

## ALTERNATIVE OUTLINES OF IMMIGRATION. A CASE OF REPOPULATION OF EXISTING ABANDONED SPANISH TOWNS

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**Abstract.** One of the most sensitive tragic situations today, in regards to human relations in Europe is the illegal immigrants' issue. But it is no longer mainly a subject of borders' transgression, obsolete sovereignties, or labor-hand marketing. Huge population masses without fixed course are driven by different urgent motives from their countries of origin – North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, – they have no choice but to move in search of places to settle and provide a decent home for their families. In the form of another drama in this case of heritage and environment, some old rural villages of Spain – as there are in other southern European countries – have been completely abandoned and their current status, in ruins, results of the economic, political and urban trends of the past 75 years. Connecting these issues, it could be considered a promising future for those homeless families as well as for those dying towns through integrated solutions of mutual benefit. This research examines the resurgence of human being's value over any other concept of relative temporarily value, and where a town's roots are more important than any commercial interest and real estate speculation.

**Keywords:** citizenship, globalization, immigration, reception, reconfiguration, recovery, repopulation, settlement, traditions, values.

### Introduction

The theme of this work comes from the current and growing pressure of the many migrants who emanate from troubled homelands or simply in search of livelihood opportunities. We are lead as architectural and urban design professionals to explore mobility solutions and territorial accommodation from drastic changes in the organization of existing land. An appropriate and secure place to develop a decent life is part of the Fundamental Human Rights. The Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR 1968) reads as follows: *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.*

Globalization, as a civilization's phenomenon, should serve to not only extend economic exchange and market networks, which primarily benefits companies, but to open new opportunities for cooperation

and acceptance among the inhabitants of diverse cultures, particularly with respect to immigrants, regardless of their motivation to move from their place of origin. Cultural citizenship should be viewed in terms of satisfying demands for full inclusion into the social community (Pakulsky 1997). Migration is one of the oldest phenomena in human history, yet in many cases today is perceived as a threat or attack to current borders and political maps.

### Background

The current notions of individual rights are closely linked to the principle of citizenship or nationality. One has rights within the limits of a political context to the extent where one has a charter of nationality (Marshal 2006).

Back in the Middle Ages, walled settlements' fortifications were the city's boundaries. They were walls of protection, aimed at blocking flows, and society was enclosed behind those strong protective parapets.

Within these walls, families were grouped in order to procure value to the city and defense of cultural identity associated with and organized around a specific territory (Brighenti 2010). Each citizen was appointed to a social class according to their precedence by birth, a privilege granted by the accident of fate. Those whose birthright would place them beneath the upper classes were accommodated in the vicinity of the wall or within the forest, with no access to the privileges enjoyed by the feudal lords and the inner-wall citizens. Incoming traders differed from the local inhabitants, “they were set apart by their origins, for they were ‘new men’ and indeed outsiders to the feudal order itself, living on the margins of that society; they were set apart by their way of life for they lived exclusively by trade; they were set apart in a purely physical sense, for they lived outside the walls of the old feudal settlement or ‘pre-urban nucleus’ in a separate trading and manufacturing colony, the suburb” (Hibbert 1953).

Citizenship has not always unfolded according to a single developmental logic (Mann 1987). During the Enlightenment, the differences granted through the notion of nobility were openly fought to overthrow the *status quo* of birthright, which led to modern principles of universal equality. Lying at the core of citizenship, was the recognition of the equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law; however these would always remain within the constraint of national borders. The civil society never fully occupied the intermediate ground of the public domain; for it was always inclined towards either the political or the economic. One tradition, which has been closely identified with modern liberalism, has stressed the idea of citizenship in terms of a market society and is reflected in the pursuit of the rights to possess property and to enter into contracts (Delanty 2002). It was then that the political boundaries of nations went on to become modern feudal walls and despite the inevitable class system within, constitutional statements became guarantees of rights and obligations available to all its inhabitants. This new geographical order became evident in Europe, particularly through the armed conflicts during the first half of the twentieth century, where national boundaries were indisputable. “The same processes of imperialism and mercantile capitalism that established the nation-state in the first place set into motion another phenomenon that would challenge such foundations. Historic levels of immigration, particularly from non-Western to Western countries, introduced difference into the tidy homogeneous identities that underwrote early modern citizenship” (Isin, Wood 1999).

Modern nationalism fuses four different notions of peoplehood that had developed separately in early

modern Europe. These are: the people as a sovereign entity, which exercises political power by means of some sort of democratic procedure; the people as citizens of a state holding equal rights before the law; the people as a group of obligatory solidarity, an extended family knit together by obligations of mutual support; and the people as an ethnic community undifferentiated by distinctions of honor and prestige, but united through common destiny and shared culture. These four notions of peoplehood are fused into one single people order. Democracy, citizenship, social security and national self-determination are the vertexes of the world order of nation-states as it matured after the Second World War (Wimmer, Schiller 2002). Through the subsequent integration of the European Union, insurmountable barriers have been transferred to the perimeter of this large area, indicating a marked division between the European Community and foreign residents. The result has been the alienation and deprivation of privileges which are solely reserved for the old continent. In recent years this segregation has intensified leading to create what is known as the lock policy. Therefore the current situation does not differ much from that experienced during the Middle Ages. The benefits conferred through knighthood present many similarities to privileges granted by a current passport or a charter of nationality. The weakening of former national identities and the emergence of new identities, especially the dissolution of a kind of membership known as “citizenship” in the abstract meaning of membership in territorially defined, state-governed society and its replacement by an identity based on “primordial loyalties”, ethnicity, “race”, local community, language and other culturally concrete forms (Friedman 1989).

The rising tide of protests, conflicts and changes in Arab countries that have mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes in search of safety and a future for their families, has accelerated in recent years to become a subtle, but steady, migration to continental Europe. Different situations with similar results can be observed in other parts of the world which result in the mobility of its residents. “Many of the new forms of migration/mobility are inadequately captured by statistics, if at all. There is a tendency for migration not to be documented if it is not seen as problematic” (King 2002: 101). In Spain, the arrival of illegal immigrants is intensely active and permanent throughout the years since the early 1980’s due to the introduction of democracy after Dictator Franco’s death (Calavita 2005). However, in most circumstances, most immigration today is not within the framework of diplomatic formalities and protocols. The old dichotomies of migration study – internal versus international, forced versus voluntary, temporary

versus permanent, legal versus illegal – blur as both the motivations and modalities of migration become much more diverse (King 2002). Most of the immigrating parties are uprooted human beings in search of land, looking for a corner in the planet to live, where everyone is entitled to basic rights and freedoms. Immigration right is not an issue of ideology, historical debts or revenge, not of donations or contracts; it is a matter of commitment to the Fundamental Rights of Man to ensure a better global future.

On the other hand, it has become evident how the effort towards the integration of immigrants in the current structure of the modern western city has proven, in general, a failure. The incompatibility has been seen in recent cases, like France and Spain (Joppke 2007). Exclusion based on stigma is distinguishable from other forms of marginalization because it depends on social consensus about the targets that tends to be shared among a set of people, and is often accompanied by a social justification or supportive ideology for moral segregation. Group memberships are very important to people and how they respond to the threat of exclusion from their groups (Abrams *et al.* 2005). The deficiency to adapt to local traditions, language difficulties and/or the lack of inclusion in the labor market has pushed immigrants into seclusion and led them to rooming houses or overcrowded urban slums. In addition, for the average citizen as well as for some fellow immigrants, the presence of the struggling immigrant in the western city is annoying and hardly being tolerated by both parties. Life is there noticeably uncomfortable. Human rights are at once a utopian ideal and a realistic practice for implementing that ideal. “They say, in effect, treat a person like a human being and you’ll get a human being. They also, by enumerating a list of human rights, say, in effect, ‘here is how you treat someone as a human being’” (Donnelly 2013). Esses, Haddock and Zanna (1993) argue that the more the in-group’s values, customs, or traditions are blocked by the out-group, the more negative the in-group’s attitudes toward the out-group will be. Esses *et al.* presented studies of attitudes toward various ethnic groups, as well as homosexuals, showing a relationship between their measure of symbolic beliefs and attitudes toward these groups. They conclude, “When our values seem to be threatened, they are especially likely to be salient and to influence our attitudes toward other groups” (p. 159).

### Proposal

One of the feasible actions to be taken by Europe, as a community, could be the definition of outer urban specific areas in several countries where immigrants coming from places of conflict and/or underdevelopment

may be accommodated. The European Union (EU), as trustee of the potential of the nations it represents, could serve as the financial and technical agency for the establishment of places destined to shelter immigrants on those countries. In the case of Spain, these settlements, while remaining within Spanish territory, would act as a European community space under a free loan scheme. Political concepts such as the wall, the lock, or the closed door policies would be forgotten, giving rise to new patterns of politic distribution and freedom of transnational movements, where of migrants’ individual identity prevails over their nationality, thus giving priority to Human Rights instead of citizenship rights.

The possible schemes of town establishment must meet both the convenience of the recipient country and the necessities of immigrants, balanced within a new legal framework regarding land use.

One of the phenomena caused by the Industrial Revolution was the movement of population masses from rural areas to cities. That change has been slow but steady, and in 2007 the world urban population exceeded its rural counterpart at a worldwide level. Current Spanish cities host almost 70% of its total population. This has greatly reduced the amount of inhabitants in many Spanish towns and many others are completely abandoned. These last went through a process of gestation, growth, maturity, and not a few enjoyed the strength and charm of some others that are now flourishing urban centers. Some of these abandoned towns even keep ancient stone remains from the Roman Empire.

It is important to point out that the situation in Spain at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was very different in terms of its socio-economic situation, since poverty was strongly associated with rural life, and migration to cities was by then a strong attraction for economic opportunities. On the other hand, the emergence of numerous groups willing to undertake their own settlements completely unrelated to the modernity of urban centers has become a strong trend. This is something that has become a different motive for migration around Europe, and there is an unlikely possibility of returning to the villages’ original circumstances.

Immigrants from areas of conflict or insufficient supply of subsistence have relatively little experience living in developed cities; they are people more akin to suburban and rural environments. Therefore, as an option for a bilateral agreement, they could be entrusted to repopulate some of these uninhabited sites, here denominated Districts of Reception and Settlement for Immigrants (DaAi for its Spanish acronym for *Distritos*

*de Acogida y Asentamiento para Inmigrantes*), with the intention of reviving them through their new inhabitants, sustain themselves and develop as a cultural community protected within the Spanish territory.

In the northern area of the Guadalajara province, near the border of the Soria province, there are three abandoned villages: Querencia, Tobes and Torrecilla-del-Ducado (Es tu pueblo 2008). They are located north of Sigüenza, south of Almazan and west of Medinaceli. Due to their geographical location near to each other and existing communication channels, it is proposed that these three towns as the first settlements to meet the principles in this likely project under the status of Districts of Reception and Settlement for Immigrants.

### Clauses

Settlement of new residents on these regained locations would face two separate challenges: on one hand, the celebration of new life for these towns and a new opportunity for these forgotten places; on the other, the serious challenge to make them work properly as the home for the new settlers. Indeed, several considerations have to be taken into account to guarantee the feasibility of each case. The following is a sketch of how this could be addressed:

*Agreement.* The groundwork for the establishment of DaAis would be established by an agreement written by the corresponding municipal authorities together with EU representatives in order to define the land loan conditions and time terms. This agreement would be written in Spanish and translated into English as well as the language(s) of the immigrant community(ies) set to establish in the town(s) involved in the agreement. There must be as many translations as different languages involved in order to proceed with the certainty of legal understanding. This agreement should be signed in all its languages by the mentioned authorities (municipal and EU) as well as by representatives of every one of the sheltered groups, and shall have an initial period of ten years of duration. There would be a revision at the end of this period in order to decide on a possible renovation for another ten-year period. At the end of this first period, and if there were no complaints by the municipal authorities, EU representatives would proceed to revise and renew the agreement and, in further agreements, the EU representatives would be the only party dealing with the hosted communities. After the second period, the following contract periods would be for thirty years where, at the beginning of each agreement, there would always be a no-complaint report from the corresponding municipal authorities.

*Physical reconfiguration.* As a fundamental part of the agreement mentioned above it would be a com-

promise from the new settlers (received immigrants) for the reconstructing, rehabilitating, remodeling, and/or reconditioning the main structures that at the time of their setting-up composed the abandoned town assemblies (or their rests). There will be needed a reconfiguration project by a professional accredited restorer and it must be reviewed and approved by a commission composed by a member of the EU agency, two members of the municipality council, the municipality official architect and an academic tenured member of any Spanish Public University, preferably a Restoration Architect. Before all these actions a report from an accredited specialist shall exist, consisting on a description (written and graphic) of every building and structure in town, no matter their conservation state. The settlers compromise activities shall also be accompanied by a) professional advice from qualified builders on the matter, b) materials provided by the corresponding municipality and with charge to the EU agency, c) supervision from a registered architect(s) and approved by the municipality official architect, and d) a graphic log book of the works during all its working period, the ten years of the agreement if necessary.

*The spirit of reconquered towns.* From an anthropological point of view, it is important to consider that this alternative proposal involves fundamental aspects that have to do with several factors that would be contrasted from the fact of people of distant origin's settling down in the ruins of what used to be a village with a life of its own. Time and space coordinates play a fundamental role. On one hand, the conditions observed in Spanish towns whose source of life depended on a political organization where rural life had a different meaning made them self-sufficient and with some guarantee of permanence. Economic activity in the Iberian Peninsula by the mid-19th century, according to patterns of development, similar to the rest of Europe, moved through semi-industrial production schemes and with the widespread use of farming and animal-force-based transportation. The railway was crucial then, since it covered long distances in terms of raw materials and finished products distribution, usually to large settlements. However, each town maintained a balance regarding neighboring townships and based their livelihood and activities in what each region was viable to produce and exchange at reasonable (often walkable) distances. Obviously, there were also cases of importation of some goods from other countries, such as fine furniture, essentials and some machinery, in the case of wealthy people. But the majority kept their traditions and customs from own regional conditions. In addition, cultural heritage of these tenants was fairly homogeneous by that time, after centuries of varied

influences came from diverse backgrounds: religious traditions, town festivals, community life, flea market, education, health care, etc. Thus, the existence of small townships scattered throughout the territory was therefore logical and normal regionalism as a factor of cohesion and common strength, with a markedly slower and predictable growth and development but with confident steps ahead and minimum surprises over the horizon.

*The migrant communities.* Current conditions of the globalized world make today's migrants much dissimilar to those who moved large distances even not long ago (postwar drifters on the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are a clear example), and differ mainly by three important factors. First, the information, access sets high degrees of homogenous views on social and political circumstances; also its speed has been instrumental in key events' dissemination for societies. Second, the widespread use of English language has established itself as the common resource of many dissimilar civilizations. Despite the connectivity among other languages, English has emerged as the common denominator among people of varied origins around the world. Third, commercial activity has been simplified and has become a management of products and services with a different dynamic, allowing access to certain products for social groups that formerly would not even contemplate possible.

Religion is a great bulwark for some migrant communities and a community relations epicenter, major decisions emerge from it that maintain society's social, economic and political ties. Hence, community life, as well as religious celebrations and festivals, have an important sense to these communities given the specific traditions brought from their places of origin. Miscegenation proliferation, which since the beginning of distant lands colonization had gradually multiplied the spectrum of various faces above all territory, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed special growth, particularly in the United States and southern Europe (Karier 1972). This, in addition to other notable consequences, facilitated the multiracial and ethnic interaction and the mixture of traditions and customs. However, many signs of entrenched origin have persisted today almost intact, particularly those related to religious beliefs. And the deep enmities among certain social groups have sprung up with unusual barbarity, as in the case of the Balkan region in the 1990 Bosnia war. The success of a settlement proposal as the one raised here depends greatly on the specific situation of social integration that can be achieved, and this requires maintaining constant surveillance and control over levels of friction and

possible conflict. One of the main responsibilities in the development of these repopulations is to prevent at all costs any possibility of becoming ghettos or nests of poverty, for which permanent surveillance and support will be necessary.

### Project's spirit

Geopolitical reorganization of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century offers new views to the development of urban and architecture in many parts of the world. Important proposals have already been seen in the fields of rehabilitation and recycling in developed world's diverse regions. The 2014 Pritzker prize was granted to Shigeru Ban for his high quality design to extreme situations caused by devastating natural disasters. Other streams drive for the recovery of old architectural structures, but with care to maintain high levels of dignity in their re-use.

The role of designers is crucial in relocation and rehabilitation circumstances. In the case that concerns us here, it would be a fundamental, caring, harmonious result to reconfigure buildings and environments of the selected towns. It is referred as "architecture's recovery" the conscious and responsible activity for infusing new life to outdated and often abandoned structures. In that sense, architecture's archaeology plays a crucial role, and many research centers dedicated to the study of architectural restoration and rehabilitation are including contents around this approach. In the *Laboratorio de Patrimonio del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*, in Spain, the subject "Architecture: The Recovery of Built Memory", belonging to the Master Program of Urban Renewal and Rehabilitation, is an example of this approach. It would be necessary to keep a healthy balance between original buildings' features and the new program intended to be covered, because the recuperated structures' correct understanding and assimilation will turn into the dignity conferred to them at all times in their new application.

From the design point of view, it is also necessary to argue that those physical approaches should contain poetic and cultural values inherent to the citizens/users of these sites, and that these solutions will be contributions of architecture with a deep underlying dialogism, able to organize its contemporary time. Globalization has encountered many drawbacks on diverse fronts within the current social activity. In the case of architecture, it is seen that if it is not reinventing cities, there is no bright future given the characteristics of today's world (Castells 1983). Architecture and urbanism of commitment mean to responsibly reply to individual and social demands for better places to live in with proposals which restore the personal and group dignity through a better built environment.

## Disclosure Statement

This paper is written as part of the specialization track of the author towards his study and research of the dwelling as a responsibility in the practice of architecture of commitment. Even so, it seeks to influence by opening talks regarding possible solutions to current Human Rights problems, in particular in relation to decent housing for homeless and immigrants.

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