

PAVEMENT AND HERITAGE IN HISTORICAL CITIES. SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT A SINGULAR INTERVENTION IN CORDOBA (SPAIN)

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One of the elements of the city as a physical expression of spatial planning, often overlooked by geographical and urban landscape studies, is the pavement of the thoroughfare. This aspect of the urban landscape, essential for modern functions of the city, has also an important influence on the aesthetics and image of ancient and contemporary cities. It has been, in our opinion, an important sign of the urban identity versus rural and, moreover, provides unique values that hold on many occasions the heritage and tourist image of certain historic destinations. We cannot deny that the thoroughfare pavement is an essential component of the city public spaces, that that determines their roles and image. It affects the functions assigned to streets and public squares; it conditions their exploitation, and facilitates or hinders motorized and non-motorized movements. It also affects other aspects such as the costs required for its maintenance and preservation, environmental quality of the city, public facilities, city heritage attractions, and urban landscape and aesthetic itself.

Consider the city pavement is to direct our attention to the form and function of the streets and squares of the city, where a lot of activities are developed by both local residents and visitors. In urban public spaces, economic, social and personal relationships are built. These spaces support the movement of people, vehicles, animals and goods. It is also a mean of meeting, expression of feelings and life experiences. Thoroughfare's pavement is an exceptional perception point of the city landscape as well; buildings, monuments, storefronts, urban furniture, gardens, trees, fountains and diverse signals can be watched and enjoyed. And many of these attributes are directly influenced by the pavement style (type of materials, geometry, texture, color, resistance, etc) and its specific functions.

There is no doubt that the vision of the city as the best example of a planned territory –versus natural environment– represents a rationalization of the original variables. This rationalization is supported in the building of artificial elements that contribute to the devel-

opment of the city as a container of different functions and private and collective interests. Cities have been built and modeled according to planning criteria and needs of the time, and some cities still maintain the traces of centuries of imagination, construction, destruction and reconstruction.

Since the nineties of the twentieth century urban pavements include a wide range of materials, techniques, procedures and specialized functions, which is causing a deep transformation of the contemporary city, including historical vestiges that survive. In this regard, it often supposes a physical revitalization of the old quarters, a functional change of its mobility and an aesthetic transformation of urban heritage and landscape. In addition to that, one last feature must be added: the intensity and speed of changes, especially evident in large and medium-sized cities, that have generally been the cause of social, economic and environmental conflicts.

In relation to the principles and general arguments outlined above, the purpose of this article is the description and analysis of the reform carried out in 2011 on the arterial street 'Jose Cruz Conde' (or simply 'Cruz Conde') of the city of Cordoba (Spain). The analysis begins with a typological synthesis of traditional pavements that still survive in historical city centres. Secondly the mentioned project of Cruz Conde street is specifically considered. An intervention that follows the principles on the role of urban street advocated by the *City Committee of the World Road Congress (Marrakech, 1991)*. That is a review of the thoroughfare as a social environment of human encounter and also about its role in the revitalization of the historic city as a cultural and tourist destination. Both aspects that, in the case of Cordoba, were enhanced by the attraction led by the EXPO '92 in Seville, the *World Heritage Site* designation of the Mosque of Cordoba in 1984, or the subsequent (in 1994) expansion of that designation to a large urban area of the historical city centre. In addition to that we cannot forget the growing importance of environmental vision and universal accessibility in the city.

Consistent with these purposes, we must mention the advance of the urban paving industry itself. It has recently known an unprecedented development in technological and material innovation, which has led the incorporation and use of new urban pavement non-existent a couple of decades ago.

Such circumstances are beginning to be picked up, in the case of Cordoba, in the land planning of the city: the *General Urban Plan* (2001), the *Historical Centre Special Plan* (sanctioned in the same year) and more specifically in the *Accessibility Plan* (2006) and the *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan*. The work of planning concerning historical urban pavement is conditioned by this new scene defined by the principles of the new needs that society demands of public espaces. In effect, society has increased their demands about them; they are nowadays a combination of aesthetics, conservation, environmental quality, walkability, universal accessibility, comfort, tourist boost, economic development, demographic revitalization, etc. Such are these demands, all legitimate, that it is not strange that contradictory positions arise, regarding to paving intervention. This is especially clear in historic centres such as Cordoba, whose extraordinary extension is already a big problem in their management and development, to which one might add their own demographic, social and economic heterogeneity.

The ‘Cruz Conde’ street is an ideal example of the modernization of the historic urban scene of the city of Cordoba. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century diverse *urban surgery operations* were undertaken in the city centre of Cordoba. Those operations aimed, ultimately, the development of a new centre that recalls the foundational Roman origins, a centrality that would gravitate around the expansion of the ‘Tendillas Square’ and its own adjacent streets like ‘Cruz Conde’. At the end, the goal was not only modifying the physical reality of historic Cordoba, but also reorganizing the economic, social and symbolic map of the city; leading to a bourgeois centrality serving as urban showcase for wealthy families and where they could satisfy their demands for leisure and business. A new centre that still retains some of these attributes and their economic relevance in the context of the city, at the expense of have altered the landscape of the ancient city centre. At present this new centre, developed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is set in the northwestern area of the former ‘Villa’ district and is known as the ‘Mall’, occupying an area of 45'5 hectares.

In the sixties of the twentieth century, once established the economic character of the ‘Mall’ on their public spaces, the ‘Cruz Conde’ street was remodeled again, in order to improve pedestrian appearance and, above all, to further strengthen its role as the hub of road traffic. This reform consisted of to asphalt the road and widening and setting up the sidewalks, acquiring the look that has remained until the end of 2010.

In the early twenty-first century ‘Cruz Conde’ street began its most recent and drastic metamorphosis. A deep twist that has become the street from an important communication artery shot in the historic centre of Cordoba to a modern pedestrian or semi-pedestrian street; a new street in which the most noted aspect is its pavement, where a collection of innovations in heritage, culture and accessibility that have been introduced.

The new pedestrian pavement makes possible the connection between the northern suburbs and commercial areas with the southern old and tourist Cordoba (‘Tendillas Square’ and its surroundings, ‘Jewish Quarter’ and Mosque Area). The paradoxes of urbanism! ‘Cruz Conde’ street was born with the purpose of improving traffic conditions in that new commercial and social centrality revolved around ‘Tendillas Square’. Over half a century later, the road is reinvented and adapted to the new demands of the city, now giving response to the needs of pedestrian accessibility, cityscape humanization, and growing commercial and tourist functions. The aim is to consolidate ‘Cruz Conde’ a main gateway to the historic city centre, in addition to strengthen its offer of shops, accommodation facilities, financial, tourism and restorative services, which must be of particular interest to local residents and visitors. There is no doubt, besides, that it will change the landscape and heritage perception about this reformed sector and the entire city.