COMMON BUILDINGS AS A CONTROVERSIAL HERITAGE: MATERIAL AND CULTURAL REQUALIFICATION

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Palabras clave: Recualificación urbana, Arquitectura Pop, *Kitsch*, Diferenciación social.

Resumen:
La rehabilitación se encuentra tradicionalmente circunscrita a edificios o áreas considerados singulares que integran el patrimonio histórico-artístico. Sin embargo, los edificios corrientes de 1960 hasta hoy constituyen la mayor parte del patrimonio construido de la Eurorregión; no siendo viable su derribo masivo, conviene estudiar formas de intervención. Con una calidad limitada, es necesaria tanto la mejora de sus características físicas, como de su lectura social. Tomando dos obras de referencia, se explica la metodología del estudio. Primero los tipos de conformación física corrientes. Después las lógicas y las características materiales y culturales, para lo que se decodifican y recodifican sus elementos constitutivos. En base a las características materiales y culturales se conforma una matriz de análisis. Así se prueba que la recualificación es posible, pero que no está exenta de contradicciones.

Keywords: Urban requalification, Pop architecture, *Kitsch*, Social distinction.

Abstract:
Refurbishment is traditionally related to singular buildings or remarkable areas, which are considered to be historical-artistic heritage. Nevertheless, common buildings from 1960 to the present day constitute the majority of the built heritage of the Euroregion. As their mass demolition is not feasible, different interventions should be analysed. The limited quality of common buildings makes the improvement of both physic characteristics and social interpretations necessary. Two masterpieces of modernism serve as examples to define the categories of physical structures. Furthermore, through the decoding and recoding of their elements, common composition and material and cultural quality can be clarified. An analysis matrix can be created based on material and cultural characteristics. Thus, it is proved that requalification is possible, though there could be some contradictions.

1. INTRODUCTION: FROM HISTORICAL REHABILITATION TO COMMON REQUALIFICATION

This paper is related to the thesis currently being written by this author and it summarily presents some of its themes. In the introduction the notion of common buildings as heritage able to be requalified is analysed. The next section deals with how they appear in reality and how they are formed. The concept of quality in its two dimensions is presented using the *Villa Savoye* and the *IIT Chapel*. Bourdieu's distinction theories are used to create a definition of requalification which aids in the distinguishing of other embellishment processes, and both categories are illustrated with examples. The conclusions revaluate the previous explanations and open some lines of research about legislation, cultural debate, and project.

The main question which the thesis tries to answer is how to leverage built heritage. Refurbishment is usually related to buildings or areas considered as remarkable examples of the past and art movements, included in the category of historical-artistic heritage. It is related to the long tradition of only focussing on erudite representative architecture, an idea which is perfectly represented by *Nolli Map*. After the early modernist idea of *tabula rasa*, city centres were revalorised and attention turned to the study of the old areas through representative elements and *types* (Rossi 1968) and other methods of the *Italian school of urban morphology*, forming the theoretical-practical corpus for the rehabilitation plans in old historic centres in the Euroregion. Nevertheless, this vision became insufficient for the current challenges:

> The magnitude of the problems that cause urbanisation today requires the search for general solutions that respond satisfactorily on the quantitative plane. This requires *working from ordinary production*, in other words, with normal financing, with usual constructive procedures and with mid-level professionals. [...] Introducing the ordinary production, departing from the already in-existence in order to transform it, by assigning to it other objectives which are not a mere response to the initial programme, constitutes *the only one means of building the city today*. On the contrary, isolated experiences will take place, which are interesting but which have limited scope, and it will increase the divide between a marginal research and innovation group and mainstream production [...] This approach implies the redefinition of architectonic work, of its methods, and objectives. (Panerai, Castex and Depaule 1986, 181)[1]

[1] Translation of the original text by the author of this article: «la magnitud de los problemas que hoy promueve la urbanización obliga a buscar soluciones de conjunto que respondan satisfactoriamente al plan [sic] cuantitativo. Esto exige *trabajar a partir de la producción ordinaria*, es decir, con la financiación habitual, con los procesos constructivos usuales y con profesionales de tipo medio. [...] Introducir la producción ordinaria, partir de lo existente para transformarlo asignándole otros objetivos que no sean la mera respuesta al programa inicial, componen [sic] *el único medio de construir hoy la ciudad*, de lo contrario se sucederán las experiencias aisladas, interesantes pero de alcance limitado, y se acentuará la escisión entre un grupo marginal de investigación e innovación y una producción dominante [...] Este punto de vista supone la redefinición del trabajo arquitectónico, de sus métodos y objetivos.»

In contrast to the traditional trend focused on singular objects, as previously mentioned, attention should be turned to the *ordinary*, non-erudite, non-canonical, *common*[2] architecture.

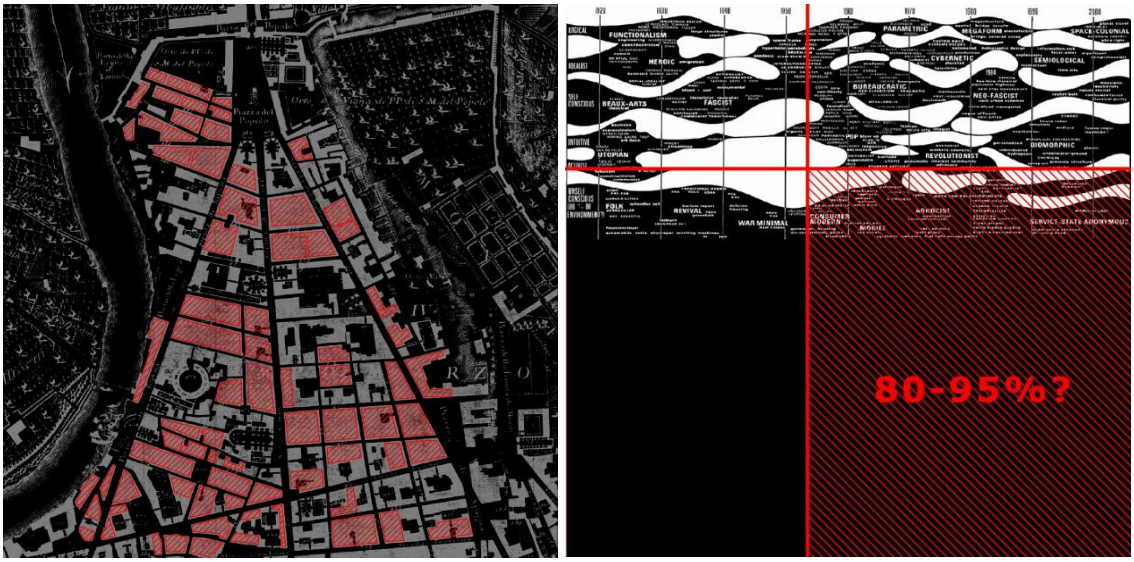

Figure 1 & 2. Undifferentiated buildings highlighted in red on *Nolli Map*, 1748. Artistic space of common buildings highlighted in red in scaled Jencks' *Evolution diagram (Source: author photo edition, from the original images in it.m.wikipedia.org and Jencks 2000 respectively).*

This research proposes the hypothesis that probably the best way to leverage built heritage is not the rehabilitation of just the buildings which are already high quality – as is usually done -, but the intervention in the major part[3] of the built environment, which is of low quality and for which requalification is also more necessary. The common buildings from 1960 until now constitute the main non-natural heritage of the Euroregion, from an economic point of view, their usage, and the life stories of their users. Transforming them into an asset via their requalification requires the recognition of their value, which should not be measured in historical-artistic terms. Some changes could be introduced in common buildings to improve them in terms of quality, and consequently in terms of value and beauty as well.

But as a controversial element, they suffer from some negative approaches which make the endeavour of their valorisation more difficult. Traditionally, *Academia* paid no attention to common buildings. Common buildings were just ignored (deliberately or not), considered to be unworthy of a study and, consequently, without quality: in other worlds they were *non-architecture*. The possibility of proving their values did not exist since the architectonic analysis tool were exclusively reserved for historical or artistic masterpieces. Another later position was disdain towards common buildings, especially to those with

[2] The thesis should clarify, distinguish and justify the chosen concept of *common* in contraposition with other similar terms like: ordinary, popular, pop, vernacular, trivial, banal, vulgar, conventional, commercial, etc., which exceeds the purpose of this article. Note that in this research the synonym of *common* is 'corriente' in Spanish and 'corrente' in Galician/Portuguese (and not 'público').

[3] Jencks' Evolution diagram quantifies the *unself-conscious* buildings in 80% of the environment. The importance of this diagram is also the representation of erudite and non-erudite architecture in the same plane. The «buildings made by architects» are estimated at 5% (Rapoport 1968, 3), consequently, the rest, 95% are non-erudite. These global estimations of their time would confirm this hypothesis.

lower budgets or less culture since their aesthetic parameters do not match the established tastes and morals. These architectures were considered 'ugly', 'inappropriate', 'intolerable', 'uncultured', 'an attack on the landscape', etc. This attitude continues to be active in the present day and very widespread, to mention some examples: in Galicia the public debate created the term *feísmo*, in Portugal these objects are called *patos bravos* and a blog called *Ugly Belgian houses*[4] has received a great deal of attention in its country.

Figure 3 to 6. Common buildings normally considered 'ugly' in North Portugal and Galicia *(Source: Villanova, Leite and Raposo 1995, 129; Lizancos 2000, 10; Paz 2006, 38; Domingues 2009, 244).*

In contrast, a series of authors, as a minority and minorised trend, takes the position of giving value to these common architectures, going from scientific to artistic approaches. This attitude is more recent and in international discussions it is possible to mention studies in anthropology like *House form and culture* (Rapoport 1969)[5] and *The savage mind* (Levi-strauss 1962), in architecture like *Learning from Las Vegas: the forgotten symbolism of architectural form* (Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour 1977), and in art criticism like *Five faces of modernity: modernism, avant-garde, decadence, kitsch, postmodernism* (Calinescu 1987), among others. In the local Euroregion discussions this approach was followed later by architectonic research like, among others, *Houses of dreams* (Villanova, Leite and Raposo 1995), *Land of a thousand beauties* (Creus and Gallego 1998), *The contemporary house in Galicia* (Lizancos 2005), *Ugliness? Destroying a country* (Paz 2006), and *The street-road* (Domingues, 2009).

This last approach orientates the research in the direction of effectively managing to leverage the major part of the built heritage. For this purpose, a panoramic view of built heritage (mostly neither historical nor artistic) as a social resource is needed. In this regard, it is necessary to analyse its compositional process and its capacity of adaptation: not only the purely physical reality, but also this other immaterial dimension of discourses, ideas, and affection. As occurred in the case of historical and artistic heritage in old centres, the study and development of theory and practice will contribute to forming rehabilitation instruments, in this case, for areas outside the historical-artistic centres, which are non-canonical and non-legitimated territories. In addition, in the last few years public powers in the Euroregion (the UE, states, regions, and municipalities) have approved a series of rehabilitation initiatives in common tissues and urban sustainability and regeneration strategies: *2020 agenda, Programa Polis, Estrategias de Desarrollo Urbano Sostenible Integrado, Áreas de Reabilitação Urbana, Áreas de rehabilitación Integral*, etc. It means a change of paradigm from new urban expansions to the actual built areas.

[4] uglybelgianhouses.tumblr.com

[5] Titles are translated for a better understanding of the studies' themes. If an edition in English exists, its title is used. At any case, in the bibliography the consulted editions and exact titles are indicated.

2. COMMON BUILDINGS IN THE EUROREGION: CLASSIFICATION AND MODELLIZATION

Built processes have changed in recent decades from traditional architecture. A better understanding of general trends in western peripheral areas at the different levels is needed. The Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion in the post-industrial era appears as a privileged case study due to its in-between position in both time and space.

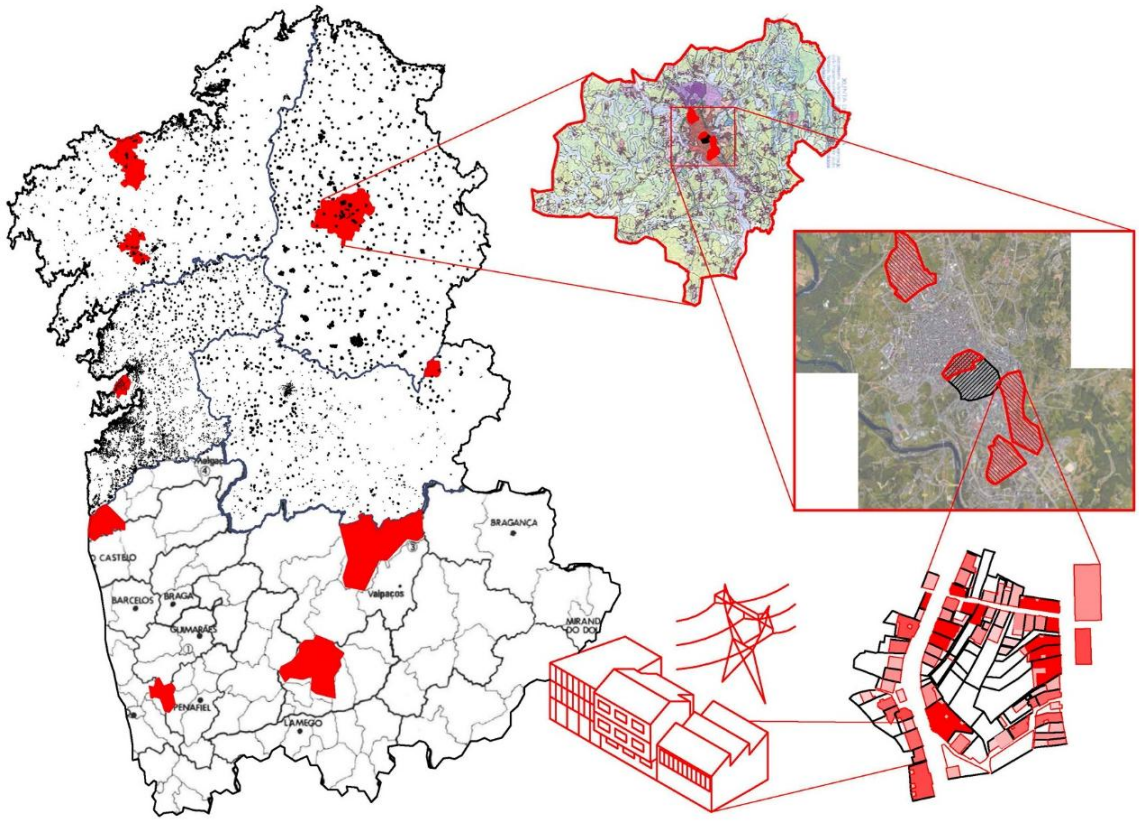

Figure 7. Multi-scale Euroregion scheme. Methodology used in case studies *(Source: author).*

The Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, according to various authors, is characterised in contemporaneity by transgenic building patterns, which are widely misunderstood (Villanova, Leite, and Raposo 1995; Lizancos 2000). This change of paradigm can be found in *Horizontal property law* (Portugal 1955; España 1960), which meant the democratisation of built property and a guarantee of 'social peace' for the fascist dictatorships. After 30 years of the stagnation of built reality, society as a whole participated as new owners in the territorial explosion of buildings. Due to this, the implementation of modernism and postmodernism was practically simultaneous. The expansion of the built environment followed patterns of increasing complexity and instability, typical of the post-industrial territories explained by the research of diverse authors, among others: *The city is not a tree* (Alexander 1965), *The city as architecture* (Portas 1969), *The urban question* (Castells, 1972), *The third generation of urbanism* (Venuti 1987), *Elementary city* (Viganò, 1999), *Diffuse city in Galicia* (Dalda, Harguindey, and Docampo 2006) and *Configuration of diffuse city in Galicia* (Barreiro 2013). Thus, the contemporary urbanisation of the Euroregion does not correspond to traditional cities and

is non-canonical: diffuse, informal or atomised, not only on peripheries and new urban expansions, but even in old centres. These cases are set aside by society and theoretical reflection: they are then non-legitimated areas because, in contrast with other (representative) areas, they do not have agents who support them. Nevertheless, the majority of the population lives in these contexts that are described as follows.

A Rua and *Chaves* are small towns in the interior of the region. Both of them have had post-modern expansions in recent decades, built with capital from migrants and characterised by collective residential buildings with other uses. They have planning instruments for old areas but nothing is forecast for areas which are obsolete.

Lugo and *Vila Real* are classical monocentric towns, and are also capitals of an interior region. They have defensive old centres with rehabilitation plans. Their contemporary urban expansions apparently follow the canonical model of each dictatorship (courtyards buildings and blocks respectively), even though there are post-modernist non-canonical combinations of functions. Paradoxically, to regenerate these complex areas, traditional plans are prepared.

Milladoiro (Ames), Marín, and *Ermesinde (Valongo)* are dormitory towns with metropolitan industrial/commercial services. They are the main settlements of each of their municipalities but they are located at an extreme and do not represent the identity of the municipality. Ancient borders and settlements are surpassed by metropolitan urbanization and the ensemble of houses, collective buildings, and warehouses defies modernist doctrines. Urban regeneration is required but attempts are fragmented in both public and private spheres.

Baldaio (Carballo) and *Vila Praia de Âncora (Caminha)* are in territorial polycentric urban corridors. Their development was caused by external urban and touristic tensions. Speculation and hybridisation affects both individual and collective building. They have become obsolete and instruments for their refurbishment are planned but have not yet been carried out.

After the analysis of the buildings in these contexts, it is possible to find common buildings (houses, apartments, shops, offices, stores, warehouses), and also specific (hospitals, industries) and singular (public institutions, churches, artistic constructions) ones. The common buildings are those whose form comes from a cultural model, which is a simple transposition of the habitability and organisation of its function. They are a direct consequence of needs, conditions, and ambitions. They respond conventionally to their physical and social context. All the previous characteristics differentiate common buildings from specific (in which functional or technical aspects are prioritised) and singular ones (with special solutions due to their ideas, identity or representativeness).

The difficulty in addressing common buildings is due to their anti-canonical character: they correspond neither to traditional nor to modern types. The modernist axiom ‘form follows function’ provokes the reasoning of starting from the use of space (and not from the space itself as proposed). This creates methodological problems. In a rehabilitation context the function changes in many cases. The same type is used for different functions, for instance commercial and industrial uses. It is frequent that

buildings with more than two storeys have different purposes with a considerable number of owners, managers and users.

Luckily, even in their complexity, the patterns are very repetitive: they just need to be characterised in terms useful for comparison. For a better explanation, the methodology will be illustrated by two well-known buildings: the *Villa Savoye* (Le Corbusier 1931) and the *IIT St. Saviours Chapel* (Mies van der Rohe 1942)[6].

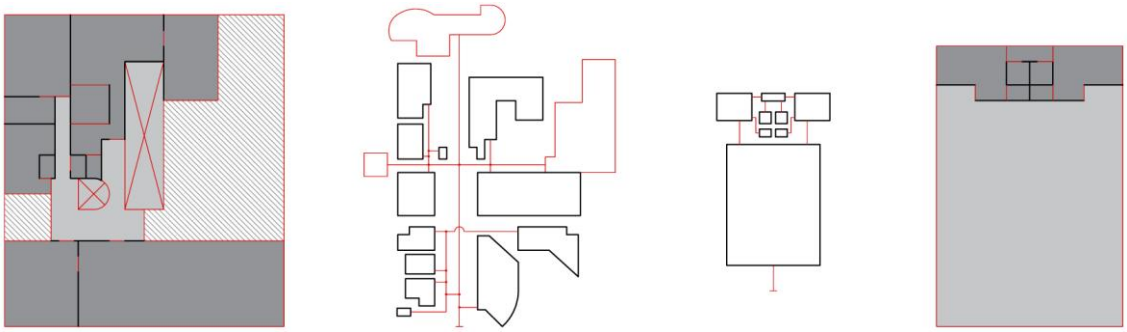

Figure 8. Floor plan (1/500), structure of spaces (1/1000). *Villa Savoye* and *IIT Chapel (Source: author).*

These two examples, a church and a house, illustrate two common ways of organising the structure of spaces: with an *open-structure space* and a *closed-structure space*. The former has a big open space and, if necessary, other secondary rooms linked by filtered communication (spaces serve as passageways). The latter has several similar rooms (an indifferent matrix), linked in a tree topology by a specialised communication corridor. Thus, in the case of simple buildings (those with one owner-manager-user), there exists on the one hand *individual closed-structure buildings* like houses or isolated offices; and on the other hand, *individual open-structure buildings* like warehouses, factory halls, or shops. It is even possible to find the hybrid category of *individual open+closed-structure buildings* like a shop (open *big space*) combined with its owner's house (*closed spaces*), and this hybrid continues being a common building.

To explain the complex buildings (non-canonical according to modernism), it is necessary to relate them to the new paradigm of construction as an ensemble of storeys, as explained in *Delirious New York* (Koolhaas 1987) and in *Horizontal property laws*

[6] By the same authors, there are cases that are even simpler and more evidently related to common composition procedures, like the *Dom-ino system* (Le Corbusier 1914), which was conceived for common houses, and the *IIT Minerals and metals research building* (Mies Van der Rohe 1942), described by its author as a simple consequence of the input data.
The reasons for choosing these two buildings is because they are specimens on the first level: paradigmatic masterpieces by masters of modern architecture and with a great consensus about its quality. And more importantly, because, as representative models (or stem cells), they contain the main codes used in later common buildings. The same approach could be possible with other pieces by other authors; it would just be more complicated and less effective. These projects are particularly simple to illustrate some general notes about quality and the differences between material and cultural issues.
They also represent the two procedures of common composition, which it is possible to summarise with respective archetypes: the *house* and the *pavilion*, simply two views of what a box can be. The former, cubist, highlight the volume, the being that envelopes the space; the latter, neoplasticist, focusses on faces and edges (surfaces and lines) which limit the space, and also on the articulation of the parts.

(Portugal 1955; Spain 1960). Thus, in the Euroregion two kinds of common buildings coexist: individual, related to the old paradigm (one developer; one owner, manager, user, and use), and collective ones, related to a new paradigm (one developer; multiple owners, managers, users, or uses). So, it is necessary to add three more categories: *collective closed-structure buildings,* like constructions with various apartments, offices, their storage, or parking spaces; the existing (but less frequent) *collective open-structure buildings* like the assembly of various different factory halls and/or shops; and the very frequent *collective closed+open-structure buildings,* like residential buildings but with secondary/tertiary uses on lower floors and in basements[7].

The *IIT Chapel* is clearly an *individual building*. But the *Villa Savoye* could be modelled as a *collective building*[8] consisting of the main residence of the family, the other service apartments, and the garage. As mentioned, this analysis is essentially morphological and it defines the units of use; a part could change its function or character and the frame remains stable. In common buildings these units of use involve several spaces, which are basically 'boxes' (or 'cells' of the needed size, independent, exterior or not) organized in a compact way, and in this way there suitable to be modelled and analysed[9]. This banal (but real) conception of common buildings, often an uncritical copy and trivialisation of modernism, relates to legislation that usually controls material quality through the most basic habitability in the Civil code, the welfare norms for housing, and the labour legislation for work spaces. This highlights the lack of creativity in common buildings and the necessity of increasing their quality in their multiple dimensions and not necessarily maintaining the common patterns.

3. MATERIAL AND CULTURAL QUALITY IN COMMON BUILDINGS

The study revolves around the wide concept of *quality*[10], which includes *material* (determinable by objective means) and non-material (*cultural*, dependent on a value

[7] As mentioned, for this study, without prejudice, any building is common if its parts are common. For instance, there is no problem with considering *houses over factory halls* (Ergosfera 2015) as common; nor with including as common a *collective building* formed of high-quality apartments on top floor, other apartments on the upper floors, offices on the first floor, a shop on the ground floor, an industrial use in the basement, and parking spaces below. As the combinations are countless, collective buildings are designated according to their parts, and the notion of *type* is applicable to them. Usually buildings have different types of apartments on one floor: in the corner, with two sides, open to courtyards, etc.

[8] This modelling is forced because the family is the only owner and manager, but it is useful for understanding the concept, and transformations in the next section.

[9] In material quality the thesis focuses on physics, metrics and basic shape. Modelling is based on a two-dimensional methods and a three-dimensional model (*LoD0* and *LoD1,* by *OGC standard CityGML*). Floors are converted to polygons with properties and metadata, and then extruded. Through modelling it is possible to automatically obtain all the characteristics related to physical form: internal divisions, usable surface, exterior surface, views, lighting, consumption, sustainability footprint, etc. Automation is one of the main lines that the research opens, since knowledge of the repetitive built patterns is the basis for developing probabilistic automated methods for massive information treatment.

[10] The discussion of the term *quality* exceeds this article, and it will be addressed in the thesis, but some notes should be made. *Quality* is the array of inherited properties of an element which confer the capacity to satisfy implicit or explicit requirements. It allows it to be compared using high degrees of objectivity. Even if the satisfaction of a requirement is affected by the agent's perception, quality remains more stable. This term is defined in opposition to *value* and *beauty*. *Value* (in its economic, historic or artistic derivations) is a social construct, thus external to the object. *Beauty*

judgement) issues. The former basically depend on the physical characteristics: the morphology of the building and its construction standards (engineering). The latter depend on the elements that provoke different cultural interpretations (sociology). But the two dimensions are interconnected and any intervention affects both of them.

Material and cultural quality should be analysed from a large sample of common buildings, after a detailed request for information about the constructions, their agents, and their context, as proposed in the thesis. This deductive method exceeds this article, so in order to illustrate material and cultural quality, this article inverts the terms and uses an inductive approach using the *Villa Savoye* and the *IIT Chapel*. Through the decoding and recoding of their elements, a disqualification is produced, and it is possible to analyse it and classify it either in the material or the cultural category. As inverse engineering, the deconstruction of the quality of a masterpiece should help to understand the process involved in requalification.

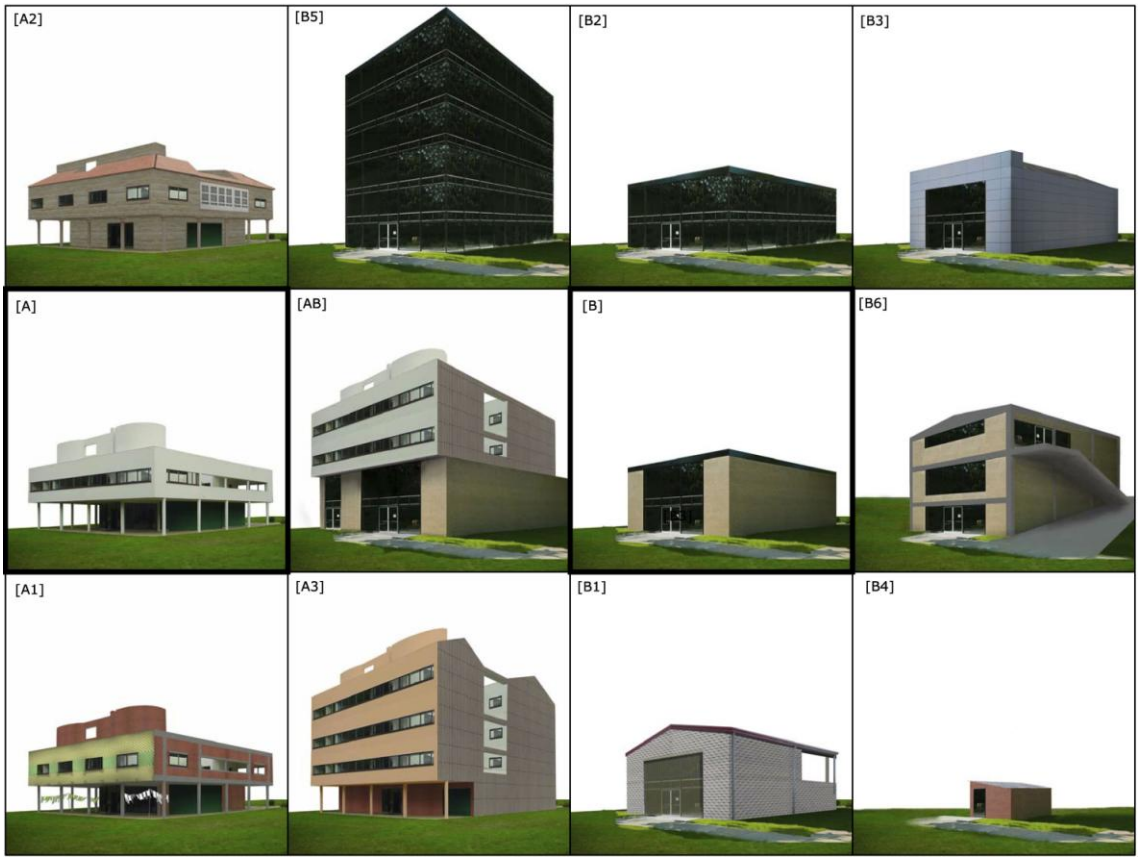

Figure 9. Transformation matrix of a *closed-structure* and an *open-structure building (Source: author photo edition, from the originals in www.omau-malaga.com and www.worldarchitecturemap.org).*

Pictures [A] and [B] show buildings as they are: a rational house and a minimalist chapel.

The first transformation is on the surface of *Villa Savoye*; there is has almost no difference in its material conditions (its physical hardware did not change) but the style

deals with aesthetics and taste, using a high degree of subjectivity. The distinction processes (Bourdieu 1979) explain the relationship between the three concepts and the underestimation of common buildings by architectural academia.

and symbolism of [A1] and [A2] are completely different. The former is a *punk* house, outside of established visual codes, and the latter a *neo-traditional* house, which celebrates a certain legitimated aesthetic.

The same experiment is carried out on *IIT Chapel*, but in addition, the function and the enclosure system are changed. [B1] could be an archetype of small basic industry hall or warehouse, using poor industrial materials and even with an open part to save money. [B2] is an open transparent space suitable for an office or a trendy shop. [B3] is a commercial-industrial building that uses its high-tech enclosure to convince costumers to buy. As mentioned, the same spatial structure could be used for various functions, and each one has its own social signs of status.

Apart from cosmetic transformation, aggregation and subtraction are also possible. [B4] is the division of the IIT Chapel to create a small brick warehouse. [B5] is a tertiary tower, a simple aggregation of the pavilion archetype in height. The repetition of the main floor of the Villa Savoye forms a collective residential building in [A3] with secondary services on the ground floor; here, by the same speculative reasoning, the interior terrace is substituted for a minimal courtyard in order to create two apartments per floor. The result is an important loss of material quality and a trivialisation of modernism, but each apartment still maintains the relationship with the landscape, using the courtyard as a first frame as the *Villa Savoye* does. But this relationship and limited quality are in danger if other constructions could be built on the side.

As mentioned, it is possible to stack any function, as is the case in [B6], following the *Horizontal property law,* but cultural patterns usually located industries-warehouses in the basement, commercial spaces on the ground floor, and offices on the upper floors. If housing is added on upper floors, like in image [AB], this creates the usual but non-canonical *collective open+close-structure building*. The codes are modern but common buildings do not respect avant-garde commandments: functions are not separated, the building is conceived as an assembly and not as unique object and, 'worse', it insists on compact cities and streets.

Assuming that the 12 images could be representative of reality, they illustrate the thesis' hypothesis that a reduced number of patterns would be present in common buildings in a rather simple composition. These patterns would be related to modern erudite architecture, not directly through the knowledge of important projects, but rather through intermediate examples (diffusion processes) and because they try to respond logically to similar problems. As the modifications have an impact on quality in either material or cultural dimensions, they can be analysed and then classified as *requalification*, *disqualification*, and other processes that are conceptualised in the next section.

Accepting a certain similarity of the exercise to reality and the existence of traditional value recognition processes in Euroregion society (based on the *distinction theory* according to Bourdieu 1979), the upper stratum could be very valued due to their good materials used *à la mode*, the central state could be controversial depending on artistic training, and the lower stratum could be less valued, since this group looks old, *démodé*, or lower-class. These preferences are deeply ideological, and the study does not establish social value, it just notes the existence of processes related to social valorisation

and quality, and tries to introduce some of their mechanisms. In addition, these processes seem transversal[11] to common/erudite architectures and their different functions (in contrast to traditional visions).

The conclusion of this exercise would be the existence of shared genetic codes between modern erudite buildings, common buildings and constructions with different functions. These codes would be suitable to be manipulated using certain rules. Thus, in other words, since modernity architectonic lexicon and syntax are shared and only one language and nature exists, in which is possible to operate in order to transform it, independently of its category (erudite or common) and function. Thus, on the same plane it is possible to analyse how and why erudite architecture is of better quality or social valorisation than common one - and in which cases it is not.

4. THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION AND ILLUSTRATION OF REQUALIFICATION

Bourdieu's studies (especially *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, 1979) are the theoretical framework for stabilising objectivity-subjectivity of taste and the social valorisation of *habitus* and architecture[12]. Assuming this school of thought, society would be organised based on two dimensions: economic and cultural capital. The amount of each capital defined a position in the social space. According to this scheme it is possible to study the different social levels and the relationships of distinction between them. It also sets up the theoretical frame to study the trajectory, the strategy and the eventual social evolution.

In an analogous way, it is possible to build a scheme of social space to analyse buildings, using the material conditions on one axis and the immaterial issues in the other. The complete methodology will be developed in the thesis, but essentially the matrix should take into account both of the dimensions of the agents, the building itself and the context. Firstly the people involved in the project - owner, manager, designer, builder, etc - should be analysed in economic and material capital following Bourdieu, taking into account that some of them are legal persons, then by the statistic integration of their members. Secondly, the material and cultural quality of the object are analysed as mentioned in the previous section. Finally, issues of context are noted to properly evaluate it in both material (e.g. the local climate) and social (e.g. an aesthetic trend during some years) dimensions.

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[11] This idea could be illustrated empirically by two examples. Firstly the curtain-wall [B], which meant in its times an improvement of quality even if a part of the society disdained it. Afterwards it was a symbol for the capitalistic offices and shops [B2]. Nowadays towers [B3] keep the same cultural quality and social values even if from a material approach they are inefficient and non-sustainable. Secondly, housing and industries are valued in the same way, differentiating the most basic systems [A1, B1] and the trendy aesthetics [A2, B2, B3]. In the Euroregion, both houses and factory halls passed through the same aesthetic styles: modern [A, B] in the 60's and 70's, postmodern (stone, imitations, ground colours) in the 80's and 90's, and high tech (metal, composite) in the 21st century.

[12] Buildings are simultaneously objects and subjects of distinction. For the study the latter is important. They contain different elements which indicate status: façades, materials, style, etc. The theory says that the nearer and the newer in social space, the bigger an effort is made in distinction; this is important, since common buildings are similarly placed and new social classes emerged in the Euroregion (due to the delayed change to an industrial/post-industrial economy).

For a better understanding of social space, four houses in the Euroregion illustrate the extreme positions. [1] *Villa somier* was conceived and built by its low-class owner with a low level of education; extremely economic and fragile, it has only prosaic uses; located in a rural area, criticised or loved (by conservatives or outliers), it has become a symbol of *feísmo*. [2] *Man's house* was built by this 'crazy' artist from a well-educated background with practically no budget; designed for meditation, it is solid but tiny and with no facilities; located in an illegal and windy place, it is not conventionally comfortable and its conservation is controversial. [3] *Marcial Dorado's house* matches in the archetype of element to legitimate the new wealth of a low-class, minimally-educated drug dealer; the building uses materials and elements without creativity; in Arousa, a touristic area and gateway for drugs, dealers are social references, friends of politicians and hated figures. [4] In the *Residence of the President of Galicia* all the agents have a high economic and cultural level; consequently, the result is a building of high standards and subtle representational design; located on a privileged hill of Santiago, social valorisation depends on the party political opinions, except for the neighbours, who have left their hill.

These examples serve to characterise the corners of social space, which (without other better names) could be called: *popular*, *punk*, *commercial,* and *erudite* architecture. Of course, the *Villa Savoye* and the *IIT Chapel* would be in the last group due their exceptional agents, qualities and privileged contexts. The corners are probably the most challenging and creative places in social space. In contrast, in the middle there would be a vast space[13] with probably the highest concentration of buildings: the *conventional* architecture, where all the common buildings are placed due to their medium socioeconomic values. This does not mean that all specimens in this central area are common buildings: they could be extremely singular or specific. This is why creativity and differentiation do not mean *per se* requalification; they remain in the central area if the quality is not increased and they do not improve in social space.

In a simplified approach to the quality of building, everything explained previously remains applicable. So it is evident that the requalification [R] is a trajectory which increases material and cultural quality. Not perchance, this vector is an approximation to the erudite architecture and it means social improvement for its users. A requalified building improves both the quality of life of its users in practical (enough space, more comfort, more opportunities, less fees) and value (dignity, identity, pride, trend) terms. Thus, when it was mentioned that the thesis tried to contribute to the requalification of common buildings, what it was meant is that it contributes to the improvement of social conditions of all users of common buildings or, in other words, the *social ascension*[14] for the majority of society: so simple, so clear, and so important to be pronounced as it is.

[13] The limitations of each zone require a wide analysis of numerous cases; it is a result and not a starting point. The proposition of the borders of this vast area of the Euroregion for a certain time is one of the challenges of the thesis.

[14] This could be exemplified in both quality dimensions. A material requalification in an old building which previously caused *energy poverty* means a *social ascension*, because its inhabitants are not 'poor' any more. A cultural requalification in a social neighbourhood considered ugly and potentially dangerous due to its design means a *social ascension*, because its neighbours are not *stigmatised* any more.

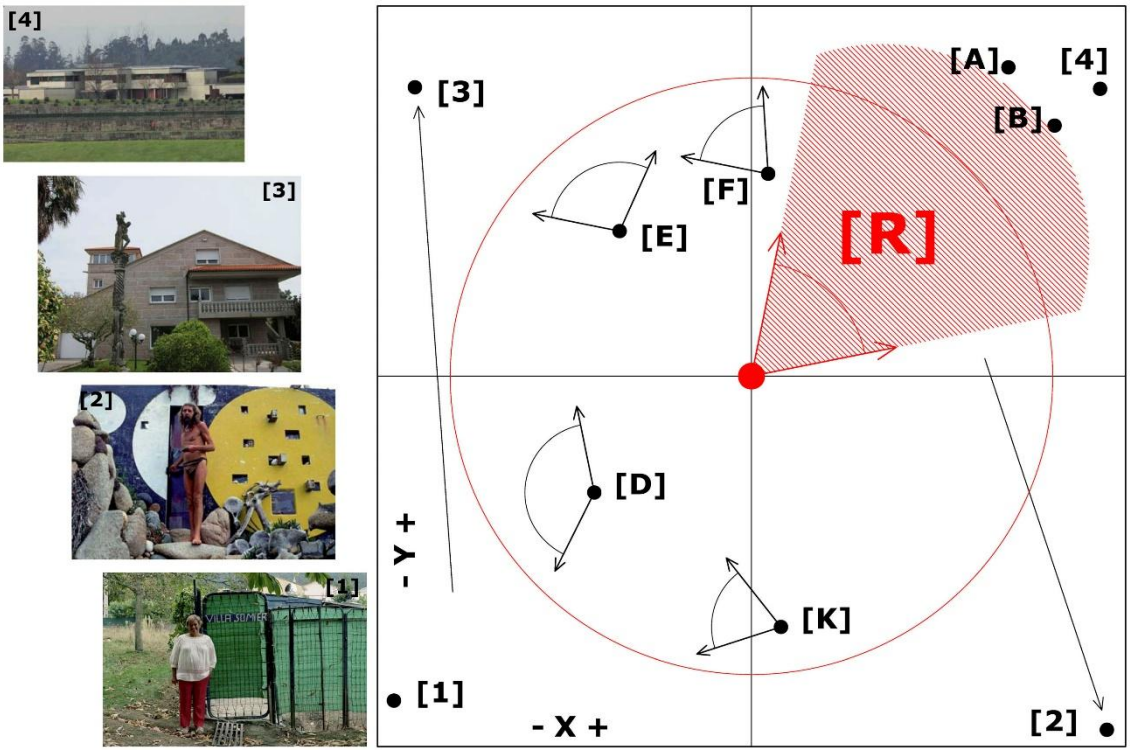

Figure 10. Schema of social space in architecture [X: cultural quality / Y: material quality]. Trajectories and examples *(Source: www.elmundo.es, elpais.com, www.europapress.es, and economiadigital.es).*

Requalification's definition is rather simple but complex to concretise and distinguish from other fake notions of improvement. In principle the procedure for improving quality is essentially the same as for designing with it: qualities could be identified and then improved in their quantitative or qualitative dimensions. The problem is the many contradictions in the design process (a change can increase quality in one way and decrease it in another), especially in the case of refurbishment where complexity increases. Common requalification is usually partial[15] and it could focus on certain aspects, but it should take into account the others. For this study, an intervention is only considered a requalification if quality is increased in both material and cultural axis, even the improvement is very small or the compatible solution is just planned.

The intrinsic contradictions in architectural project lead to the temptation to 'add' quality or simulate it, generating processes which are not a real requalification. The study identifies certain general non-qualifying approaches with echoes in the Euroregion. *Deregulation* [D] removes the protection standards for material conditions; it produces an increase in value in the short-term and an uncertain future. *Elitism* [E] only proposes the increase of the economic dimension through the use of exclusive materials or techniques, which evidently causes the impossibility of a wide application. *Disneyfication* [F] is the addition of predesigned elements from a well-considered standard style that creates an artificial pseudo-identity. *Kitschification* [K] is the imitation of an appreciated aesthetic using poor methods, usually including excessive decoration with bad taste. There are illustrated by well-known international examples and their vectors are drawn on the scheme of social space.

[15] There is no expectation that the requalification of common heritage could be total, since it would not be probable or even sensible to try to reach the maximum in every quality category.

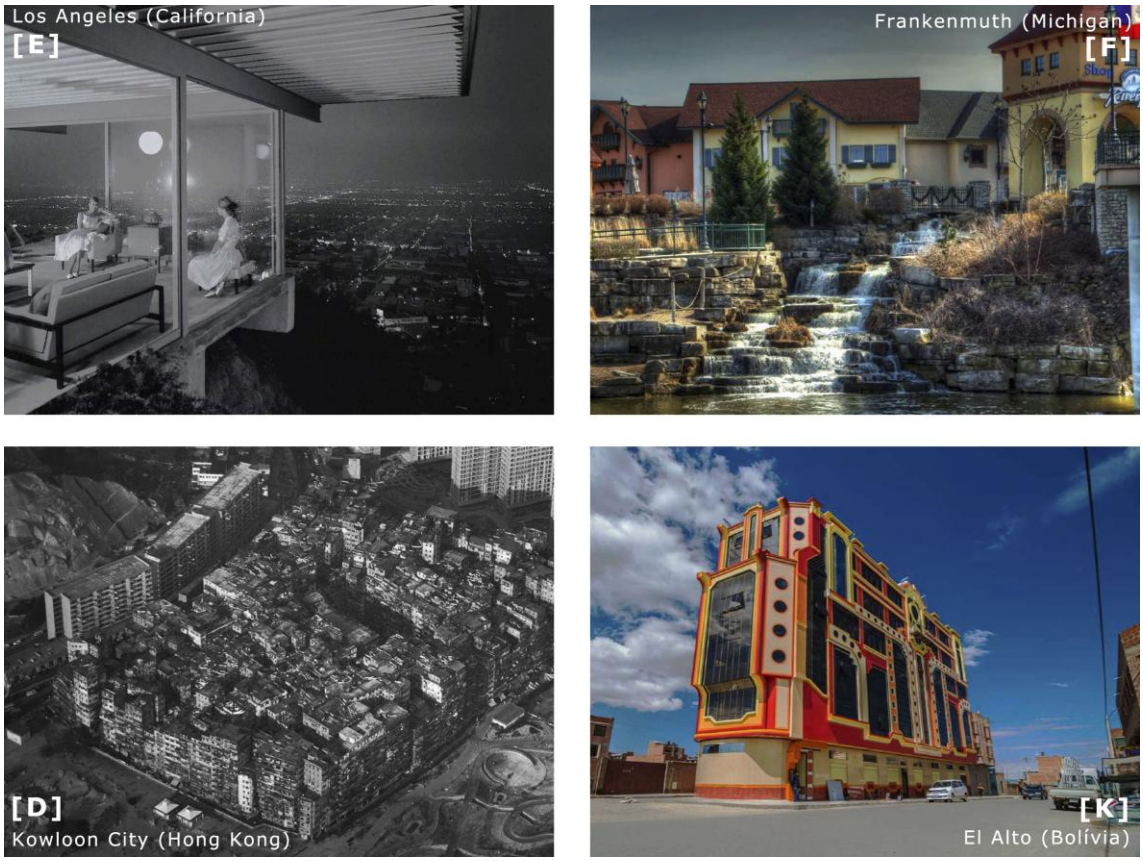

Figure 11-14. Non-qualifying processes: *Deregulation* [D], *Elitism* [E], *Disneyfication* [F], *Kitschification* [K]. *(Source: es.wikipedia.org, www.artnet.com, www.1zoom.me, and www.univision.com).*

Figure 15 & 16. Material and cultural requalification: new lifts and energetic refurbishment in social housing in Gijón (bher ARQUITECTOS, 2013) and new construction for completing a non-canonical urban tissue in Corrubedo (David Chipperfield, 2002)
(Source: www.estudiobher.com and elcroquis.es).

The intervention of *bher ARQUITECTOS* in Gijón highlights two material challenges of this time: the functional adaptation (accessibility) and efficiency (increasing energy costs). Requalifying the common heritage does not mean conserving everything; nor building nothing new. Projects like the Chipperfield's house in Corrubedo prove the possibilities of cultural requalification of neighbouring common buildings through the addition of a new element: it places the forefront the subtleties of the architectonical project, the appreciation of common built heritage and the will to integrate; it introduces quality to the adjoining buildings, and through this, adds more value (in its various senses), and probably beauty as well. Thus, requalification should be understood in its wider meaning, including material (efficiency, accessibility, ecological footprint) and cultural (identity, inclusion, aspirations) issues. These principles should guide the demolition of (or intervention in) existing buildings and the construction (or not) of new buildings in consolidated areas.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LINES OF RESEARCH

This paper illustrates why and how common buildings can be considered as a heritage, particularly using the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion as case study. The controversy of their role in heritage is due to traditional - and current - conceptions within the discipline of architecture which separate singular from common buildings. Through an exercise of derivation of masterpieces of modernism, it is possible to propose that erudite and common architecture can share codes and reasoning, thus this division would be futile.

Based on the dialogue between material and cultural characteristics it is possible to form an analysis matrix which proves that requalification is possible. As some contradictions could take place, it also provides the tools to evaluate requalification in its different dimensions and distinguish it from other interventions that do not mean a real improvement of the users conditions such as *kitschification*, *disneyfication*, *elitism,* or *deregulation*. The great possibilities of *common buildings* are presented, as well as the necessary conditions for their effective valorisation. Thus the conceptualization of requalification opens some lines of research which will be tackled in the thesis, essentially the necessity and the limitations of: legislation, cultural debate, and architectural projects.

It would be necessary to protect the material quality of the already built and its eventual requalification, for which the development of standards, welfare protection norms, and planning should be useful; nevertheless, they cannot be against culture or against project. For a cultural requalification, some prejudices, determinations, and general aesthetic principles in norms should be revaluated; but in contrast, it is possible to establish principles of caution, dialogue processes for innovative solutions, and a wide debate about culture and identity. Thus, new architectural projects, only with their own limitations but without auto referential diversions, could appear and contribute to the quality of built heritage.

6. REFERENCE LIST

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