

Heritage Replacements: From Convent to Square and to Contemporary Architecture - Conventual Urban Transformations in Andalusian Cities

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In Andalusia (Spain), the conventual typology has shaped the urban centers of its cities following a process of implementation, which affects the traffic and internal organization of the city. In the mid-19th century, the confiscations led to the expropriation, demolition, and disappearance of a large part of their monastic spaces. The starting situations (size of cities, socioeconomic state in the 19th century or characteristics of the conventual foundations) gave rise to diverse urban responses. The bourgeoisie's need to "modernize" the cities led to the appearance of squares and the opening of new roads. On other occasions, the old factories were reused for the installation of new uses (prisons, barracks, markets, etc.), or their plots were used for new construction. The case of Plaza Nueva in Seville from the demolition of the San Francisco Convent is studied. Also, together with other Andalusian examples, such as the San Antonio de Padua Convent in El Puerto, the current Plaza Isaac Peral and Los Descalzos Convent in Écija. The case of this last city constitutes the counterpoint in the convent reuse, without generating relevant urban spaces. Once again, the Plaza Nueva, due to its condition of the centrality of the Andalusian capital, constitutes the maximum exponent of this urban and symbolic revision. The economic power put into practice its urban capacity, again through architecture. It will finance new buildings as representative images of their brands, companies, and institutions. The testimonies of the convent activity, the new spaces emerged from the disentanglement actions and their new contemporary symbols constitute sequential fragments of urban history. They are necessary for the cities for their valuation and heritage understanding. The study of these Andalusian cases can serve as a reference for the detection of similar processes in the European Mediterranean frame.

Introduction

In the process of sacralizing the urban space experienced in most European cities, Andalusian cities will enjoy a special idiosyncrasy. Due to their chronology and the intensity of conventual occupation, they had a main role in its urban

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development. The arrival of the conventual orders has not taken place, logically, until the progressive conquest of the Islamic territory by the Catholic kingdoms between the 13th and 15th centuries. From that moment, the progressive establishment of the conventual system was decisively defining the urban area and the landscape of Andalusian cities. The demolition of this structure in the 19th century was determining the transformation of the cities. Then appeared the construction of the new bourgeois city and subsequent new socio-economic symbols of urban capitalism during the following 20th century.

The main objective of this communication is to deepen the understanding of the heritage dimension of the spaces in historic Andalusian cities; deepening in the knowledge of the consequences, topographical and symbolic, always triggered by one of the key events in the urban history of the populations of Andalusia: the disentanglement, destruction, and reuse of the conventual building structures.

With the main objective of understanding the processes mentioned, this contribution focuses on the analysis of various case studies. These arise from the demolition of an important convent building. From this point, two divergent situations are analyzed, the emergence of new urban space and the filling of the convent block. In a second moment is taken into account the subsequent contemporary transformation of both situations. As the main case of study, the Convent of San Francisco in Seville has been considered, on whose site the current Plaza Nueva would emerge. On a second level, the Convent of San Antonio de Padua, in El Puerto de Santa María (today Isaac Peral Square), is incorporated as a similar and divergent starting point, as well as the case of the Convent of Los Descalzos in the city of Ecija, a marked counterpoint in the conventual reuse.

Methodologically, this research is the result of a mixed approach; something frequent, and essential, in analytical works of urban nature. The main bases of the study are based on the analysis and revision of a high number of secondary documentary sources. Here it has been used generic references to monasticism and how they are in Andalusian cities. At the same time, historiographical knowledge of the case studies is complemented by the consultation of primary archival sources. Secondly, urban analysis techniques have been used, supported by the comparative study of historical. Lastly, it has been studied current cartography and planimetry, as well as the interference of both with the real urban situation.

The Conventual Establishment

After the appearance of the Christian religion, the monastic phenomenon linked to a spiritual and individual retreat arose. Little by little, individuality was replaced by community, grouped together in buildings designed for this type of life. The first monastic orders,¹ were born here, which, unlike the traditional

1. There are two types of religious orders: monastic and mendicant. The monastics followed the initial schemes by developing a contemplative and isolated lifestyle in the monastery. Mendicant orders are characterized by active living, preaching, and alms living. While the first will be located usually in rural areas, the second will look for cities and villages. M. Cantera Montenegro, *Los monjes y la cristianización de Europa* (Madrid: Arco, 1996), 61-63.

temple, generated a new type of building that supported the needs of community life. Mendicant orders began their greatest rise from the 10th and 11th centuries in the Middle Ages. Their scope of expansion will be mainly Western Europe, since they are under the influence of Catholic Christianity. Although the east is also Christian, its orthodox branch will develop another conventual typology, similar, but without any relation to the west² (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Christian Churches in the XXI Century in Europe, together with the Andalusian Location in the South of the Iberian Peninsula

Source: Data for the location obtained from Pardo Torregrosa, 2018.

The monastic complexes will constitute authentic buildings such importance that they will sometimes surpass the temples of the cities in which they are located.³ They are not only buildings dedicated to worship and prayer. They configure a true sign of union and identity from the European perspective. In spite of the many differences between people, the power struggles of kings or geographical borders, monasticism has saved each of these difficulties by spreading throughout the continent. In this way, religious orders will make their appearance on the urban scene taking a leading role in many cities. So [...] mendicants configure the urban context to the point that their greater or lesser presence will mean the greater or lesser economic and cultural splendour of cities. Depending on the category of a city, there will be in it one, two, three or the four most important mendicant orders: Preachers, Minors, Carmelites and

2. J. Orlandis Rovira, *Historia de la Iglesia. La Iglesia antigua y medieval* (Madrid: Palabra, 2017), 187-200.

3. Buildings such as the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial stand out in Spain. It was ordered to be built by Philip II in the 16th century. Although it was occupied by the order of Saint Jerome, it was the residence and burial basilica of the kings of Spain since then. A. Bonet Correa, *El Real Monasterio de El Escorial* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2005), 20-26.

Augustinians.⁴ The conventual enclosure is not just a piece dedicated to prayer, without relation between it and its environment. It is the opposite thing. It has a high level of importance articulating the territory through its situation in the different ways of communication between cities.

In a changing and growing world, convents will play the main role in building the city of the middle and modern ages. Although the phenomenon is repeated in the different countries of Europe, it will be decisive in a region located to the south of the Iberian Peninsula: Andalusia. It will be here where the religious orders will find a suitable place for their expansion and settlement. However, it was not until the 14th century that the first convent foundations were established. In the Iberian south there will be an impediment that will avoid the previous appearance of the monastic orders, another religion that from the 8th century occupies most of the entire Iberian Peninsula: Islam.

Conventual Foundations in Andalusia

The medieval panorama of the Iberian Peninsula was very different from the rest of Europe. The Islamic faith dominated the territory known as Al-Andalus from the 8th century. However, its influence will decrease in favor of the Christian kingdoms that from north to south will expel the Muslims.⁵ After the Christian conquest of Andalusia between the 13th and 15th centuries, the town planning of the Andalusian region experimented with big changes with the arrival of religious communities. The communities with foundations in the peninsula will look for the urban nucleus of greater relevance and geographical strategy.⁶ The oldest, Franciscans and Dominicans, were the first to make their foundations when they were present, along with the Christian troops, in the reconquest of Andalusia.⁷ The kings of Castile favored its implantation to the rhythm of the war campaign itself.⁸ Houses, fortresses, lands... were indeed distributed among the noble Castilians, but the orders were also benefactors of this distribution. They also received houses, plots, and lands where they could settle in the newly occupied enclaves. In the case of Seville, the military orders were initially accommodated, as they were the main collaborators in the war against Islam. After the occupation of the city in the 13th century, it gradually began to be established until it became the largest convent city

4. Cited in J. Álvarez Gómez, *Historia de la vida religiosa II* (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1998), 278-282.

5. The conquest of Muslim territories by Christians will not be fast. It is a slow and long process that will last seven centuries. E. González Ferrín, *Historia general de Al Ándalus* (Córdoba: Almuzara, 2016), 10-15.

6. A. Atienza López, *Tiempo de conventos, una historia social de las fundaciones de la España moderna* (La Rioja: Marcial Pons, 2008), 71-79.

7. During the war many clerics and friars accompanied the Christian armies. Not only in prayer but also for military help. Many of the religious communities were also soldiers, such as the Order of Mercedarians M.C. García Torralbo, *M. C. Baeza Conventual* (Úbeda: Gráficas Minerva, 1998), 33-35.

8. J. Miura Andrades, "La presencia mendicante en la Andalucía de Fernando III," in *Fernando III y su época. Actas de las IV Jornadas Nacionales de Historia Militar* (Seville: Diputación de Sevilla, 1995), 509-519.

in Andalusia.⁹

The appearance of monasticism led deep urban changes in the cities. The 13th and 17th centuries will have the greatest conventual production spread throughout the kingdom of Seville. Of the 367 convents were located in 81 of the 155 municipalities in the region, which means an average of 2.4 convents per municipality of the kingdom and 4.6 per municipality in which there is a convent.¹⁰ In this sense, López Martínez analyses only the ancient region of the kingdom of Seville. However, if we transfer the data to the whole community, interesting relationships can be observed. The number of convents during the 18th century has been selected from those cities that have the heritage protection of a Historic Complex and are medium-sized cities. As shown in the table (Table 1), an order is established by the province, convents, and city which, divided, gives us the relation quotient. Among the factors obtained, as a result, we can observe the great concentration and influence of monasticism in provinces such as Seville, Malaga or Jaén, unlike the rest. Regions such as Cadiz, Cordoba or Granada maintain a similar level concerning the number of convents per city, Huelva being in the last place.

Table 1. *Andalusian Convents and Medium-Size Cities*¹¹

	Convents	Cities	Convents/Cities
Cadiz	32	11	2.91
Cordoba	6	2	3.00
Granada	12	4	3.00
Huelva	2	2	1.00
Jaen	45	6	7.50
Malaga	38	4	9.50
Sevilla	71	8	8.88

Source: Number of medium-size cities from the Andalusian Territorial Landing Plan (POTA) and number of convents from Madoz, 1847.

The conquest of Andalusia not only attracted the mendicant orders because of the new distributions but also because of the need to spread the faith and Christianize the ancient Islamic lands. In this first foundational stage, the kings of Castile will propitiate the appearance of the conventual orders using donations of lands that allow them to settle. In the city of Ronda (Málaga) can be seen how the convents of Santo Domingo and San Francisco are directly financed by the kings.¹² This fact was crucial in the conquest stage, as it gradually configures the

9. M. T. Pérez Cano, *Patrimonio y Ciudad. El sistema de los conventos de clausura en el centro histórico de Sevilla* (Seville: University of Seville, 1996), 92-103.

10. A. L. López Martínez, *La economía de las órdenes religiosas en el antiguo régimen* (Seville: Dip. Prov. De Sevilla, 1992), 35-36.

11. In Table 1, the province of Almería is not included, because there are no cities with this condition: it must appear a medium-size city and it must be a historic complex.

12. The allusion to kings refers to the Catholic Kings: Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragón.

medieval model of the city.¹³ The task of occupying the cities and transmitting the Christian religion among its settlers became necessary. Now, the convent buildings became part of the urban landscape of the Andalusian towns and cities. In addition to the large capitals, due to economic or conventual strength such as Seville, the medium-sized cities acquired notable importance in the Andalusian panorama. The settlements of the nobility generated the development of small villages. Examples of this fact are the town of Osuna, belonging to the lordship of the dukes of Osuna, the town of Marchena, head of the duchy of Arcos or Sanlúcar, belonging to the Medina-Sidonia family.¹⁴ Their lords enlarged their cities endowing them with new palatine or ecclesiastical constructions using the appearance of new conventual buildings. Osuna stands out among the medium-sized cities mentioned, as it obtained university and collegiate schools, which are still active today. In these previous cases, such as the Marquises of Estepa or those of Alcalá la Real, the nobility obtained part of the independence from episcopal control, so they were in charge of cover costs and attract orders to their cities.

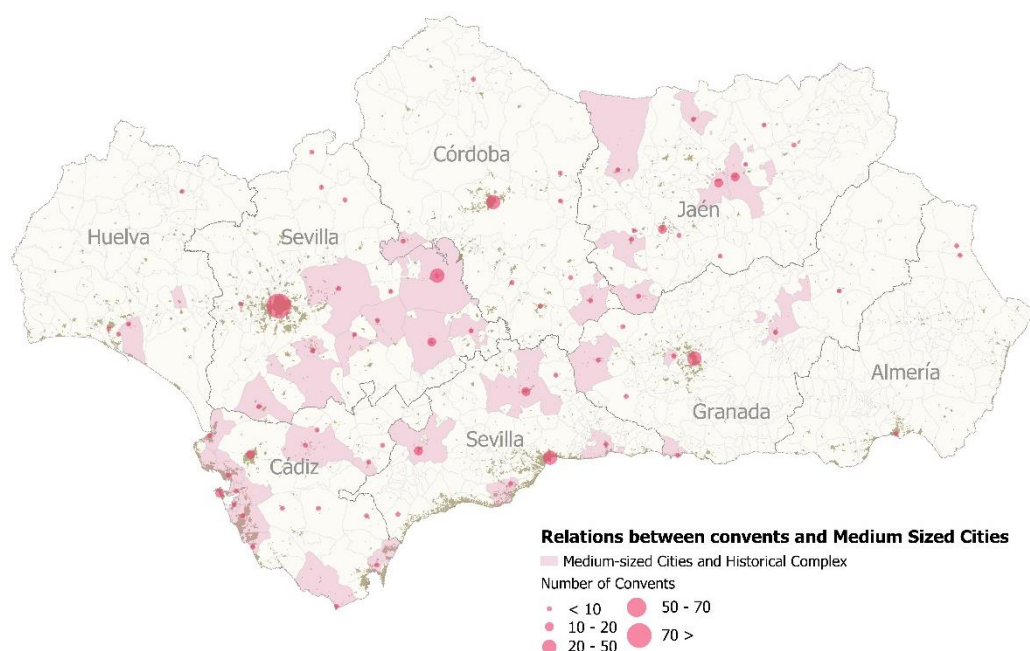


Figure 2. *The Relation between Convents and Medium-Size Cities*

Source: Medium-size cities from Andalusian Territorial Plan (POTA) and convents from Madoz, P.: 1847.

In the conventual map generated in the first decades of the Christianization of Andalusia (Figure 2), the orders of San Francisco and Dominicans stand out mainly in big cities like Seville and Cordoba. Afterward, they did not take long to find settlements in smaller towns but with strong political, economic and territorial

13. M. A. Ladero Quesada and J. Sánchez Herrero, "Iglesia y ciudades," in *Actas del VI Coloquio Internacional de Historia Medieval de Andalucía y las Ciudades Andaluzas* (siglos XIII-XVI) (Malaga: University of Malaga, 1991), 232-233.

14. S. Rodríguez Becerra and S. Hernández González, "Los conventos en la conformación de las ciudades medias andaluzas," in *Zainak. Cuadernos de Antropología-Etnografía* 31 (2009): 467-501.

importance such as Antequera, Carmona, Écija, Marchena, Ronda or Osuna, without forgetting the strong conventual presence in the cities of Eastern Andalusia such as Jaén, Baeza, and Úbeda.¹⁵

Urban Transformations

The architectural convent heritage inherited in the cities of Andalusia is not eternal and unalterable. Since the conventual foundations during the Middle Ages in the 14th century, in the next centuries the monastic buildings were not changed until the 19th century. One of the determining events for monasticism and the Spanish church, with an enormous repercussion, will be the different disentailments carried out during the 19th century. Liberal political ideals initiated the first disentailment processes. Between 1834 and 1855, the disentailments of Mendizábal¹⁶ and Madoz¹⁷ will take control of the process. It would be a determining process for the urban history of the cities. There was a massive sale of an enormous number of properties belonging to the Church, in favor of the new bourgeoisie, linked to the urban development of the cities.¹⁸ Most of the convents disappeared or suffered great transformations, leaving only very few without intervention.

It is very frequent to find reuses of these conventual spaces for new needs and social uses: housing, quartering, education centers, industry...highlighting the case of Seville with various actions that have partially or transformed the conventual buildings.¹⁹ The convents are large surfaces inside the cities; the new times conceived new transformations to the cities as squares and avenues. Consequently, new streets were opened or renovated in old conventual blocks. The new developer operations have before them a large area that they must lot to be able to obtain greater profitability. At the same time, its profitability produces an architecture of low quality that favors the generation of a new road, giving rise to

15. M. J. Parejo Delgado, "Conventos, monasterios y hospitales en Baeza y Úbeda durante la Baja Edad Media," in *Actas del VIII Congreso de Profesores Investigadores de Hespérides* (Baeza, 1989), 196-198; Miura Andrades, *Friles, monjas y conventos. Las Ordenes Mendicantes y la sociedad sevillana bajo-medieval* (Seville: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1998).

16. The disentailments in Spain took the names of their main authors. Two Spanish politicians named Juan de Dios Álvarez Mendizábal and Pascual Madoz e Ibáñez. F. Simón Segura, *La desamortización Española del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 1973), 50.

17. Previous to the disentailments, data of the existing buildings can be known through the dictionary made by Madoz. All the buildings are shown here with details, belonging to all the municipalities in Spain, before the start of the disentailments. The exhaustive inventory carried out by Madoz together with cartographic and iconographic information of the conventual spaces generates clues and keys to understand the transformations suffered in an urban space.

18. A. Lazo Díaz, *La desamortización de las tierras de la Iglesia en la provincia de Sevilla (1835-1845)* (Seville: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla e Instituto de Estudios Sevillanos, 1970), 115-127.

19. M. Molina-Liñán, C. López-Bravo, and E. Mosquera Adell, "El Convento en una nueva sociedad: Transformaciones y nuevos usos. El caso de los conventos sevillanos," in *Actas del XI International Congress AR&PA: El papel del Patrimonio Cultural en la construcción de la Europa de los Ciudadanos* (Valladolid, 2018), 47-56.

an urban fragmentation.²⁰ But the complete transformation that takes place in some cases in a square, in a public space for the city, is striking. Therefore, it is very recurrent to eliminate the old conventual pieces and replace them with modern squares, a meeting place in the city and the opening of a new access road to the urban center. The cases of the convent of San Francisco in Seville or the barefoot Franciscan convent of El Puerto de Santa María, in Cadiz, remain important references in the historical memory.

The first generated the square called Plaza Nueva, the first example of public *Hausmannian* space in southern Spain. The "Decree on the opening of new public spaces" issued by José Bonaparte in 1810²¹ had meant in the city of Seville the definitive legal support for the conversion of conventual structures into public spaces;²² these architectures, which had been the functional muscle of the capital of the Spanish Golden Age²³ (Figure 3). The conservation state was already weakened by the war against the French occupation and the decrease in the number of clerics. This was the prelude to the aforementioned disentanglements that would follow throughout the 19th century. This strategy of transforming the urban scene would be executed in three paradigmatic cases: the convent of Santa Cruz, of La Encarnacion and of San Francisco.²⁴ The first of the spaces mimic the urban scene of the Santa Cruz neighborhood, although the convent of La Encarnación will give rise to a market. The city needed a market after the replacement of the Casa Lonja by the Archivo de Indias. The last of the extinct convents would be transformed by a square of orthogonal geometry -characterized by the civil power represented in the Town Halls- that would end up capitalizing on the 19th century the bourgeois emulsion and the definition of the space-symbol of a new Seville: the Plaza Nueva.

20. M. T. Pérez Cano and E. Mosquera Adell, "Sevilla ciudad conventual, urbanismo y patrimonio," in *Cescontexto. Debates* 6 (2014): 180.

21. José Bonaparte, brother of Napoleón Bonaparte, was king of Spain between 1808 and 1813 after being conquered by French troops. M. Lara Martínez and L. Lara Martínez, *Breviario de historia de España: desde Atapuerca hasta la era de la globalización* (Madrid: Edaf, 2018), 369-374.

22. J. A. Piqueres, "José I, El Rey Regenerador. El discurso josefino sobre la regeneración de España," in *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 11 (2012): 135.

23. The period of splendour of the arts, literature, politics and economy of the Spanish Empire between the 16th and 17th centuries is called the Spanish Golden Century. Lara Martínez and Lara Martínez, *Breviario de historia de España: desde Atapuerca hasta la era de la globalización*, 2018, 237-239.

24. Ollero Lobato, "De convento a espacio público," 2018, 6-29.

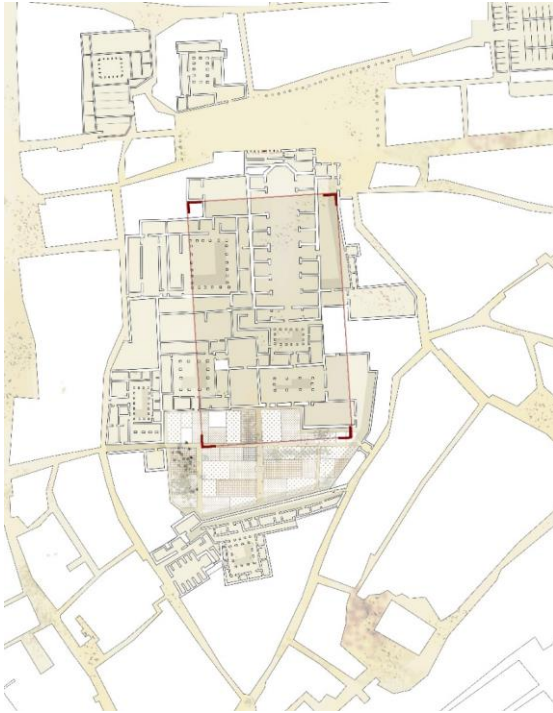


Figure 3. *Planimetry of the Convent of San Francisco De Seville, 17th Century (The red perimeter determines the position that the New Square would acquire).*

Source: Planimetry based on the hypothesis of the Collación of Santa María around 1600. In Moreno Pérez, 1993: 243.

Cayetano Vélez and Ángel de Ayala, consecutive municipal architects, will unsuccessfully design two projects without finishing them. Either project was not ended due to a lack of resources during the French presence or due to internal discrepancies between the promoters in charge of their execution.²⁵ The definitive project, executed in 1856 by Balbino Marrón,²⁶ would provide a suggestive radical matrix, capable of executing the symbolic exchange between ecclesiastical power - defined in the definitive demolition of the convent, maintaining only the town hall rooms and a side chapel- and the *res publica civitas*. The Plaza Nueva in Seville introduces a new open space, completely unusual in the city. It is inserted in a context that is still strange to alignments, openings and expansions in which the Islamic urban scene continues making the city (Figure 4).

25. J. M. S. Garmendia, “En torno a la arquitectura doméstica sevillana del siglo XIX: el paso del neoclasicismo a la arquitectura isabelina,” in *Laboratorio de Arte: Revista del Departamento de Historia del Arte* 27 (2015): 323.

26. The work of the architect from Bilbao has been extensively treated in M. Linares Gómez del Pulgar, *Balbino Marrón y Ranero, Arquitecto municipal y provincial de Sevilla* (Seville: Diputación de Sevilla, 2016).

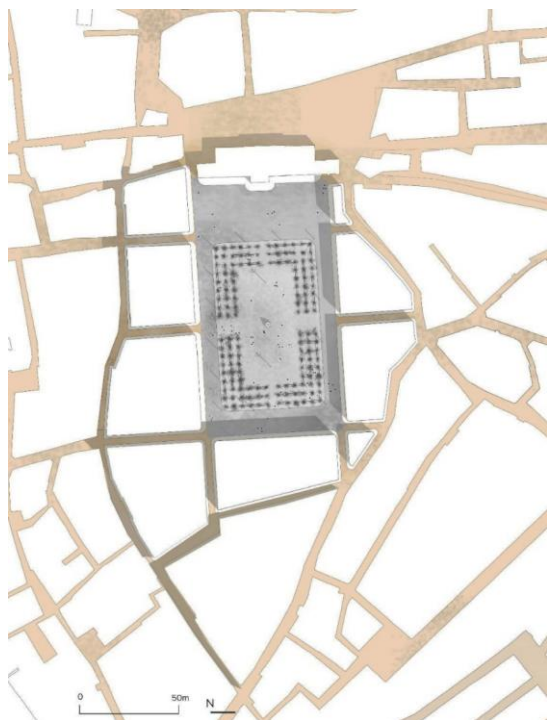


Figure 4. *Reconstruction of the Project for the Plaza Nueva Proposed by Balbino Marrón in 1854*

Source: Own elaboration.

The story of the construction of the square begins, in an urban context full of conventual complexes that, after the disentailment and exclausturation, begin his disintegration.²⁷ The demystification of the State during the 19th century²⁸ is highly permeable. It permeated the current social opinions and the way of approaching urbanism from a State that is recovering competences historically granted to the Church.²⁹ The change in the paradigm of power, catalyzed in architecture as a symbol, forces us to look for new milestones or architectural references; typologies capable of introducing a hierarchy in which civil power presides over the spatial and functional narrative.

The construction of a "Plaza Mayor" emerges, consequently, as a collective and primordial objective. It was a question of leaving a mark on the historical chronology, showing how ecclesiastical power gives control to civil power. Seville's Plaza Nueva is, therefore, a choral work that is born and matures as a

27. The dense conventual structure begins his expand through particular and singular performances. Although fragmentation is recognisable as a common factor, the urban transformations that lead to the mutation of corridors into streets and compasses into squares are carried out through a process of "morphological renovation": the conventual spatial units change from private to public function without changing their form. The "interior reform", an instrumental strategy developed in other Spanish cities during the 19th century, did not reach Seville until the fourth decade of the 20th century. Pérez Cano, *Patrimonio y Ciudad. El sistema de los conventos de clausura en el centro histórico de Sevilla*, 1996, 97-99.

28. Reference is made to the previously commented Spanish disentailment by Madoz and Mendizabal.

29. F. M. Gilabert, *La desamortización española* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 2003), 42-44.

matter of common interest, with the collective conviction that it is a key opportunity for the development and improvement of public space.³⁰ In the instances exchanged between the City Council, the promoter entity "Empresa de la Nueva Plaza", the Archbishopric, the Academy of Fine Arts and the owners, an urgent need is detected. It is necessary to bring a successful conclusion to the construction of a 'hygienic' space, 'at the height' of a 'great city'.³¹

The period of six decades in which the square conserves its original characteristics, is consolidated as the only space in the urban scene. The architectural regularity and illustrated perspective are juxtaposed: the bourgeoisie obtains its space for leisure, recreation and leisure in what is considered, over and above historical architectures and monuments, the most 'modern' icon of the city at the end of the century. When the social and political context revolves towards the liberalisation of the rental market at the beginning of the 20th century - rent prices having been liberalised with the Tenancy Law of 1842-³² the recommendations written by Balbino Marrón in the matter of protection of facades are relegated to a second plane wielding reasons of style and decorum; the partial performances in key milestones of its perimeter end up blurring due to the irruption of capitalism in the real estate market of the city, impelled by the celebration of the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929.

As in the case of Seville, the convent of San Antonio de Padua suffered too from a new urbanization project in the city. The consequence was a square called Isaac Peral, over the primitive convent (Figure 5). It will be in this square where the town hall is also located, forming the nerve center and administrative power of the city today. The opening of this square meant the demolition of the convent, installed on the land since 1684 and active until 1835. However, it was in 1868 when its demolition order was issued due to the scarcity of public spaces in the city center.³³ The disappearance of the convent not only affected the total integrity of the building, but also all the properties contained inside; from altarpieces to devotional images or canvases. The convent demolition project was commissioned to the architect Adolfo del Castillo, who also carried out the first square project. The project was executed with rectangular features occupying the old landscaped area and cemetery of the convent. The square acquires value as an element of urban planning of its surroundings, imposing its geometry on the new farmhouse and road. At the same time, it becomes the center of activity and social life of the city where, after its appearance, a building is built that will be used as a courthouse. However, years later, the building will occupy the city council due to its central location in the urban nucleus, until today.³⁴

30. J. Navarro de Pablos, *La plaza nueva de Sevilla*, Final Master Thesis (Seville: University of Seville, 2017), 158-159.

31. This has been verified after reading the letters collected in the Municipal Historical Archive of Seville (A.H.M.S.), belonging to the file "Plaza Nueva o de San Fernando 1851-1917", consulted between 07/07/2017 and 23/11/2017.

32. C. A. Comelles, "La evolución histórica del arrendamiento forzoso de vivienda: de la imposición a la expropiación," in *e-SLegal History Review* 25 (2017): 8.

33. J. R. Barros Caneda, *Arquitectura y urbanismo en el Puerto de Santa María durante el siglo XIX*, Doctoral Thesis (Seville: University of Seville, 1995), 79-85.

34. *Ibid.*, 88-89.

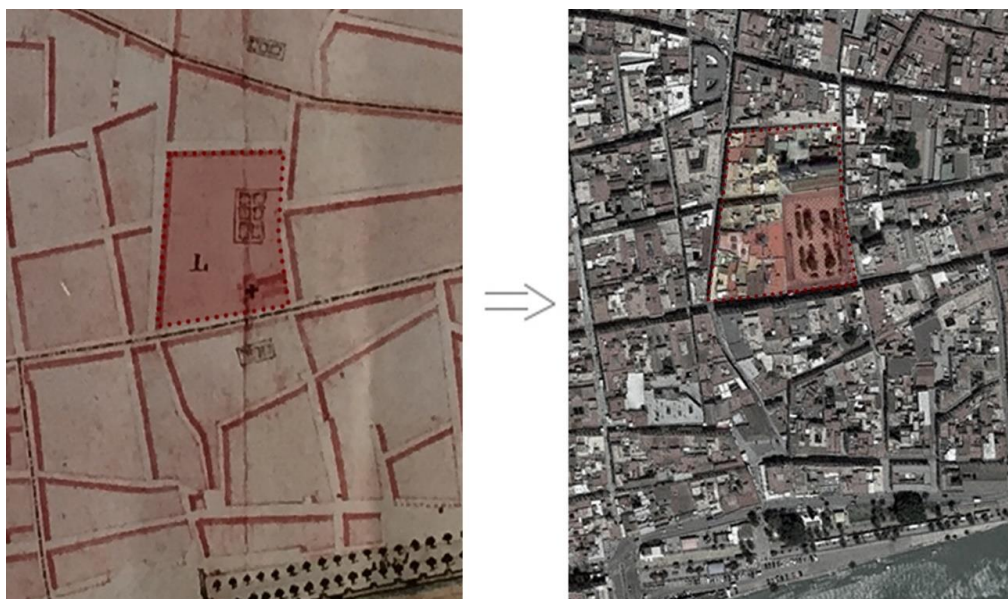


Figure 5. Transformation of the Convent of San Antonio, Puerto de Santa María
 Source: (Left) Anonymous Plan from Provincial Tourism Delegation, 1730 (Right) Air Flight from National Geographic Institute of Spain, 2018.

As we see, it is common to find in urban positions with a high convent density, different types of urban transformations. Conventual cities have their historical centers very crowded. Therefore, when new large surfaces appear from demolitions, it is normal that the existing blocks have been transformed. Most of them have been transformed into squares or streets over time. However, it is worth mentioning the conventual city of Écija as a counterpoint to this usual practice. In the municipality, known as "city of towers" for its many conventual temples and parishes, there are no transformations towards squares or big avenues. This city is a very singular and striking case among the medium-sized cities of Andalusia. The Medium-sized cities are the main backbone of the Andalusian region. Unlike other communities in Spain, the potential here gives them an enviable system of their own and identity. In its definition there are multiple meanings related to the same. Among them, quantitative criteria can be highlighted, where a range between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants is established.³⁵ However, the identification of a city of average character and even more so in Andalusia, does not answer only numerical data. Its most accurate definition would pass through the institution of an urban entity, which on the way between large capitals and rural areas, constitutes a secondary center with a function serving a good number of smaller nuclei or similar category, although it lacks the infrastructures of a central or metropolitan area.³⁶

Between this net of medium-sized cities stands out Écija as a conventual city. Its maximum convent exponent was a total of 21 monastic buildings, which

35. A. Rojas, "Las ciudades medias y la expansión territorial," in *La Ciudad Viva* (2009). Retrieved from: <http://www.laciudadviva.org/blogs/?p=2895>. [Accessed 20 April 2019], 2895.

36. B. Del Espino Hidalgo, *Las ciudades medias del centro de Andalucía. Análisis territorial y evaluación de su sostenibilidad* (Seville: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2018), 31-36.

represented 11% of the urban area.³⁷ It is a city with very few public spaces in its historical center due to the large blocks and building occupation. Its opportunity could have come in the 19th century with the disentailments. In the city, it was a very important phenomenon because of the 21 buildings, 72% were affected by expropriations,³⁸ which brought new opportunities and perspectives to the city. As it happens in cities such as Seville or El Puerto de Santa Maria, Écija needed new squares and avenues. However, this never happened. Conventual spaces were always preoccupied with another building typology. When the convent was demolished and left a large surface area free, it was automatically occupied by new buildings, with mainly residential use (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Transformation of the Convent of Los Descalzos, Écija

Source: (Left) Spínola Plan of 1826 from © Royal Academy of History, Spain (Right) Air Flight from National Geographic Institute of Spain, 2018.

The case of the convent of Los Descalzos led to the construction of residential blocks.³⁹ Another example is the use of changes in a convent plot is the monastic building of San Francisco. Next to the main square of the city, the plot was occupied after the demolition by a cinema and houses.⁴⁰ Like this convent, in Écija happened the same to all those who were disentailed and sold at public auction. Possible speculation of the newly available lands might prevail against their transformation into public use. The paradigm in Écija supposes the non-use of the

37. F. J. Ostos Prieto, *La estructura conventual en Écija. Génesis, influencias, transformaciones y continuidades en ciudades medias*, Final Master Thesis (Seville: University of Seville, 2018), 29.

38. Ostos Prieto, A. Costa Rosado, J. M. Aladro Prieto and M. T. Pérez Cano, "Identity construction of the European medium sized city through the monasticism repercussions in Écija," in *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* 603, no. 022053 (2019): 8.

39. Ostos Prieto, *La estructura conventual en Écija. Génesis, influencias, transformaciones y continuidades en ciudades medias*, 2018, 143.

40. Ibid, 88-93.

conventual spaces for their transformation into public space, because in the 20th century a new great avenue was built, the so-called "Miguel de Cervantes"⁴¹ (Figure 7). It was one of the largest urban operations in the city that would connect the urban center with one of the main territorial communication routes. Curiously, in one of the high conventual cities with new transformations in the last centuries, the conventual spaces are always reoccupied with another building typology.

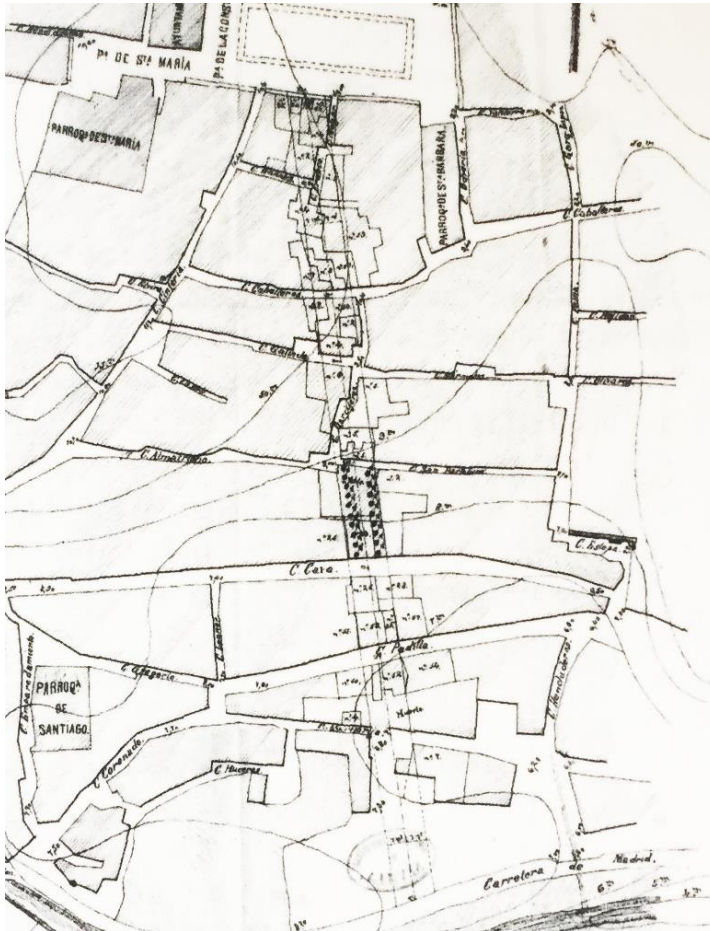


Figure 7. Plan for the Construction of the Avenue "Miguel de Cervantes", Écija
Source: Plan made by Francisco Torres, in 1881. Currently, it is saved in the Municipal Archive of Écija.

New Symbols in the City: The Contemporary Heritage

As a result of the transformations experienced after the disentailment processes, the cities were modernized. This would produce changes in their urbanism, so that other similar types of architecture would be generated. Just as the conventual phenomenon appeared during the Middle Ages as a response to the demands of the society of the time, financial architecture is born from these new

41. J. Méndez Varo, *La avenida Miguel de Cervantes. La calle "Nueva". Cien años en la memoria, 1912-2012* (Écija: Asociación Amigos de Écija, 2012), 25-26.

events. The economy is gradually changing from being productive and international to financial and global. The rise of new governmental, fiscal and international relations systems demand new buildings.⁴² Banks and companies are beginning to form the basis of a new power that will seek to establish itself in cities.

Like the conventual spaces, once symbols of power, which sought to be located in the most important cities, the new financial power will act in the same way. It will seek a position in front of public spaces, squares and avenues in which they can be easily visible and recognizable. It is inevitable to find a bank or any other entity in the square or main road of each of the capitals and medium-sized cities of Andalusia. Today it is a social system on which the citizen depends. At first, the population went to the conventual centers with prayers and alms. Now they go to the same spaces only suppressing the convent and the prayers. It is interesting to see how the transformation of space serves to accommodate various representative powers in the city it occupies from the large scale to the small.

It should be noted that these buildings, constructed in the middle of the 20th century, are a new heritage, called contemporary heritage, which would be added to the older buildings. These buildings do not have widespread heritage recognition.⁴³ There are several handicaps that these buildings encounter to be recognized as a cultural legacy to be preserved: temporal proximity, a language without ornamentation or for having been built during the period of the Europe of totalitarian regimes.⁴⁴

In this sense, and abundant to a greater extent in the mentioned Plaza Nueva in Seville (Figure 8), the financial power begins to become obvious. In its surroundings would appear the construction of the Bank of Spain building, redefining the image of the Plaza de San Francisco in its contact with the *Avenida de la Constitución*. This building was built at the beginning of the 20th century between 1918 and 1928 under the project of Antonio Illanes del Río.⁴⁵ It would be only the prelude to what would happen around the city's representative public spaces. Later years the banking power would build buildings erected as symbols of the power settled in the historic center of the city. These buildings could emerge once the openings of squares or avenues in the inherited plot advanced towards its consolidation.

But these buildings, which are now becoming contemporary heritage, are not only inserted on urban transformations of previous centuries or already

42. O. Ugarteche Galarza, *Arquitectura financiera internacional. Una genealogía (1850-2015)* Colección Inter Pares (Madrid: Akal, 2015), 10-22.

43. D. Navas-Carrillo, "Más allá de la connotación franquista. Una reflexión sobre la patrimonialización de las barriadas promovidas por el Instituto Nacional de Viviendas," in *Revista PH. Boletín del Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico* (Sevilla: Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, 2019), 246.

44. J. A. Rodríguez-Lora, "El patrimonio contemporáneo en la construcción de la memoria democrática. La arquitectura que pervivió a los cambios de régimen del siglo XX," in *Revista PH. Boletín del Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico* (Sevilla: Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, 2019), 243.

45. Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, *Banco de España*. Guía Digital. Retrieved from: <https://guiadigital.iaph.es/bien/inmueble/21900/sevilla/sevilla/banco-de-espana>. [Accessed 4 May 2019].

consolidated sites. Heritage cities such as Seville would not cease to transform their historical fabric during the 20th century. Thus, in the Andalusian city, we can find cases of openings such as *Calle Imagen* in the mid-20th century, or the current *Avenida de la Constitución* -which ends in Plaza Nueva- in the first third of the 20th century. This last intervention modifies the historical urban physiognomy and would mean the disappearance of some heritage buildings.⁴⁶ These great urban interventions could be considered as a similar entity to the opening of squares in the old city.

Other cases could be added to the Bank of Spain, such as the Central Bank - on *Avenida de la Constitución*, just next to the first one - built in 1952 and designed by Vicente Traver Tomás,⁴⁷ or the Bank of Bilbao in 1950 building, in this case, a facade towards *Plaza Nueva*, proposed by the architect José Galnares Sagastizábal.⁴⁸

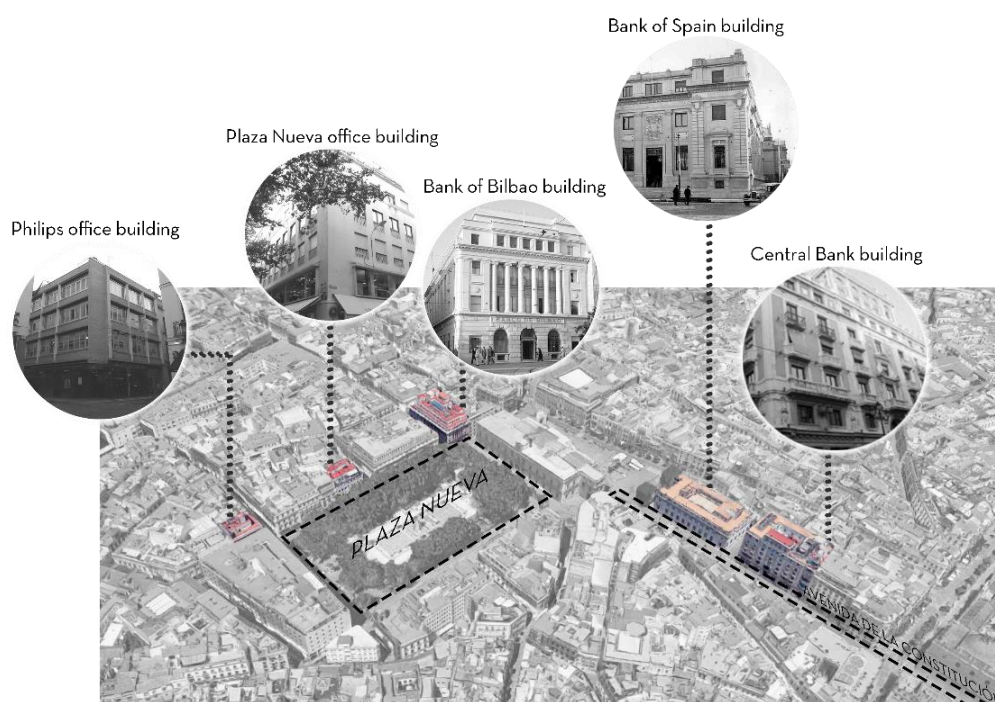


Figure 8. Buildings in Plaza Nueva and Avenida de la Constitución (Seville)

Source: Own elaboration with air flight from National Geographic Institute of Spain, 2018.

46. J. Tejido Jiménez, “La demolición a gran escala como técnica de intervención urbana. La apertura de la Avenida de la Constitución de Sevilla (1906-1927)” *Informes de la Construcción* 68, no. 541 (2016): e137.

47. V. Pérez Escolano, M. T. Pérez Cano, E. Mosquera Adell and J. R. Moreno Pérez, *50 años de arquitectura en Andalucía 1936-1986* (Sevilla: Consejería de Obras Públicas y Transportes, 1986), 283.

48. J. M. Aladro-Prieto, “Siglo XX: monumentalidad urbana y renovación arquitectónica,” in *El Ayuntamiento y la Plaza Nueva de Sevilla* (Seville: Fundación Cajasol, 2018), 79-80.



Figure 9. *Philips Office Building in the Northwest Corner of Plaza Nueva (Seville)*
Source: Own elaboration.



Figure 10. *Philips Office Building in the Northwest Corner of Plaza Nueva (Seville)*
Source: Own elaboration.

The appearance of the financial power in this heritage field will propitiate in later stages the come of other buildings to become a tertiary zone. Against the historicist style existing in these buildings until the middle of the century, the new office buildings installed in the Plaza Nueva would choose a new language. This new one was closer to modernity dispensing with ornamentation and purifying the compositions of facades. Among other buildings accommodated on the ancient convent of San Francisco will highlight the Philips office building (Figure 9) by

Alfonso Toro Buiza in 1960⁴⁹ or the known as office building in Plaza Nueva (Figure 10) by Ricardo Abaurre y Herreros de Tejada and Luis Díaz del Río, built in 1961.⁵⁰ Both buildings are currently included in the Iberian DOCOMOMO⁵¹ register, so they are erected as contemporary heritage elements that would come to add to so many others of a greater historical journey.

Conclusions

As a consequence of the evangelizing policy of the Church, the use of the monastic buildings created in Andalusia huge convent cities. The current city is the result of the urban construction generated by the convents and monasteries founded by religious orders; a phenomenon that has come to give them a true identity.

In the results of our research, we can notice that the replacement of the convent by new public spaces is a consequence of the need to generate new areas in the medieval urban area of cities. These facts took place mainly in those cities where the convent production has been greater and a high percentage of disentailed buildings existed. For this reason, Seville and Cordoba are clear examples of this urbanization process, which also takes place in the aforementioned city of El Puerto de Santa María.

As representative examples of these transformations, we have seen the cases of the Plaza Nueva in Seville or the Plaza de Isaac Peral, in El Puerto de Santa María. We have analyzed their evolution and transformation, in which their conversion from private to public spaces has allowed us to understand the heritage that conventual cities have transmitted us in the current urban planning. Nevertheless, being rigorous in our analysis of the average Andalusian convent cities, we wanted to point out that the substitution of the convent for the square has not always happened in all of them. That is why we have highlighted the city of Écija as a representative example of this situation. The convents disappeared and they were occupied quickly by other constructions, having Écija as an exceptional case.

The passing of the years means a change of power that materializes in the city. Religious power, represented by the convent buildings, disappears after the 19th century disentailments. A new power appeared in the city, the financial one. The new squares and avenues were the new scenario for the development of banks and offices. Exchanges and transformations took place from the convent to the square and financial buildings. The achievement of new spaces of opportunity in the city generated an architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries with a high architectural

49. Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, *Edificio de Oficinas Philips*. Guía Digital. Retrieved from: <https://guiadigital.iaph.es/bien/inmueble/21942>. [Accessed 4 May 2019].

50. Aladro-Prieto, "Siglo XX: monumentalidad urbana y renovación arquitectónica," 2018, 80.

51. DOCOMOMO is the acronym for Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement and is a non-profit organization initiated in 1988 in the Netherlands. Iberian DOCOMOMO is a subsidiary organization that focuses on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) (Foundation Iberian DOCOMOMO)

and heritage interest.

All this exchange produced in the urban plots superimposes layers of power materialized in buildings and spaces: convent, square and contemporary architecture. In this way, the current city is a witness of history and transfer of power, where the mixture of all these factors leaves an undeniable heritage trace.

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