



What factors guide the recent Spanish model for the disposal of military land in the neoliberal era?

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ABSTRACT

This work drafts a general framework about the disposal policies fostered by the Spanish Ministry of Defence since the 1980 s, which is apparently understudied in comparison with emerging international research. The research seeks two main goals. The first is to demonstrate that these policies have followed the general trend of neoliberal restructuring of the public sector, as it happened in countries like France, Italy, and the UK. In the face of austerity and deep state cuts in military spending, the MoD sells (off) its estate to reduce the real estate management and maintenance costs and generate financial gains from sales. The second goal is to highlight the primarily financial approach of the MoD disposal policies. Although military land may catalyse significant urban transformation, the disposal policies have sought direct economic revenue for the central government and the MoD.

1. Introduction

The geopolitical changes tied to the end of the Cold War in 1991 resulted in a huge downsizing of the Armed Forces that consequently caused their spatial reorganisation, rationalisation and mothball of uncountable installations worldwide. The non-profit organisation Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC, 1997, p. 2) calculated – but without providing any inventory – that 8000 military sites covering 1 million ha have been closed in the 1990 s in the world. The cross-cutting public administration reforms – quantified in annual Financial Laws – in an age of austerity (Fuller, 2017) hastened the rate of closure and disposal of military land over time. The general aim was to increasingly generate waves of revenue reallocated to the defence budget to face the reduction of military expenditure by central governments (Artioli, 2015).

In this context, ad hoc public policies and programmes –like the “Base Realignment and Closure” since 1988 (United States Department of Defense, 1991)– or specific public agencies –such as the UK “Defence Infrastructure Organisation” since 2011 (Ministry of Defence, 2011)– have been entrusted with the task of managing the procedures for the disposal of MoD land and buildings. Notwithstanding the disposal policies, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) still represents one of the largest estates in single ownership in Europe (Table 1).

The European Union has played a role in the conversion of redundant military installations by applying two different measures. The first measure was the direct financing of the conversions by means of Perifra and Konver programmes in the 1990 s (Brömmelhörster, 1997). The second measure was supporting transnational cooperation projects since 2000 in the frame of programmes such as Interreg, Southeast Europe, and URBACT. The aim was to develop, share, and discuss ongoing experiences on the redevelopment projects of former military sites in order to provide a solid knowledge to apply by the partners involved – for instance, the project “Maps” (Bertelli et al., 2019).

The redundancy of military facilities opens to a variety of new uses as military land host different types of facilities – from barracks and warehouses to airports and arsenals – located in urban and non-urban sectors. According to Turri et al. (2008), military settlements present high quality in terms of morphology, internal organisation, structural conception and construction techniques that convert them in “cities within a city”. Features such as wide green and open spaces, tree-lined avenues and squares offer many opportunities for urban regeneration. However, Marchigiani et al. (2022) lately stated that academics and public authorities have just addressed superfluous research and inquiry on the issue of redeveloping military land within urban regeneration strategies. This weakness is caused by the tendency to construct

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Table 1
Data on the military ownership in France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Country	Military land cover (ha)	% of the national surface	Source
France	329,431	0.512	(Trucy and Boulaud, 2010)
Italy	123,481	0.411	(Camera dei Deputati, 2006, p. 20)
Spain	134,677	0.266	("Defensa racionaliza su patrimonio inmobiliario", 2013, p. 18)
United Kingdom	227,199	0.937	Ministry of Defence (2011a, p. 6)

Source: elaboration by the Authors (2023).

aggregate discourses on very different kinds of assets, ranging from individual buildings to more articulated compendiums such as barracks. Depending on factors like history, physical features, size and the relationship between soldiers and local communities, MoD assets are distinctively related to the surroundings and this element is fundamental to define the redevelopment when closures occur (Balletto et al., 2022).

Within this complicated framework, the paper tries to contribute to land use and planning literature by two main contributions. The first is surveying military land disposal and reuse/redevelopment processes in a country, Spain, where these processes have not yet been comprehensively analysed, and highlighting what this Spanish case can bring to the other countries examined by the literature by tracing future research agenda for comparison. The second contribution is showing what factors have enabled reuse/redevelopment (in terms of decision-making styles, conflicts, and heritage), and highlighting how these factors have played out exactly to understand how (alone or in combination) they have led to effective regeneration or stalling and thus to differentiate the selected case studies one from the other.

2. Methodology

This analysis deals with the disposal policies of the Spanish MoD estate mainly through the lens of urban planning with proper reference to issues tied to other disciplines such as legislation, heritage, and economics. The paper comprises the following sections. The introduction (Section 1) discusses the relevance of military land disposal policies that have gradually become common practices in several countries and Section 3 provides an international literature review on the regeneration of former military sites and the research gaps. Section 4 proposes the categorisation of the Spanish legislation on the disposal of MoD assets from the mid-1980 s until today and highlights the main regulatory mechanisms. Section 5 analyses the results of the disposal policies both in terms of financial gains and suggests a categorisation of the new functions assigned to the former military land. Section 6 embeds the case study analysis and exemplifies the disposal and redevelopment processes affecting military barracks located in Barcelona, Valladolid, and Salamanca. This study relies on specific archival research, fieldwork, and interviews¹ conducted in the three Spanish capital cities aimed to demonstrate the intertwining among MoD, City Council, and other public and private actors. By doing so, the case study analysis elucidates the practices carried out in different contexts and by different actors, showing how planning agreements may produce land-use conflicts or harmonic decision-making processes. Section 7 uncovers the redevelopment obstacles and enablers and the outcome in terms of new uses and Section 8 remarks the lessons learned from the case study analysis and

¹ Interviews were conducted with a spokesperson from the Urban Planning Department of each of the three cities and from the MoD Delegation in the Communities of Castilla y León (for the cases of Salamanca and Valladolid) and Catalonia (for the case of Barcelona). For each case study, informal interviews were also conducted with 10 residents.

the next steps of for future research.

3. Literature review

The general lack of knowledge on military land has been tied to the so-called "military secrets" that has implied MoD's properties exclusion from the normal planning activity (Greed, 2014, p. 25). However, since the 1990 s the closure of military sites has awakened many inquiries in the field of urban studies in Europe (Artioli, 2015) and abroad (Touchton and Ashley, 2019) also through an historical perspective (Camerin, 2023). Academics coming from different disciplines released inquiries regarding architecture (Schleicher, 2014), ecology (Julien et al., 2022), economy (Nickelsburg, 2020), geography (Woodward, 2020), geopolitics (Essex and Yarwood, 2017), heritage (Fiorino, 2017; Kutlu et al., 2022), history (Coates et al., 2011), landscape (Svenningsen et al., 2019) and law (Glassberg, 1995). From the wide literature released over the years, the detected factors that primarily condition the redevelopment are the following: attractiveness in the real estate market (Bagaeeen, 2016, p. 2); correct evaluation of the costs of environmental rehabilitation, including removal and remediation of contaminants (Hansen, 2004); shared visions on private and public benefits in the definition of the new uses (profit-driven spaces vs urban commons) (Camerin, 2021); clear project timing and readiness (Ponzini and Vani, 2014); and convergent goals of national and local government based on fruitful intergovernmental relations and regulation (Essex and Yarwood, 2017).

Nevertheless, the adverse interplay between these factors restrains the redevelopment and generates spaces in state of abandonment, decay, and neglect. In fact, disused military land has been conceptualised as a specific kind of brownfield (Glintić, 2015) or vacant land (Lopez-Piñero, 2020). Touchton and Ashley (2019, p. 4) noticed that when the mothball process ends, "the difficult, multi-decade process of redevelopment begins". Despite discursive and symbolic dimensions, determining the public interest concerning military land is routinely debated and contested, with no apparent consensus.² The basis of this problem lies in the fact that public policies for disposing of MoD estate are primarily designed to benefit the government, but fail to adequately enable urban regeneration processes (Bagaeeen and Clarck, 2016; Bennett, 2020; Peric and Miljus, 2021). Recent international conferences (such as "The regeneration of former military sites. Perspectives, debates and redevelopments in Italy, Spain and abroad" at the Università Iuav di Venezia, Venice, Italy, 23-24 September 2021) attempted to categorise the state of the art of disposal and urban regeneration processes in light of societal challenges, but this endeavour alone is not enough to boost concrete redevelopments (Camerin and Gastaldi, 2021a).

Despite increasing efforts to scrutinise European and US cases, three are still the main research gaps in international urban studies. First, a much-needed holistic and integrated approach to decommissioned military land in relation to governance arena and redevelopment projects. Most researchers have focused on a case-study approach based on the survey on diverse cities in the same country (Ponzini and Vani, 2014) and comparative studies in two countries (Adisson and Artioli, 2020). Second, there is a generalised lack of knowledge on the interrelation between the evolution of the disposal policies and urban-/territorial policies and dynamics in a country along with the need to update existing research as the disposal policies evolve over the years. Apart from the cases of Italy, France and, to some extent, Germany and the UK, Spain is among the many European countries in which the primordial studies on the disposal policies outputs are not updated (Mas Hernández, 2003). Third, the main focus of the existing literature is on

² When the government formally requests to mothball military sites, City Councils, military trade unions and even military chiefs often oppose the decision, delaying the decommissioning of many installations (Sánchez Pingarrón, 2019, sec. 105); (Touchton and Ashley, 2019, p. 2)

large cities, with few studies encompassing the multiple military sites that lie in remote locations, i.e. minor municipalities (Ellwanger and Reiter, 2019; Paloyo et al., 2012). The latter generally suffers from more difficulties in fostering regeneration at urban or territorial scale because they do not present the proper basis for public-led high-cost operations and public-private-partnership real estate developments (Congreso de los Diputados, 2001, pp. 6092–6100).

As regards the Spanish case, only a specific branch of scholars – i.e., urban geographers – has shown interest in the territorial outcomes of the decommissioned MoD sites by providing two kinds of analysis. The first type of research embeds inquiries at regional and city levels (Alvar-gonzález Rodríguez, 2001; Brandis et al., 2005; Muro Morales, 1990) and the second approach relies on the study of ancient barracks to redevelop (Camerin and Córdoba Hernández, 2023; Camerin and Gastaldi, 2021b; Lloret Piñol, 2001; Gené Gil and Alomar Garau, 2020). A third research path has been introduced by Sánchez Pingarrón (2019) – a former MoD spokesperson –, who provided a broader comprehension of the evolution of the disposal and redevelopment processes at the state level, with a primary focus on the reuse into university facilities. Academics have also dealt with the following aspects: procedures and arrangements among different administrative bodies from mid-1980 s to the mid-2000 s (Lozano Muñoz, 2007); the relationship between Armed Forces and urban planning in the 18th and 19th centuries (Azanza López, 2010; Cantera Montenegro, 2013); changes in the military organisation and presence since the 18th century (Mas Hernández, 2003); and exploration of military barracks in terms of heritage, morphology, politics, and relationship with civil society (Cantera Montenegro, 2007; Sebastián Maestre, 1992). The overall focus of the Spanish literature has been on a single case-study analysis (on a specific installation, city, or region) with no comparisons between diverse cities and the redevelopments of different types of military sites. Moreover, the interpretation of the disposal policies was provided under the lens of the military apparatus administrative reform, leaving aside the implications on territorial government.

To sum up, existing literature is far to be a proper chassis for monitoring common ground and dissimilarities in national disposal policies and local urban policies about the role that former military land can play in fostering urban regeneration. Filling the above-mentioned research gaps may disclose the major driving forces and mechanisms.

4. The legal framework since 1984

The policy of rationalisation, restructuring, and modernisation of the Spanish MoD towards the 2000 started with the Royal Decree no. 135/1984 (Presidencia del Gobierno, 1984; Sepulveda and Bacas, 2008). Among the measures taken, the Law no. 28 of 31 July 1984 – the so-called GINDEF Act – launched the “Infrastructure Management”, in Spanish *Gerencia de Infraestructura de la Defensa* (GINDEF). GINDEF was intended as a 10-year independent state body to dismiss in 1995. It aimed to radically change the military geography in the country, trade real estate assets, and work together with territorial bodies to elaborate strategies and plans for the redevelopment of redundant military sites (Jefatura del Estado, 1984). The disposal of MoD sites followed the drastic reduction of the military expenditure from over 2–1% of the GDP from 1984 to 1998. This fact implied an urgent need to cut the cost devoted to real estate and the auto-financing of territorial rationalisation. While European countries like Italy decided to partially allocate the revenue from selling to wipe the public debt (Lozano Muñoz, 2007), the Spanish legislation devoted it to military purposes. This factor implicitly entrusted the MoD the task of a game player in territorial government matters. The more the revenue for the disposal, the more the expenditure can be to withdrawal facilities located in potentially strategic urban sector to generate high revenues.

Three are the procedures to dispose of the Spanish publicly owned estate, including military sites: auctions, exchanges, and an intermediate model based on planning agreements (Fernández-Piñeyro y Hernández,

1995). The GINDEF Act (Presidencia del Gobierno, 1984) stipulated that the property cannot be transferred free of charge, except in the case of sales provided for in the Town Planning legislation. Sales occurred through public auction, although private operators, Autonomous Communities or local companies were allowed to directly buy MoD land with the government approval and a prior notification to the Ministry of Economy and Finance.³

In 1994 the Spanish government reduced compulsory service from 13 months to nine until its suspension in 2001 and reduced the Army from 145,000 men to 90,000 over six years (Navajas Zubeldia, 2011; Navajas Zubeldía, 2004). This situation meant the GINDEF to keep working at least until 2004: “the need for such a body has been demonstrated by the experience gained since its creation. The original purposes for which GINDEF was set up are not only still valid, but are also acquiring a particular importance [...] for at least the next ten years” (Jefatura del Estado, 1994).

In 1998, GINDEF became a self-governing administrative agency with new responsibilities (i.e. procurement of weapons and equipment) and was renamed “Defence Infrastructure and Equipment Management” –in Spanish *Gerencia de Infraestructura y Equipamiento de la Defensa* (GIED) (Jefatura del Estado, 1998). The main change concerned how the proceeds from the sale were allocated, with most going to buy weapons and equipment and less going to modernise existing infrastructure..

The Defence White Paper 2000 supported the disposal of assets located in urban centres and their edges (Ministerio de Defensa, 2000, pp. 139–141) to generate growing revenues from sales (Lozano Muñoz, 2007, pp. 68–69) in the wake of the favourable economic period (late 1990 s and early 2000 s). However, the Spanish government pruned public spending and reorganised public bodies because of the austerity policies released after the 2007–08 financial crisis, and this dynamic affected also the MoD. The 2010 Financial Law merged the GIED and the “Armed Forces Housing Institute” into the “Institute for Defence Housing, Infrastructure and Equipment” – in Spanish *Instituto de Vivienda, Infraestructura y Equipamiento de la Defensa Organismo Autónomo* (INVIED O.A.).

The Ministerial Order No. 83 of September 2012 launched the “Commissioner for the elaboration of a proposal for the rationalisation and efficient use of the MoD estate” to hasten the rationalisation and modernisation of military land. The Commissioner set up in May 2013 the “Proposal for the rationalisation and efficient use of MoD estate” (PREPIDEF) to gradually abandon 163 sites in two steps, between 2014 and 2017 and 2018–2024 (Ministerio de Defensa, 2013). This programme is still running today.

5. The outputs of disposal processes and current challenges

Despite starting in 1984, the results of the disposal policies are unclear in terms of territorial government, with a lack of public inventories on the redevelopments already carried out, ongoing redevelopment, abandoned and/or underused land, and military sites still used by the military for national security reasons. Muro Morales (1990, pp. 283–284) found that the MoD signed 56 planning agreements with Spanish local administrations between 1981 and 1990 to dispose of 350, 000 m² of urban land and roughly two million m² of rural land. Lozano Muñoz (2007, pp. 68–69) reported that the MoD abandoned approximately 115 million m² of land worth €400 million between 1996 and 2006, corresponding to 179 planning agreements. According to Ministerio de Defensa (2011), between 2004 and 2011, the MoD signed over 90 agreements across Spain, resulting in the construction of 32,000

³ Redundant military land is generally offered to other state bodies (i.e. Minister of Culture and universities), Autonomous Communities and to local administrations through the signature of planning agreements. GINDEF launches public auctions in which private operators can participate if no public body is interested in the purchase.

homes and new hospitals, university centres, services and infrastructure. Sánchez Pingarrón (2019) discovered that universities acquired 40 MoD sites from 1984 to 2019. INVIED O.A. release yearly reports from 2011 to highlight the major planning agreements, but without a thorough qualitative and quantitative analysis of the sites released (INVIED O.A., 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). The same lack of detailed inquiry on the results obtained by GINDEF, GIED, and INVIED O.A. is noticed when analysing the MoD reports for each legislature from the 1980 s to 2016.⁴

Nor updated information or specific surveys have been released yet on the results of PREPIDEF. The 2014–17 period targeted the closure of 86 settlements made up of 2837,510-m² rural areas and 937,754-m² urban sectors, for a total of 3837,264 m². This operation predicted an expenditure of around €40 million to achieve an estimated annual saving of €15 million of the MoD spending (Ministerio de Defensa, 2013). The 2018–24 phase aimed to close 77 sites funded with €807 million to save €37 million/year in military expenditure ("Defensa racionaliza su patrimonio inmobiliario", 2013, p. 19). Despite this the first phase has not been completed yet as the MoD invested €14 million and shut 34 facilities down (21%).

In 2017, the Spanish Court of Auditors revealed a number of issues regarding the disposal and redevelopment of MoD land (Tribunal de Cuentas, 2017, p. 62): "What is striking is the excessive time that elapses between the decision to dispose of an asset and its actual disposal and sale. The average time for the official disposal of assets in 2017 is more than 12 years, with a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 26 years. In 4 cases decommissioning took more than 20 years and in 5 cases more than 10 years. The reasons for the long duration of the procedures are, to a large extent, due to both the physical and legal problems and the state of serious deterioration and decay of the military sites".

In a context characterised by the large duration of the disposal and redevelopment process, the 2007–08 financial crisis constituted a turning point in delivering redevelopment projects. On the one hand, the positive trends in the Spanish property market following neoliberal patterns (Dioni López, 2021) may explain the large number of planning agreements showed in Section 4. However, the real estate bubble has led to a severe fall in new real estate developments (Romero et al. (2015), which, in turn, has created unfavourable conditions for redeveloping former military land. Therefore, the last 15 years have seen poorer results in the redevelopment of former MoD sites. Public auction prices before and after the financial crisis support this assumption. Prior to 2007, military land was sold with a final auction price frequently higher than the starting price (Brandis et al., 2005, pp. 399–399). However, after the 2007–08 crisis, a growing number of auctions failed to sell military assets and in the case of successful auctions, the final price has been far below the expected revenue. For instance, the former Air Force hospital in Madrid was unsuccessfully auctioned for €35 and €37 million respectively in 2010 and in 2018, being eventually sold in 2019 for €22, 6 million, 35% less than the price of the first auction.

Despite starting in mid-1980 s, the disposal of military lands is still on many Spanish cities' urban agenda (San Fabián et al., 2016). The "Spain's Recovery and Resilience Plan" has also highlighted the relevance of their role in becoming a pillar of the National Housing Plan for Affordable Rentals, especially in the cases of barracks to integrally restore or partially demolish (Presidencia del Gobierno, 2021, p. 312). The expectation is that these operations would enable urban regeneration and densification, with an utter improvement in the perception of these spaces as safe from gender-based violence and harassment.

What is striking is how difficult it has been to assess the redevelopment of military land in Spain. National-based research has been hampered by the so-called 'military secrets' and the lack of public and

academic research. As emphasised in a parliamentary question (Congreso de los Diputados, 2001, p. 6089), two main reasons dissuaded the MoD from mapping and updating the current state of its estate. Firstly, the intricate legal issues associated with the wide range of military sites and, secondly and most significantly, the ever-changing nature of defence policy. The Armed Forces are constantly subject to short-term reshuffles, mainly due to the annual spending review policy and new international geopolitical scenarios. According to these factors, a public inventory would have to be modified on a continuous basis (at least every four or five years), and this operation would be too challenging for the MoD. The difficulty of implementing a medium or long-term demilitarisation programme based on a public inventory of sites is illustrated by the unfulfilled 2014–2017 PREPIDEF.

6. Case study analysis

An original attempt to provide new knowledge may be exploring two particular dynamics. The first is the relationship between the singular land management schemes in place in Spain and the redundant military land to redevelop. The second is the inclusion of former military land within the jurisdiction or General Master Plans.

As regards the first dynamic, military land can be integrated into the land readjustment area as it happens with any other private or public landlord. Therefore, by funding the non-negotiable planning obligations foreseen in the General Master Plans, the military might receive buildable plots. That land value gaining would be captured by the MoD by preserving the ownership of transformed land or just selling the property off. Such a process applies regardless of whether the land is classified as urban regeneration or urban expansion. Therefore, the case study analysis aims to disclose whether an asset has undergone such a process or, if any other property has been disposed of, it is necessary to discuss the possible reasons. In connection to that, the different case studies show the advantages and barriers that the MoD might face when transforming military areas by playing an active role (e.g., a landowner in a land readjustment program) or a passive one (e.g. selling the land or delivering an administrative concession).

The second dynamic regards the fact that the pieces of military land falling within cities do not imply that such land is subject to Town Planning laws and the prescriptions of General Master Plan – *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana* in Spanish or PGOU. Therefore, its integration in the city by the inclusion of alternative land uses normally associated with urban uses is not direct. For this reason, it is important to provide information on how, when, and which stakeholders played a role in their inclusion within the jurisdiction of PGOU.

The case study analysis regards the inquiry on the basic features of the disposal and redevelopment process of the following military sites: the Jaime I and the Roger de Lauria barracks in Barcelona, the General Monasterio and Conde Ansúrez barracks in Valladolid, and the El Charro barracks in Salamanca. The choice of case studies relies on the goal of showing the main features of the afore-mentioned dynamics, so each case study represents a different way to proceed with the disposal: the direct selling to other public authorities (Barcelona), public auctions resulting in the asset sold to private actors (Valladolid), and planning agreements with public and private actors (Salamanca). The exploration of these cases is performed through data collected from grey literature, among which the planning agreements signed between at least the MoD and City Councils, local planning tools, and the press review, the review of the scientific literature, and fieldwork in the case studies.

6.1. Selling to public entities

The Jaime I and Roger de Lauria barracks (Barcelona) were built in the 1880 s nearby the former citadel which today corresponds to the Vila Olímpica neighbourhood (Fig. 1). This sector underwent a profound urban renewal process in the late 1980 s to host the venues for the 1992 Summer Olympic Games and the redevelopment of the barracks was

⁴ The open-access reports from 2000 are available in <https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/memoria-de-la-xi-legislatura-del-ministerio-de-defensa-enero-junio-2016.html>

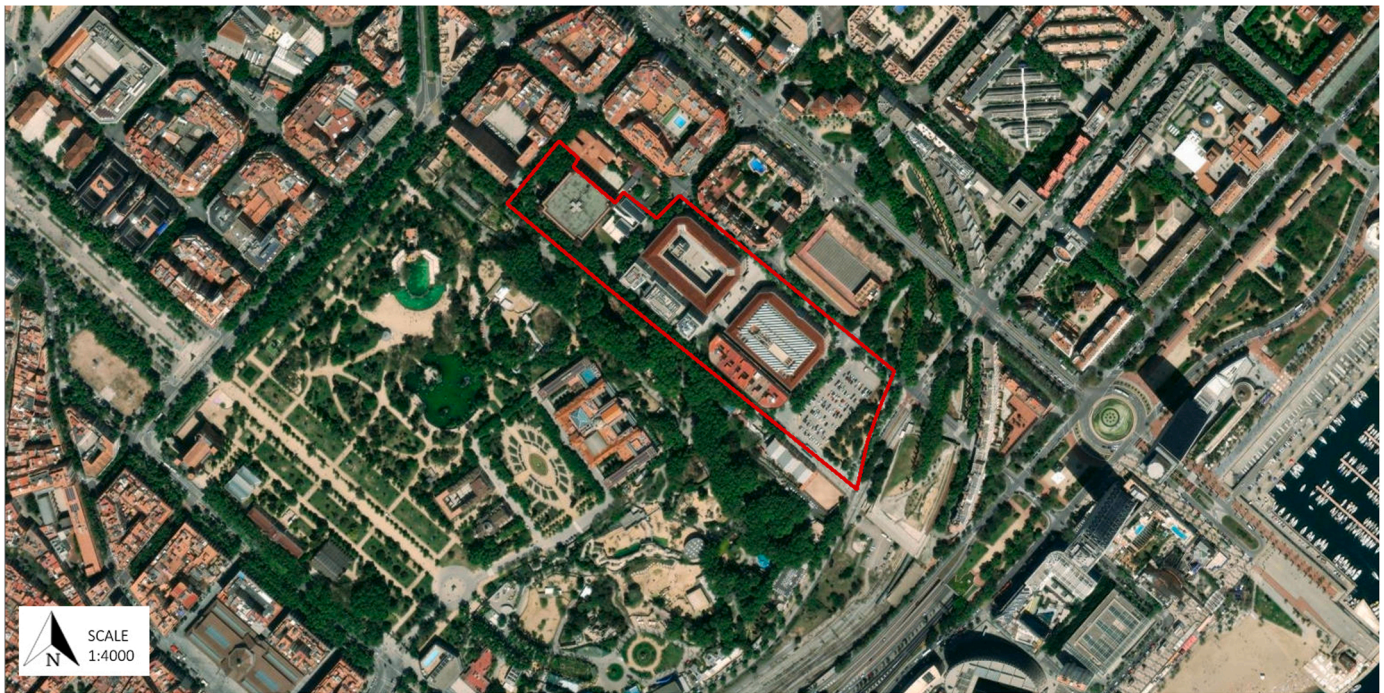


Fig. 1. Localisation of the Ciutadella Campus.

Source: Rafael Córdoba Hernández's elaboration on the 2022 Plan Nacional de Ortofotografía Aérea's orthophoto according to [Ayuntamiento de Barcelona \(1995b\)](#).

ascribed to this wider transformation. The MoD's Decree of 8 June 1987 identified 72,011 m² of military land located in Barcelona, including Jaime I and Roger de Lauria barracks (Figs. 2 and 3), to withdraw (Muro Morales, 1990, pp. 290–291). This decree led to a draft agreement between the MoD and the City Council, signed in April 1988, with the aim of jointly determining the new uses. The occasion was the creation of the Pompeu Fabra University in 1990 (Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, 1990). As the 1992 Olympics did not involve any new use for the barracks, the idea was to devote Jaime I and Roger de Lauria barracks to an urban campus, given their characteristics and their location (Venteo, 2010). The barracks consisted of two symmetrical buildings in a good state of conservation suitable for transforming them into lecture halls and educational facilities (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1995b, pp. 23–28). In September 1991, the MoD, City Council, and Catalan Region signed the planning agreement for the sale of the two barracks to the Catalan Region for providing new university facilities. This agreement established the selling price for Jaime I and Roger de Lauria barracks



Fig. 2. Jaime I barracks.

Source: Photo by Federico Camerin (2022).



Fig. 3. Roger de Lauria barracks.

Source: Photo by Federico Camerin (2022).

(corresponding respectively to 500,000,000 pesetas⁵ – €3005,060 – and 600,000,000 pesetas – €3606,073), the conservative reuse due to their status of cultural heritage, and the impossibility to provide other functions other than university facilities. The planning agreement modified the PGOU (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1992) and was successively included in a wider transformation surrounding the two barracks (68,816 m²) to create the so-called “Ciutadella Campus” through a detailed plan (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1995b). The project works lasted from 1995 to 2010 and the public expenditure reached €14,9 million (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 1995a), of which the University received 335,000,000 pesetas (€2013,390) and further 381,000,000 pesetas (€2289,856) respectively from the EU-fostered programmes 1993 Konver I and 1994-to-1997 Konver II grants (Sánchez Pingarrón, 2019, p.

⁵ Each conversion from pesetas to € was calculated without factoring in inflation.

150). The conservative reuses of both Jaime I and Roger de Lauria barracks were awarded the “Ciutat de Barcelona” prize for architecture and urban planning respectively in 1996 and 2001 (Martorell et al., 2002).

6.2. Selling to private agents

The Conde Ansúrez and General Monasterio barracks are located on the southern outskirts of Valladolid (Figs. 4 to 6). This area, which consists of various urban voids formerly used for railway and industrial purposes, is currently undergoing a wide process of transformation into a new central area, which has already provided new facilities and equipment (i.e. urban parks, offices, administrative centres such as the Social Security Headquarters and the new high-speed railway station) (Fernández Maroto, 2019, pp. 463–490). Before the official disposal, the 1984 PGOU listed 21 buildings as a heritage to be mainly dedicated to public equipment and facilities, with those belonging to General Monasterio barracks devoted to provide new housing units (building coefficient of 0,75 m²/m²). In February 1991, the planning agreement signed between MoD and City Council confirmed this proposal and the 1996 and 2004 PGOU extended the application of the building coefficient of 0,75 m²/m² to Conde Ansúrez barracks (Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2020, p. 4). Meanwhile, the General Monasterio and Conde Ansúrez barracks were sold to a group of six between private banks and real estate investors for respectively €52,252,750 (initial price: €32 million) and €38,915,000 (initial price: €23,8 million), totaling €91,167,750. Afterwards, in 2007 the City Council approved the private-led Special Plan for the Inner Reform (*Plan Especial de Reforma Interior* – PERI – in Spanish) affecting 123,453.39 m² of land (barracks plus public spaces) (Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2007). The application of the building coefficient of 0,75 m²/m² to the whole area resulted in a new total new gross floor area of 92,590.04 m², including the 6744 m² of the existing buildings’ gross floor area. As a result, the PERI allowed the construction of new 85,846.04 m² devoted to private housing (77.261,44 m²), social housing (7.709,00 m²), and commercial and tertiary facilities (875,60 m²). However, Valladolid’s Federation of Neighbourhood Associations appealed the validity of the PERI in relation to the correct allocation of land for public purposes according to the 1999 Regional Town Planning Law. Several aspects of the redevelopment were declared illegal, such as the insufficient assignation of 10% of the total buildability to social housing (7.709,00 m² instead of 9171.44 m²), so the planning tool was subsequently declared null and void by the Valladolid High Court of Justice in February 2009. Following the changes in ownership, with the inclusion of public-private real estate agencies created ad hoc by the Spanish government after the real estate bubble – such as “Sareb”⁶ –, the owners’ management company was set up in October 2015 (Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2015). A new Urban Development Project (“*Proyecto de Actuación APE 59 Cuarteles de Artillería y Conde Ansúrez*” in Spanish) was launched within the new PGOU, which was approved in 2021. The redevelopment works started in summer 2022 to build new 839 dwellings, including 164 subsidised housing. The estimated land development and construction costs are respectively €9.671.669,72 and €84.815.402 and the estimated revenue for the owners from the selling is €156.270.065 (Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, 2020).

6.3. Planning agreements with public and private actors

The 34.478-m² Julián Sánchez “El Charro” barracks lies in Salamanca’s urban centre, specifically in the residential neighbourhood of

⁶ Sareb was created in 2012 to manage and sell the troubled assets of rescued banks. The public-private society set up the housing development vehicle “Árquora Homes” which currently owns the 50% of both General Monasterio and Conde Ansúrez barracks (<https://www.sareb.es/en/>).

Salasas, and was part of the planning agreement signed in July 2003 between the MoD, the City Council and the major Spanish commercial company El Corte Inglés (Fig. 7). The first attempt to negotiate the conversion to civilian uses between the MoD and the City Council was included in the 1984 General Master Plan, which established the conversion of the barracks to tertiary uses for large public institutions (Ayuntamiento de Salamanca, 2014, pp. 5–7). However, the abandonment took place in 1996 and negotiations lasted for almost two decades, resulting in a planning agreement signed in 2003 for an exchange of properties and redevelopment works worth €10,800,000. The agreement amended the 1984 PGOU in 2004, while the City Council was elaborating a new PGOU – eventually approved in 2007 –, so the change of land use was directly incorporated into the new tool. The aim was dividing the barracks’ area into two sectors, separated by a new road. On the one hand, an area comprising the El Corte Inglés-owned shopping centre (10,611 m² for a total gross floor area of 88,300 m²) (Fig. 8), the City Council-owned civic centre devoted to cultural and social facilities (3462 m²) (Fig. 9) and a public square (8127 m²). On the other hand, a 4,148-m² plot still belonging to the MoD for building 14,085 m³ of 7-floor housing units. The planning agreement established two main commitments. The first was the task assigned to El Corte Inglés, which paid for the new facilities of the redevelopment project (€80 million for the shopping centre; €4343,000 for the civic centre; €3.826.000 for urbanising the open spaces, i.e., public square, 216 new surface parking spaces, traffic reorganisation and improvement of road safety) and the purchase of 7,926-m² of abandoned land owned by the local university ISPE, later transferred to the City Council, to convert it into the “Nemesio Martín” football pitch (€2600,000). The second was the property transfer of the 442,714-m² Tejares ammunition dump on the outskirts of Salamanca – worth €541,364 – from the MoD to the City Council and the retention of part of the former El Charro barracks into the MoD’s real estate portfolio. However, none of these two assets have been refurbished until today.

The redevelopment works lasted from 2006 and 2010, but the left-wing political party “Foro de Izquierdas-Los Verdes” took the City Council to court, claiming that the public interest was being violated because there were insufficient public services to compensate for the creation of a huge shopping centre. Three documents (i.e., planning agreement, planning permission, and environmental permission) were actually declared null and void in 2007, 2011, and 2014 (Tribunal Supremo. Sala de lo Contencioso-Administrativo, 2014) and this fact supposed a concrete risk to demolish all the facilities already built. The City Council therefore changed the use of the MoD land from residential to public equipment through a new amendment to the PGOU (Ayuntamiento de Salamanca, 2018). The MoD demanded that the City Council pay €14.7 million for the loss of revenue that could have been generated by the construction of private housing. Notwithstanding this, the Administrative Chamber of the National High Court rejected the appeal filed by the Public Prosecutor on behalf of the MoD. Today the new use of the MoD land is still to be agreed.

7. Discussion

The case study analysis shows that the success or failure of the disposal and redevelopment process was determined by many interrelated factors (Tables 2 and 3). A first factor is the integration of former military assets into the planning tools. The Spanish MoD tends to maximise the benefits from real estate redevelopments and interacts with the stakeholders involved, especially City Councils, but it acts differently and plays different roles depending on the situation. The MoD can act in two ways. The first is to release a list including various sites to dispose of – such as the 1987 MoD Decree listing seven buildings to abandon in Barcelona (Muro Morales, 1990, p. 290) – and then to establish the land-use planning’s contents for each case through a planning agreement. The second is to work on a specific case-by-case basis, as happened in Valladolid (Fernández Maroto, 2021) and



Fig. 4. Localisation of General Monasterio and Conde Ansúrez barracks.

Source: Rafael Córdoba Hernández’s elaboration on the 2022 Plan Nacional de Ortofotografía Aérea’s orthophoto according to [Ayuntamiento de Valladolid \(2020\)](#).



Fig. 5. General Monasterio barracks before the redevelopment works of summer 2022.

Source: Photo by Federico Camerin (2022).



Fig. 6. Conde Ansúrez barracks before the redevelopment works of summer 2022.

Source: Photo by Federico Camerin (2022).

Salamanca. Planning agreements are therefore the proper basis for integrating the redevelopments into planning tools. In both cases, however, the actors work to find ad hoc solutions for each former military site without elaborating a broader planning strategy at the city level, as has happened in countries like Italy ([Ponzini and Vani, 2014](#)) and Germany ([City of Heidelberg, 2016](#)).

As shown in the comparison between the French and Italian case ([Adisson and Artioli, 2020](#)), a second and third factor is the mechanism chosen to carry out the redevelopment and the interrelation between the actors that effectively conducted the process. The direct sale to public bodies (Barcelona), corresponding to a public-led process, and public auctions for the purchase by private actors (Valladolid), implying a private-led redevelopment, seem to be the most common choices made by the MoD. These solutions may involve little effort but immediate revenue for the military, whereas a public-private partnership may result in a whirlwind situation (Salamanca).

The time taken to decide on the new uses is an eloquent factor that strongly depends on the mechanism and relationship between the parties involved. In Barcelona, the decision-making process was quick due to the strong interest of a local university to host an urban campus (three years), while in Valladolid this period increased up to 10 years and in Salamanca it took 19 years. The case of Barcelona showed no conflicts in finding a shared solution between MoD, City Council, Regional government, and University, while the cases of Valladolid and Salamanca were afflicted by large negotiations.

The way in which the decision-making process is carried out is also relevant for achieving a wider acceptance of the redevelopment projects ([Mangialardo and Micelli, 2018](#)). Top-down decisions characterised the three case studies, with planning agreements’ contents simply notified to citizens without any real intervention in the definition of the new uses of the ancient barracks. No bottom-up approaches were implemented and the Modification of Salamanca’s General Master Plan in 2020



Fig. 7. Localisation of the former El Charro barracks.

Source: Rafael Córdoba Hernández's elaboration on the 2022 Plan Nacional de Ortofotografía Aérea's orthophoto according to Ayuntamiento de Salamanca (2018).



Fig. 8. El Corte Inglés building.

Source: Photo by Federico Camerin (2023).



Fig. 9. Municipal Centre El Charro and the ancient main entrance door.

Source: photo by Federico Camerin (2023).

received 83 objections (Ayuntamiento de Salamanca, 2019, pp. 4504–4505). Among the complains, the El Corte Inglés threatened to claim €150 million in compensation if the shopping centre was demolished and the MoD demanded for economic compensation for the possible change in land-use.

The output of a poor decision-making process was consequently land-use conflicts and appeal tribunals (Mualam, 2014). In the cases of Valladolid and Salamanca, protests resulted in appeal tribunals due to the incorrect balance between public and private benefits agreed by the signatories of the planning agreement. While the intervention in Barcelona was planned by – and entirely for – the public (i.e., for university purposes), the barracks in Valladolid and Salamanca appear to have suffered from low-tier planning decisions resulting in contested claims. The underpinnings of Valladolid and Salamanca redevelopments were declared null and void, but the MoD suffered economic damage from the appeal tribunals only in the case of Salamanca. Here the MoD still plays an active role in the process because it owns 4148 m² of land, so the

change of use from private housing to public equipment implied less revenue to be generated. On the contrary, in the cases of Barcelona and Valladolid, the MoD played a passive role as it sold the land and was therefore not affected by appeals. While the MoD exerted poor control over redevelopments after the signing of planning agreements, City Councils appear to delegate their responsibilities for spatial and land-use planning execution to other actors (Córdoba Hernández, 2014; Gaja, 2013; Morcillo Álvarez, 2017), such as universities (Barcelona), private real estate agents (Valladolid), and commercial entities (Salamanca).

In the case of Barcelona and Valladolid, the presence of listed buildings played a role in the redevelopment projects, as it meant that the existing morphology had to be maintained, although five buildings in the General Monasterio barracks were demolished in 2007 (soldiers' accommodation pavilion, carriage sheds, old sports centre, water tank, and shooting gallery). In Salamanca, only the main entrance door has been preserved and it has been relocated with respect to the original position (Ayuntamiento de Salamanca, 2014: 23–24) (Fig. 9).

Table 2
Data on the case studies.

Cities and assets	Barcelona		Valladolid		Salamanca
	Jaime I barracks	Roger de Lauria barracks	Conde Ansúrez	General Monasterio barracks	El Charro barracks
Plot Size (m ²)	8.910.206		49,306	66,354	34,478
Main data					
Construction	1887	1887	1902	1953	1926
Abandonment	1987	1988	2000	2000	1996
Disposal	1991	1995	2003	2003	2006
Redevelopment	1992–1996	1997–2000	2022–ongoing		2007–2010
Owner	Catalan Region		Private real estate actors		City Council
Disposal mechanism	Direct selling		Public auction		Exchange
Cost (€)	14,900,000		91,167,750		10,800,000
Heritage	All buildings		21 buildings		The entrance door
Current state	Conservative reuse into a university urban campus		Under redevelopment (new residential neighbourhood)		Public and private facilities with a partially-abandoned piece of land

Source: Elaboration by the Authors (2023).

Table 3
Data on the decisive factors affecting the disposal and redevelopment processes.

Factors	Barcelona	Valladolid	Salamanca
Strategy	Picking assets from a wider list of assets to dispose of	Single case	Single case
Mechanism	Direct selling	Public auction	Public-private partnership
Interrelation between stakeholders	Public-led process	Private-led process	Public-private partnership
Decision-making duration (years)	3 (1988–91)	12 (1991–2003)	19 (1984–2003)
Appeal tribunals	/	2009	2007, 2011, 2014, 2021
Role of the MoD	Passive	Passive	Active
Presence of listed buildings	Both barracks	21 buildings	The main entrance door

Source: Elaboration by the Authors (2023).

The variation and explanatory role of the factors are the following. First, regardless of the strategies or mechanisms used in each of the case studies, the analysis has shown that the success of a project needs bargaining the new uses between public authorities and citizens within a wider scheme to properly balance private and public interests. Planning agreements and amendment of General Master Plans have been means of approving already decided projects negotiated by public authorities with the help of private agents, no matter their legality nor whether they can take place in the short or long term. Second, the more protracted and conflictual the negotiations between the actors involved, the more likely it is that the former military sites will become ruins, resulting in increased costs of reuse/redevelopment and potential loss of heritage. Regardless of the active or passive role of the MoD, a variation strictly connected to the interrelation between agents and the decision-making process is the appeals tribunal's decisions over the claims for the illegal character of the projects, which can turn the scale in one or another agent's favour. The results of the appeals are usually amendments to the planning schemes to compensate the unbalanced public and private interests. Third, although the presence of listed buildings shapes the project, cultural heritage apparently does not influence the successful implementation of the regeneration and is seen instead as a starting point for steering appealing flagship projects. More control over the treatment of the tangible and intangible values of the military buildings and morphology should take place to avoid actions like the inverted repositioning of the ancient barrack's main door in Salamanca (Fig. 9). Fourth, effective regeneration is likely to occur sooner or later depending on the intricate relationship of the analysed factors.

However, the timing will depend on the level of complexity and cost of the project and the extent to which the transformation is tied to a profit-driven approach, which in turn will be conditioned by favourable or unfavourable conditions in the property market. Stalling regenerations, especially the case of Valladolid, are apparently most tied to rent-seeking projects sought by private investors which, through the disposal process, have become the property owners.

To sum up, the case study analysis contributes to show that, despite the differences between the three cases, there is a strong common profit-driven and rent-seeking rationale that (with some exception for the Barcelona University facilities) seems to drive military regeneration projects. Speculative proposals have, despite some opposition, been the dominant approach to regeneration. The combination of speculative planning, austerity, and MoD disposal plans have fed each others in the Spanish model. Although cases like Barcelona in which a public-public partnership aimed to pursue the public interest and projects were smoothly carried out, the implementation of the redevelopments counted on giving the public less than the minimum requirements foreseen by planning schemes.

8. Conclusion

This paper is a first attempt to identify and interpret the main dynamics affecting the disposal and redevelopment of military land in Spain since the mid-1980 s. On the one hand, this analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the evolution of the relationship between the State and the territorial entities when it comes to the disposal and redevelopment of military land in Spain. On the other hand, this study examines the interaction between the different factors that have influenced the development of the land in the cases studied, with particular attention to the role played by the actors involved.

The in-depth analysis of the vicissitudes associated with the three types of disposal processes revealed the predominantly market-oriented approach linked to urban entrepreneurship in Western countries since the late 1980 s. The profit orientation of both public and private actors has generally resulted in the dismantling of public property in favour of private profit, with various negative consequences for public interests. However, this trend has been recognised and, in the cases of Valladolid and Salamanca, has led to significant conflicts over the new uses of the barracks with delays of several decades in achieving complete redevelopment. The case of Barcelona, by contrast, can be seen as an exception to the neoliberal approach to the management of military-owned assets, as a public-public partnership carried out the urban transformation to provide university facilities.

The second aspect is that the rent-seeking approach and the self-financing needs of state and territorial entities have led them to adopt planning models that follow trends in population growth, demand and

land supply, trends that contributed to the generation of the real estate bubble in the 2000 s. Private actors play an important role in the public decision-making process by launching speculative proposals that end up modifying planning instruments with the approval of local councils and the Ministry of Defence. Consequently, appeal tribunals came into play, highlighting the illegality of the new uses and forcing the City Councils to modify the primary redevelopment projects to improve public benefits (more public housing in Valladolid and public facilities on the land still owned by the Ministry of Defence). Despite this, the real estate companies and the commercial chain continue to enjoy significant economic benefits linked to the construction of a new residential neighbourhood (Valladolid) and the maintenance of a possibly illegal business (the Salamanca shopping centre). One of the consequences of the appeals could have been the launch of public debates or participatory planning processes to obtain feasible feedback from local communities. However, the local authorities of Valladolid and Salamanca did not establish any real participation and simply changed their PGOUs. In this context, the MoD plays a secondary role, as the disposal policies were linked to the outright sale of land owned by the MoD (Barcelona and Valladolid) or to the sale of the land (Salamanca and Salamanca).

From this research, it is fundamental to underline what the Spanish case brings to the international literature. It seems that many of the processes painted in this paper are quite like those that have happened in other EU countries. While European states launched similar public property ownership reforms since the 1980 s, the Spanish-based disposals, planning schemes, and redevelopment model have surely influenced the outcomes and can be the foundation for a proper future comparison with other countries. The national-related elements that can contribute to enrich the international literature are the following. First, the lack of comprehensive inventories and an updated status of the MoD estate inhibit a fuller comprehension of the disposal processes at national and regional level and of the assets' real economic value and the expenditure they should be subjected to for being converted in civilian use. Second, the involvement of powerful private actors capable of undertaking major transformations following neoliberal patterns seems to be the only way to achieve concrete redevelopment in a context where public funding is scarce and weak, especially after the 2008 financial crisis. Eventually, and consequently, it is poor the role played by public actors for guaranteeing a balanced amount of public equipment and facilities in developing the redevelopment projects. While the MoD tries to finance itself by a speculative management of its own estate based on the Spanish legislation, City Councils are eager to let the speculation happen, even by going beyond the legality of the planning schemes. Citizens have not been sufficiently involved in the decision-making process, but grassroots organisations had a remarkable role in temporarily stopping the redevelopments (Valladolid) and improve the quantity of public by appealing the validity of planning tools to improve the quality of the projects.

Future research should compare the factors analysed in this paper in other countries, searching also for broader elements to include in the comparison (legislation, planning schemes, and austerity policies). While it seems unlikely to achieve a complete survey on the result of the disposal policies without the proper support of the MoD, a fundamental work should be the creation of an inventory on the auctions carried out to sold military land to understand the failing procedures, whether a difference between initial and final prices exists and calculate the revenue for the MoD.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Camarin Federico: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Córdoba Hernández Rafael:** Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Project administration, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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