

SOCIALIZE THE SOIL OR DIE

PUBLISHED IN

Vía Construcción, Barcelona, febrero 2005

Arquitectos 181. Ed. CSCAE. Madrid, 2007

Quiero ser arquitecto, Libros de la Catarata, Madrid 2015

Textos críticos. Afilando el bisturí. Ediciones Asimétricas. Madrid, 2017

SOCIALIZE THE SOIL OR DIE

On housing in Spain today, or how the poor will not inherit the land.

There are many people in Spain today who have to die in order to live. In order to have access to decent housing, they have to give up their whole lives for it.

A very high percentage of people today are in hock up to their eyebrows to be able to pay for their homes. The price of housing today is exorbitant.

A very high percentage of today's young people stay at home with their parents until very late in the evening because they can't afford decent housing even if they try hard enough. It is not easy to afford the mortgages needed to pay such a high price.

A very high percentage of people I don't even know, and I don't even know where they are, but they are, are getting rich by cheating, swindling and swindling those who have gone before them. Among those who are enriching themselves in this way are many developers and architects who navigate in the tempestuous sea of real estate.

And, finally, a lesser percentage of people who are known and who know where they work, are allowing, starring in and promoting such nonsense. And they are in the newspapers AND they or their wives must be making a fortune (they usually put it in the name of their wives who, of course, do not appear in the newspapers), otherwise there is no explanation for this absurd situation. Among them are many politicians from both sides, and also many architects and various other people. As a good friend of mine used to say, all of them with a great spirit of recollection.

If not, how else can it be explained that construction in 2005 cost 600 euros per square metre and then on the market (not only in Madrid) it is sold 10 times more! at 6,000 euros per square metre. That this is done with any other product may seem fine to some (the free trade market they call it). But it should not be fine with anyone if this happens and is allowed to happen with the basic necessity par excellence, which is housing.

We will then be told that this is not the case. That the social housing that they promote, the politicians on both sides, only costs half as much, 3,000 euros per square metre. Well, it still seems immoral to me. 5 times more than the cost price! It's like killing, you don't kill less if you kill half as much. You don't steal less if you steal half as much. Some of us were taught not to kill and not to steal, that's all.

And where does the crux of this thorny issue lie: in the cost of construction? No. Any honest builder, of which there are some, can build a house today, in 2005, for 600 euros per square metre, using good materials, on time and to a good quality. And earning it well.

So is it a question of the soil? Yes, it is. It's the damn soil. The land, "the good land" of that beautiful Pearl S. Buck novel has become the crux of the matter. Land that is worth "nothing" one day, the next day, because of a "declaration of urban land", can be worth a thousand times more. Of course, it is usually bought for "nothing" by the same person who then declares it "urban" with intermediaries, of course, with front men. Doesn't it seem very significant to you that none of the political parties, neither when they arrive nor when they leave, nor when they arrive again nor when they leave again, say anything about the subject, about the subject that most worries each and every one of us who are ordinary citizens? Curious. That "the poor will inherit the earth" must be a lie. The poor will inherit something else. But not the land. But not land. And much less if it is "developable" land.

If I provoke you at the top of this article with a SOCIALISE THE GROUND OR DIE, it is because I believe that at this point it is the only possible solution to put an end to this cancer of the society in which we live. Here we go! some will say. Well, let's get started! Because a very old Land Law, dating back to '56, which seems to still be in force, provided for a high percentage of urban land to be reserved for social housing. Social housing, does that ring a bell? Either it has not been complied with, or it has been skipped, or it has been skipped.

I could tell you that the last house I now have in my hands, about to be finished, is built on a rectangle of 18x30 metres, with two gardens and a large swimming pool, with a living room of 80 square metres and a ceiling of 8 metres high, and with 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms, and that it will cost less than 250,000 euros. Maybe you don't believe it. Well, it's true. The secret? The land, which is what they now call totally free. Maybe this can properly be called "social housing".

Of course, the last house I built, bigger than the previous one, also cost 300.000 euros only 2 years ago. It has more than 450 square metres and has been published halfway around the world. Beautiful but not cheap. And the one before that only cost 120,000 euros and is already on the cover of several architecture books. The secret, once again, is the land, which in both cases was affordable.

Of course, VIA Construcción asked me to write this article with the healthy intention of talking about housing in the most poetic sense of the term. Like talking about the breath of the gentle aura, of the wind, in the eye of the hurricane. I am supposed to talk about light, space and beauty in contemporary housing. To write about how the homes of the new millennium should be spacious, bright and simple. Of course it is possible and desirable.

But I can only say that before that, which is what I try to do with each of my works, there is something more basic and essential, which is to resolve the issue of land. Affordable land. And that things have reached such an extreme that the only solution is to cut the problem to the bone, as with cancer. SOCIALISE land, liberalise it, nationalise it if necessary, which it is. Neither I, nor any architect who wants to give the best of himself to society can end up making only houses for the rich. Once when I tried to build social housing they threw me out because I refused to accept the corruption proposed by the

corresponding official body which, by the way, is still alive and kicking. Very much alive and kicking.

Years ago there was a catchy song by a wonderful Canarian group, Los Sabandeños, which, after enumerating various signs of economic power and asking "whose is this...?", always returned to the refrain that repeated: "it belongs to the middlemen in the fruit business". Well, the housing issue today has ended up like the Canarian fruit. In the hands of the middlemen. With the difference that fruit is dispensable and housing is not.

If you bring me free land, I promise that I will build you for next to nothing the most beautiful house in the world in which you and your children and your children's children can live happily. Without having to die to live.

NB

I have learned that not only is nobody going to SOCIALIZE the land, nor liberalize it, much less nationalize it, but the next thing is that we are going to be charged for the sun we drink, which, until now, was free. I have written countless times that the most luxurious material of Architecture, which is the LIGHT of the sun, is given to us for free. Well, the speculators must have read it and found out and it seems that a law will be passed to regulate this. And like the land, like the good land, they will end up selling it to us at the price of gold. Will they dare to call it "urbanisable light"?