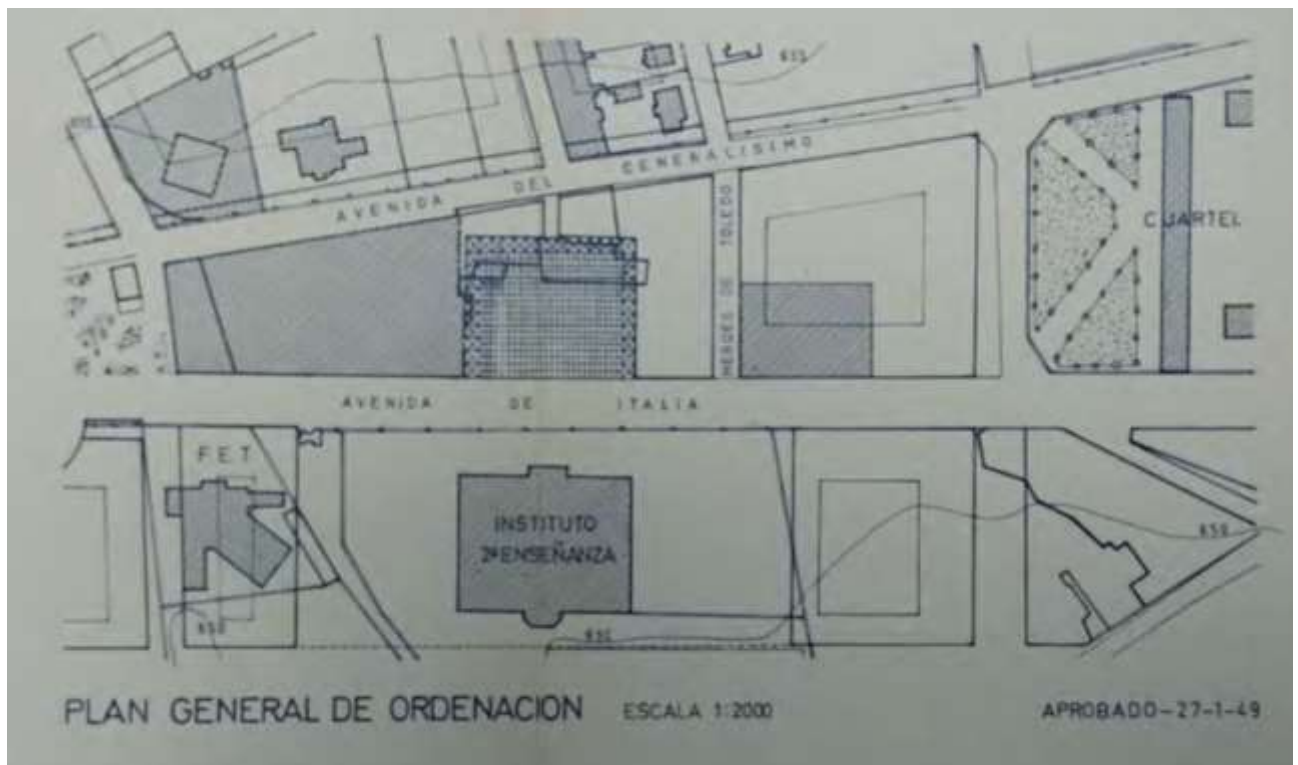


Source: Ministry of Public Works and Transport General Archive (Spain); Urban Planning section; dossier 8381; signature 976/01.

5.2. Design modification of the *Ensanche* [Expansion] square (1946-1957)

The lack of initiative to develop the *Ensanche* [Expansion] square in the subsequent years, coupled with the construction of numerous government edifices along *Italia* avenue (the inaugural section of Valladolid road in the 1940s) and even within the traditional city center (Ávila, 2009, pp. 475-479), prompted the municipal authorities to request a reduction in the originally planned dimensions of this public space from the Directorate General of Architecture. In 1946, a new, more modest design was introduced. As illustrated in the Urban Expansion Plan document of 1949 (Figure 4), the site was organized around a peristyle, which was bordered on three sides by buildings designated for commercial activities and several representative structures that had not yet been renovated. These included the Civil Administration building and the Tax Office.

Figure 4. Design of the *Ensanche* [Expansion] square (1946), as it appears in the Zamora Urban Expansion Plan of 1949.



Source: Ministry of Public Works and Transport General Archive (Spain); Urban Planning section; signature 91/05.

By the end of the 1950s, it had become clear that the enclave had lost any potential to display the distinctive character it was originally intended to have. At that time, the area contained old houses that were viewed as eyesores and detrimental to the image of the privileged environment. In response to these conditions, the Town Council proposed a new plan for the organization of the site, one better aligned with the evolving needs of the community. In November 1957, the city's architect, Enrique Crespo, submitted a report highlighting the need to create a space for public meetings, fairs, and similar events in the city's expansion area. However, enclosing the space with arcades was deemed financially unfeasible for the Municipality. Consequently, it was proposed that the boundaries of the square be defined by the existing buildings in the surrounding area. This approach would incorporate the Technical Institute of Secondary Studies and the National Welfare Institute —completed a few years earlier— into the layout, defining the southern and eastern flanks, respectively. For its part, the private residences situated at the northern and western edges of the complex would complete the composition¹⁴.

¹⁴ PHAZ; MF; PWUP; sig. 781/15.

The final design was entrusted to Rodolfo García de Pablos, widely recognized as the head of the architectural team responsible for the Urban Expansion Plan. In this instance, he was supported by engineer Emilio Pérez Losada, the provincial director of Public Works¹⁵. Although no graphic representation of the proposal exists, it is documented that in 1958, negotiations began with the landowners —María del Tránsito Sacristán Galarza, Martín Cañivano, and the heirs of Ángel de la Peña— to determine the compensation for the expropriation of their parcels¹⁶.

Despite progress on these matters, the approval process for the project documentation was repeatedly delayed. By October of the following year, the mayor announced that negotiations had been held with a private enterprise interested in acquiring the site for the construction of residential units¹⁷. This change in land use was justified by the need to expand the city's real estate inventory and increase urban density in the central districts. The objective was to curtail the outward expansion of the city from the eastern periphery.

5.3. First residential project (1964)

The reorganization of the area was assigned to municipal architect Julián Gutiérrez de la Cuesta, who submitted the relevant documentation in November 1964. The project was, undoubtedly, more modest in scope than its predecessor, as the City Council's financial resources were insufficient to cover the substantial costs associated with construction and maintenance. Furthermore, the proposed objectives had strayed from the original intent, as the idea of establishing an open place for meetings and performances was ultimately dismissed. The new layout was designed with two primary goals: first, to avoid the significant financial burden of constructing and maintaining the previously planned public space, and second, to regulate the uncontrolled expansion of the city to the east, thereby enabling a more comprehensive urban development of the area. The buildability index was raised above the limits established by the municipality in its 1949 planning document¹⁸.

Gutiérrez de la Cuesta's latest proposal aimed to integrate the sector into the grid defined by the Urban Expansion Plan, while preserving the existing perimeter streets and avenues. Additionally, a new thoroughfare, ten meters wide, was proposed to traverse the area from north to south, effectively dividing it into two distinct sections. At the western extremity, a twelve-meter-wide strip of land was designated for the allocation of plots, completing the block that was already partially occupied by existing constructions. The remaining land was to form a new quadrant, bordered by new buildings along its periphery. Its layout would mirror that of the surrounding area, adhering to the conventional design principles seen throughout the rest of the expansion.

The most distinctive feature of this design was the creation of two access points along the perimeter, one from Requejo Avenue and the other from the proposed new street, both measuring eleven meters in width. These openings allowed access to a space that would traditionally have been designated as an internal service courtyard. However, this area was transformed into a sort of public access plaza. What is surprising is how the significant reduction in leisure space was justified. Instead of being viewed as a disadvantage, this reduction was framed as a benefit. By limiting the public space to the bare minimum required for vehicular traffic, the area was effectively prevented from becoming a school playground, thereby avoiding potential issues and accidents involving students from the nearby high school (Figure 5).

Despite being evaluated in February 1965, the proposal was ultimately not approved. The primary reason for this decision was the imminent formulation of a new, comprehensive urban plan for the city, which would include the development of the aforementioned area. As a result, it was decided to defer approval until the entire document could be ratified, or until any necessary partial revisions could be made¹⁹.

¹⁵ PHAZ; MF; MB from 1960 (L/1845).

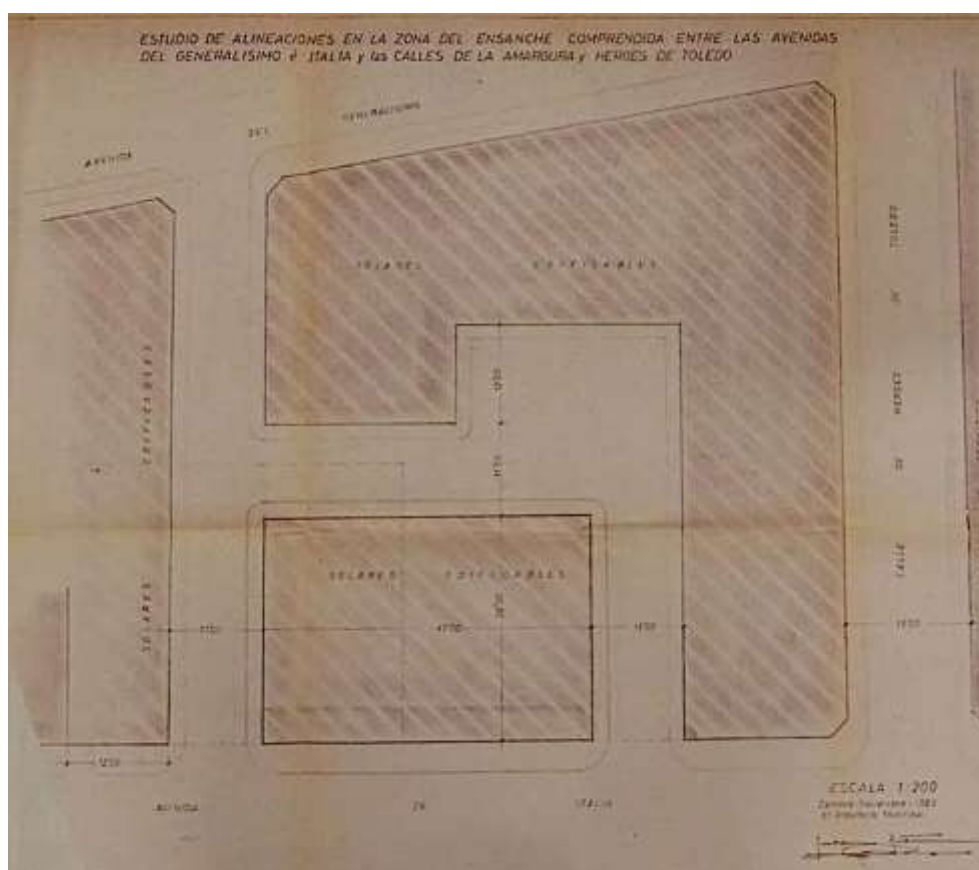
¹⁶ The Plenary postponed the study of the documentation at the sessions held on July 7 and September 6, 1958 (PHAZ; MF; PWUP; sig. 781/15).

¹⁷ PHAZ; MF; MB from 1959 (L/1845).

¹⁸ PHAZ; MF; PWUP; sig. 781/15.

¹⁹ PHAZ; MF; PWUP; sig. 781/15.

Figure 5. Project for a new residential block in the *Peña* neighborhood (1964).



Source: Provincial Historical Archive of Zamora; Municipal Funds; Public Works and Urban Planning section; signature 781/15.

5.4. The *Ensanche* [Expansion] Shopping and Residential Centre (1967)

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, the rejection of Gutiérrez de la Cuesta's proposal may have been due to the breakdown of negotiations between the City Council and the construction company interested in developing the area. It is clear that the municipality's ongoing financial constraints would have prevented the execution of such a project without external financial assistance. The mere acquisition of the land would have required an expenditure that the Municipality was unable to afford under the circumstances. Consequently, about a month after the case was closed, the local government agreed to review a new private proposal for the construction of a residential complex on the site, provisionally named *Río Duero*.

In a meeting held in March 1965, the Municipal Plenary evaluated the preliminary project positively, noting that it served two key purposes: it significantly contributed to addressing the housing shortage in the area and enhanced the prestige of one of the city's most important districts²⁰. Accordingly, the file was promptly processed as required. The final design was signed by architect Gabriel Riesco Fernández in March 1966, under the new name of *Ensanche* [Expansion] Shopping and Residential Centre. The document was ultimately approved in May 1967²¹.

The organization created by Riesco diverged significantly from previous proposals for the area, which had been in place since the 1940s. Given the limited surface area, one of the key objectives of the intervention was to promote the use of the plots through a strategic development plan that would optimally leverage the potential of the existing urban plan, in effect since 1949. Furthermore, the report

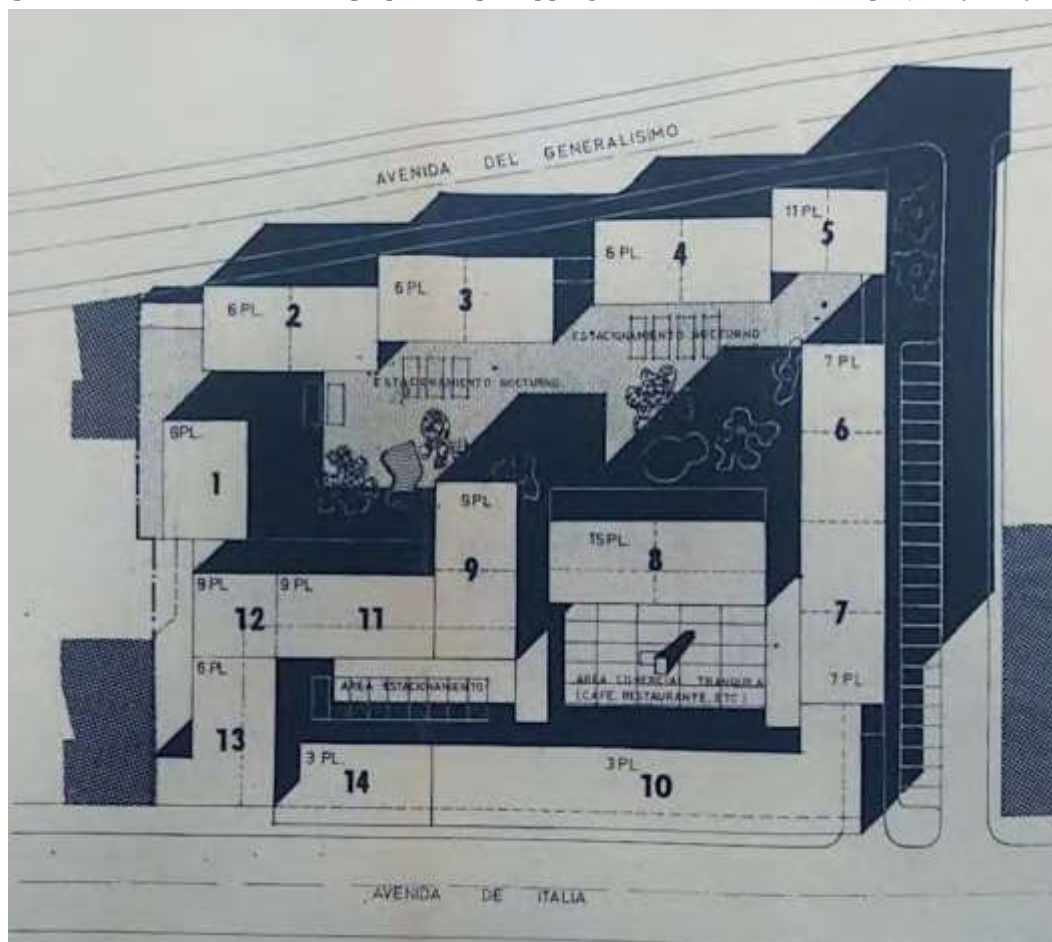
²⁰ PHAZ; MF; MB from 1965 (L/1848).

²¹; MPWTGA ; UP; dossier 8381; sig. 976/01.

emphasized the need to address the evolving lifestyles and habits of the population, which could not be effectively met by the outdated previous schemes.

Thus, in addition to providing the necessary conditions for the construction of new housing, the real estate project aimed to create a center for the social activities of the community. To this end, various sheltered spaces were organized to facilitate commercial and recreational activities, protected from inclement weather. Care was taken to ensure that the different elements were designed and positioned in accordance with these requirements to avoid interference between them. These requirements were translated into an urban design that was distinct from both the traditional block with a closed courtyard, common in urban expansion, and the rationalist linear layouts typical of social housing developments, which often resulted in ambiguous open spaces (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Plant of the *Ensanche* [Expansion] Shopping and Residential Centre project (1967).



Source: Ministry of Public Works and Transport General Archive (Spain); Urban Planning section; signature 91/05.

For this reason, it was decided not to include internal roads and to limit traffic to the three existing perimeter ways. *Italia* avenue, situated along the route of Valladolid road, was designated as a crossing for high-speed traffic. *Generalísimo* avenue, now known as *Príncipe de Asturias*, was defined as an interurban road, accommodating local traffic at medium speeds. *Héroes de Toledo* street was designated as a secondary road for slow traffic, with a width of fifteen meters to allow for parking. The interior space was organized according to this classification.

The commercial area was developed around a large interior space for leisure and recreation, with primary access from *Italia* avenue. This area was divided into two zones. The street-level zone, with a more active character, was surrounded by shops, while the elevated area, one meter above the ground, was separated from traffic and could be used as terraces for bars and restaurants when weather permitted. Below this elevated space was a garage with a capacity of seventy parking spaces for residents, complemented by an additional open-air parking area located at the rear of the commercial zone, accessible from the side streets.

The layout of the buildings aimed for a balanced design, featuring a predominance of block typologies combined with more striking structures. The facade facing *Italia* avenue was the most open, consisting of a two-story structure elevated on columns and intended for office use. The horizontality of this elevation was accentuated by the arrangement of sliding windows, characteristic of Modern Movement architecture. To counteract this effect and break the monotony of the complex, two towers of eleven and fifteen stories were added, primarily for residential use.

The remaining dwellings were distributed in blocks of six to nine stories, defining the relationship spaces and fulfilling the planned number of housings. The forceful volumes and the absence of unnecessary elements were common characteristics of all the buildings (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Present-day images of the *Ensanche* [Expansion] Shopping and Residential Centre: A. Facade of *Requejo* avenue (former *Italia* avenue); B. Inside commercial and recreational space; C. Residential tower.



Source: Frechilla, M. A.; Aeropól Drones (2021).

6. Conclusions

The analysis of urban planning interventions in the *Peña* neighborhood of Zamora during the Franco regime supports the initial hypothesis that urban form is inextricably linked to the historical and cultural context of each period. From the 1940s to the 1970s, urban development proposals for this area reflected the different stages of the dictatorship —ranging from the fascist monumentalism of the early years to the later adoption of International Style influences and modern architecture—highlighting the direct impact of political and economic changes on the built environment.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that postwar urban planning, influenced by the new government, sought to project an image of power and control by using the city as a tool of political propaganda. This is exemplified by the significant number of official headquarters and facilities built during this period, as well as the *Ensanche* [Expansion] square project, which was conceived as a new representative center within the city's expanding landscape. This project was adapted to the changing circumstances and economic constraints of the time, reflecting a scenographic framework that aimed not only to

consolidate the regime's authority but also to impose a historical narrative through architecture, thereby reinforcing the dominant ideology in the urban space.

Over time, Spain's economic and social development, driven by international integration and the Stabilization Plan, became evident in the town's architectural and urban planning approaches for the Peña neighborhood. The scaling down of the original project, along with the gradual incorporation of more functional and less ostentatious elements in the later stages of development, marks a shift toward a more pragmatic and less ideologized approach to urban planning. This transition was not merely a response to evolving economic conditions and the urgent need to implement new residential developments reflected a broader process of modernization. Despite the regime maintaining its authority, this upgrade aligned with global trends and the need to adapt to a changing international context.

The analysis of this case therefore provides valuable insights into the impact of national policies and global economic changes on urban planning in medium-sized cities like Zamora. In addition, by examining the extent to which these local interventions aligned with or diverged from broader trends in Spain, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Francoist urbanism. Thus, this research not only expands the existing knowledge on this specific case but also provides insights that foster a deeper understanding of the dynamics of urban transformation in the context of authoritarianism and global economic transitions.

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