Housing and Urbanism in Spain in Francoist period

Public policies and propaganda around the Obra Sindical del Hogar (1939-1977)

Víctor Pérez-Eguíluz, Marina Jiménez Jiménez, Miguel Fernández-Maroto, Luis Santos y Ganges

- * University of Valladolid, Instituto Universitario de Urbanística, victor.perez.eguiluz@uva.es
- ** University of Valladolid, Instituto Universitario de Urbanística, marina@arq.uva.es
- *** University of Valladolid, Instituto Universitario de Urbanística, miguel.fernandez.maroto@uva.es
- **** University of Valladolid, Instituto Universitario de Urbanística, luis.santos.ganges@uva.es

Abstract

The *Obra Sindical del Hogar*—OSH, Housing Trade Union Welfare— was a Spanish social housing building entity during the Francoist dictatorship. Although it served the *Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda*—INV, National Housing Institute—, which was the autonomous state agency for housing policy, OSH was under the control of *FET y de las JONS*, which was the only party of Franco's regime. This paper aims to compare real performance of OSH with its own propaganda throughout the dictatorship. Our methodology has included analysing housing production data at the national level in this period, particularly social housing, and studying three significant and complementary projects carried out in three locations in the region of Castilla y León in three different decades—Burgos in the forties, Covaleda (Soria) in the fifties and Valladolid in the sixties—. It can be concluded that the OSH performed a huge propaganda work that made its production seem much larger than it really was.

Keywords

social housing, propaganda, Spain, Francoism, Obra Sindical del Hogar.

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Fig. 1. Contributions to the General Plan of Assistance Action of the DNS for the period 1949-1952. Direct contributions of the DNS to the OSH accounted for 23.6% of the total contribution to the nine welfares but taking into account the "other expected contributions", it reached 68.5%.

INTRODUCTION

Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista —FET y de las JONS— was established during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) as a "political entity national in nature" mediating between society and the State.¹ The statutes of the new party defined it as "inspiring Militant Movement and base of the Spanish State", hence the use of the term "Movement" as a synonym for this new legal entity. As a single party, FET y de las JONS was clearly a fundamental guarantor of the energetic and continued repression of the new "National State" that emerged after the Civil War, led by the dictator Francisco Franco until his death in 1975. However, it was also an entity for providing its "social policy" and a sustained propaganda agency, both of them made to obtain consent.² The "Movement" combined coercion and social persuasion, becoming the most obvious representation of the Francoist myth of claiming social justice.³ Apart from disciplining the people, rather than influencing their opinion, the propaganda of the "Movement" aimed to awaken a mythical belief —Franco as a leader, the so-called Caudillo— and to spread ideas with emotional claims to get the population involved —FET y de las JONS as the only social agent—.4

During the Francoist dictatorship, state housing policy, built or promoted, was clear but also very insufficient and iniquitous. Nevertheless, the propaganda was responsible for pretending the existence of a social concern in the regime, materialized despite the difficulties. The state agency in charge of promoting social housing was the *Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda*—hereinafter INV, National Housing Institute—created by the Law of April 19th, 1939 to

implement the new regime of protection for low-income housing. The INV was therefore a state organization, but it also needed to use the "Movement" organizations to succeed in its mission, fundamentally the *Obra Sindical del Hogar*—hereinafter OSH, Housing Trade Union Welfare—. The OSH was an important social service of the "Movement" dedicated to advising, building and managing residential groups for the "humble classes". As a building entity, the OSH could not act without executive political intervention, technical control or the essential funding provided by the INV, but it was systematically shown, through propaganda, like the main entity acting in favour of workers. Understanding the impact of social housing policy and the role of the OSH regarding public opinion's control are the objectives of this paper.

THE OSH AND SOCIAL HOUSING CONSTRUCTION AS THE GREAT SOCIAL WORK AND PROPAGANDA OF THE "MOVEMENT"

In 1937, FET y de las JONS statutes established an organization with "services", among them Welfares and Trade Unions. In 1941, those functions were linked to the Delegación Nacional de Sindicatos—hereinafter DNS, National Delegation of Trade Unions— under the control of the Deputy Secretary of Welfares. The assignment of the national delegations of the "Movement" to four deputy secretaries was due to the interest in controlling the "Movement" from top to bottom. It must be taken into account that the State enacted the trade union unity and its organization as a public law corporation. Thus, the single party—FET y de las JONS— imposed its control on the so-called Sindicato Vertical—Vertical Trade Union—.

The "Movement", gradually established as a public corporation, assigned an enormous and dual functionality to the DNS. On the one hand, labour, socio-economic and political functions of the Vertical Trade Union were managed through the *Organización Sindical Española*—hereinafter OSE, Spanish Trade Union Organization—, subordinated to the party to ensure the submission of workers. On the other hand, we find social and propaganda functions of the Trade Union Welfares of the Movement: a social function to obtain public support through several organisations, which cooperated with the State on "social assistance".⁹

Therefore, the OSH was one of those nine trade union welfares depending on the DNS. Created on December 19th, 1939, eight months after the creation of the INV, its main role was the initiative, projection, construction and management of housing groups, under the funding and legal control of the INV. The OSH was the main welfare of the DNS, accounting for slightly more than 30% of the total budget for "assistance actions" of the OSE (as for 1950). It had a clear political significance given that it provided social housing. His role pursued a double demonstration: the so-called Françoist social concern and the leading role of the DNS, the capital instrument of the single party and the Vertical Trade Union.

Year /	Building of houses			Family Houses	Population
Period	Total	Social Houses	Non-social Houses	(Total / Variation)	(Total / <i>Variation</i>)
1940				5,803,361	26,388,311
1940-1945 1946-1949	N.A. N.A.	N.A. 28,975	N.A. N.A.	+883,839	+1,784,052
1950				6,687,200	28,172,363
1950-1954 1955-1959	N.A. N.A.	158,641 414,018	N.A. N.A.	+1,039,200	+2,604,721
1960				7,726,400	30,777,084
1960-1964 1965-1969	784,798 1,274,465	700,504 875,594	84,294 398,871	+2,932,482	+3,264,447
1970				10,658,882	34,041,531
1970-1974 1975-1979	1,670,275 1,598,244	919,508 817,009	750,767 781,235	+4,068,038	+3,641,832
1981				14,726,920	37,683,363

Fig. 2. Housing units built in Spain in relation to the housing stock and the population. Every social housing built is reflected here, by both the OSH and other entities. From the fifties, the construction of social housing —"limited incomes"—increased considerably. Always far below needs.

There were two major lines of work regarding the propaganda of the "Movement", each one with its specialized media agencies: the Deputy Secretary of Popular Education —with its national delegations of National Education, Cinematography and Theatre, Broadcasting, Press and Propaganda— and, the trade union publications and the propaganda of the DNS itself.

The "Movement" had several platforms for spreading its ideological control: around forty newspapers exempt from prior censorship, 11 cinematographic media —*Noticiarios y Documentales No-Do*, News and Documentaries—, a news agency, a network of radio stations and Ediciones del Movimiento, a publishing house with hundreds of books and fifteen magazines and weekly newspapers. The DNS had periodical publications, such as the *Boletín Oficial de la DNS*—Official Bulletin—, the *Revista Sindical*, magazines and bulletins of the National Trade Unions and of the Trade Union Welfares—such as the bimonthly magazine of the OSH, *Hogar y Arquitectura*, published between 1955 and 1977—, as well as several trade union bulletins of territorial demarcations, 12 and all kinds of brochures, reports, catalogues, etc. of the trade union bodies. 13

OSH'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC HOUSING PRODUCTION IN FRANCOIST SPAIN

With an ideological basis prior to the first housing legislation with public intervention —the so-called "affordable houses"—, Spanish governments throughout the twentieth century understood that property ownership should be promoted rather than rental housing. When in 1939 the protection regime for low-income housing was established —Act of April 19th, 1939—, the aim was building social housing for the sparsely solvent population. That population was supposed to get the property after forty years of fee-paying. When the protection regime for limited-income housing was enacted —Act of July 15th, 1954—, the rationale did not change, extending the profile of the beneficiaries to the middle classes, reducing the relative weight of less solvent

people. Thus, the scheme of a country of owners was consolidated in the long term, where the share of renters declined until it became secondary. In this regard, the propaganda campaign of the OSH called "A house for you" was notorious when the "Home Savings Card" was created in 1946, aiming to promote saving for the mandatory initial contribution, amounted for 10%.

There is a serious problem with statistical information regarding the OSH. As explained by Lanero, even the data of the official contribution to the construction of social housing are difficult to obtain, since they vary depending on the sources and tend "to an excessive valuation of the achievements with a legitimizing purpose", 14 while, as Del Arco points out, "the housing deficit and its deplorable condition became a real national problem". 15

In 1950, the DNS reported on its activity up to July 18th, 1949—after ten years of the so-called "New Spain"—. It had built 198 housing groups with a total of 9,800 housing units. In addition, 215 groups were under construction with a total of 15,759 housing units; 49 other groups with 1,500 units were in the auction period and 325 groups with 20,240 housing units were in project or in preliminary stages. 16 Out of this rough amount, 48,299 housing units, only 9,800 of them had been handed over in those ten years of operation, that is, one third of the already built units and far below the real needs, which were counted by several hundred thousand. 17 In contrast, no less than 5,600 propaganda events, 85 visits by foreign personalities, 204 key handovers events and 450,000 propaganda brochures had been made. 18



Fig. 1. Inauguration of a residential group in Madrid in the fifties by the authorities, led by the Head of State, the General Secretary of the "Movement", the National Delegate of the DNS, the General Director of the INV and the National Head of the OSH.

According to Jubert, the activity of the OSH from 1939 to 1954 was reduced to the construction of "24,373 housing units -38% of those built by the State—facing the existing deficit of 1,000,000" and between 1954 and 1957, "76,526 units -39.4% of those built with state protection and up to 21.4% of the total built in Spain—". This last percentage dropped to 12.3% in 1958-1960, to 4.8% in 1961-1964 and to 2.2% in 1968-1970, although it recovered to 6.8% in 1973. ¹⁹

During the period of abandonment of the failed autarkic policy, throughout the fifties, several legal changes took place. The Decree-Act of May 14th, 1954 entrusted the INV with the management of a "social housing" plan and the Decree-Act of May 29th, 1954, assigned to OSH the planning of the construction of 20,000 housing units annually. Furthermore, the Act of July 15th, 1954 on the protection of "limited-income housing units" and its Regulation -Decree of June 24th, 1955 - where approved. Those regulations provided indirect benefits to the homes of the so-called "first group" and, in addition, economic aid from the State to those of the so-called "second group", expanding the range of intervention to the middle classes and promoting private investment. Thus, the Decree of July 1st, 1955 authorized the INV to build 550,000 limited-income housing units in five years according to a First National Housing Plan 1956-1960, in which the OSH was responsible for building 175,000 units, 32%. The Act of November 13th, 1957 on the Social Emergency Plan of Madrid and the Decree of November 22nd, 1957, which regulated the "subsidized housing" as a new category, were also approved in order to "return to the private initiative as an essential source of construction and to establish the precise incentives".20 The political shift from autarky to developmentalism —which resulted in the so-called "Spanish Miracle" - involved the gradual abandonment of direct State intervention and a change of approach: the "economically weak classes" had to wait for the construction of social housing —which only accounted for 9% of the expected total to be built by INV—, while the bulk of political action was destined for "middle-level families".

The OSH distributed its efforts in all the Spanish provinces, both in the rural and urban areas, although it was mostly focused on the cities. It is known that Francoist dictatorship was a regime where corruption was nothing strange, and so did the OSH. For example, Bernal pointed out that "in 1951, it was discovered that most of the housing units that the OSH was building in Madrid's Sierra were not handed over to workers as permanent housing, but to people from well-off classes, destined for holiday residences".²¹

THREE MEANINGFUL CASES: *BARRIADA JUAN YAGÜE* (BURGOS, 1945-1950), *BARRIO DE SAN MATÍAS* (COVALEDA, SORIA, 1953-1962) AND *GRUPO XXV AÑOS DE PAZ* (VALLADOLID, 1962-1967)

As illustrative examples of the performance and propaganda of the OSH during Francoist dictatorship, three complementary cases located in three different locations in the current region of Castilla y León are synthetically explained below: one in the city of Burgos from the autarky period, another in a town in the province of Soria as a case of privileged action by the "Movement", and finally a case of the developmentalism of the sixties in Valladolid.



Fig. 2. Site plan of the Barriada Juan Yagüe. Burgos, 1947

Starting with a neighbourhood in Burgos called *Barriada Juan Yagüe*, it is the second OSH action in a city that had grown a lot in population —as it hosted the headquarters of Franco and his governments during the Civil War—, so housing was one of its main needs in the forties. The OSH had already built a small group of 117 homes between 1942 and 1944 and the construction of another 456 units was planned, which, however, was preceded by the one that is described here, with 316 homes and carried out between 1945 and 1950. They were public actions of social housing that barely cover the needs, considering that the mayor of the city recognized in January 1945 that at least 2,500 families lived in not even minimum conditions of health.

In 1945, the captain-general of the Sixth Military Region, Juan Yagüe Blanco—one of the few Falangists called *camisas viejas* among the generals—personally promoted a neighbourhood of "ultra-cheap houses" for the neediest population of the city. He achieved its prioritization by the local authorities and the OSE. Thus, until the end of the decade, the so-called *Barriada Juan Yagüe* had an effective preference in the limited public investments. In order to speed up what he understood as one of his "national regeneration" projects, Juan Yagüe counted on the DNS and the OSH, with the surprising collaboration of the *Servicio Militar de Construcciones*—hereinafter SMC, Military Construction Service— as well as with extraordinary non-refundable funding that he got from his comrade the Minister of Labour. It was a personalist initiative that was followed by other similar operations in the area of the Military Region under the command of this victorious Castilian general.

The land for the neighbourhood was chosen and acquired by the DNS in the outskirts of the city. The SMC built the neighbourhood following the commission of the OSH, elaborated the projects for free and renounced to the usual benefit of 15% of the budget. The OSH obtained the necessary mortgage credit through the captain-general, while the INV only intervened when the neighbourhood was practically built and imposed some urbanization conditions. The captain-general managed to involve the National Delegation of Social Assistance —with a centre for children's feeding—, the Welfare 18 de Julio —with a medical dispensary—, the Ministry of Labour —non-refundable funding—, the Ministry of Justice —with a parish church and rectory house—, the Ministry of National Education —with a school group and teachers' houses— and the Welfare for Education and Leisure —with the so-called *Hogar del Productor*, a sort of leisure centre—. The neighbourhood was composed of ground floor houses —suitable for temporary agricultural labourers, according to the INV— of varied typology, mostly semi-detached houses, of about 50 m²—kitchen, dining room, living room and three bedrooms— on plots of 375 m² on average, where their occupants could grow a garden and breed animals.

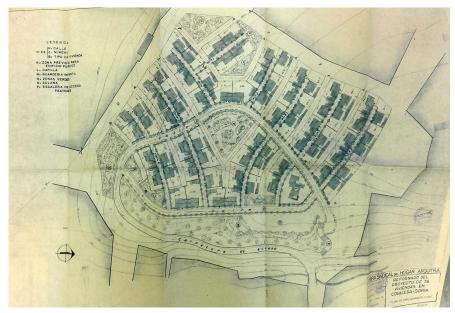


Fig. 3. Site plan of the modified project of the Barrio de San Matías in Covaleda.

As "ultra-cheap" houses, their repayment fee was low enough. The allocation was made for large and needy families. Families of 6 to 13 people accounted for 80.5% of the 152 houses within the first phase and for 64.6% of the 164 houses within the second phase, so that the 316 houses were occupied by around 2,100 people, the vast majority children and young population. As proof of its political significance and its role in propaganda, national authorities visited the new neighbourhood with the captain-general on every official visit to Burgos from 1945 to 1951 —several ministers, the national delegate of the DNS and Franco himself twice—. It was widely disseminated by the press and radio, especially in the local newspaper of the Movement, *La Voz de Castilla* (1945-1976), and in the trade union bulletin of Burgos, *Vertical*.

The second case corresponds to the rural mountain municipality of Covaleda —province of Soria—, which had about 1,500 inhabitants at the end of the Civil War. The OSH announced in 1945 the possible construction of an isolated set of 16 protected one-storey houses on a plot ceded by the City Council in the outskirts, with the municipal commitment to building accesses. This coincided with the installation 3 km far from the village of the *Campamento Nacional de Mandos Francisco Franco*, a camp where to provide instruction for junior commanders of the Falanges Juveniles de Franco —since 1960, *Organización Juvenil Española*, Spanish Youth Organization—. Exalted by propaganda, articles and newscasts followed their activities, including the indoctrination of thousands of national teachers. It should be noted that Franco himself visited the town in 1948 thanking the neighbours.



Fig. 4. Site plan of the Grupo XXV Años de Paz. Valladolid, 1964.

The initial housing project of the OSH did not eventually materialize, but the building charity *Francisco Franco* of the province of Soria elaborated in 1953 a new project for 56 "rural" subsidized houses and plots for 72 more possible units. They were one-storey semi-detached houses with around 58 m2, including living room, kitchen, toilet and three bedrooms, together with units for animals, feed and manure, in plots from 180 to 210 m2. The project proposed a new neighbourhood, called *Barrio de San Matías*, which was separated from the original settlement of Covaleda by a thalweg. A curvilinear road structured several pedestrian and carriage ways giving individual access to each residential plot. Other plots were reserved for green areas, a public building in a central position, a chapel and a children's home. Before this project materialized, it passed to the OSH. A new report in 1957 identified the houses as "limited income, 2nd category" and considered a church, a market and schools as facilities, "which will not be projected for now". The auction for its construction was published in October 1958, which was concluded in March 1962 after some modifications in materials and budget.

Coinciding with the project, the construction and the occupation of the new neighbourhood between 1955 and 1969, the City Council of Covaleda undertook all kinds of improvement works in the municipality: streets and squares paving, drinking water and sewerage networks, electricity networks and public lighting, etc., as well as a collector and telephone service for the camp. Thus, the OSH built a rural residential group, in line with its role of social assistance, although more in line with the political relations of the "Movement". The propaganda was both national, linked to the camp, and regional and local, by the newspapers of the "Movement" in the nearby provinces and the trade union bulletin of Soria, *Recuerda*.

Finally, the third case corresponds to the city of Valladolid, where the OSH carried out its last action in the mid-sixties. In August 1960, the Provincial Delegate of the DNS addressed the City Council of Valladolid in relation to the new housing plans of the State, asking about the amount and type of housing to be considered as most suitable for construction. The City Council indicated its preference for small and low-cost housing —with three bedrooms, dining room, kitchen and toilet—, as many as possible. It should be noted that in the following months a real housing construction boom for working classes began in Valladolid. Taking advantage of the subsidies and the new favourable economic situation within the developmentalism, various private developers built large amounts of housing, producing neighbourhoods that lacked public facilities. Thus, between 1960 and 1964 licenses were requested for the construction of more than 15,000 housing units in the city.

In this context, the OSH initiated in 1962 a project to build just 503 dwellings, led to get visibility because of its "quality". Compared to contemporary neighbourhoods, the OSH presented a very well-equipped project, including two schools, a nursery and a leisure centre. Instead of the alignments of blocks that were shaping the periphery, a different arrangement was proposed, with three "American blocks" combined with towers, equipped with an elevator. The project was presented in 1964 under the name of *Grupo XXV Años de Paz*, referring the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Civil War, very celebrated by Franco's regime. Works began the following year and lasted for almost two years.

The adjudication process was carried out in 1967 after a raffle held in the assembly hall of the provincial delegation of the DNS, which allowed expanding the resonance of the project among the local society and press. In addition, half of the homes were reserved for certain profiles that allowed verifying the social action carried out by OSH through this promotion: 10% for some ex-soldiers of the Francoist Army and their widows; another 10% for those who had married that year; and 30% for heads of large families. In addition, 60 homes were reserved for people living in shanty towns, re-rented and evicted. The keys-handover took place a few weeks later in a public event that coincided with the symbolic date of July 18th. Among others, the civil governor and the archbishop of Valladolid were in charge of delivering the keys and titles to the awardees, although the contracts were formalized a few weeks later.

The 500 dwellings of *Grupo XXV Años de Paz* represented a minimum part of the thousands of homes that were built in Valladolid in the sixties. However, the condition of "prestige operation" that the OSH granted to this project in terms of its composition and facilities, as well as the careful process of housing adjudication —public events, reservation of homes for certain especially vulnerable groups—, guaranteed a remarkable impact among local society, in propaganda terms. In Valladolid, the "Movement" had the generalist newspaper *Libertad* (1931-1979), as well as the trade union bulletin of the provincial demarcation of the DNS, *Tierra*. The press was, as always, very relevant in propaganda.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of the OSH was relevant in the context of direct public housing construction, but insignificant in relation to social needs, despite the fact that its actions were shown, with the force of propaganda, as really notorious. As González and Ortiz have pointed out, the OSH was a vehicle "for propaganda, proselytizing, disciplining and political loyalty of its beneficiaries" while "the problem of housing for the popular classes remained unsolved throughout the dictatorship". ²² The OSH built tens of thousands of housing units when real needs were counted by several hundred thousands.

The OSH production was very diverse, bearing in mind its national scope and its long existence (1939-1977). Its systematic study, still to be done, is worthwhile regarding urban planning, housing policy and social statistics. The three cases that have been presented are just a significant sample of this diversity.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Víctor Pérez Eguíluz is Architect (2009, Premio Extraordinario), PhD in Architecture (2015, Mención Internacional) and postdoctoral researcher at the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística of the University of Valladolid. He focuses particularly on the study and intervention of the consolidated city, analyzing urban and territorial phenomena, applying GIS and statistical analysis.

Marina Jiménez Jiménez is Architect (1998), PhD in Urban Planning (2009) and Master in Landscape Architecture (2016). She is Professor of Urban Planning and Landscape Planning at the School of Architecture of the University of Valladolid. She has also taught at Porto (Lusíada University) and A Coruña (UDG). Her research focuses on the relationship between nature and city, from the architectonic design to the landscape composition and territorial planning.

Miguel Fernández Maroto is Architect (2012), Master of Research in Architecture (2014, Premio Extraordinario) and PhD in Architecture (2019, Mención Internacional, Premio Extraordinario). He is Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture of the University of Valladolid. His work focuses on spatial planning techniques and tools, taking into account both its recent history and current lines of innovation. He conducts his research as a member of the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística of the University of Valladolid and he is secretary of its journal, Ciudades.

Luis Santos y Ganges is Bachelor of Philosophy, Specialty Geography (1988); Diploma of the General Course on Land Transport (1989); University Specialist in Landscape Planning (1990); Diploma of the Postgraduate

Course on Urban Planning (1991); PhD in Urban Planning with a thesis on the relationship between rail and city (2002); and PhD in Humanities with a thesis on contemporary history and industrial heritage (2015). He is Professor of Urban Planning and Landscape Planning at the School of Architecture of the University of Valladolid and current Director of the Instituto Universitario de Urbanística of the University of Valladolid and its journal, Ciudades.

ENDNOTES

- 1. Article 1 of Decree No. 255 of April 19th, 1937, of the foundation fo FET y de las JONS.
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- 3. Àlex Amaya Quer, "El Acelerón sindicalista: discurso social, imagen y realidad del aparato de propaganda de la Organización Sindical Española, 1957-1969" (PhD diss., Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2010). 187.
- 4. Carme Molinero, "La captación de las masas. Política social y propaganda en el régimen franquista" (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005); Eduardo Iáñez Pareja, "Falangismo y propaganda cultural en el «Nuevo Estado»: la revista Escorial (1940-1950)" (PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 2008); Àlex Amaya Quer, "El Acelerón sindicalista: discurso social, imagen y realidad del aparato de propaganda de la Organización Sindical Española, 1957-1969" (PhD diss., Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2010).
- 5. The OSH was the most relevant instrumental body of the INV but not the only one, since there were also some bodies of the Deputy Secretary of Welfares (Social Assistance, Education and Leisure), Housing Boards of various kinds (Building Charity Francisco Franco, official housing boards of the ministries...) and other entities of the Administration working directly for their employees (Autonomous Bodies, City Councils, etc.). In addition, apart from the INV, the General Directorate of Devastated Regions and the National Institute of Colonization also built public housing.
- 6. Article 23 of Decree No. 333 of August 4th, 1937; Decree of July 31st, 1939; and article 3 of the Decree of November 28th, 1941.
- 7. Miguel Ángel Perfecto, "El nacional-sindicalismo español como proyecto económico-social", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie V Historia Contemporánea nº 27 (2015). 153.
- 8. Glicerio Sánchez Recio, "El sindicato vertical como instrumento político y económico del régimen franquista", *Pasado y memoria: Revista de historia contemporánea* nº 1 (2002). 22.
- Miguel Ángel Perfecto, "El nacional-sindicalismo español como proyecto económico-social", Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie V Historia Contemporánea nº 27 (2015). 157.
- 10. Francisco Bernal García, "El sindicalismo vertical. Control laboral y representación de intereses en la España franquista. La Delegación Nacional de Sindicatos (1936-1945)" (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2008). 591.
- 11. Considering the number of newspapers, the press of the "Movement" accounted for more than 40% of the press in Spain in the forties and fifties, although it was losing weight up to less than 25% in the sixties and seventies. By its diffusion, it supposed from 32.5% of the units printed in 1946 to 21.6% in 1966, and decreasing later on. Among them, the most important were: *Arriba* (official newspaper of *FET y de las JONS*), *Pueblo* (OSE's newspaper) and *Marca* (the most read newspaper of the "Movement", precisely the one dedicated to sports).
- 12. The bulletins of the provincial delegations of the DNS were, for our three study cases: *Vertical* in Burgos, *Recuerda* in Soria, and *Tierra* in Valladolid.
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- 15. Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, "«Morir de hambre». Autarquía, escasez y enfermedad en la España del primer franquismo", *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea nº 5* (2006). 246.
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- 19. Juan Jubert, "La OSH y la política de vivienda. La política de vivienda del Estado y la OSH. Una cronología paralela", *Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme* nº 105 (1974), 43.
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- 21. Francisco Bernal García, "El sindicalismo vertical. Control laboral y representación de intereses en la España franquista. La Delegación Nacional de Sindicatos (1936-1945)" (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2008). 556.
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