

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ARQUITECTONICS: MIND, LAND & SOCIETY**  
**BUILDING THE SOCIAL LIFE: THE EMBODIED, CONFIGURATIVE AND DIALOGIC**  
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**Process and Plastic Transformation**  
**Contemporary Architecture in Mediterranean Historical Centers**

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Theme: DISEÑO E HISTORIA (MODERNIDAD Y TRADICIÓN) / DESIGN AND HISTORY (MODERNITY AND TRADITION)

Architectural and Urban Heritage is no longer a secondary field for research. The best architectural and urban designs are now growing in consolidated historical settings, where ideas are converted in objects. Consider the works by P. Zumthor, R. Piano or Wang Shu.

We welcome research about Historical Urban Forms transformations.

**Abstract**

Historical urban fabrics of Mediterranean cities have well-defined characters: they are a temporary synthesis of continuous and physical transformations, more or less homogeneous, recognizable and readable through the study of stratification and fusions that characterized their typical formative process, in relation with masonry material they are composed/constructed. Their conservation results positively effective if paradoxically they continue to transform themselves. How to make such transformations coherent, constructively and expressively, compared to the inherited reality they fit into? Through a certain kind of typological studies, it was possible to read and codify the type of process that has led to the formation, often only apparently complex, of historical centers that we are now protecting against any type of intervention. This work-in-progress paper intends to reflect on the coherent and processual use of reinforced concrete in the transformation process of historic centers. A material that has undergone a formative process that was concluded in its full and complete 'elastic' development, born and realized in the technologically-advanced areas of central and northern Europe, which ended up invading Mediterranean areas. The same material possesses a 'plastic' potential that, if architecturally well-used, makes coherent, necessary and congruent, interventions for the continuity of the life of such historical centers. Spanish 'plastic' contemporary architecture could represent, in my opinion, an interesting example to study.

**Introduction**

Talking today about Modernity and Tradition means referring to a precise way of thinking about time that is a fundamental parameter that always governs the action of man who transforms the reality he lives in. What is interesting about the research that I am beginning to develop on the city concerns the historic conception of urban transformations: Modernity breaks with the past consciously and contrasts with history. Modern Architecture, or as it was described by an inattentive and oblivious criticism, abandons tradition, mainly coinciding with the neoclassical one belonging to the previous period, to be seen as a novelty in sharp contrast to the way of designing in those years and from the historical context inside of which the modern design could possibly be inserted. Parallel research to the Modernist one, much less 'publicized', are instead in continuity with the consolidated and preexistent context: the 'other modernity' is not breaking with the past in order to contrast it but to interpret tradition to continue it in the future time. Here we could find a concept that will only later be systematized by some scholars and architects who will establish a converging method about 'reading' and 'designing' architecture. A method that narrows the categorical and sectoral differences that are exaggerated by the official Modernism, by undoing them in the 'reading' and 'organism' unitary concept of which we will give more precise definitions in the following text. Coming back to reflect on the relationship between tradition, modernity, history and process, recovering a valuable and fertile approach, reconsiders, in my opinion, the problem of historic centers by providing a possible, consistent and proportionate solution.

**Process: Theory, Methodology, Definitions**

Before moving forward with those notes, I would like to recall some definitions and terms that surround a precise investigation methodology and a definite research approach that are the basis of this synthesis. This method belongs to a codified legacy of a theoretical *corpus* of considerable practical interest and fertile operative application that has recovered a more 'humane' relation with the discipline of architecture: the core science of this method conforms to the study of anthropic behaviors of man, who has learned to transform nature and domesticate it. And when we refer to nature, we consider the availability of any

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material to be subject to the fundamental man's anthropic act that is 'selection': materials such as stone, soil, tree trunks, foliage, etc., have undergone a process of domestication, adaptation, transformation that has enabled it to be used for the protecting, living, ultimately, human purpose. The reading and analysis method encoded such transformations, restating a global vision defined through a process. A process that, logically and necessarily, binds various degrees of transformation: not a series of episodes, therefore, placed side by side to form a summation of parts, but a sequence that binds and merges into an ever-new unity which degrees of transformation are no longer recognizable. The process of transformation directly concerns the matter of which it is recognized the attitude to be transformed into material, which becomes an element that compose, at last, the organism.

Depending on the type of matter available in a given area, it is possible to identified two types of processes: a 'masonry-plastic' process bonded to the stone matter and the other 'wooden-elastic' one, related to the wooden matter. Let's imagine man in a territory where the available matter in large quantities is stone: territories evidently with poor vegetation and therefore a small amount of wood. Man that lives in these territories has learned to exploit the nature or the natural configuration of matter, to satisfy security and safety requirements that became increasingly important once man became sedentary. Thus, existing lugs and cavities already helped human beings, for example, to protect themselves against atmospheric agents: in other words, man selects certain natural configurations for that particular end, selects the 'matter' that, in this way, becomes 'material'. There is still no human work that will characterize the future excavation of caverns or cavities in the soil, to overcome the lack of natural convenient configuration of the reality: man selects the soil and transforms it, and cavities inhabited by many Mediterranean territories testify this type of process. Very often, in desert areas, excavated matter is organized above the cavity, becoming material for human habitation; in other situations matter, accidentally encountered, is logically organized to form increasingly complex constructions. It is the case of the typical dry stone walls, formed by stone piles simply stacked and juxtaposed in mutual solidarity to form fences, simple land divisions or early rudimentary constructions such as *trulli*: the material is selected in relation with the technological and technical skills of man and the time he acts.

As the work becomes larger and the techniques for obtaining it develop, the 'material' becomes an 'element': there is a need to search for material and, for example, to extract it from a quarry employing an increasingly technical and technological effort, obtaining rough material that will be worked in series, finally producing stone blocks. Those will ultimately specialize their functions in relation to the position they occupy in the construction: the logical transformation process will produce different shapes of blocks used in the specific and constructive nodes of the building and it will form larger blocks for greater compression strength, curved blocks that will counter the pushing forces. Elements, once specialized, will involve the architectural organism. The same process could be followed by considering wood as the other matter that has undergone the same kind of transformation, but obtaining quite different characters. Wood, unlike stone, imposes a different relationship with the man that has to learn domesticating it: the first shelter is the one offered by the dense foliage of trees that protects man from the atmospheric agents. The matter is the one most widely encountered, the one at the disposal of the selective critical act of man: the more flexible, the more exquisite trunks of trees can be bent and knotted at the top, composing the first rustic wooden structure that will be closed by the same harvested foliage. Matter becomes material when, again, undergoes this critical anthropic selection process and constitutes, organizing the construction, the first 'elastic' architectural organism. Even in this case, the most critical research and transformation work makes the indistinct material a defined geometrically element. Elements will assume different shapes and functions in a wooden-elastic organism, specializing their constructive and static role.

We pause for a moment on the definition of the word 'organism' that does not lead to a biological analogy about the biological functioning of man, nor a mimetic analogy in which shapes of nature are transposed into architecture. The definition we use here overcomes this danger and reaches a more general and even deeper level: the organism is the unity of the parties that necessarily collaborate to the same purpose, that is architecture. Organicity is the quality that measures the level of collaboration of the parties in the unity; at the other pole of the dyad there is seriality, which instead determines the least degree of collaboration and overall implication of elements in the construction. We must emphasize the opportunity of this theoretical approach that abstracts and synthesizes the variability of the reality that is affected by the contingent, which is imperfect and, ultimately, human. It is interesting to study what lies between these two dyads that define absolute reference points and perimeter definition lines that allow to reach a certain critical awareness: there is no real 'organic' architecture in the real world, as there is no architecture absolutely serial. There are, however, an infinity of variants that transform themselves by adhering to the physical-material and anthropo-social context of each particular territory. This will be considered as the result of anthropic act on nature and will define a geographic-cultural area as a portion of a territory in which it is possible to recognize a high number

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of common characters in materials, in elements, in structures of buildings. This synthesis, as we will see later, will be justified by scientific researches on numerous case studies.

**Wooden-Elastic, Masonry-Plastic**

So far we have seen how it is possible logically identify a process of transformation that starts from matter and comes to the composition of the organism. We have seen how much man, first unconsciously and more and more consciously, actively acts in this transformation process: it begins through the selecting process of the material that, increasingly complex, undergoes a process of specialization of the that material, always by man. Material and its intrinsic structural and physical composition play a fundamental role in the type of transformation: the particles that constitute the material aggregate and determine the mechanical and physical behaviors at various scales. Wood is generally composed of longitudinal fibers, that is a predominant dimension on the other two, banding together simply by joining each other vertically. It produces a global affinity of matter that becomes material and then becomes an element that will only propose, on a larger scale, the character that distinguishes its internal composition: the elements man has succeeded in codifying transforming wood are essentially linear, discrete and repeatable, iterated, serial and ideally interchangeable. The resulting behavior is called elastic, about elements that recover their initial configuration to cease the forces imposed on them.

The stone material consists of almost homogeneous and three-dimensional particles, in which no dimension prevails a lot on the other. As a result, these particles tend to share, when aggregating with adjacent ones, more than one side by setting a three-dimensional structure that resists in the space without giving priority ideally to any direction. Stone material tends to be transformed in a different way: stone elements are flat or curved, they are 'individualized' and continuous, and, crucially, they are linked, when aggregated, by a necessity link that forces them to cooperate. The mechanical behavior of these elements is called 'plastic', since at the end of the imposed stresses the material does not recover the initial configuration but proposes a new and globally different one. Structures and organisms can identify characters that depend on the composition of matter: hence, we could have buildings with 'serial' vocation when they are generally composed by elastic materials (wooden, ferrous,...) and buildings with 'organic' vocation when they are generally composed by stone materials (stone blocks, bricks,...). We could now introduce and understand the concept of 'cultural area' intended as a part of a territory in which it is possible to recognize a large number of common characters in the elements, in the structures of buildings.

Moving now to consider the most used modern material, that is reinforced concrete, we must note the coexistence of these two distinct characters we have just described within a single material. It is well known that concrete is a strange union of two materials, iron and cement, whose mechanical behaviors are basically opposed: iron is an elastic material while concrete is plastic. These give life, joining themselves, to a new material that maintains, potentially, both physical behaviors. The Romans were the first to take full advantage of all the concrete plastic potential in their monumental architectures we all know. Then, after a period of oblivion, this technique was re-opened at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution by updating it and obtaining the reinforced concrete still used today. From an architectural point of view, this material has undergone a very complex process that has firstly developed and interpreted its 'elastic' nature, deriving from the Northern cultural area which was, at that time, technologically more advanced: first, the Modern Movement and subsequently the International Style codified the use of the elastic structure, consisting of reinforced concrete beams and pillars. Blamefully with an inadvertent criticism and instantaneous communicative diffusion system, this process has hidden and stifled the experimentation on the 'plastic' potential of reinforced concrete which, in the meantime, was carried out in Mediterranean cultural areas.

**Mediterranean Plastic Architecture**

Today, after a series of architectural classifications, all due to superficial – that have concerned the surface of things – critical approaches (Post-Modernism, Neo-Brutalism, Neo-Classicism,...) we are returning to studying architecture from the analysis of the matter of which it is composed. Entering inside the tectonic mechanisms that organize various architectonic materials by giving to the informal a controlled dimension defined by man, has allowed to define a few unsolved points. In my opinion, based on considerations made so far, it is possible today to talk about Mediterranean plastic architecture. We could consider the Mediterranean a geographic-cultural area that is defined by typical characters that could be identified in buildings that are plastic constructions in which every element, homogeneous and generally stony, assumes a specific role and a specific form in the architectural organism.

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They are masonry constructions that define space through the definition of walls: adherence between matter and anthropic transformation is at the highest level and this could be seen both in historical and contemporary construction, far from the communicative bursts that dominate the world of today architecture. The organic character of traditional Mediterranean stone architectures rereads today in reinforced concrete architecture: this allows to retrieve the anthropic relationship that is established between matter and man through that 'static sensitivity' that approaches and unites them. The reinforced concrete wall could represent the maximum integration of a traditional wall discretization, composed by a finite number of stones, in which the two different materials – concrete and steel – take their precise forms and roles: the homogeneous part is the one that resists to compression strengths, the fibrous one resists to the traction strengths, collaborating together actively for the same purpose that is architectural organism. The character of reinforced concrete construction composed by load-bearing walls resumes and actualizes the traditional wall construction character, due to the use of stone.

### **Plastic City**

The 'plastic' character of organic architectures could be also identified on a larger scale, involving the entire urban extension. We could consider the city as the result of the aggregation of smaller scale elements represented by buildings. The type of aggregation involving individual buildings along with the structure of paths that define them are the fundamental data that measures the degree of organicity of urban space. So, in my opinion, it is possible to recognize 'elastic' cities and 'plastic' cities, depending on how buildings, that are smaller scale elements, are aggregated and transformed into urban fabric. The 'elastic' city is composed by elements that could be replaced, added or modified, without producing a new overall configuration of the city, while the 'plastic' city is composed by elements can be replaced, added or changed, producing a new overall configuration of the city. Many examples of traditional elastic city are present in those areas where the most widespread material was (and is) wood and which gave rise to typical half-timbered structures, to Gothic buildings, and finally, with new elastic materials such as iron and steel, to the city of skyscrapers, that could be considered linear elements, discrete, interchangeable inside an urban fabric with a minimum degree of aggregation.

The 'plastic' city, on the other hand, is characterized by an organic behavior involving all elements of the aggregate which form a new urban unity where parts are no longer isolable without thinking of having to involve the whole system. We could recognize traditional plastic cities, that are urban organisms formed from co-operating tissues, on which it is impossible to act individually, since they were formed by many units that have been recast, stratified, transformed: the plastic city changes configuration every time it undergoes a processual transformation. While it is possible to consider a contemporary metropolis, whose urban tissues are made up of skyscrapers as individual urban elements that do not alter, when replaced, the relationship with the total, as an elastic city, it is much more difficult to identify a contemporary plastic city. It is the result of a continuous process of transformations that involves the pre-existing urban structure and produces new cities every time they intervene: this is much more evident in the Mediterranean historical centers whose characters belong to this peculiar constructive and anthropic world.

It was interesting, then, try to find architectonic interventions in consolidated historical and plastic contexts such as the Mediterranean one which, however, were able to establish the closest relationship with the existing, using contemporary techniques and technologies. This kind of interventions intend taking advantage of reinforced concrete plastic potential: this implies organic planning thinking, where space is defined by own construction, but at the same time imposes a tight confrontation with the existing one that it is not a simple urban scene and facade, but actively collaborates, physically and constructively, with the definition of new and temporary urban unity. Contemporary Spanish architecture, made of reinforced concrete load-bearing walls, may in my opinion be subjected to a first analytical and critical scan: the four following cases would demonstrate a new approach to the problem of the transformation of historic centers that somehow come re-activated by these contemporary transformations, more or less questionable, but all with a plastic and organic character.

### **Case Studies**

#### **Eduardo de Miguel Arbonés | El Musical Cultural Center, Valencia, 2004**

The building designed by Eduardo de Miguel Arbonés is part of the building fabric of El Cabanyal-El Canyameler urban tissue in Valencia. These two names are indicative of the planimetric fusion of two small settlements built on the coast and inhabited by fishermen. The regular grid of routes identifies an urban fabric of small houses that, after some fires of the late

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eighteenth century, replaced the previous *barracas* built with perishable materials. These two settlements were formed around two small special poles, represented by a worship site: from earlier times it is known the presence of two small churches, on which recent modern buildings have been erected. The churches are located at a barycentric distance from irrigation channels that physically define the limits of the two centers, Cabanyal and Canyameler, that then have been transformed into carriageways. The urban fabric develops in a regular way and opens in some way in front of the worship building that is the urban pole par excellence. The Musical Cultural Center is engraved transversally into a small irregular lot, adjacent to the Nuestra Señora del Rosario Church, overlooking the square that has the same name.

The building engages on the façade of a pre-existing building that was restored, removing all internal old walls, maintaining the orthogonal entrance axis that rotates in correspondence with the entrance hall. The technical spaces and the offices are placed in a small volume that occupies the width of a lot, reconstructing the urban prospect on the relative path. The construction results therefore, in a certain limit, 'plastically' inserted into the pre-existing building fabric: it retrieves, even partially, the masonry construction on which the new building is engraved and enters the context, adhering physically to it, reaching a new balance, both social and material: to the special polar religious function, represented by the church building, it was added the special one related to theatrical and musical activities, represented by the new special building. This fact contributes to increase the urban polar role of the square. In addition, the building is designed and made by reinforced concrete: but there are no pillars or beams structures, and this indicates a particular constructive character of the building that is plasticity. And plasticity tends towards organicity that unites construction and space into a single architectural act: load-bearing walls become overwhelmed and emptied, enabling services and vertical paths to be embedded in the interior of walls, while simultaneously enabling the lighting of the room.



Fig. 1 - Eduardo de Miguel Arbonés, El Musical Cultural Center, Valencia, 2004. Axis and urban nodes. Drawing by the author.

**Exit Architects | Museo de Semana Santa, Hellín, Albacete, Spain, 2011**

The Semana Santa Museum is, again, engraved into the historic urban fabric of the city of Hellín, located on a territorial route that joins Albacete and Murcia. A typically Mediterranean fabric, characterized by numerous transformations that affected the city and its historical events. The core of the old Arabian castle lies on the top of the hill. From here start urban paths and fabric on which it engage, consisting of row houses, resulting from subsequent transformations of probable Arabian courtyard houses. At the foot of the hill, in a nodal position, stays the worship building, the Church of the Assumption: this special building has its structuring axis on the north-south orientation, with the apse situated on the north and the alleged entrance to the south, probably perpendicular to an hypothetical climbing path, now disappeared and absorbed by urban fabric plastic transformations, that arrived to the summit of the hill. Today the church occupies a nodal position due to the convergence of several territorial routes that reach it: the entrance is located now on the east facade, rotating the previous axis that generated the ancient entrance on the south: this plastic internal transformation reinforces the node of the square that opens in front of it. The new building fits into the basic urban fabric that looks forward to the southern previous church entrance, ideally recapturing its axiality, structuring internal spaces and specializing their functions. The entrance is slightly 'moved' to the square, while it forms inside the large entrance hall restoring the old facade of a little pre-existing building and incorporating it into the new one. Despite this small critical point that we have to emphasize and lowers the degree of plastic transformation we are analyzing, again even in this case the load-bearing structure is conceived and made of reinforced 'plastic' concrete: there are no pillars and beams that make up the

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well-known skeleton structure, but large sects and walls which define and close the space while supporting the cover and allow the passage of light inside the building, simultaneously.

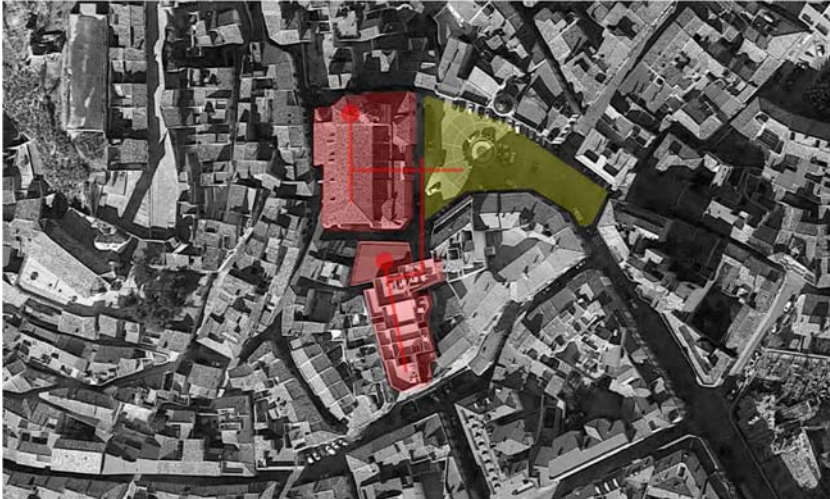


Fig. 2 - Exit Architects, Museo de Semana Santa, Hellín, Albacete, Spain, 2011. Axis and urban nodes. Drawing by the author.

**J. C. Sancho y Sol Madrideojos S-M.A.O. | MACA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Alicante, Alicante, 2010**

The next case analyzed in this research lies in the historical urban fabric of the city of Alicante. The long history of transformations that generated it has made more difficult to read the context, but not impossible. What matters is that the basic urban fabric develops and forms at the foot of the small fortified mountain by the various peoples who have conquered Alicante, a fabric of which it is possible to identify its masonry and organic character. On today matrix route, Calle Rafael Altamira, on which the Ayuntamiento of Alicante special building is attested, there is the Church of Santa Maria, set on the previous mosque, with the structuring axis of the longitudinal internal space that is parallel to the matrix route. In front of the church there is the nodal space of the church-square, and on the north facade is set the plastic intervention that in this case involves the physical structures of a small pre-existing building, once again organically incorporated into the new museum's architectural unity. A plastic unity achieved thanks to the use of reinforced concrete: form-resistant boxes, large wall sects and floor planes that divide the vertical space, allowing a filtered light and reaching to illuminate even the lower floors. The distributive plan is clear and gives a coherently interpreted expressivity on the façade, perfectly inserted into the historical context. A contemporary building that re-elaborates a materic language, for example, of the lining stone that unifies the prospect without hiding its contemporary being.



Fig. 3 - J. C. Sancho y Sol Madrideojos S-M.A.O., MACA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Alicante, Alicante, 2010. Axis and urban nodes. Drawing by the author.

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**Ignacio Mendaro Corsini | Centro Cultural Templo de San Marcos y Archivo Municipal, Toledo, 2000**

The transformation that affects the old church of St. Mark in Toledo does not directly involve the basic fabric but restores a new urban balance through the attainment of a new architectural unity. However, by analyzing Toledo historical urban fabric, one realizes the clear formal configuration of the city that is the result of a crystallized process: it is relatively straightforward to read into the urban fabric the presence of the courtyard house with its numerous variants, which, in relation to the degree of its transformation, determines the shape of the city. It is relatively immediate to identify routes and nodes that connect churches, convents, palaces that occupy nodal positions and establish an organic necessity link between the different parties involved. Plasticity is detectable in the physical relationship that these buildings establish with the surrounding tissue, a collaboration relationship that involves the entire urban dimension. The intervention is, in this case, the transformation of a former convent complex, typically composed of the special building of the church (St. Mark's Church) and the serial building of the convent (Cloister of the Trinity) demolished during the 1960s. The new construction, conceived and built in reinforced concrete flat walls, takes advantage of the traces of the old cloister to reclaim its directions and foundations. The distribution of the interior space is related to the space hierarchy that the construction itself imposes: the cross-section reveals that the full-height spaces are intended for reading and consultation, illuminated by a soft and filtered light, reflected on the concrete surface itself through interposition planes that divert the luminous flux inside the building; those spaces that are destined for storage are masonry/massive conceived, enclosed by a concrete box construction. Plasticity is expressed through the attention that the architect places on the use of architectural details that seek to encode a new language, linked to the expression of constructive techniques, for example linked to the specific use of the formwork, to the surface finish of the prospectus, to the coherent pigmentation of the cement derived from the traditional block material of the existing building, obtaining an organically contextual adherence to the surrounding tissue.



Fig. 4 - Ignacio Mendaro Corsini, Centro Cultural Templo de San Marcos y Archivo Municipal, Toledo, 2000. Superposition of the current plan on the old plan of the cloister, over the Toledo orthophoto. Editing by the author.

**Partial Conclusions**

Trying to synthesize the results obtained through the first analysis of this type, linked to a new and unprecedented organic reading method on the peculiar plastic use of reinforced concrete, we could partially conclude with the following statements. Having clarified and circumscribed the meaning of 'mediterranean' and having tried to clarify the meaning of 'plastic city', and therefore of plastic transformation, we could now identify a kind of process, which we can call now 'plastic', which deals with the way in which Mediterranean cities are transformed. The physical inclusion of pre-existing elements in the new design also applies to static, global, and local functions, referring to individual elements (walls, floors,...) and entire buildings that behave, increasing the reference scale, as static larger scale elements that govern the global balance of urban tissues in Mediterranean cities. An opportunity to intervene, among many, that does not stop the natural evolution of the Mediterranean cities and their central pulsating core: 'musealization', determined by a presumed politically correct moral affliction, ended up embalming entire historical centers that in the meantime were considered whole monuments to preserve. A certain type of conservation and the

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widespread and effective inability to read and to intervene critically on the existing urban tissues, without the weight of any kind of reverence for a past that has always transformed itself, has produced distorting results.

We could now find out some interventions that apparently seem to be in a relationship of mutual respect to pre-existence, but completely deviate from it, in order to preserve its memory. This, in my opinion, suggests a physical detachment that precedes the death of Mediterranean urban fabrics, which lives not only thanks to social strata, but also, and above all, respect to an architectural point of view, that is deepened in this paper: the organic, material, constructive aspect which unifies all parts in a unity, no longer isolable. In 'elastic' historic centers, belonging to the Nordic elastic world, where individual elements – the buildings that compose the serial urban fabric of row houses – are still identifiable, it is possible and consistently permissible to intervene 'elastically': it means that the intervention, punctually performed, it may not affect adjacent buildings, it can resolve itself on its own unit, alongside all other units that make up the serial urban fabric of the Nordic historical centers. It is therefore not possible to confuse those two types of intervention that belong to two types of different formative process and therefore, in my opinion, could be consistently used once certain conditions have been identified. By reducing the theme of this research to the Iberian region and specifically to the Spanish geographic-cultural area, it has been seen that active transformations of historical centers are coherent with the process of transformation that has always characterized them: a process that involved the today plastic material par excellence, that is reinforced concrete. By exploiting its plastic potential, through the flat and planar structural conception, reinforced concrete forces the architect to an organic and unitary thought that not only unifies the space and construction of a single unitarian element but places it in necessary constructive and static relationship with the preexisting elements and with the adjoining context.

This relationship, when triggered, finds the final balance through the expressive unification operated by the wise architect who turns critically, or tries to do it more or less consciously, the contemporary constructive act in architectural language. In my view, the way outlined by these four interventions could yield a coherent response to the current Mediterranean historical centers transformation demand. Historical centers can not afford to undergo an acritic conservation regardless, irrespective of any, equally illogical, transformation that is not coherent, also and above all constructively, to the context in which it is inserted. Once this type of critical reading has been established, the problem moves, in my opinion, on the ability to analyze the Mediterranean constructed heritage, on the ability to read critically the characters that distinguish them. The examples recognized here show a line of research that, in my opinion, could make important developments and could contribute to the theme of the continuity in transformation of the historic heritage of the Mediterranean. The reinforced concrete, when used plastically, recovers the typical masonry character of the stone material and succeeds, on a larger scale, reaching organicity in collaboration with the same stone material that involves the city. It is about developing a critical sensitivity, in this case 'static' that we have lost, that we could measure and transform the existing organic world to continue plastically its life.

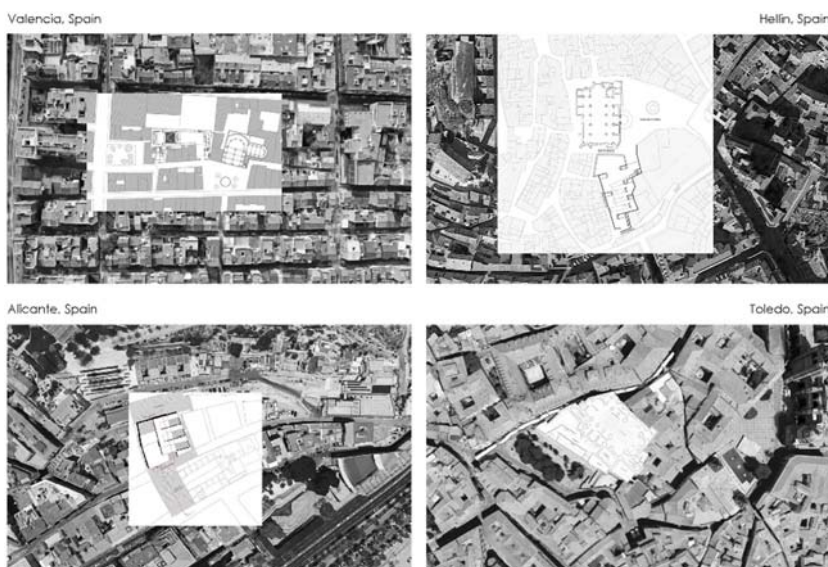


Fig. 5 - Brief overview of the four 'plastic' interventions. Editing by the author.



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