In 1860, Madrid’s Town Council adopted the first comprehensive urban plan for the city, the Castro extension (*ensanche*) plan. This project designed a new city around the old one and assigned new limits to this city. These new limits actually laid within the administrative frontier of Madrid’s municipal district and thus divided its territory into three distinct spaces: the old town (Interior), the extension zone (*ensanche*) and a third space, whose ground was officially designated as rural (*extrarradio*). However, this plan launched an important speculation wave in the *ensanche* area. The year following the adoption of the plan, the parcelling out of land started in the *extrarradio*, where anarchic nuclei of population quickly appeared. This spontaneous response to the demand of lower-class housing, its location and production modalities were an unsought after, but direct consequence of the plan.

From the end of the 19th century onwards, Madrid’s *extrarradio* became a major urban concern and the symbol of poor urbanisation, the *anti-ensanche*. In the first half of the 20th century, urban planners therefore undertook the designing of regulation plans for the *extrarradio*.

In this paper, I want to temper the assertion concerning the unplanned features of this peripheral urbanisation and try to bring into light how the responsibility for *extrarradio* urbanisation and the construction of a lower-class suburban city might have been tacitly and informally transferred from the public authorities to certain individuals, who were professionals and members of the urban elite.
Madrid’s urban growth between 1860 and the Civil war took two very distinct forms. The Spanish 19th century answer to the demographic growth was the “ensanche”; this extension plan designed a new city following a chessboard pattern, for which the Town Council provided infrastructures. The ensanche policy, major Spanish planning invention in the mid-nineteenth century, was to exacerbate, especially in Madrid, the contrast between two types of urban growth, and therefore between two types of city, the official and planned city and the peripheral city, spontaneous and unplanned.

Madrid’s ensanche plan, designed by the engineer Carlos María de Castro, in contrast with Ildefonso Cerda’s plan for Barcelona, assigned new limits to the city. These new limits actually laid within the administrative frontier of Madrid’s municipal district, and thus distinguished three spaces within the municipal district: the interior (the old city), the ensanche (the new urban space where the city extension was planned) and the extrarradio (the remaining rural lands of Madrid). The plan prompted an important speculation wave in the ensanche land, which was only very slowly being built, while in the year following the adoption of the plan, parcelling out of land started in the extrarradio area, where anarchic nuclei of population quickly appeared. This unplanned urban growth responded to the call for housing emerging from the lower class. Small plots – around 300 m² each in the 19th century – were sold to rural immigrants, but lacked basic infrastructure (that is lightning, pavement, sewerage or water supply). Many of these immigrants worked in the building industry and built themselves little houses where they and their family would live.1
The parcelling out of land and building in the extrarradio area was not illegal, but there was almost no regulating framework for it. The building of houses outside the ensanche area was not prohibited and followed the same rules as those in the interior. However, no streets had officially been designed, so that it was impossible to apply those rules. Until 1892, the parcelling out of land was absolutely unrestricted, and was not submitted to any regulation. Any landowner could divide his property into plots. He had no obligation to submit the street design to the Town Council and even less to establish urban infrastructures. In 1892, the Town Council adopted new regulations regarding urbanism which for the first time officially recognised private urbanisation, creating a new category of “particular streets”, i.e. private streets. The authorities established a very basic legal framework for such urban development: the certificate of habitability (and not the planning permission) for a house was to be submitted to the official existence of the relevant streets. To be officially opened, a private street had to be connected to two existent ones and had to be equipped with elementary urban infrastructures. The street owner was therefore responsible for the equipment and maintenance of the street. Once the street was fitted with the proper urban equipment, the owner could donate the street to the public domain which would then be in charge of its maintenance as any public street. This obligation of equipment was completely ignored so that in 1907, the Town Council added to the original set of regulations the possibility for the public authorities to equip a private street.

While the public authorities were building a modern city according to contemporary principles about urbanism and health safety, a city that was to be the residence of the Madrid bourgeoisie, private initiative was giving birth to another type of city with important rural features. This new city, where lower-class households freshly immigrated from the countryside were settling down, did not fit at all the 19th century idea of the successful city. The extrarradio soon appeared as a major urban failure, characterised by the deficiencies of its infrastructures, the chaos and absurdity of the street design, which was seen as the result of the sum of the particular interests of the land developers, who had not been subjected to any comprehensive plan nor collective control. The discourse about this peripheral growth has always been one of reject. From 1860 to the Second Republic, contemporary ideas about how to plan a proper city witnessed two important stages. The “ensanche” remained the only model for producing a city all across the 19th century and beyond. It was based on the designing of street pattern. It was founded on the temporal disconnection between infrastructure works and building. This concept presupposed the equipment of a large territory and was undertaken by the public authorities. The ensanche would produce plain urban land – the ensanches would often turn into new city centres. This concept was based on a strong differentiation between urban and rural land that did not take into account the possibility of an intermediary reality. In this sense, the ensanche policy postponed further away the suburban process. The case of Madrid was particularly striking, since Castro’s choice of a closed city contrasted with Cerda’s determination to put an end to any benefits that may be obtained from an advantageous location, and inequality between owners due to administrative and fiscal boundaries. From the 1920s onwards, the idea of regional planning, including the promotion of satellite cities and the use of “zoning”, replaced the 19th century idea of ensanche. The extrarradio spontaneous way of producing urban ground strongly contrasted with the ensanche model and was somehow overtaken by regional planning, which operated at another scale. Between these two stages in the history of Spanish urban planning, the main urban question to be solved would be the “extrarradio problem”.

This paper wants to suggest that the extrarradio urbanisation was not as spontaneous as it has usually been understood and that there has been some kind of informal support from the public authorities, despite the official discourse of reject. We will first look at the direct public
involvement in the peripheral development, then study the connections between the individuals taking part in the extrarradio urbanisation and the public sphere and finally examine the urban plan for the extrarradio, adopted in 1916 and in force until 1933, although never completed.

Public involvement in the peripheral urbanisation

At first sight, Madrid’s extrarradio urbanisation in the second half of the 19th century appears as a major failure in the ensanche policy. If Castro’s extension plan was aimed to regulate Madrid’s urban growth, to curb down the high density of occupation in the old city and avoid anarchic suburban growth, we must admit that it failed. Indeed, the anarchic suburban construction works were merely pushed further away, outside the new city limits. If the plan aimed to respond to the severe housing shortage, the failure was even more obvious. In fact, between 1905 and 1910, the ensanche population grew by 11.08 % and the extrarradio population by 27.38 %. These figures invite us to underline the role of unplanned urbanisation in the housing of lower-class families. Extrarradio had a vital role in the city’s growth and this could not be ignored by public authorities who were facing their incapacity to respond to this housing problem.

The municipal reaction to the first signs of extrarradio urbanisation was indifference. The first petitions for planning permissions in the extrarradio arrived on Carlos María de Castro’s desk, since the author of the extension plan was presiding the ensanche commission, which was in charge of all the building files outside the old city. The engineer’s answer to the petitions shows that he early understood that the extrarradio was to be the new stage for unplanned urbanisation, but he still did not show any concern. He in fact gave his agreement to all the planning permissions, although none of them was signed by authorised persons and therefore did not follow municipal regulations. Indeed, according to him, the characteristics of these houses did not really matter since they were outside the ensanche territory. Castro’s position leads us to wonder whether responding to the call for housing was actually one of the main aims of the ensanche.

Later on, the position of the public authorities towards peripheral growth had dual implications. On one hand, they would formally reject it and, on the other hand, they would actually help to consolidate it. There are a few cases that seem to show genuine support from the Town Council for peripheral urbanisation. In April 1891, the Marquis of Cubas, agreed with the bishop to build a church for the new parish constituted by the two neighbouring suburbs of North East extrarradio, Prosperidad and Guindalera. As he was an architect, he himself designed the plans for the church that was to be built on the land he owned between the two suburbs, which were by this time connected by a rural path. The Marquis of Cubas asked the Council a planning permission and requested that it should mark down the alignment of the street. As the street – a rural path – had no official existence as a street, the municipal engineer in charge was unable to mark alignment and altitudes. However, he considered the path that connected the ensanche with Guindalera, and that suburb with Prosperidad, so useful that he advised the Council to open it as an official street. On June 26th, 1891, the Town Council voted the opening and urbanisation – equipment - of this connecting street (which would be called Cartagena), in conformity with the technician’s report. An individual petition, a private initiative, had led the Town Council to open and equip the first extrarradio official street, despite the lack of any comprehensive street project for that area (at a time when the idea of a comprehensive project, which was increasingly called for, was considered as the only appropriate way for building a city) and outside any juridical framework.
Although the example of Cartagena Street is the best documented case, there are other examples of public involvement in extrarradio urbanisation. The examination of 1929 aerial photographs of Prosperidad suggests that there has been some kind of planning, even public planning, in the extrarradio urbanisation, contrasting with its traditional understanding as merely spontaneous and unplanned. Indeed, the photograph of Prosperidad very clearly shows the existence of streets, planted with trees, where no houses have been built yet. In this part of Prosperidad, street design and equipment actually came before house building. There is evidence in the municipal archives that shows that one of these streets was the result of public action. In January 1900, landowners requested from the public authorities the prolongation of Marcenado Street, which was a private street from Prosperidad. They claimed that the street would be very useful for connecting Prosperidad to San Ernesto Street. San Ernesto Street was a private street from a typical extrarradio allotment, established by a land developer far away from the rest of the suburb – an example of extrarradio ‘chaotic’ growth. He then, together with other landowners, exposed to the Council the need for a connection and subsequently obtained it.

However, the official position was, throughout this period, one of reject. Furthermore, the Town Council instituted the provisional character of extrarradio buildings. Early in the 1880s, the Council included in the planning permissions a special clause for the extrarradio, specifying that in the case where a municipal plan made the destruction of a building necessary, the owners did not have the right to claim for any compensation. In 1902, a Real Order sanctioned this clause, demanding that it should be inscribed in the Registro de la Propiedad. This juridical invention, which was to be denounced by some Town Councillors and municipal technicians as contrary to Spanish law, was very symptomatic of the general position of the Council towards
the peripheral unplanned urbanisation. On the one hand, it was actually tolerated – even supported as we saw –, on the other hand, it was formally rejected and condemned to legal precariously.

This contradictory position was to lead to many cases of juridical absurdity. The opening of Cartagena Street resulted into juridical conflicts. There was no normative framework for land expropriation in the extrarradio. The Town Council had undertaken the opening and equipment of the street following pragmatic concerns, but outside any given law. The land on which the street was located had not been expropriated nor even officially donated by its owners. There was no notary act that legally recognised public property on the street. In November 1892, the Conde de Villapadierna wrote to the Town Council that, while visiting his spouse's property, he had discovered that a substantial portion of the property had been used for Cartagena Street, although he had never been told about it. Not only had he not donated the land, but the Council had even undertaken works on private land without informing its owners10. More than thirty years after the opening of the street, in 1911 and 1916, some landowners who had found that the street overlapped into their property were still claiming for some kind of compensation11. All these cases resulted in very heavy files going from desk to desk until the municipal law department, whose staff sent requests to the archive department in an attempt to find an explanation and a juridical solution for this peculiar situation. The archive's answer was always a negative one: there were no traces of any agreement whatsoever – not even verbal – between the landowners and the Town Council.

This noticeable involvement from the public authorities to the spontaneous urbanisation of the extrarradio outside of any regulating framework, which urges us to temper any assertion about its “unplanned” features, also leads us to question the possible connections between extrarradio land developers and the public sphere.

An informal transfer of peripheral development to private initiative?

The examination of 1929 aerial photographs brought into light certain cases of direct municipal involvement in Prosperidad. Besides, the suburbs’ plans show evident signs of order. The absence of regulating framework related to allotment until 1892 and the following disregard for the rather limited directive enforced in 1892, invite us to imagine the extrarradio as a mosaic of allotments. However, Prosperidad’s plan in 1940 is not as chaotic and disorderly as the official discourse suggests. It shows clear elements of order and organisation. Obvious breakdowns in the design of the streets are quite rare. As a matter of fact, the number of dead ends is relatively small, and there are very few evident examples of disjunction between the streets of two neighbouring allotments. On the contrary, there are quite a few cases of consistency between neighbouring allotments, that seem to reveal some kind of unity in their conception. The central and oldest part of the historical Prosperidad suburb – eleven rural properties divided into plots by nine different land developers in the first twenty years following the ensanche plan12 – is sufficiently consistent to suggest that there was some kind of unity in its design13. Evidence from the archives confirms this supposition, since the name of a surveyor appears in certain notary documents for some of these allotments14. Esteban Esteban Latorre, surveyor and maestro de obras, seems to have designed most of them. This man was also responsible for many building plans submitted to the Town Council. Esteban Esteban Latorre was graduated from the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, where municipal architects also came from.

If many of the land developers were members of the lower middle-class and acted as the intermediaries who bought a rural property to divide it up into plots, some members of the
urban elite also played a role in the extrarradio urbanisation. Some of the most important landowners of Madrid’s ensanche and extrarradio themselves divided into plots their extrarradio properties. This was the case for the heirs of the Maroto, Piernas and Erice families. Some of them, Juan Francisco Maroto and Gabriel Padierna de Villapadierna for example, divided their property into blocks – conceiving the design of the streets – and then let others divide the blocks further into plots. Some of them, especially in regards to the design of the streets, showed a real concern for order and adopted the contemporary model of the ensanche’s chessboard pattern. These people were important members of Madrid’s economic elite and their activity must have been well known and perhaps entrusted by the public authorities. They also distinguished themselves from other extrarradio land developers because they often dedicated part of their property to a religious foundation. Francisco Maroto assigned in 1871 part of his property to the building of the first chapel in Prosperidad; his heirs later sold some portion of their property to the Little Sisters of the Poor, etc15. While the City Council was building a prestigious modern city, the urban elite was developing suburbs to provide housing to lower-class households.

Eventually, the political municipal elite also started to take part in the extrarradio construction. The Marquis de Cubas whose initiative to build the parish church for Prosperidad and Guindalera would lead to the opening and supplying of the first public street on extrarradio private ground, was an outstanding member of the municipal elite. Francisco de Cubas y González Montes, Marquis de Cubas was a Town Councillor and deputy for Madrid in the Cortes when he asked that provisions should be made for the alignment of Cartagena Street. He was Madrid’s mayor for a few months during the following year. He finally reached the position of senator in 1892. The Marquis de Cubas was a very important landowner; he was one of the 200 highest contributors in 1891 and belonged to the recent nobility – he had been ennobled in 1862. This member of the economic and political municipal elite was also an architect; he had studied, as all architects and maestros de obras from Madrid, at the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. The above evidence makes his role in the extrarradio urbanisation quite remarkable.

José María Gurich, a land developer in the northern part of Prosperidad in the first fifteen years of the 20th century, precisely where 1929 aerial photographs show properly designed streets, was a municipal technician who was in charge of the municipal finances in 1919.

These connections lead us to suggest that regarding peripheral growth and the construction of the lower-class city, there might have been some kind of informal transfer of responsibility from part of the public authorities to specific individuals, that are landowners and technicians connected to the municipal power sphere.

An attempt to found a pragmatic urban planning policy towards peripheral growth

Extrarradio urbanisation was probably not as unplanned as it first seemed, and the official position of reject was in contradiction with personal connections, and sometimes actual involvement of the public authorities in peripheral urbanisation. However, this position was never formalised. Our concern here is to draw attention to the only real attempt to formalise such position. In the first thirty years of the 19th century, the main urban concern in Madrid was the extrarradio problem. The first plan for the extrarradio was designed in 1909 and adopted in 1916; it was in force until 1933, when a new extension plan was adopted16. However, this project was never completed. The plan was designed by a municipal technician, the military engineer Pedro Núñez Granés. Urbanism historians have rather severely judged his plan, since he was mainly influenced by 19th urbanism. However, it appears to us as the only attempt to
give a formal framework in order to enable the regulation of the unplanned peripheral growth and to give some juridical grounds to what we have characterised as an informal transfer of responsibility from the public authorities to private initiative for the construction of a lower class suburban city.

Núñez Granés was, in the Town Council, director of the department of public streets, fountains, sewerage and electric services from 1901 to 1928. Carmen Gavira saw him as part of the new type of municipal technicians who believed in the power of progress and science17. Indeed, he produced a large number of documents and seems to have been a hard worker. Pedro Núñez was convinced of the necessity to quickly regulate extrarradio urbanisation and proceed to the equipment of the existing suburbs. His day to day management of extrarradio inhabitants’ petitions for water-supply, lightning and paving, actually made him highly aware of the extrarradio problem. He was also struck by the absurdity of the situation in regards to regulation. He used to make constant claims for the elaboration of a comprehensive and juridical solution18. He underlined the absurdity of the 1902 Real Order which acknowledged the provisory character of extrarradio buildings by excluding any compensation in the case of destruction ordered by a public urban plan19. Not only was it politically and socially impossible to apply, it was also in contradiction with Spanish law on private property. When, in November 1907, the Town Council asked him to design a general plan for the extrarradio, he was to act as the hands on worker he always had been. He undertook the task while continuing to deal with the daily management of public works.

In 1909 he handed in his work. His project was not at the vanguard of urban planning. He recommended the extension of the city, around its ensanche, by a system of radial and circular streets. In the purest ensanche’s tradition, the urban territory was to be extended in the continuity of the existing city. A “park-avenue” was to go all around the city, reminding the 19th century Viennese ring. Núñez Granés had not integrated into his project the recent idea of regional planning, which meant pushing the limits of urban planning much further away than the mere urban territory. The authors of the later urban projects for Madrid were architects and not engineers such as Núñez Granés. They responded to a public competition and were not directly in charge of any technical department in the Town Council. The projects they submitted included ideas that urban planning history considers as evident signs of modernity and therefore have proved of interest to historians more than Núñez Granés’s project. However, Núñez Granés’s project was very interesting in his understanding of the extrarradio reality20. Thanks to his work as a municipal technician, he understood the process of urbanisation on the way in the extrarradio. He was also aware of the financial problem and economic injustice resulting from the ensanche administration which charged the public domain with the equipment works that in fact benefited the landowners. He first requested that all extrarradio land became municipal, although he knew that this would never be accepted. He then proposed that public authorities should design and equip the main streets, following a radial and circular pattern that would ensure the general coherence of the traffic, and easy access to the peripheral neighbourhoods. The parcelling out of land – including the conception of the street design - and the urban equipment of the polygons delimited by these public streets were to be carried out by the landowners. They had to submit a plan for their polygon to the Town Council, then finance the equipment of the streets, which could later be donated to the public domain. This meant the recognition of the private urbanisation in the periphery, but it allowed the public authorities to control it and obliged the land developers to properly equip their allotments. It was a very pragmatic project which was based on the acception of private urbanisation, until then always rejected, and which based on it further urban development. To this effect, Pedro Núñez Granés’s project was indeed very innovative.
In practice, Núñez Granés followed the same idea of pragmatic collaboration between private and public authorities in order to provide equipment for the extrarradio. In 1917, some individuals asked the Town Council to mark down the alignment for the circular street, which appeared on the adopted plan, so that they could build a charity house on their parcel. As the Town Council had still not voted the budget for the completion of Núñez Granés’s project, the engineer pragmatically suggested that the parcels’ owners should provide the financial means and the labour force while he would supervise the works for free.

**Conclusion**

A close examination of the plan of one extrarradio suburb, Prosperidad, together with the study of the archive evidence on the construction of this peripheral city show the limits of a radical distinction between planned and unplanned urban growth. The interpretation of Madrid’s extrarradio urbanisation as spontaneous and anarchic does not completely fit reality. There were some forms of planning and public authorities were not totally estranged to it. Certain participants in this urbanisation were connected to the public sphere and the Town Council got sometimes directly involved in it, although they always denied any legal recognition to this action. Perhaps, the so-called “anarchic urbanisation” should be re-examined in the light of a possible acceptance, or even informal and tacit transfer from the public authorities of the responsibility of suburban development towards some kind of professional and economic elite. If we consider the social importance of suburbs for lower-class housing in Madrid in the first third of the 20th century and the incapacity of public authorities to deal with the housing problem, this suggestion seems to make reasonable sense.
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Notes

1 On the first division into plots of rural properties in the extrarradio, see VORMS (2004).
2 AYUNTAMIENTO DE MADRID (1892).
3 SOLA-MORALES I RUBIÓ (1997).
6 See Archivo Histórico de Villa (AHV), Secretaría, for similar planning permissions.
7 AHV, Secretaría 16-21-10.
8 These aerial photographs were part of a large survey on the city undertaken by the Town Council, AYUNTAMIENTO DE MADRID (1929).
9 AHV, Secretaría 15-312-49.
10 AHV, Secretaría 13-55-29.
11 AHV, Secretaría 24-481-30 for example.
12 Registro de la Propiedad de Madrid, various inscriptions.
13 See Registro de la Propiedad de Madrid, for various inscriptions.
14 See Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid for various notary acts.
15 Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid, tomo 31283.
16 NÚÑEZ GRANÉS (1910).
17 GAVIRA (1985).
18 NÚÑEZ GRANÉS (1916).
19 NÚÑEZ GRANÉS (1920) p. 12.
20 LÓPEZ LUCIO (1986) first underlined the innovating aspects of Núñez Granés’s project.