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## THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL SEGREGATION IN THE URBAN SPACE: SOCIAL AND SPATIAL DIFFERENCES IN THE CITY OF LEON.

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### 1. URBAN SOCIAL INDICATORS: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL OUTLINES.

At different stages in History, cities have responded to social and economic forces and indeed continue to do so. In this sense, cities have been based on a mercantile economic system and a strict social order since the mediaeval feudalism, and after this, with the emergence of capitalism in the Eighteenth Century and the Industrial Revolution in the Nineteenth Century, a large proletarian class and a newly stratified elitist class appeared.

The cyclic growth of the capitalist economy with successive improvements in urban transport systems and changes in construction technology, generate a sequence of growth phases which give the city a series of distinct urban zones.

The city's shape is an indicator of the social order, with a clear link between social relations and spatial shape.

At the beginning of the present Century a new social and economic relationship developed along with a different rhythm of life. This system was controlled by the requirements of mecanization which led to industrial technology becoming more complete with a resulting large-scale production. As a consequence of this, we can see a process whereby property and economic growth passed into the hands of a minority that exploited the non qualified working force. Apart from all this, the bureaucracy and the middle class were born with purchasing power and with residential advantages and attitudes within the city which soon began to have deep effects on the social geography (KNOX, P., 1987, p. 11).

Urban land responds to the pressures generated by economic changes and the social organization. We cannot comprehend a specific space according to its degree of transformation or present-day state, without a clear reference to the social relations that have been developed or are developing on it (SERRANO RODRIGUEZ, A., 1986, p. 11).

The distribution of social groups in the city indicates the degree of social segregation and the unequal opportunities to acquire accommodation according to social standing (VERVAECKE, M., 1988, p. 165). The reasons for the inequa-

lities in accommodation accessibility are the unavoidable consequences of the free market system linked to urban land-usage development. The effects of rapid economic growth, population increase and speculative investments have encouraged disproportionate levels in the land market. The land income monopoly is a structural inconvenience to any real urban planning (PICKVANCE, C. G., 1976, p. 60).

Any residential differentiation carried out is a consequence of the land-owners' actions, as this group has always brought pressure to bear on local administration. Although nowadays the government and local authorities have increased the regulations relating to land-usage, the decisions of the private sector are still important in the type and the location of housing; however, these decisions are restrained by the economical, political and ideological impositions of society, which significantly influence the urban model. Constructors play an important role in shaping the model and in residential growth, especially in the aspects of the location of neighbourhoods, including the type of building for a specific social class which depends on the monetary power it has. Besides, we have to consider the correlation between land uses and land values; the latter correspond to the principal determinants in the segregation of the areas and the uses allocated to these areas (ROMANOS, M. C., 1976, p. 43).

Demand for housing in relation to the inflow of people is responsible for a speculative urbanism and the construction of huge blocks at minimum cost, according to the economic laws that control the market. In this sense, immigrants are placed according to their economic opportunities. This creates a social and specific differentiation, since the characteristics of the housing and its inhabitants are the basis for the type and level of services and other functions made available (CASTELLS, M., 1976, p. 203).

The physical structure of the city shows its different combinations. The symbolic town centre, with an emphasis on prestige and status, the fashionable areas, the areas of subsidized housing, the open atmosphere of working-class or racial areas and those residential zones which get spoilt depending on their changing value, become the judgement instrument of future usage in the hands of state agents and speculators; all this is a tangible representation of the different systems of economic and social integration that are present in contemporary society.

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The essential point about the residential location theory was stated by HAWLEY. He suggested that the reason for housing development lies in the price of urban land (HAWLEY, A. H., 1950, pp. 280-287). This lies in three factors: land value, location of other activities and the time and costs of the transport related to central urban activities. So we may find housing that cannot compete with the most intensive land uses such as business.

The production of space includes different types of operations like soil appropriation, urbanization and construction. All these operations tend to be submitted to a rationalization via planning. Here is where the dominant class uses local power as an instrument to ensure its strategy. If we agree with the theory that the potential use of the land is the one that determines its price, the activity gets centred on those more 'favoured' zones of the urban soil which guarantee the greatest benefits.

The accumulation of capital results in the production of urban soil. This has generated disorganized patterns of growth in our cities, which correspond to the inequalities in planning and urbanizing actions. Therefore, the disordered growth which takes place, leads to a subservice, infraurbanization and urban marginality.

In recent years, growth in Spanish cities has been disproportionated and disorganized. Building focused on obtaining maximum benefits. Therefore the *National Plan for Housing* was created in order to provide a great number of families with accommodation. However, this has given rise to a low quality habitat, with a very limited capacity, an imperfect urbanization, a great population density and very distinct segregated areas according to the status of the inhabitants. Therefore, subsidized housing areas have led to a socially discriminating type of urban growth, as a result of its location and types of housing, and the general character of the development.

Urban continuity which was a characteristic of the historical city, was shattered by the disordinate pattern of growth. This together with its planned expansions achieved during the Nineteenth Century and the first third of the present century, is the price that has had to be paid to an inflexible land market, in which the laws are the same for both public and private promotion. The whole of the planned city and the incorporation of cheap housing into orthodox productive mechanisms, are correlated to the break down of the Nineteenth-Century bourgeoisie city continuity in the same way that the loss of spatial clarity caused by the new architectural designs and new urban plans that are weaker and incoherent are linked to it (Vid. LOPEZ DE LUCIO, R., 1985, pp. 16-17).

This is the main reason why cities have not grown much in recent years. All actions on the consolidated or semiconsolidated urban soil, become more important than extensive growth. This is mainly due to the passive accumulation of urban deficiencies, including deficiencies in services, throughout previous decades, which have to be eliminated as they have given rise to an uneven urban

design with differences in urbanization, preservation and services in a vast number of sectors which have grown rapidly.

The different levels of approach to power by every social group and the situation that elitist groups have enjoyed which encases excessive influence both on the use of land and decisions making, have deprived many neighbourhoods of the ability to use their rights. Therefore, as Lefebvre says, space is a product full of ideologies.

Residential segregation and spatial concentration make the intensity of intra-urban disparities of accessibility clear. This physical proximity and opportunities to take advantage of the range of services and commerce in an urban area is a very important determinant of land value, residential property use, and the living quality or social welfare (Vid. ZARATE MARTIN, A., 1991, pp. 120-125).

Space relates to inequality and implies a lack of services. In any urban system there are differences of accessibility to services of a superior level. This implies that the sector of the population with the least possibilities of access, are deprived of these services. Nevertheless, the development of an economic system able to adopt a uniform spatial configuration has not been developed yet and there is little probability of one development in the future. Inequality is an unavoidable part of growth (FUCHS, R. J.; DEMKO, G. J., 1983, p. 508).

The city grows according to its economic activity, since production and distribution create jobs, and employment opportunities attract people. Therefore, from the moment that the city reaches an important size, the effects of a spontaneous differentiating processes begin to show. Urban segregation is the result of a series of complex forces and it bears a direct relationship to the organization and functioning of cities.

Spatial models and social processes are inter-related in a complex model in such a way that we cannot comprehend one without the other. Social relations get set up through spatial relations and, indeed, spatial structure is formed by social processes. Besides, it is impossible for the generation of the spatial theory to occur independently of the social theory (BASSET, K.; SHORT, J., 1980, p. 5).

City inhabitants are forced into systems of organization especially where transport and communication innovations and in the advance of technology are concerned. Social groups are the result of the economic competition which generates the division of work. The consequence of this is social life fragmentation between the home, school and the workplace. These economic changes are reflected in society's social ladder. The relations that take place in urban areas and the areas themselves, where human beings are organized, are a response to the combination of some complex environmental and cultural forces.

The city is often a place of conflict, since some groups with contrary interests try to impose their own value of the urban landscape on others. The most powerful group with control of the market and with a political legitimacy and

authority, have a strong influence on the demands and pretensions. This competition takes place in an institutional context where there is a change in the use of urban land according to the resident groups (LEY, D., 1983, p. 281).

The effects of rapid economic development, the population growth and the speculative investments have stimulated an uneven level in the urban market. The unavoidable consequence of the parallel paths of the free market and the development of land use and the influence of one on the other is the huge inequalities of accessibility to housing.

The housing question has always increased the State's actions to reduce inequalities via the provision of subsidized units. However, in an urbanized society where people are highly stratified by factors such as market power and social status, the unevenness in the quality of living is endemic (LEY, D., 1983, p. 395).

Local administration is responsible for all kinds of goods and services like pavements, schools, hospitals, transport, etc. All of these activities have a direct effect on social geography and physical morphology and the contribution of consecutive generations of urban government, can clearly be seen in the residential structure and the quality of the urban environment today.

The present-day problems in urban areas are the result of parts of the economic and social system. Pressure is always laid by the most interested group, that is the reason why the plans are not very efficient, as they usually benefit a few to the detriment of the majority of the population. Ideas proposed by town planners normally undergo severe alteration when they are carried out and sometimes, the result bears no semblance to the original plans. The relative importance of planning, according to FERNANDO TERAN is that «the reality of Spanish cities generally bears no semblance to what the plans propose».

The zoning of municipal territory by an urban plan creates a clear diversification of the land values, which opens up potential arguments between the social classes and groups. If the capitalist bourgeoisie and its business means are present in this confrontation of interests, most of the social classes will be excluded from this rivalry, while land-owners and speculators deal with the administration. Owners are always very interested in the municipal space division of the plan as it determines the price of the land. Their attitude is dependant on the satisfaction that they obtain from the positioning of their plots after the urbanistic zoning. Bearing in mind the effective role and working methods of the municipal power, the middle-class' allegiance to the municipal director group or to the clientele will be decisive.

The accumulation of capitals that results in urban soil production, has created a disorganized growth in our cities on the basis of the inequalities of planning and urbanizer actions. Private appropriation of urban soil and its income is the primary cause of social segregation (BADCOCK, B., 1984, pp. 76-79).

We must not forget either that all actions, programs and plans are often justified by the pressure of some social classes upon others or even on the authorities. Urban structures are not transformed spontaneously but change in response to everyday conflict of interests. Therefore, urban problems become political ones when socialization of production methods speeds up, from the moment in which the services as a whole play a strategic role in the everyday-life structure and rhythm. Nowadays, the city is no longer a stable place but is a constantly renewed social practice. It is becoming increasingly politically entangled which must be a point of controversy when the social management is closely linked to all kinds of social and political conflicts. Accordingly, spatial research as an expression of social structure is as equivalent to the study of its elaboration made by the economical, political and ideological systems' members, as it is to the combination of these three and the social practices that are derived from it.

## **2. RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE IN THE CITY OF LEÓN.**

Spanish cities have grown without any planning guide. This kind of guidance has only materialized with the 'new developments'. However, they have always answered to the most powerful classes' interests, clearly excluding the rest of the social classes because of the high land prices. Since the new developments, a lot of cities have grown outside any planning as there was a parallel expansion in the outskirt settlements, like in the case of León. The 1956 *Land Law* obliged Ordering Plans to be made but all that they have achieved in many is the legalization of the suburbs and not their disappearance, as most of the settlements had been built outside of the law.

The results of this planning system have been the reverse of what was proposed which has made the city grow unevenly. One of the causes, although not the only one, is that there is no control on land. The juridical setting on which planning lies, has been transgressed by the agents of urban land production. They have adapted it to their needs through a muddled interpretation because of the ambiguity of the juridical statutes. Private initiative decides the path which urban development will follow according to the land uses, as it has a lot to do with the soil production process.

The production of residential space strengthened the social division of the space on the basis of the different speculative possibilities. The territory stratification was shaped on the differential use of the new residential space from the view-point of incomes and socio-economic standing, in tandem with the social capitalist model. (SANCHEZ, J. E., 1984, p. 26).

The workforce which came to the city in increasing numbers, especially from the 50s onwards, could not avoid

settling in peripheral areas or suburbs, where they could find economically available accommodation. Although the occupation of the new urban development was quite slow, the land price was very high and this was the reason these areas were built. Because of this, the city grew without control, with no previous plan of infrastructure and services, and moreover, in scarce cases in which plans were made, they were not referred to afterwards.

The land value increase in the central zones has provoked an important increment in construction in the urban area. Old buildings are replaced by high, close buildings, which are very productive for property operations. On the other hand, school centres are incorrectly placed in the centre of the city since they need large expansive spaces. However, it is said that they have to be kept there, like other urban services, in order to prevent inequality and an unbalanced situation when compared with other areas in which the different services are examined.

Private initiative was immediately directed towards the concentration of housing on the minimum land expanse which planning would legally allow, in such a way that the problem of urban land production was solved, although another problem appeared as it was not equipped with social services. Similar life conditions to those a hundred years ago were created; these conditions were those of dense, highly populated cities which arose in Europe after the Industrial Revolution. The present system does not offer a fitting quality of life after obtaining the maximum value from the inhabitants' work, and this is its main problem which has yet to be solved.

The unequal spatial investment in urbanization, in alliance with planning, must answer to an internal system that deals with renovation operations in the centre and adapts it to the context of the circulation of capital (the commercial areas get continuous investments for maintenance) with the incentive of construction in the city's expansive areas. These investments are socially unevenly distributed; the reason for this is that while areas with most of the acquisitive capacity are the focal point of the investments, urbanization in peripheral areas and working-class housing enjoy only minimal investments (VILLAGRASA IBARZ, J., 1984, p. 449).

The solution to the shortage of social services has been very anarchical, every gap in the urban tissue has been used up, because the urban soil is already consolidated and because of the lack of planning. With regard to this situation, new urban areas must be equipped with enough services. In this sense, municipal corporations must become aware of the need for planning in a new dimension. They must support that activity since the future of the new city is at stake.

Some areas have been totally abandoned. They began to become unpopular at the end of the 70s. They grow in an anarchical way which produces great congestion because of building agglomeration which especially affects peripheral

areas which were in need of even the most elementary urban services. Until the approval of the General Ordenation Plan in 1981, the city's peripheral areas became segregated from the centre in order to accommodate the weakest social classes among whom differences also existed.

The origin of that kind of housing is outside the land qualified by the New Development Plan, within the local urbanistic legal context. Land owners divided their plots in small pieces irrespective of any urbanistic regulation.

The residential areas considered are the following:

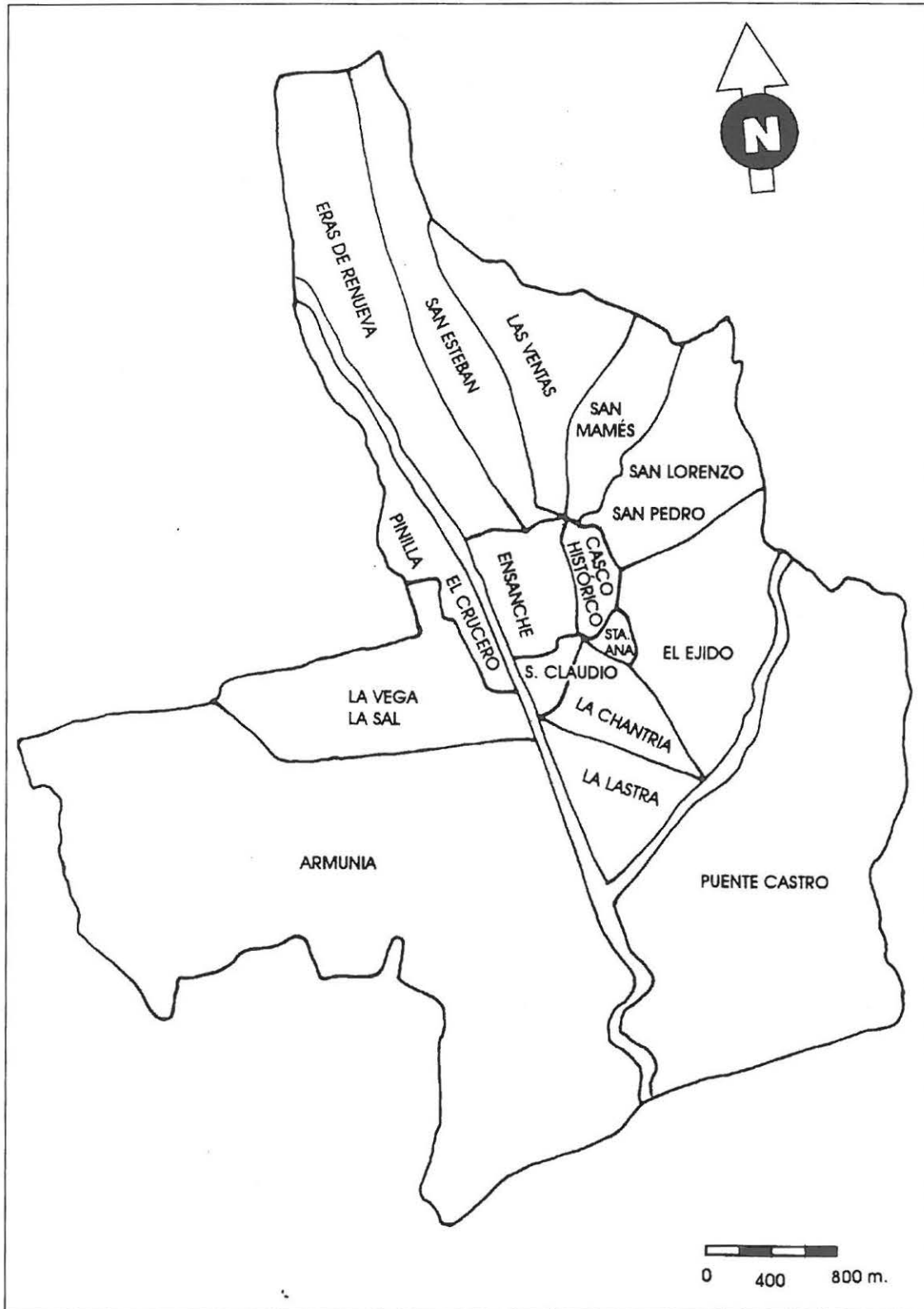
\* The old town or walled area which is today suffering a process of degradation, not only in demography but also in construction as it has not been renewed like in other cities. In 1993, the *Special Plan of the Historical Town* was approved in order to tackle this situation.

The physical damage of the urban tissue is made clearer still, by the exodus of the upper-class, in response to the transfer of economic activities and because of new demands. This exit has led to occupation of these areas by the lower social classes, as a consequence the housing prices have fallen and the houses are often divided up in order to be rented. This creates inadequate dwelling conditions. In this area we can see progressive deterioration of the buildings, environmental quality and social image. As the buildings become underused, population in that area decreases. A large proportion of old people becomes concentrated there; these people generally live on their own and have very low economic incomes, in consequence, 70% of the population is inactive.

This area becomes a mostly tertiary space the same as the rest of the city, with the special characteristic that a high proportion of women are working. In this case, the presence of some remaining religious schools, large groups of charwomen, dressmakers, hairdressers, small businesses run by women and an important integration of women to official organizations, explains the incorporation of woman into production. The men's jobs are in the building sector (as labourers) or linked to supply or as employees of low level market of services.

All these activities reflect the social context of middle and lower classes whose distribution correlates with those who are most established in the area; so a great percentage of people work in their places of residence.

\* The Ensanche was planned in 1897, undergoing various modifications until 1935. Yet the layout was far from coherent, formed by nuclei or different styles acting in the owners interests. In 1900, the land which occupied was still made up of market gardens, which was taken up by some business establishments and small factories. Most of the demographic growth in the last decades of the 19th. Century was absorbed by the remodelled space within the walls of the city (the buildings rising in height). The Ensanche is submitted to a strong process of densification, because of the use and the continuous disappearance of services. It is the present administrative and commercial centre of the city.



DELIMITACIÓN DE LOS BARRIOS

This central zone has been occupied by socio-professional, demographic and familiar characteristics which are very different to these of the old inhabitants of the centre. Besides there is a new functional structure. Nowadays social and functional homogenization of the area has become a reality, as an area mainly controlled and enjoyed by the local bourgeoisie. That is the reason for the progressive revaluation in the area within a functional and social context. The residents are more homogeneous considering their professional characteristics and income levels. Bourgeoisie fed the middle-class population that was settled in the old town. There was, an immigration of tertiary activities attracted by the demand that arose from the development of the central functions in this area. The large number of dealers, industrialists and civil servants, who occupy the superior positions for decision making in local administration, to some extent is very significant. The huge demographic growth in the last twenty years was in the hands of people linked to the functional transformation of the urban area. It is a period in which lots of small retailer commerces and a proliferation of offices and professional positions were set up. On the other hand we have to point to the increasing presence of women in the labour force, because of their high level of education and the domestic services which are often associated with the employment of women.

The rewards of accessibility to the new centre, the proximity to the tertiary sectors which should benefit the majority, the collecting capacity of the costumers and some exclusive services have facilitated the demand for offices and specialized activities in the most central streets as opposed to housing.

\* 'Contact areas' such as San Claudio (the Southern expansion of the new development), San Lorenzo and San Pedro to the North, and Santa Ana to the Southeast, have been transformed, with a gradual loss of their urbanistic personality.

San Claudio's sector is settled on the grounds of a convent which was plotted in 1923 and was occupied during the fifties and sixties. The average economic and educational level of the residents is reflected in the type of housing they have, as most of them are listed buildings. Only 20% have middle or superior studies, and non-manual employment. They mainly depend on commerces, workshops and are small business owners, and middle-civil servants). None of San Claudio's characteristics are significant but there are many represented. And because of its proximity to the centre, it gets benefits from alterations to the latter.

San Lorenzo and San Pedro are old suburbs outside the ancient walls. The construction near them has been especially chaotic, with heterogeneous buildings and a deficient level of urbanization, not only because of the damaged state of the streets and squares, but also because there has been a lot of land which has gone without urbanization so that streets fade to nothing and simply end.

Nowadays, this sector is being built according to the Partial Plan of La Palomera. The population's socio-economic level ranges from average to low. Approximately 30% of the jobs held are in the industrial sector and the rest are employed in offices. The proximity of the area to the historic walls and its strong relationship with the University, causes a sense of union between the tradition of León and the universitarian development of the city.

Santa Ana is an old outskirts where there was a Jewish Ghetto in the Middle Ages. It has been completely rebuilt with a great increase of the constructed volume. As a whole it suffers from the lack of forward thinking during planning especially with regard to services. A population with an average to high economic level prevails. The new development has expelled the old residents and it has been occupied by young couples.

\* La Chantría, to the South, has only recently been constructed and has caused revaluation of soil prices, because of a series of unplanned services such as hospitals, kindergardens, parks, libraries and a commercial centre. It is a sector with an average to middle high socio-economic level (civil servants and employees), which has seen much growth in the past few years. The huge empty space in the middle of the area is now being built up with luxurious housing.

\* The Northern and Eastern areas (El Ejido, San Mamés, Las Ventas-Inmaculada and San Esteban and Eras de Renueva) have a lack of adequate road-networks and a lack of public services and green places. These problems have increased with construction, renovation and densification of these areas. Middle and lower-class populations live in these sectors. They mostly come from the surrounding areas of the province, as they migrated to the city because of the economical crisis in the 50s. The main employment of this population was concentrated in small industries which were set up or modernised, in the construction sector which began to be of relative importance, as well as in offices and commerce which expanded. All these sectors exhibit urban disorder as a result of speculation because of the wide variety of constructions, an irregular and narrow network design which together led to maximum building use of the land. In these areas there is no room for squares and gardens, and this is one of the aspects that the people of the neighbourhood feel most strongly about. Most of the housing is officially protected and subsidized. However, the area of Inmaculada is the result of a process of self-construction by the owners, to a great extent; this leads to a lack of elementary services in this area. There are primary services and commerce around the main road-network in these areas. Nowadays, Eras de Renueva is being built according to a specific Partial Plan and this sector is being occupied by middle and lower-classes. Some of the buildings are subsidized and an area (Los Rosales) is occupied by high- class people with chalet.

\* The areas to the West of the Bernesga River (Pinilla-El Crucero and La Vega-La Sal), had their origin in

working-population settlements (lower-class) which were linked to development of the railway at the end of 19th Century. Part of the area was developed with housing promoted by the *Hogar Sindical* during the 40s; it was of very low quality in general. This area is an example of anarchical town planning, with a mixture of all sorts of uses, including: residence, industry, workshops and warehouses.

\* The peripheral areas of Puente Castro – with a rural origin – and the town of Armunia, which became part of León with its three rural nuclei, are under intense constructive pressures which are opposed to its structure and capacity. The socio-economic level is low and an important part of the active population (40%) is employed in industrial activities.

To sum up, we can say that the increase in population and urban terrain in the peripheral areas, caused a spatially and socially differentiated growth, with distinct social, commercial and administrative contents within sectors.

The urban structure offers a land market which encompasses the entire city. In it, each sector has a certain price according to the social classes which are to live there. This offers facilities to the promoters which allow them to decide what type of housing (high-quality, popular, big, small...) should be built.

The present-day city is the result of an important process of space production, especially centred on obtaining maximum economic benefit. This viewpoint does not consider other qualitative aspects about the life-conditions of the population. The negative experience of the urban phenomenon itself forces us to look for new ways and directions for town planning, which, obviously have to differ from the original. It will start from a criticism of traditional theories of town-planning, and we recognize the presence of antagonistic groups with contrary interests, it cannot be said that town planning is objective and neutral.

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