

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Spanish reception of the urban and housing policy of the Estado Novo: the case of the Alvalade Neighbourhood in Lisbon (1944-1954)

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Abstract

Despite the geographical and ideological proximity between the dictatorships of António Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) and Francisco Franco (1892-1975), their exchange of knowledge concerning housing and urban development in the 1940s and 1950s has received little scholarly attention. This article examines the extent to which Spanish technicians and policymakers – particularly the minority who guided the country's urban development – were aware of and evaluated the urban planning and housing policies of Portugal's Estado Novo. The analysis focuses on the Alvalade Neighbourhood in Lisbon, built according to an Urbanisation Plan of acknowledged success, by João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971), and integrated into the municipal plan by Étienne de Gröer (1882-1974), developed with the impulse of Minister Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943). The research is based on a bibliographical and documentary review, complemented by direct experience of the Alvalade Neighbourhood. The study reveals that the initiative was both known and appreciated in Spain, contributes to the knowledge of the international dissemination of the Alvalade experience and, by suggesting some key differences between the two national contexts, lays the groundwork for a further comparison of the urban planning and housing achievements under both Iberian regimes.

Keywords: Iberian dictatorships, housing policy, urban planning, Alvalade Neighbourhood, exchange of knowledge, congresses

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Introduction

After its Civil War (1936-1939), Spain entered a difficult post-war period characterised by international isolation, largely due to widespread rejection of the regime that emerged from the conflict and its tacit support for the Axis powers. Portugal was one of the few countries with which contact was maintained, facilitated by the ideological affinity between the dictatorships of Francisco Franco (1892-1975) and António Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) and their geographical contiguity (Chaves Palacios, 2017; García González, 2018, p. 664).

During the 1940s and 1950s, both countries faced a severe shortage of housing with acceptable living conditions, albeit for different reasons. Portugal, in a relatively stable situation, was experiencing significant internal migration from rural areas to Lisbon. This demographic pressure exacerbated the already critical housing shortages in the capital, prompting the development of urban studies and plans, as well as the implementation of social and public health policies aimed at improving residential standards. Spain, by contrast, had to contend with war-related destruction, rural-to-urban migration, and the urgent need to upgrade a housing stock in which 75% of dwellings were inadequate or unsanitary (Fiscalía de la Vivienda, 1946, pp. 8-9; Lasso de la Vega Zamora, 2009).

This shared challenge, along with the cultural and ideological commonalities in how it was addressed, and the decline, from 1942, of active models for the Franco regime like Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (García González, 2018, p. 661) motivated us to explore the possible exchange of knowledge with Portugal concerning housing and urban planning in the central decade of the century – a period characterised as the heyday of Portuguese urban planning (Lôbo, 1995, p. 145) –, as well as the opinion that the neighbouring country's social policy merited. The truth is that information on such connections remains scarce, with only a few specific publications (Bustos Juez, 2016; Lanero Táboas, 2020). While recent studies have examined the dissemination of Spanish architectural projects in Portuguese magazines after the Second World War (Arza Garaloces, 2016; Pinto, Saraiva & Delgado, 2019), the reverse has not been equally explored with regard to urban planning and affordable housing.

Specifically, the paper examines Spanish awareness and evaluation of what has been described as the “paradigmatic [plan] of the urban and housing policy of the Estado Novo, contextualised in a historical situation of political, economic and social transition”¹ (Janarra, 1994, p. 164; Costa, 2021): the Alvalade Neighbourhood developed south of Avenida Alferes Malheiro – now Avenida do Brasil – in the northern part of Lisbon (1944-1959). In spite of possible design or implementation flaws (Janarra, 1994, p. 184, 188, 191-194), this was an emblematic experience in Portugal, with a strong impact at a national scale. Yet, no studies have been found that shed light on the degree of knowledge and reception of this flagship plan in Spain, nor on the broader perception of the urban planning and housing policy of a regime as geographically and ideologically close as Portugal's.

To this end, the research draws on a bibliographical and documentary review, complemented by direct experience of the Alvalade Neighbourhood. This approach involved examining issues from the mid-1940s to mid-1950s of the main Spanish journals on architecture, urban planning, and local administration – e.g., *Cortijos y Rascacielos*, *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura (RNA)*, *Nuevas Formas*, *Reconstrucción*, *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, *Gran Madrid*, *Revista de Obras Públicas*, *Revista de Estudios de la Vida Local (REVL)*, *Boletín de Información de la Dirección General de Arquitectura (BIDGA)* –, in order to trace the dissemination of Estado Novo housing policies and their materialisations. Additionally, publications derived from professional congresses, exhibitions, and lectures attended by experts from both countries have been consulted, such as catalogues, books of proceedings, lecture transcripts, and brochures. Consultations have also been made on the documentation related to these events preserved in the Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) and the Archivo General del Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana (MITMA) in Spain, the Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa in Portugal, and the archival collections of some of the Spanish professionals involved, dispersed among different institutions². In parallel, a research stay allowed the author to reside between June and September 2024 in one of the original buildings of “neighbourhood

¹ All translations from Portuguese and Spanish into English are by the author.

² Online enquiries have been made regarding the documentation held in the “Pedro Bidagor Lasarte” and “Rodolfo García-Pablos” collections at the Servicio Histórico of Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, and in the “Gabriel Alomar” collection at the Arxiu General del Consell de Mallorca. I would like to thank the staff at these institutions for the information provided concerning the respective inventories.

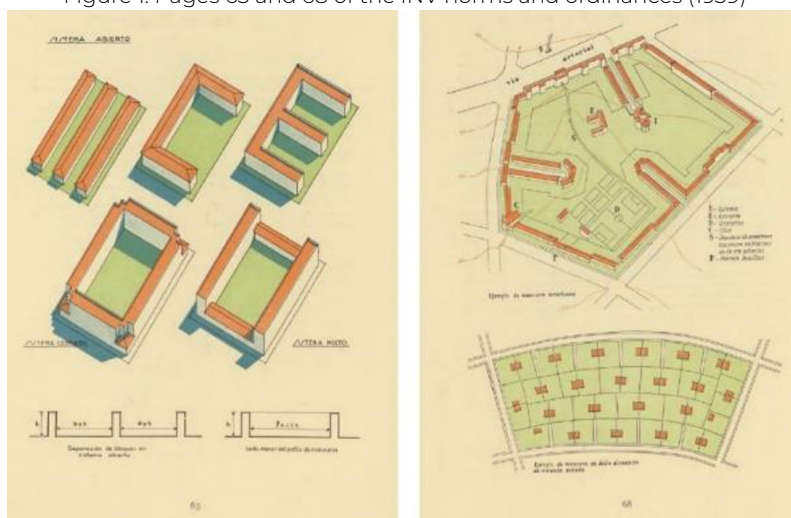
unit 1” in the Alvalade Neighbourhood. This immersive experience helped to preliminarily identify some similarities and differences with contemporaneous Spanish developments, while also offering insight into the impressions expressed by Spaniards in the historical sources reviewed.

The article begins by outlining the main strategies adopted by both regimes in the creation of new neighbourhoods, with attention to their urban and landscape implications. Building on this overview, and following a brief review of the Urbanisation Plan for the area south of Avenida Alferes Malheiro, the article proceeds to examine, in chronological order, the opportunities for knowledge exchange between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s, assessing the dissemination and reception of the Alvalade experience among Spanish technicians and policymakers. This analysis enables us to present an evaluation of the awareness and appreciation of this initiative in Spain and to lay the foundation for a future comparative study of urban planning and housing achievements under both Iberian dictatorships.

The Spanish regime in the face of the housing problem and urban development

Less than a month after the end of the Spanish Civil War, the Ley de Vivienda Protegida (‘Subsidized Housing Act’), of April 19, 1939 was approved. This haste announced that housing was to become a central concern in the emerging regime’s social policy (Sambricio, 2020). The law aimed to facilitate housing construction by official entities. On paper, it appeared sensible and demonstrated an awareness of the urban and territorial implications of residential developments. It stated, for example, that “the housing problem cannot be solved only by building houses, but complementary services and essential communications are required”³, and that “if houses were to be built on land lacking urbanisation, it will be indispensable that the project includes the necessary urbanisation works and complementary services”⁴ (Jefatura del Estado, 1939). The Reglamento de Aplicación (‘Implementing Regulation’) (1939) added the requirement of respecting municipal plans and obtaining prior approval from town councils (Fonseca, 1941). The norms and ordinances of the Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda (INV), also established in 1939, were advanced and broadly in line with the rational principles prevailing in Western urbanism. This included support for the Radburn estate model and the double-bay block – limited to five storeys –, building restricted to classified land in urban settings, or the establishment of a minimum proportion of green space per inhabitant (8 m²), among other criteria (Figure 1) (Terán Troyano, 1978, p. 140; Lasso de la Vega Zamora, 2009; Sambricio, 2020). This new legislative framework, which was not disconnected from earlier experiences, focused primarily on rural housing, whose low-density solutions were often applied to urban peripheries due to their advantages in food self-supply and simple construction, not forgetting its association with a virtuous lifestyle rooted in the land (González Díaz, Frau Olmedo & Sáinz Guerra, 1994).

Figure 1. Pages 63 and 68 of the INV norms and ordinances (1939)



Note: Possible building organisations [Left] and solutions for “economic land division” [Right].
 Source: Biblioteca Digital Hispánica (Biblioteca Nacional de España), call number VC/2439/16.

3 Preamble.

4 Article 2.

However, these and other new housing provisions frequently faced an insufficient urban planning framework, which hindered their practical implementation, and a widespread disregard for the urban and landscape repercussions of new developments (Alomar, 1954, 1956; Ministerio de la Vivienda, 1963, pp. 83, 131; Moya González, 1980). At the outbreak of the Civil War, only 14 provincial capitals had approved expansion plans (Terán Troyano, 1978, p. 114), and little progress was made during the conflict. Existing plans often proved ineffective due to outdated projections or lack of financial resources (García Martín, 2019). As a result, vague or “interpretable” language in housing legislation frequently led to discretionary decision-making. Even aspects for which the INV ordinances established clear requirements, such as street paving and lighting or the inclusion of children’s playgrounds, were often ignored or postponed, which speaks of a significant gap between theory and practice (Terán Troyano, 1978, p. 162; Moya González, 1983, p. 33).

This gap frustrated the minority who understood that addressing the housing crisis necessarily required discussing urban planning, and who undertook the task of guiding the country’s urban development (Alomar, 1980 [1947], pp. 32, 55-59; García González, 2018, p. 612). Forums such as the congresses of the Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda⁵, the events organised by the Instituto de Estudios de la Administración Local (IEAL)⁶, and journals like *Gran Madrid*⁷, *REVL*⁸, or *BIDGA*⁹ served as platforms for discussion. Theoretical contributions were limited and constrained by censorship; among the most notable were *Campos urbanizados y ciudades rurizadas* (1941) by César Cort (1893-1978), directly inspired by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), and *Teoría de la ciudad: ideas fundamentales para un urbanismo humanista* (1980 [1947]), in which Gabriel Alomar (1910-1997) reflected his learning from English and American experiences. A few years later, the IEAL also published *Viviendas de renta reducida en los Estados Unidos: un estudio de los conjuntos en gran escala y de sus repercusiones en materia de urbanismo* (1952) by Fernando Chueca (1911-2004). Although far from forming a homogeneous bloc of thought, and acknowledging the difficulty of accessing foreign publications between 1936 and 1945 (Alomar, 1980 [1947], p. 33; Terán Troyano, 1978, pp. 237-238), this group was well-informed about international experiences and sought to raise awareness of the need to jointly regulate housing production and urban development. However, efforts in dissemination, planning, and legislative drafting appear to have been largely futile: many housing developments supported by official programmes were built outside approved expansion plans, in the absence of such plans or in violation of their guidelines, reflecting more opportunistic decisions than a coherent long-term urban strategy¹⁰.

The Portuguese regime in the face of the housing problem and urban development

In Portugal, the Estado Novo also developed a social policy, although not as crucial or identity-defining for the regime as it was in the Spanish case (Pereira, 2013, p. 325). The Constituição stated that it was the duty of the authorities to promote the construction of independent houses in order to protect the family as the basis of society (Gros, 1982, p. 117). The Programa de Casas Económicas (‘Economic Housing Programme’), launched with the Decreto-Lei 23052, of September 23, 1933, favoured the construction of individual houses with orchards, promoting a semi-rural lifestyle as ideal for the working classes – an approach similar to that adopted in Spain – (Viegas Serpa dos Santos, 2015, pp. 119-120; Pereira *et al.*, 2018; Carvalho, 2020). Additional programmes targeting different social groups were progressively introduced: Casas de Renda Económica (‘Economical Rental Houses’) (1945),

⁵ ‘Spanish Federation of Urban Planning and Housing’, an independent entity created and chaired by César Cort whose ultimate purpose was to advise the government. These congresses have been studied by García González and Guerrero (2014) and García González (2018) in relation to Cort.

⁶ ‘Institute for Local Administration Studies’, focused on training municipal technicians.

⁷ Directed by Pedro Bidagor and edited by the Comisaría General para la Ordenación Urbana de Madrid y sus Alrededores (COUMA).

⁸ Edited by the IEAL.

⁹ Resumed in 1946 by Francisco Prieto-Moreno and Carlos de Miguel and sent for free to every Spanish architect.

¹⁰ Examples in Galicia, Madrid, Granada, Valencia, and other cities have been studied by Leira, Gago and Solana (1976), Valenzuela Rubio (2020), García Fernández (2022), Puertas Contreras (2012), Rodríguez Iturriaga (2022; 2024), Santos y Ganges (2023), Gaja Díaz (1989), or López-Mesa (2018).

Casas de Renda Limitada ('Limited Rental Housing') (1947), Casas para Famílias Pobres ('Homes for Poor Families') (1945), and Casas para Pescadores ('Fishermen Housing') (1946).

Although urban planning was also a minority concern among Portuguese architects (Beja, 2009), there was comparatively greater openness to international ideas and exchanges. In particular, the appointment of engineer Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943) as Minister of Public Works and Communications (1932-1936 and 1938-1943), a role he held concurrently with the presidency of the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa from 1938, resulted in a strong impetus for urban and territorial planning (Gonçalves, 1981; Di Salvatore, Tostões & Guarda, 2015). Duarte Pacheco commissioned the drafting of legislation and regional and municipal plans to the French experts Donat-Alfred Agache (1875-1959) and Étienne de Gröer (1882-1974), with De Gröer also assuming responsibility for Lisbon's general plan (Marat-Mendes & Oliveira, 2013; Lôbo, 1995, pp. 74-100). A follower of Howard's theories, De Gröer advocated an integrated vision of architecture and landscape, viewing the individual house with a garden as the basic unit for urban expansion (De Gröer, 1946; Lôbo, 1995, pp. 74-75; Carvalho, 2020; Bertoni, 2024). Between 1938 and 1940, he defined the main development strategies for Lisbon and requested several sectorial studies to be integrated into the general plan (Oliveira & Pinho, 2008). That same year (1938), João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971) returned to Portugal after completing his specialisation in the Institut d'Urbanisme in Paris and joined the Câmara Municipal (Di Salvatore, Tostões & Guarda, 2015). Considering the plan drafted by De Gröer, Faria da Costa made a preliminary design for the city's northern expansion, completed by 1942 but thoroughly revised in late 1944 to address the worsening housing crisis and to introduce the American concept of the "neighbourhood unit" (Di Salvatore, Tostões & Guarda, 2015). That year, Decreto-Lei no. 33921 of September 5, 1944 established the requirement for all Portuguese municipalities to develop general urbanisation and expansion plans. In 1946, De Gröer resumed work on the Lisbon plan, integrating the approved plan for Alvalade and obtaining formal acceptance from the municipality two years later (Oliveira & Pinho, 2008; Viegas Serpa dos Santos, 2015, pp. 163-164).

The Urbanisation Plan for the area south of Avenida Alferes Malheiro

The Alvalade plan was thus the first large-scale partial plan (230 ha) to be integrated into Lisbon's municipal planning framework (Janarra, 1994, p. 200). This neighbourhood represents a transition from the more conservative approaches of the Estado Novo to modernity, with its symbolic turning point often identified as the I Congresso Nacional de Arquitectura (1948) (Gros, 1982, p. 130; Lôbo, 1995, p. 145; Tostões, 1997, p. 49). Built on previously rural land expropriated by the municipality, its layout harmonised diverse urban models – Garden-City, Radburn estate, "neighbourhood unit", among others –, adapting them to the local context (Figure 2) (Janarra, 1994, pp. 166-184; Costa, 2010; Lameira, 2019; Carvalho, 2020). The area was structured into eight "neighbourhood units", each centred around a school and designed to minimise vehicular interference with pedestrian routes and community life (Pereira, 2016; Neves & Pinto, 2020). The execution of the first phase was made possible through a funding agreement with the Federação de Caixas de Previdência (Costa, 2010, p. 47; Tostões, 2021, p. 33). The initial priority was to provide full infrastructure across the area to encourage private investment. Subsequently, the municipality began constructing Casas de Renda Económica in "neighbourhood units" 1 and 2 – the farthest from the consolidated city – to set an example and increase the value of the rest of the units (Costa, 2021). These dwellings were arranged in linear, double-bay buildings of three to four storeys, folded around low-speed streets and semi-public cul-de-sacs, and open onto shared gardens. The architectural design combined spatial optimisation, standardisation, and prefabrication with familiar domestic imagery (Jacobetty Rosa, 1948; Lobato, 1951; Costa, 2021). The neighbourhood's distinct identity was shaped by the varied yet cohesive appearance of the buildings. Even in private development areas, control of the urban image was guaranteed by auctioning plots together with approved architectural designs (Tostões, 2021, p. 30). Not only were dwellings built for approximately 45,000 residents of varying income levels, but also commercial spaces and public facilities. The neighbourhood achieved a smooth transition to the rural territory through the *mata* – now José Gomes Ferreira park – and the shift to single-family housing on its eastern edge, while maintaining a good linkage with the existing city along its southern and western borders. Attention was also given to greening, with contributions from a new generation of landscape architects (Neves & Pinto, 2018; Tostões, 2021, p. 33): in total, 33 hectares were allocated to open spaces. The final phases allowed for changes in typologies and

volumetric arrangements, culminating in 1959 with the construction of visibly modern buildings (Tostões, 2021, pp. 35-39). In summary, it can be said that the plan succeeded in “building city” and urban landscape, leaving a lasting imprint on Lisbon’s urban fabric and image (Janarra, 1994, p. 212; Costa, 2010, p. 32; Viegas Serpa dos Santos, 2015, pp. 330-335) (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Plano de urbanização da zona a sul da avda. Alferes Malheiro, João Guilherme Faria da Costa, 1945



Source: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Gulbenkian Art Library, Estúdio Mário Novais collection, call number CFT003.40097.

Figure 3. View of José Duro Street in “neighbourhood unit 5” of the Alvalade Neighbourhood



Source: photograph by the author, June 2024.

Occasions for knowledge exchange: the Spanish reception of the Alvalade Neighbourhood

The historical review presented above, combined with direct engagement with the Alvalade Neighbourhood – informed by prior research conducted on several typical Spanish housing developments of the same period (Rodríguez Iturriaga, 2022; 2024) –, offers a preliminary foundation for identifying certain parallels and divergences between the respective contexts. As previously noted, in Spain, the slow pace of urban plan drafting was often overshadowed by social urgency, constrained resources, and the sporadic availability of land. As a result, housing estates were typically

small and scattered – rarely exceeding 1,000 dwellings¹¹ – and, although they adopted residential typologies similar to those found in Alvalade, they tended to prioritise the maximisation of housing units and favoured traditional, low-cost solutions over technical innovation (Rojo de Castro, 2003). During this period, urban planning, landscape design, and social considerations were largely overlooked, a neglect reflected in the spatial segregation of many housing estates, their weak integration with the existing urban fabric, the poorly conceived sizing and distribution of open spaces relative to built areas, and the frequent omission or deferral of urbanisation, landscaping, and public amenities¹². These defining features of the Spanish case stand in stark contrast to the Alvalade Neighbourhood, although future studies that deepen the comparison between both contexts are desirable. The fact that housing developments conceived from analogous theoretical and ideological premises could be realised in Portugal without significant distortion may well have drawn the attention of Spain’s political and technical elites. This section seeks to shed light on this issue by examining the opportunities for knowledge exchange in housing and urban planning between professionals from both countries during the central decade of the twentieth century.

To begin with, it must be noted that, despite the parallels between the Iberian regimes, the publication of Portuguese economic housing projects in Spanish technical journals was minimal. One rare example is provided by *Nuevas Formas*, which after the Civil War moved its head office from Madrid to Lisbon, changing its title to *Nuevas Formas: Revista Iberoamericana. Arquitectura e Decoração* and its director to Porfírio Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957) – at that time, President of the Conselho Diretor do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos (‘National Union of Architects’) (SNA) –. During its Lisbon period (1940-1943), the magazine published only one Portuguese social housing project: the eleven houses for the *cantoneiros* of the Tagus channel (1943), designed by Carlos Rebelo de Andrade (1887-1971). These were single-storey detached homes with private orchards and a regionalist aesthetic. The project was briefly described in Portuguese and illustrated with a few photographs and a floor plan of one of the dwellings. Only one other article on the topic has been found, this time in *RNA* (1944), which praised the Estado Novo’s social policy. It highlighted the concept of Casa Económica – defined as “family home, with orchard” – and the shared values with the Franco regime: the social utility of private property, the rejection of large buildings, and the emphasis on hygiene, intimacy, and regional character (C.V.G., 1944). This article offered only general, mostly legal, commentary, accompanied by photographs of several completed neighbourhoods (Figure 4). Throughout the period studied, social housing developments in Germany, Italy or Switzerland received significantly more coverage in Spanish technical journals.

Figure 4. Pages 152 and 153 of the article “Construcción de habitaciones obreras en Portugal y la política social del Nuevo Estado”



Source: *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, 1944 (28).

¹¹ See the statistics for the period 1939-1943 (Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda, 1943). The examples studied in the references cited in footnote 10 are also illustrative of the small scale of the realisations. For further information, Moya González, Fernández Salgado and Escamilla Valencia (2021) provide a detailed overview of the housing estates built in Madrid between 1940 and 2010.

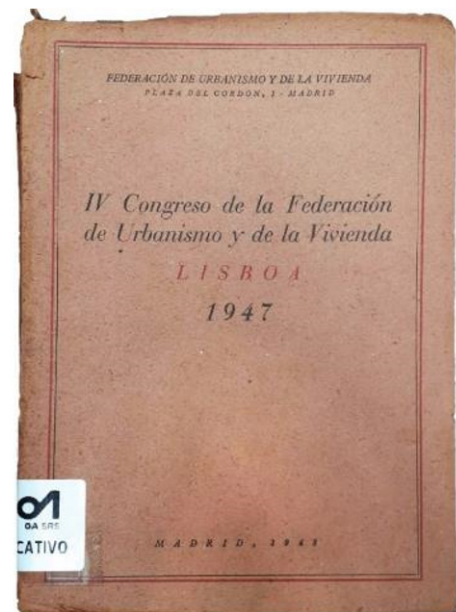
¹² See footnote 10.

Much more relevant seem to have been the opportunities for knowledge exchange facilitated by meetings and professional events, whose impact was amplified through associated publications and reviews. One early occasion was the 1942 joint congress of the Asociación Española para el Progreso de las Ciencias and the Associação Portuguesa para o Progresso das Ciências. At this event, Pedro Muguruza (1893-1952), then head of the DGA, presented a study on improving substandard housing, which he concluded by emphasising the similarities between the housing challenges faced by Portugal and Spain, as well as the measures proposed in each country (Muguruza Otaño, 1943). The public assertion that Spain and Portugal shared circumstances and were aligned in their search for solutions was recurrent throughout these decades.

But undoubtedly, one of the most significant congress series for professional exchange in this field was that of the Spanish Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda. In fact, it is likely that the RNA article cited above was connected to the preparation of the III Congreso (Madrid-Seville-Lisbon, October 1944)¹³. On that occasion, an invitation was extended to the SNA to participate. García González and Guerrero (2014) note that the Federation's President, Cort, maintained close ties with Portugal, motivated by his private business interests and his contact with the exiled Royal Family. In addition, according to Ribeiro (1993, Vol. I, pp. 319-320), he was a close friend of Pardal Monteiro, who – Moniz and Von Oppen (2015) add – would have invited him to deliver a series of training lectures on urban planning following the enactment of Decreto-Lei no. 33921 of September 5, 1944.

The SNA accepted the invitation to participate in these meetings, which from that point onward would be described as “Hispanic-Lusitanian”¹⁴. In the inaugural session, the IEAL Director, José Gascón (1875-1962), praised the urban improvements made in Lisbon from “new orientations”, which he had visited, and added that Spain also had noteworthy realisations to showcase, particularly in the area of post-war reconstruction (*III Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1945, pp. 258-259). The Portuguese speakers included Carlos Rebelo de Andrade, Antonio Maria Veloso Reis Camelo (1899-1985), Porfírio Pardal Monteiro, and A. Couto Martins (1897-1970). Their presentations advocated for the arborisation of streets, the integration of social classes and housing typologies, and the inclusion of facilities and recreational areas within new neighbourhoods – Alvalade was not yet mentioned. In the closing session held in Lisbon, Cort acknowledged Portugal's success in solving many urbanisation challenges (*III Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1945, p. 291).

Figure 5. Book of proceedings of the IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda (1947)



Source: Biblioteca da Ordem dos Arquitectos (Lisboa), call number CES 002.

¹³ This congress coincided with the I Reunión Luso-Española de Arquitectos organised by Muguruza (Bustos Juez, 2016).

¹⁴ ABC, 03-07-1947.

This meeting was perceived as satisfactory by both countries, as the next edition, the IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda, was held in Lisbon (Figure 5). Initially scheduled for 1946, the event was postponed to June-July 1947 at the initiative of Oliveira Salazar, to coincide with the centenary celebrations of the Christian conquest of the city (García González, 2018, p. 674). The Spanish delegation included engineer and politician Federico Mayo (1894-1954), INV Director, who expressed his desire for increased collaboration with Portugal (*IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1948, pp. 124-125); the Federation's President, Cort; Gaspar Blein (1902-1988), from the IEAL and the DGA; José Fonseca (1904-1986), from the INV¹⁵; Gonzalo de Cárdenas (1904-1954), from the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas; Juan Guerrero Ruiz (1893-1955), from the Dirección General de Administración Local; and several other professionals, some of them from various public administrations ('Portugal.-El IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda', 1947).

Attendees visited an exhibition featuring the urbanisation plans for the Ajuda slope and the Alvalade Neighbourhood, the latter occupying an entire wall with examples of the housing types and their corresponding rents (*IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1948, p. 163). Interestingly, the Alvalade plan had been mentioned in *REVL* following its approval ('Casas económicas en Lisboa y Benguela', 1945), and the *Revista Internacional de Sociología* had reported on the funding agreement reached with the Federação de Caixas de Previdência (Viñas, 1946), all of which suggests that Spanish attendees may have had some prior information. Moreover, participants had the opportunity to visit "the various works developed by the State and the capital's municipality, which are truly important and some of them very commendable, such as the new neighbourhoods of economic housing, and that both in the municipal or architectural aspect as well as in the social", in the words of the Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy¹⁶. At that time, the first phase of Alvalade was "in full swing" (*IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1948, p. 163). The congress was reviewed in *BIDCA* and the already cited *REVL*: the former highlighted the "great works carried out in the brother country in the field of urbanisation and housing in recent years" ('IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda', 1947), while the latter outlined the "visit to the great exhibition of the urbanisation works undertaken by the corresponding General Direction, which is a high exponent of the determination and enthusiasm with which the country has worked to improve its living and urban conditions" ('Portugal.-El IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda', 1947). At the reception held on June 30, Cort praised the works carried out in Lisbon, noting their "great competence and skill" and highlighting "the exemplary methods followed by the Portuguese in the field of expropriation, in which the interests and rights of the public administration and private individuals are combined with due justice" – a topic that appears to have been somewhat contentious in the Spanish debate¹⁷ (*IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, 1948, p. 161).

Events followed in the ensuing years. In 1948, the Exposição Nacional de Obras Públicas was held in Lisbon, coinciding with the I Congresso Nacional dos Arquitectos (May-June). Despite being the exhibition, as well as the congress, a national-scope event, Spain took notice of its celebration, as Pascoal (2020) has studied¹⁸. The display included a pavilion by the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, which featured, among other materials, a 1:1000 scale plan of Alvalade, 16 aerial photographs of the urbanisation works, and a large model of the first two "neighbourhood units" (figs. 6-7) (Ministério das Obras Públicas e Comunicações, 1948, n.p.; Secretariado Nacional da Informação, 1949, p. 143). The exhibition was visited by the Spanish Ministers of Public Works and Instruction, the former of whom publicly expressed his surprise at the works undertaken in such a short period (1933-1948) (Secretariado Nacional da Informação, 1949, pp. 201-202)¹⁹. A few months later, *REVL* reported on

¹⁵ Fonseca was a lecturer in urban planning at the Porto architecture school in 1945-1946, according to Moniz and Von Oppen (2015).

¹⁶ AGA, 82/07089. Letter from the Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy in Lisbon to the Ambassador, in turn forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27-08-1947.

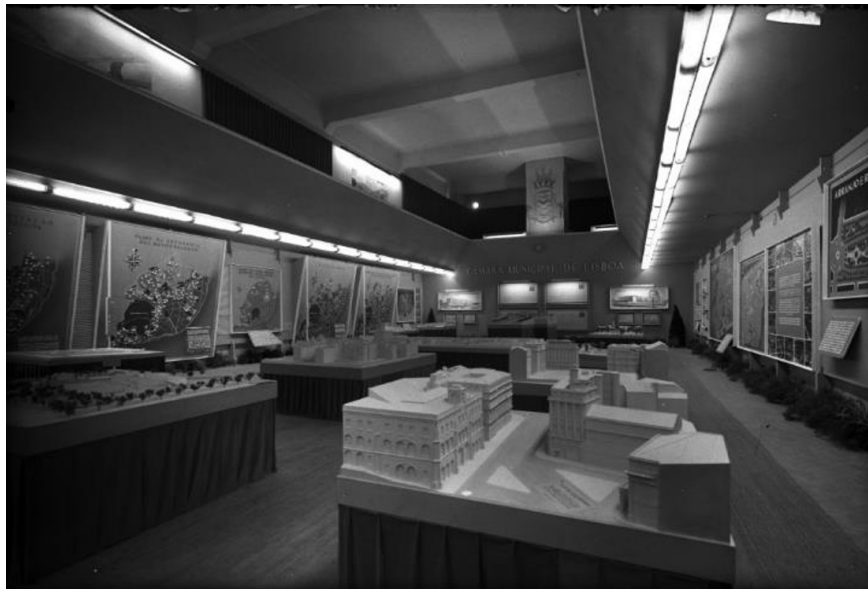
¹⁷ Architects and planners like Fonseca or Alomar defended the municipalisation of the land required for the development of population centers, while other specialists criticised such measure as "socialist", "exotic" or economically unfeasible (Alcázar Olalla, 1948; Alomar, 1980 [1947], pp. 60-61, 208-210).

¹⁸ The event was reviewed in *REVL* ('Lisboa.-Exposición de Obras Públicas', 1948).

¹⁹ In that autumn, the V Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda was also held in northern Spain. Portuguese participation was scarce on that occasion due to the recent death of the President of the SNA, Cottinelli Telmo (1897-1948), suggesting that the exchange of knowledge was minimal (Fonseca, 1948).

the inauguration of the Alvalade Neighbourhood, heralding that “when completed, it would be one of the most pleasant areas in Lisbon” (‘Portugal.-Hacia la resolución del problema de la vivienda en Lisboa’, 1948).

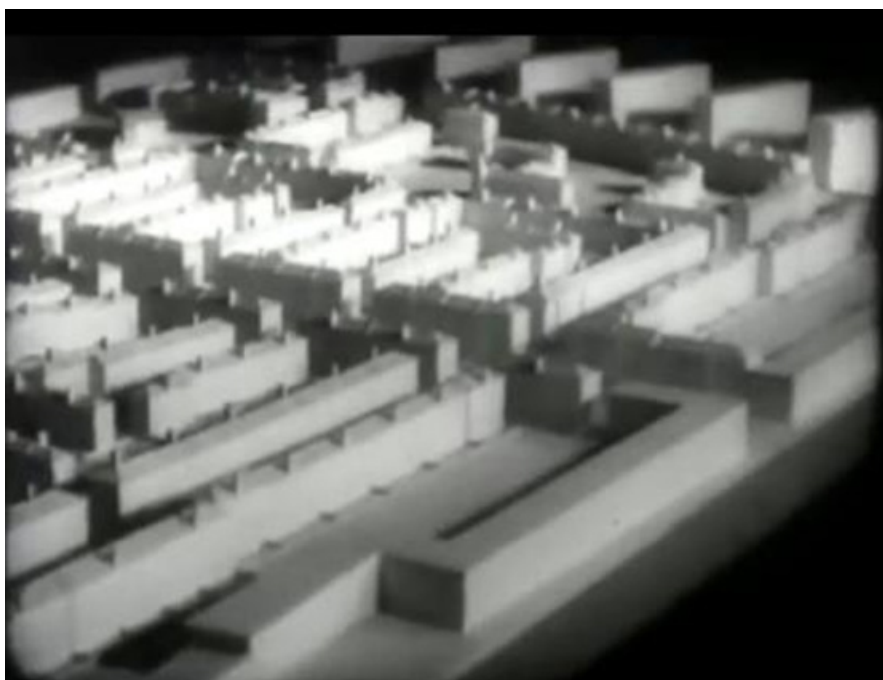
Figure 6. One of the rooms of the Exposição Nacional de Obras Públicas (1948)



Note: On the right wall, plan for the Alvalade Neighbourhood and 16 aerial photographs; in front of the board, at the background, a model of the first two “neighbourhood units”.

Source: © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa. [Instituto Superior Técnico, exposição de Obras Públicas], António Passaporte, PAS003121.

Figure 7. A frame of the documentary film *Lisboa de Hoje e de Amanhã* (1948), produced by Câmara Municipal



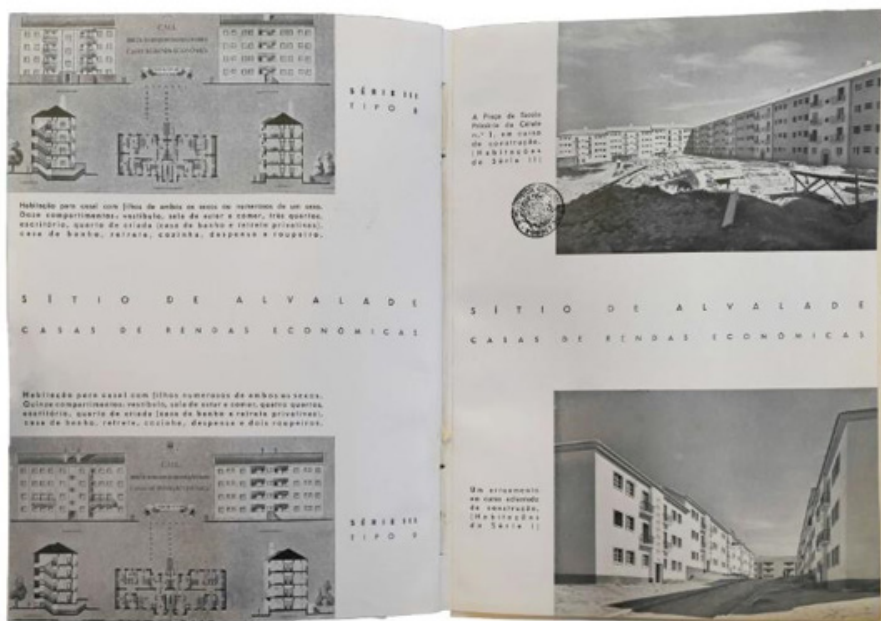
Note: Model of the first two “neighbourhood units”.

Source: Cinemateca Portuguesa.

Another opportunity for knowledge exchange arose on the occasion of the I Congrès des Capitales, held in Paris in November 1948, which was attended by representatives from the municipal governments

of Madrid and Lisbon (Congrès des capitales, 1948). The participation of the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa was particularly noteworthy, as it presented several comprehensive studies compiled in informational brochures translated into French. These included *L'administration municipale de la ville de Lisbonne (Portugal)*; *Quelques notes sur le développement de Lisbonne*; *Lisbonne et son plan directeur*; *L'urbanisation de Lisbonne : le "sítio de Alvalade"*; *L'habitation économique à Lisbonne*; *Le problème de logement*; *Parcs d'enfants*, and *L'Organisation administratif portugaise rend possible la parfaite administration d'une grande ville*²⁰ (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Informational brochures edited by the Câmara Municipal on the occasion of the I Congrès des Capitales (1948)



Note: [Top] Brochure covers [Bottom] Two of the interior pages of the brochure dedicated to the Alvalade Neighbourhood.
Sources: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, call numbers S.C. 13695//7 V, S.C. 13695//2V, S.A. 15436//5 V, S.C. 13695//1V, S.C. 13695//8 V, S.C. 13695//4 V and S.C. 13695//5 V; Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Gulbenkian Art Library, call number CS 978.

²⁰ We have found eight brochures, some of them also with an English or Portuguese version. The first page of the brochure *L'administration municipale de la ville de Lisbonne (Portugal)* reflects the invitation from the Paris municipality and conveys the conviction that Lisbon's experience may be of great value to the congress participants.

In addition to oral interventions, the Alvalade Neighbourhood featured in most of these brochures, either in the text or through pictures, detailing the legal, economic, administrative, and technical measures that were making its execution possible. As can be seen, one of the brochures was entirely dedicated to explaining the process behind the creation of this new urban sector and its main characteristics, richly illustrated with photographs and plans. These brochures appear to have been distributed among conference attendees ('Livros de propaganda', 1948) and received positive reviews in *REVL* ('Libros y Revistas', 1949) and *Revista de Estudios Políticos* (J.I.B.G., 1949). Both journals praised Lisbon's policy and highlighted the abundance of sunny, well-ventilated open spaces, the provision of public facilities and shops, and the social diversity present in the Alvalade Neighbourhood. In any case, the attention given to Portugal in Spanish specialised journals remained limited.

As a result of Portugal's growing prestige in this field, Lisbon was selected to host the next edition of this conference series: the II Congresso das Capitais, held in October 1950²¹. Once again, representatives from Madrid's city council attended. The programme included several site visits, among them to the Alvalade Neighbourhood (Figure 9) and to an exhibition of plans and models of the new urban sectors. In one of the presentations, engineer Luís Guimarães Lobato (1915-2009) explained the measures adopted to rationalise construction works and reduce their cost, citing Alvalade as a successful example (Lobato, 1950). In its review of the event, *Gran Madrid* commended Lisbon's initiatives "regarding expropriation, urbanisation, housing, street design and reforestation", once again highlighting the Alvalade experience (COUMA, 1950). Upon returning to Spain, the mayor of Madrid lamented that his city council was less well-funded than those of Rome, Paris or "even" Lisbon ('El II Congreso de grandes capitales', 1950). The review published in *REVL* also emphasised the importance of acquiring large tracts of land to facilitate rapid housing production, citing Lisbon and Paris as examples, and suggesting that this strategy was insufficiently applied in Spain – a shortcoming that was, in fact, regretted in several national forums²² – ('El II Congreso de grandes capitales', 1950). A sense of restrained frustration begins to emerge in Spanish accounts, in light of evidence that the national policy was possibly not proving as effective as that of the "brother country".

Figure 9. Two pages of the leaflet of the II Congresso das Capitais (1950)



Note: Programme for Tuesday 17th October, which included a visit to the Alvalade Neighbourhood. Source: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Gulbenkian Art Library, call number FT 5442.

21 Madrid proposed a shared venue with Lisbon (Rebello, 1948).

22 At the V Asamblea Nacional de Arquitectos ('National Assembly of Architects') (1949), the Urban Planning section of the DGA noted "the constant failure in municipal management concerning urban planning", among other reasons, "due to the utilisation of the expropriation and execution resources offered by legislation in an insignificant proportion, resulting in a frequent domination of the private interest over the general one" (Sección de Urbanismo de la Dirección General de Arquitectura, 1949, p. 238). At the VI Asamblea (1952), it was again pointed out that "a policy of large expropriations has never been well received in municipalities" (Pérez Mínguez y Devillota, 1952).

Finally, in the early 1950s, three additional events helped publicise Lisbon's urban planning and housing achievements among Spanish professionals and policymakers: the VI Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda held in Porto (June 1951)²³; the XXI Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) (September 1952), hosted in Lisbon – partly due to the Portuguese support for this organisation since its post-war restructuring (Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização, 1953); and the Troisième Congrès de l'Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA), similarly held in the Tagus capital (September 1953).

The first of these events was attended by a large Spanish delegation, including the Federation's President, Cort; Juan Guerrero Ruiz from the IEAL; Francisco Prieto-Moreno (1907-1985) from the DGA, and around twenty other architects or officials²⁴. According to the review published in *REVL*, the programme comprised a visit to an exhibition by the Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização, which once again featured the plan for the area south of Avenida Alferes Malheiro, as well as a trip to Lisbon ('Portugal.-VI Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda en Oporto', 1951, De Miguel, 1951). The Spanish consul in Porto sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by press clippings, reporting that the Spanish attendees had been "very pleasantly impressed by the progress made in Portugal during the last years regarding urbanisation and housing construction"²⁵. Carlos de Miguel (1904-1986), editor of *BIDGA*, conference attendee, and author of a review, highlighted the "visit to Lisbon, where the great urban works undertaken by the deceased General Carmona²⁶ could be appreciated, making the capital of Portugal one of the most beautiful and modern European cities" (De Miguel, 1951).

Secondly, the XXI Congress of the IFHP was attended independently by several Spanish technicians and politicians²⁷, including Pedro Bidagor (1906-1996), Rodolfo García-Pablos (1913-2001), Manuel Muñoz Monasterio (1903-1969), Manuel Manzano Monís (1913-1997), Gabriel Alomar, and Antonio Marsá Prat (1897-1983), among others²⁸. A telling sign of Spain's disorientation – particularly of Pedro Bidagor's fluctuations – was the presentation of several "organic interpretations" of major Spanish cities, likening them to animals or human figures (Terán Troyano, 1978, p. 273; García González, 2018, p. 687). The congress integrated a parallel exhibition of projects (Figures 10 and 11), a bibliographical display offering the possibility of purchasing some of the exemplars (Costa & Lapa, 1952, n.p.), and a "thorough and commented visit to the new neighbourhoods in Lisbon" (Alomar, 1952), including Alvalade, as press reports demonstrate (Figure 12). In his review for *Gran Madrid*, Marsá highlighted

“(...) the criterion, generally accepted by all countries, of building double-bay blocks, with the incorporation of Nature: sun, air, and vegetation to the urban environment, achieving normal densities by forcing heights and ensemble aesthetics with the set of volumes”,

describing the neighbourhoods of Alvalade, Areeiro, and Ajuda as "of great interest" (Marsá, 1952). However, there was still some reluctance to apply similar schemes to urban extensions in cities like Madrid (Bidagor, 1951; García Pablos, 1952; COUMA, 1953, pp. 17-18; Terán Troyano, 1978, pp. 189-190, 294-298). The Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy also praised the "exhibition of models, projects, books and journals, in which the excellent urban planning work developed by the Lisbon town council in the last years stood out"²⁹. Alomar, in turn, provided a detailed report on the event in *REVL*, applauding the municipality's efforts – with the sole inconvenience, in his opinion, of the lack of social nucleation in Alvalade and Areeiro – and drawing self-critical conclusions for Spain. These included the delay in enacting a Land Act, the lack of coordination among competent administrations, and the elementary need for urbanisation to precede construction in urban extensions:

23 The corresponding book of proceedings has not been found.

24 AGA, 82/08334. *Relación de congresistas al VI Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda. IIª Reunión Lu-so-Española de Arquitectos. Oporto 17-23 junio.*

25 AGA, 82/08334. Letter from the Spanish consul in Porto to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 05-07-1951.

26 De Miguel was referring to António Oscar de Fragoso Carmona (1869-1951), who served as President of the Portuguese Republic until his death.

27 Spain had lost its official representation years before (Alomar, 1952).

28 MITMA, M-DGU-13, *Personal. Representación de los arquitectos Pedro Bidagor Lasarte, Rodolfo García-Pablos, Manuel Muñoz Monasterio, Manuel Manzano Monís y Gabriel Alomar al XXI Congreso Internacional de la Vivienda y del Urbanismo en Lisboa, Portugal. Año 1952.* In AGA, 82/08300, more attendees are mentioned: Diego B. Reina, Severiano de la Peña, José Fonseca, Juan Piqueras, César Cort, and the count of La Viñaza.

29 AGA, 82/08300. Letter from the Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy in Lisbon to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24-10-1952.

“(…) it is a healthy principle observed in all European countries except ours; hence the sad result of the dusty urban extensions of Spanish provincial cities, hybrid zones where the rural character has disappeared, without being replaced by a true urbanised city” (Alomar, 1952).

In a lecture at the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Cataluña y Baleares (‘Official Association of Architects of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands’), Alomar also acknowledged that Spain’s achievements had not “matched its efforts, which is undoubtedly due to the absence of a decisive step leading to the organisation of the national land, a step already taken by most Western European countries” – presumably Portugal among them (Alomar, 1950).

Figure 10. Projects exhibition during the XXI Congress of the IFHP (1952)



Note: On the wall, general plan and street views of the Alvalade Neighbourhood.

Source: © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa. [Representação da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa no 21º Congresso Internacional de Habitação e Urbanismo], photographer Horácio Novais, HNV000399.

Figure 11. Projects exhibition during the XXI Congress of the IFHP (1952)



Note: On the right wall, boards about the Alvalade Neighbourhood, accompanied by models of the housing types.

Source: © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa. [Representação da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa no 21º Congresso Internacional de Habitação e Urbanismo], photographer Horácio Novais, HNV000407.

Figure 12. Attendees to the XXI Congress of the IFHP visiting the Alvalade Neighbourhood



Source: *Diário da manhã*, 24-09-1952.

Thirdly, the *Troisième Congrès de l'UIA*³⁰ did not yet have official Spanish representation³¹ (Viladevall Marfá, 1953), but Cort took part in the “Urbanisme” working group, and Secundino Zuazo Ugalde (1887-1970), Juan Guerrero Ruiz, Francisco de Asís Viladevall Marfá (1912-1989), and eight other professionals also attended (*Troisième Congrès de l'Union Internationale des Architectes*, 1953, pp. 464-465). The intensive session programme was complemented by a bibliographic exhibition and a visit to “the new city neighbourhoods”, which, in Viladevall's words,

“... are of interest because of the multiple lessons that a curious architect can draw from a detailed visit: they confirm the primary importance of green areas and gardens in today's houses. Examples can already be seen of groups of blocks of independent dwellings without interior courtyards” (Viladevall Marfá, 1953).

In closing, it is worth noting that the 7th and final congress of the Spanish *Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda*, held in Palma de Mallorca (1954), no longer featured any presentations from Portugal, although there were some attendees from that country (n.a., 1954). Moreover, while Portugal participated in the XXII Congress of the IFHP held in Edinburgh (1954), Spain did not, and the Alvalade experience was not discussed on that occasion. Neither it was at the XXIII Congress of the IFHP in Vienna (1956), which both countries attended. All this suggests a turning point around 1954, when the international dissemination of the Alvalde plan appears to have declined, coinciding with the final stages of its execution.

As a summary, for reference and future research, the most relevant congresses examined are listed below:

- III Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda (Madrid-Seville-Lisbon, October 1944)
- IV Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda (Lisbon, June-July 1947)
- I Congrès des Capitales (Paris, November 1948)

³⁰ A small group of Portuguese and Spanish architects also attended the previous edition of these meetings (Rabat, 1951), but no evidence has been found to suggest that either country presented communications. However, Portugal showed “a perhaps modest but no less significant contribution” in the parallel exhibition (Pacheco, 2013, p. 289). The first congress of the UIA (Lausanne, 1948) did not include Spanish or Portuguese presentations.

³¹ Spain's admission to the UIA was approved in 1955.

- II Congresso das Capitais (Lisbon, October 1950)
- VI Congreso de la Federación de Urbanismo y de la Vivienda (Porto, June 1951)
- XXI Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) (Lisbon, September 1952)
- Troisième Congrès de l'Union Internationale des Architectes (Lisbon, September 1953)

Discussion and conclusions

This study demonstrates that the informed minority engaged in debates on urban planning and affordable housing at the national level in Spain were aware of, and genuinely admired, the progress made in Portugal, as well as in other Western countries. Although mutual distrust may have limited bilateral relations in the immediate post-war years, over time a growing desire for rapprochement emerged, accompanied by increasingly evident self-criticism on the Spanish side, or even a latent frustration when comparing outcomes with those of the “brother country”. Nevertheless, Portugal did not come to be regarded as a major reference point.

Portuguese initiatives and their results were primarily known through thematic congresses and events – which Lisbon hosted an unusually high number of within a short period – and through the publications derived from them, such as catalogues, brochures, books of proceedings, and reviews in specialised journals, mostly focused on urban planning or local administration, to a lesser extent on architecture. These gatherings provided opportunities for discussion, access to plan documentation, and, in some cases, direct observation of the built environment, something particularly notable in the case of the Alvalade Neighbourhood, which was proudly and repeatedly showcased. The fact that some of these meetings were unofficial or attended by Spaniards in a personal capacity has resulted in limited documentation available in Spanish public archives. However, the material that has been located, along with the publications stemming from these events, allows us to affirm that there was a sound level of awareness of the Alvalade experience and, more broadly, of the Estado Novo's urban and housing policies among the Spanish minority engaged with these matters. Furthermore, we can say that the initiative was largely appreciated, as positive impressions are reflected both in professional/public discourse and in internal communications. Complementing the archival and bibliographic enquiry, direct engagement with the Alvalade Neighbourhood has contributed to a better understanding of Spanish accounts. Although the ideas embodied in the plan were not entirely novel, its principal merit lay in the flexible synthesis it achieved, moving beyond earlier reactionary approaches, and the strategy that rendered its implementation feasible, aspects that were sufficiently covered in the reviewed events and publications. The research questions posed by this article have hence been answered and, at the same time, a contribution has been made to the understanding of the international dissemination of the Alvalade experience.

This study also lays the groundwork for a more detailed comparison of the achievements in urban planning and housing under both Iberian dictatorships. Several clear differences between typical Spanish developments of the period and the Alvalade Neighbourhood have been identified, such as the tendency towards spatial segregation, the small scale and residential monofunctionality of housing estates, their lack of integration into broader urban planning strategies, the residual nature of open space, and the postponement of public facilities, services, and urbanisation works, all of which are features specific to the Spanish context. It would be worthwhile to explore the underlying causes of these divergences in greater depth. According to Alomar, a decisive differential factor may have been the limited urban planning awareness and the discoordination, indecision, and even apprehension with which Spain approached the modernisation of its urban planning instruments, an attitude closely linked to the economic precariousness and socio-political caution of the post-war and autarkic period. As seen, Portugal began this update in the 1930s with the involvement of internationally recognised planners. This planning momentum, seemingly driven by the authority of Duarte Pacheco, was able to align with housing policy. The Alvalade Neighbourhood can thus be understood not only as a paradigm of alliance between national and municipal governments, embodied in Duarte Pacheco's dual roles, or as an example of the Estado Novo's shift from conservative approaches towards modernity, evident in the evolution of residential typologies and

the emphasis on green spaces, but also as the clearest expression, in Salazarist Portugal, of the integration of urban planning and housing policies. This may well explain its success and its capacity to “build city” and shape the urban landscape.

By contrast, Spain did not approve its national Land Act until 1956, and its implementation was – intentionally or not – undermined from the outset (Alomar, 1980 [1947], pp. 60-68; Terán Troyano, 1978, pp. 326-348). The municipal plans in force during the studied period were of limited usefulness in managing urban growth. Moreover, municipalities made only minimal use of the expropriation mechanism, likely due to the fragile economy and land speculation, but also probably because of a reluctance to infringe upon private property interests at a time when it was “convenient to attract it to a constructive collaboration”³². As a result, the scarce resources available were channelled into the quantitative production of housing on whatever land could be obtained, developments in which other considerations were either absent or conspicuously insufficient, and whose contribution to “city-building” was largely incidental. This trend persisted well beyond the mid-1950s, despite the nominal land regulation, economic recovery, and a gradual opening to the international scene: although housing complexes expanded in scale and buildings became better equipped, fundamental aspects such as urbanisation and integration into the broader urban fabric received limited attention.

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³² Draft of the Land Act (1953), cited in Terán Troyano (1978, p. 331).

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