



**Politecnico  
di Torino**

# **Honors Thesis**

---

**Master's degree Science in Architecture Construction City**

**Abstract**

**Title**

**FROM THE SUBURB DORMITORY TO THE ACTIVE CITY.**

**A new urban model development model for the southern suburbs of Madrid.**

**Tutor**

**Marco Trisciuglio**

**Candidate**

**Chiara Torelli, Giulia Zaffonato**

**December 2024**

---

The thesis proposes a new urban model for the southern outskirts of Madrid, aiming to go beyond the traditional concept of a “dormitory suburb” and rethink marginal areas as vibrant, dynamic, and integrated spaces capable of evolving over time. The design approach seeks to enhance the local history, territorial specificities, and community needs, demonstrating that no place is ever truly “empty” — rather, each holds untapped potential that can be activated through urban interventions of architectural, social, and environmental quality.

At the core of the analysis is the Cañada Real Galiana, an informal settlement stretching linearly for approximately 15 km across Madrid’s urban edge. This unique space, rich in social complexity and contradictions, represents both a challenge and an opportunity to rethink urban development policies and imagine a new relationship between center and periphery, between formal and informal city.

The project is based on a dynamic modular grid designed to respond to changes over time and progressively adapt to external factors such as demographic growth, financial resources, emerging social needs, and environmental shifts. The grid’s modules are classified into four categories — empty, semi-filled, filled, and over-filled — according to their constructive and functional density. This classification creates a flexible framework that can transform based on context: for example, an empty module can evolve into a semi-filled one when housing demand increases, or a filled module can be further densified to host new functions or services.

The strength of the system lies precisely in its dynamic adaptability: the project does not propose a rigid, final form, but rather an organism capable of growing, shrinking, and reconfiguring itself over time. This enables development to be planned in progressive phases, avoiding excessive upfront investments while ensuring sustainable, controlled evolution that can respond to external pressures such as population increase, economic transformations, and climate-related challenges.

From a design perspective, the grid draws inspiration from historical references such as Cerdà's plan for Barcelona and Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette, reinterpreting them in a contemporary key to maximize flexibility, connectivity, and functional mix. The Cañada Real Galiana is transformed into a main infrastructural axis, while transverse copies of it are inserted to create new direct connections between Madrid and neighboring municipalities. Within the grid, attractor hubs host strategically important public services, while a large linear park — conceived as a “river of shade” — crosses the space, generating environmental quality and social interaction.

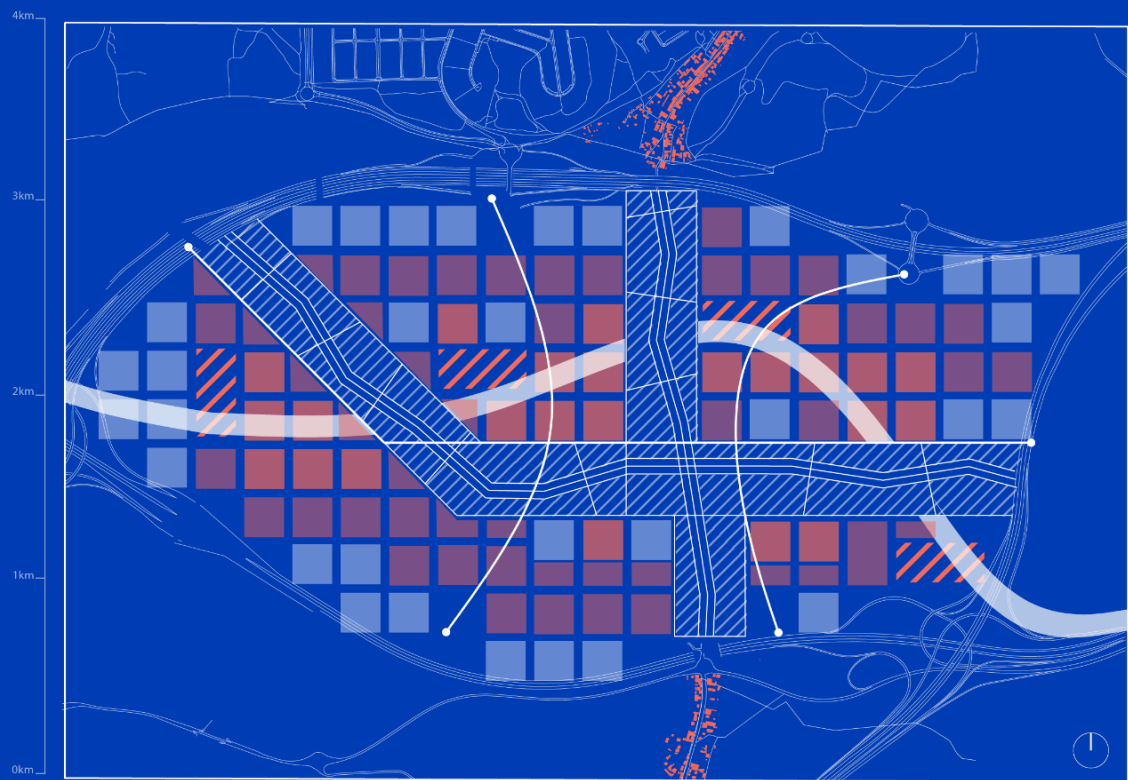
The theoretical appendices of the thesis explore the key themes underlying the project: the history and regulatory framework of the Cañada Real Galiana, the phenomenon of chabolismo and its socio-economic roots, and finally, the visionary scheme of the linear city by Arturo Soria y Mata, which inspired reflections on modularity and urban adaptability.

In summary, the project offers a flexible and scalable growth strategy, where each module becomes a piece of a living system, in constant evolution, capable of responding to the challenges of the present and the future.

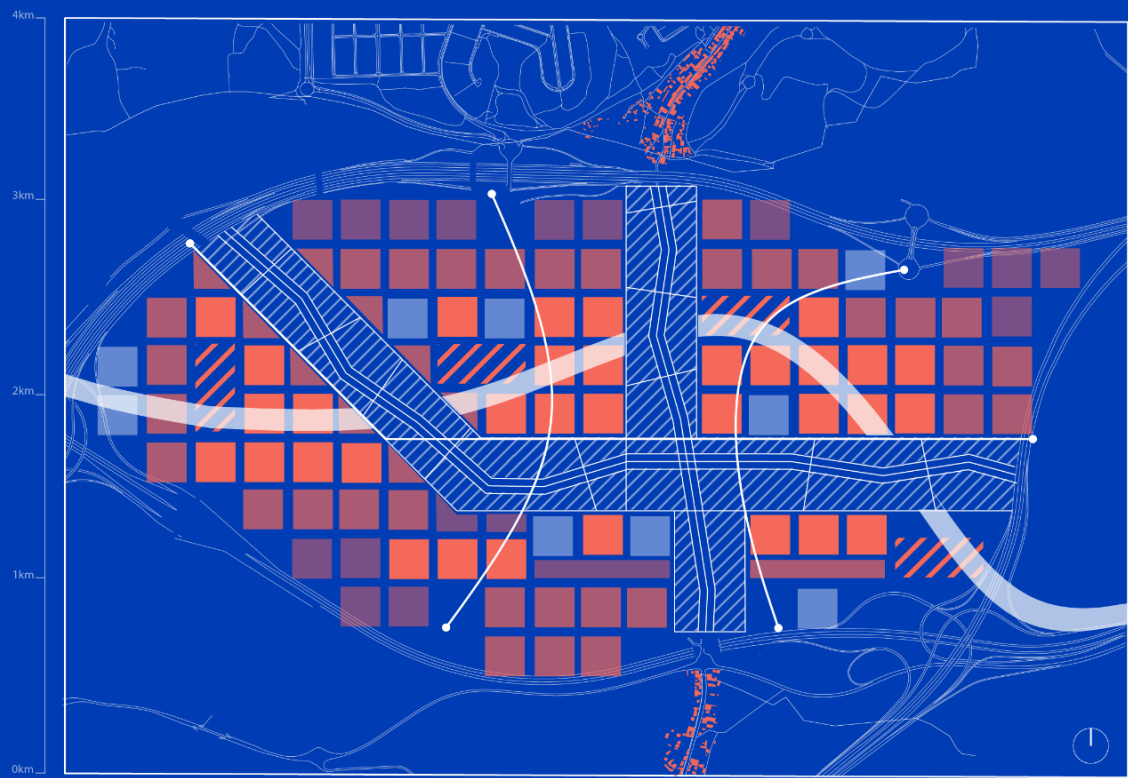
Image 1. Steps 9 and 10 of the project concept: the 2030 and 2050 versions. In the orange gradient, the modules transition from semi-filled to over-filled based on their building capacity.

Image 2. Example of an over-filled module in plan view.

Image 3. Example of an over-filled module in axonometric view.



///



■

Image 1.

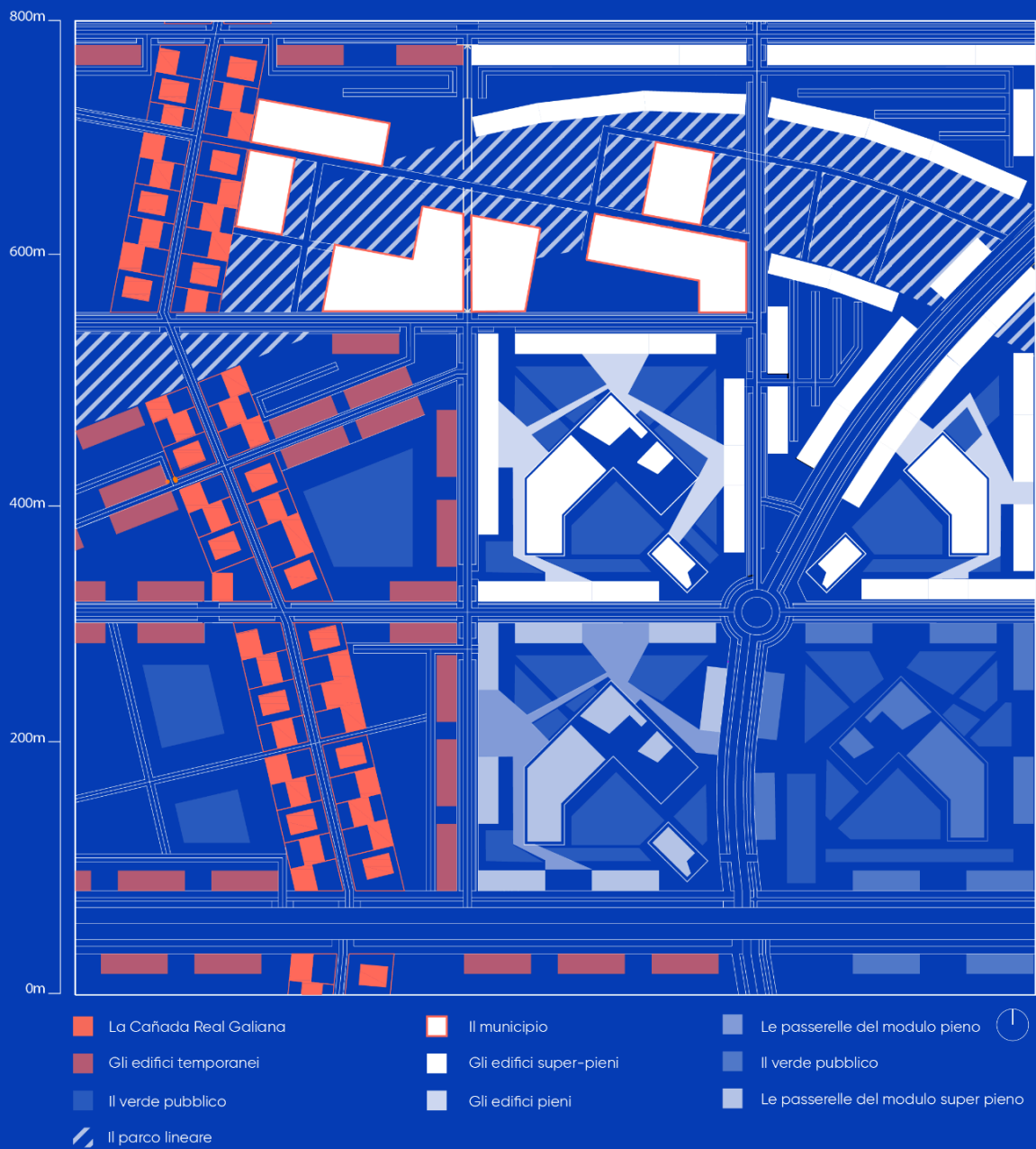


Image 2.

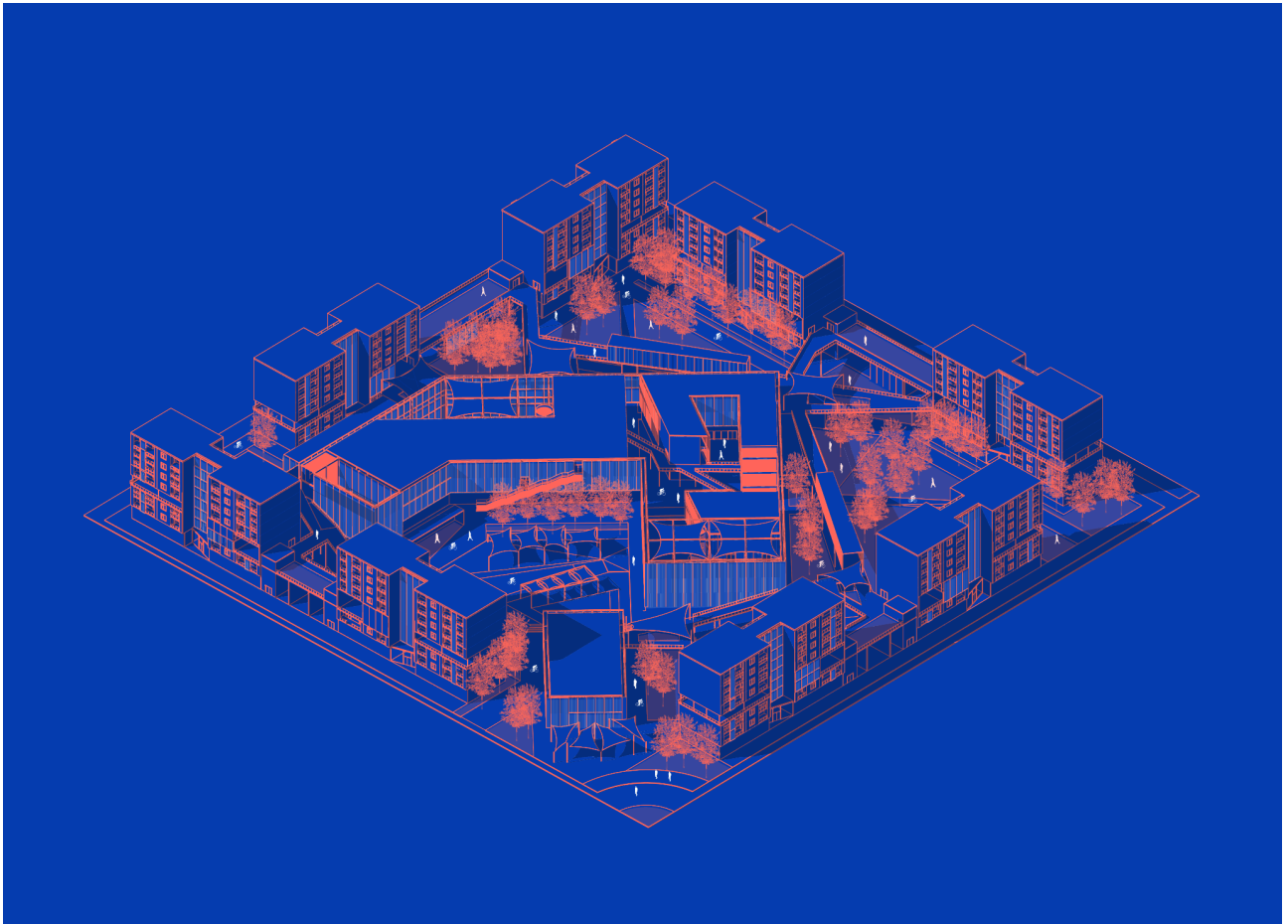


Image 3.

---

---

**For info:**

**[chiaratorelli12@gmail.com](mailto:chiaratorelli12@gmail.com)**