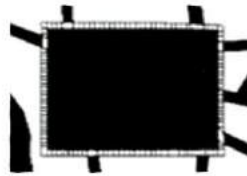
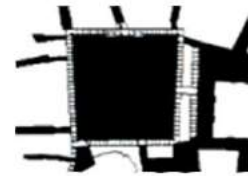




Valladolid



Madrid



Salamanca

The Plazas Mayores in Valladolid, Madrid, and Salamanca

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In this paper, I will discuss the Spanish Plaza Mayores, using three examples to analyze their formation and elements. The three Plaza Mayores that I will present include Valladolid, the first great plaza in Spain, Madrid, the iconic plaza of the capital of Spain, and Salamanca, the most beloved plaza in Spain. Before I begin this analysis, it is incumbent upon me to explain the history and formation of public spaces to better understand the crucial role of public squares, namely the Plaza Mayores.

The first public space noted in architectural history is in the ancient Greek city-states, the Greek Agora. The Agora was often framed by a stoa, a colonnade covered outdoor walkway. (See figure 1a.) The Agora was the center for political issues, such as assembling for military duty or to hear official statements of the ruling king. The Agora was also used for commercial functions, such as a marketplace where traders bargained, and merchants kept shops to sell their goods. (See figures 1b and 1c.) The name, Agora, is derived from two Greek words: *agorazo*, which translates to “I shop” and *agoreuo*, which translates to “I speak in public”. If the word is analyzed even further, *agora* in ancient Greek can be translated as “to meet”, which insinuates this final definition of the Agora: “a public place located in the city where citizens went to exchange their opinion on public and private affairs.” (*Ananiadou-Tzimopolou, Yerolympos*) The concept and functions of the Agora have been replicated with new names throughout history since the Greeks as “...citizens have never ceased to show their fondness for city squares, or to demand the creation of new ones.” (*Kowalski/Mancuso*) The Agora continued to live and take form through the names of the Roman Forum, squares, piazzas, plazas, parks, and of course, the Plaza Mayores.

Before the Spanish developed the concept of the Plaza Mayor, the architects and engineers of the Middle Ages were forgetting to include a public square in their city infrastructure. Franco Mancuso called the Plaza Mayor a “return to democracy”. (*Mancuso*) He emphasized that a city cannot be democratic without a public center in which citizens have the freedom to discuss and exchange opinions and ideas. “The Plaza Mayor not only revitalized important central voids, but also introduced the first large rectangular and geometric space in the heart of the city.” (*Rubert de Ventos*) The fascination of plazas grew until every city in Spain had a Plaza Mayor by the 13th century. Plaza Mayores not only changed the

face of Spain, but it was also the source of inspiration for the rebirth of plazas all over the world and a major contribution to urbanism, especially throughout Europe and Latin America.

The term *Plaza Mayor* literally means “main square” in modern Spanish. There were a few requirements needed for the plaza to be the main square of the city. Firstly, it was crucial for the plaza to be in the city center. Being that its main purpose was to serve the public on a democratic level, it needed to be attainable for all to use the plaza for a marketplace, festivals or to meet others. Additionally, there are studies that show the plaza and the administrative center, such as the palace or the law court, were intentionally located near one another. This proves the Plaza Mayores’ second function of providing a space for political events and cultural entertainment, such as city council, executions, bullfighting, cultural festivals, and intellectual/ religious debates. During the Spanish Inquisition, the space was used for the ceremonial burning of prohibited book, which I’m sure was the major cause of Plaza Mayore’s constant and frequent fire issues. It was for these specific events that the Plaza Mayores were often paired with enclosing balconies, which served as “grandstands” in order to allow for the maximum amount to people to witness and enjoy the staged events. The size of the plaza was important as well. The Plaza Mayores were built large enough to serve as a military parade ground or as a gathering place during a crisis or fiesta. Lastly, the Plaza Mayores were built in the Spanish Baroque style, in a geometric shape of an adaptable rectangle, according to the site’s existing streets and topography.

The first great plaza in Spain belongs to the city of Valladolid. The plaza was first noted in the mid-13th century, when the main market moved from Plaza de Santa Maria to Market Square. In 1561, there was a great fire at the old Market Square which deconstructed most of the plaza. Philip II instructed Francisco de Salamanca, the royal architect, to urbanize this space as a marketplace, and as a backdrop for public celebrations. The Plaza Mayor of Valladolid is still used as a meeting place and marketplace today.

The architectural elements of the plaza are simple and predictable, as it attempted to conform to the existing street patterns and old market’s dimensions. The plaza is rectangular in plan, with the dimensions of 121.92 meters in length and 81.07 meters in width with eleven unmarked entrances. (See figures 2a and 2f.) The plaza’s facades are typically 3 or 4-story residential housing buildings with large

balconies to facilitate the viewing of the show, resting on granite columns. (See figure 2b.) There is a statue of the founder of the city, Pedro Ansúrez, in center of the plaza which was constructed in 1903 by Aurelio Carretero. The Plaza Mayor of Valladolid served as a model for the construction of Plaza Mayor of Madrid.

When the main market moved to Market Square, (the future location of Plaza Mayor Valladolid,) some renovations needed to be addressed. (See figure 2a'.) There were 5 streets that merged together, creating a central space. The diagram shows how the plaza was formed in this location. Using the streets as axis points, the rectangular plan oriented itself so that its corners matched the existing 3 streets. The fourth corner fell in the midpoint of the 4th and 5th street. You can see how this created an interesting street formation for the future in the current plan. (See figures 2a' and 2f.)

The plan of the old Market Square before the fire of 1561 revealed some information regarding the construction of the Plaza Mayor Valladolid, including its entrances and its columns. The Market Square had 14 entrances, while the current Plaza Mayor only has 11. This shows the powerful effect of the 1561 fire. (See figures 2c and 2f.) We can easily assume that 3 or more buildings on the left side of the old market map have been destroyed in the fire, leaving little reason to continue those particular streets into the new plaza. Another aspect that can be derived from the old Market Square's plan is understanding the placement of the columns throughout the square and its surrounding areas. It does seem interesting that the plaza's columns continue outside the square and into the streets, creating an odd shape of its journey. By analyzing the old plan, we can see that the columns continue into other public plazas and spaces, thus explaining their purposes. (See figure 2c.) The columns serve as a divider in the city, indicting the public space as opposed to a residential or government space. It also offers the merchants privacy and protection of their goods for sale. This also clarifies why the entrances of the Plaza Mayor are unmarked by any architectural element, other than the buildings themselves which create the void. Being that the public space and marketplace continue to exist outside the plaza, there is no need to mark the plaza as a public space independent from its surroundings. (See figure 2g.)

Through its section and elevation, the facades of the Plaza Mayor of Valladolid tell another story, by bringing history into the mix. If we analyze the façade in section, there is a sense of symmetry within the horizontal dimension. This responds to a hierarchical system of openings. The ground level offers the biggest opening through two columns. The first floor has balconies with railings, the second floor contains large windows with railings, and the third floor only has small simple windows. This can be said respectively about the height of the level too. (See figure 2d.) If we cross reference this with the history of elevators, we can begin to understand the hierarchy of the levels. Being that elevators were not invented until 1853, there was a higher demand for the lower floors, therefore becoming a more expensive location. The higher you needed to climb, the cheaper the view. This indicated the importance of the lower levels over the upper levels. We would almost expect to see the same symmetry in the elevation as well, but this is not the case. These buildings differ in height and size being that the square evolved from the existing market and surrounding buildings. If a building survived the 1561 fire, it remained as one of the plaza's façades. (See figure 2e.)

Being that the Plaza Mayor of Valladolid is one of the largest in Spain, it set the iconic example for the construction of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid. Madrid was not always the capital of Spain, which is why it did not have a Plaza Mayor to begin with. The foundation of the plaza started in 1577 when Philip II asked architect Juan de Herrera to remodel the busy chaotic countryside area of the old Plaza del Arrabal. Being that he moved the capital of Spain from Toledo to Madrid, he requested a Plaza Mayor, specifically for court purposes and to legitimize Madrid as a capital. Juan Gomez de Mora continued the project. After a series of fires, Juan de Villanueva rebuilt the plaza to what it is today. The plaza was used for executions, bullfights, and municipal and cultural functions. Currently, Puerta del Sol is the more popular and active square in Madrid for community events, and Plaza Mayor is used as a historical attraction and public space.

The plan of Plaza Mayor of Madrid is rectangular with 129 meters in length and 94 meters in width, with 6 out of 9 of its entrances marked by emphasized arches which break the uniformity of the façade. (See Figures 3a, 3b and 3e.) The entrance arches create an enclosed plaza, different than that of

Valladolid(, which suggested a larger public space, as we previously discussed). This can be explained in the strong political role that the Plaza Mayor of Madrid played over its public role. (See Figure 3e.) The façade walls of the plaza are continuous harmonious 4 story buildings, containing 237 balconies facing the plaza. The distribution of the openings on the façade are similar to the hierarchy arrangement of that in Valladolid. At ground level, there is a uniform granite and limestone colonnade, with 4 identical towers on the north and south facades. The arches under the four towers are slightly larger than the surrounding arches to emphasize the towers more profoundly. There is a bronze statue in the center of the square of Philip III, created by Jean Boulogne and Pietro Tacca in 1616. (See figure 3b.)

To understand the entrances and openings of the plaza in greater depth, we need to analyze the old Plaza del Arrabal and cross-reference it with the plan of Plaza Mayor of Madrid. In the old Plaza del Arrabal maps we can see the original topography of the area as well as the existing streets, which the entrances of the current plaza are responding to. (See figure 3c.) By knowing the topography of the space, we can also conclude why the steps are where they are. Since Plaza Mayor of Madrid is a flat plaza it needed to deal with the issue of topography through steps. Being that there used to be a river by the lower left of the map, it makes sense that there are 33 steps by that entrance. (See figure 3f.) Additionally, there are 15 steps towards Calle Girona on the upper right of the map for the same reason of topography. (See figure 3d.)

As we analyze the entrances even further, we see that most of the entrances are marked with an arch of 3 meters larger than the rest of the arches in the plaza in symmetric locations. An interesting observation is that there is only one arch which is measures 1.5 meters shorter than the other large arches. (See figure 3d.) After some study, I noticed that this particular arch was not an entrance and did not lead to any streets, but to a wall. (See figure 3d.) This fact can be proved in both the historical map of Plaza Arrabal and the current Plaza Mayor plan.

There were also three additional entrances that did not have an exaggerated arch. Further research explained why this was the case. Firstly, these three entrances did not coincide with the symmetry of the other entrances, and it would not have the same geometric affect if they have been emphasized like the

other entrances. But nonetheless, these were still entrances that predated Plaza Mayor, and were therefore preserved. These entrances led to the Bakery House, the dominating building of the plaza, Calle de Zaragoza, and to the 33 steps down to Calle de Cuchilleros. (See figure 3f.)

The final Plaza Mayor which will be discussed is the most beloved of all, the Plaza Mayor in Salamanca. Felipe V ordered the construction of the plaza in 1729 with the intention of using it primarily for bullfighting. Two architects, Andres Garcia de Quinones and Alberto de Churriguera, contributed to the building of the plaza, and it was completed in 1755. The plaza was used for bullfighting for up to 100 years after its construction. It now serves as a popular public square and is the heart of the city.

Plaza Mayor of Salamanca is an irregular square which measures up to around 80 meters by 80 meters and has 6 entrances leading to opposing sides of the plaza and is emphasized with larger arches, like those in Madrid. (See figure 4a) The uneven shape is formed with the alignment of the existing streets. Although none of the façade walls match the same height, the majority of them have 3 floors and a ground terrace level, much like the facades of the prior Plaza Mayors. There are 88 granite arches raised on decorated limestone pillars, and 247 balconies, which were created for the viewing of the bullfights. On the main façade, a clock, *El Reloj*, is featured with a tower on each of its side. There were supposed to be two towers on either side of the clock, but there were some structural issues that reverted the plan. The most beautiful aspect of the plaza is its material, sandstone, which creates a glowing effect. (See figure 4b.) “Although the surface decoration of Salamanca’s Plaza Mayor is notable, the square as a whole remains a study in architectural uniformity that can be traced to Madrid.” (*Escubar*)

Plaza Mayor Salamanca wasn’t always the beautiful way we know of it today. Before Felipe V ordered its construction, the plaza was actually much larger. It was known as Plaza de San Martin, named for the San Martin Church right next to it, but served 3 purposes. (See figure 4e’.) Firstly, it acted as a marketplace for oil, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. Being that the space was too large for a single plaza, the Churriguera family used the existing streets, buildings and topography to confine the space. On the remodeling image in figure 4e’, we can see that the bounding line’s angle and dimension of the right side of the plaza was taken directly from the building’s façade on the right side. This line was then matched to

street's opening, giving the plaza its unusual shape of not being the perfect square. The space of Plaza de San Martin is currently divided into 4 open spaces; Plaza del Mercado, Poeta Iglesia, El Corrillo and Plaza Mayor. (See figures 4e' and 4e.)

The materiality is perhaps the most unique element of the Plaza Mayor in Salamanca. The plaza was nicknamed *La Dorada*, "The Golden City", after its glowing effect of its sandstone buildings. (See figure 4b.) Although it is a memorable plaza, buildings made of sandstone have their flaws. Sandstone is extremely flammable, and fires were easily spread throughout the entire plaza. The rest of its materials were local limestone and granite for the arches and columns, which is the same material that was used for the previous plazas discussed.

The second interesting element about the Plaza Mayor of Salamanca is shown in its section-cut. (See figure 4c.) There is a depression in the topography in the center of the plaza which measures up to 5.8 meters. The main function that the plaza was created for, which was for bullfighting, gives us a clue about the plaza's unnatural topography. As we analyze bullfighting arenas, we can conclude that they are typically circular in plan, with a slight depression in the center. This allows for better viewing of the event, and this stands true for the Plaza Mayor of Salamanca as well.

This helps us understand more of the architectural elements in the plaza. We can understand why the shape of the plaza is not a rectangle like its predecessors, but a square. The square offers the equal viewing of a circle but is still within the rectangular family. Additionally, Plaza Mayor Salamanca is often compared to a clock. After knowing the correlation of a circular plan with the plaza, we can begin to see its likeness, as its entrances are facing opposing directions, acting as the handles of the clock. (See figure 4d.) We also see the importance of the clock, *El Reloj*, which is prestigiously placed in the plaza. (See figure 4b.) The symbolism relating the plaza with a clock brings us back to its main function, which were bullfighting events and showtimes.

In the analysis of the three Plaza Mayores, there are elements that define each of the plazas' characteristics. The Plaza Mayor at Valladolid is the first largest plaza in Spain, and therefore it set the primary example for all of its successors. In Madrid, the plaza is known through its historical reference

and topography, as the King sought to mark Madrid as his new capital. Lastly, the most beautiful plaza in Salamanca, which clearly was influenced by Madrid and Valladolid, is defined by its unique materiality and its main program, bullfighting. We can conclude, however, that they are all very similar in function and form. The Plaza Mayores serve as a public space for both political, commercial, and as a meeting place for all. They all take form in rectangular plan which conforms with the existing streets and shape. Also, they all contain hierarchic facades of 3 or 4-stories and a colonnade structure at ground level. Finally, all Plaza Mayores in Spain shared one known fact- in their creation, they always have and will inspire, change, and challenge the form of public spaces throughout the entire world.

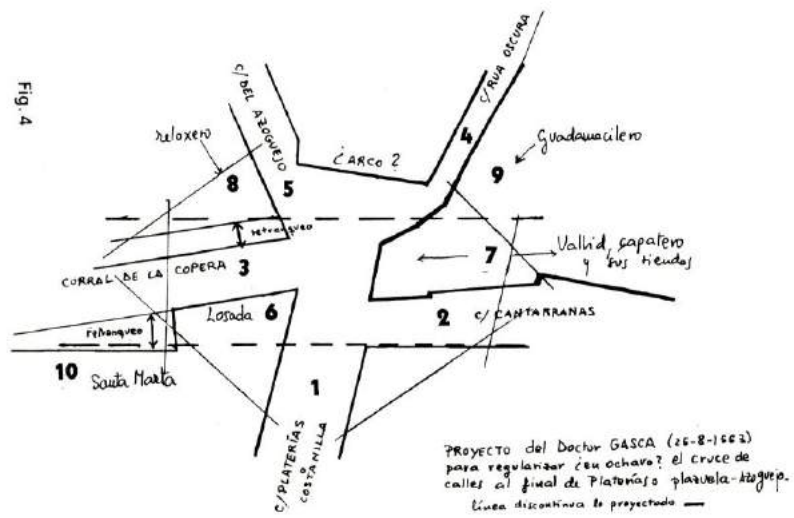
Figures 1: Greek Agora and Roman Forum

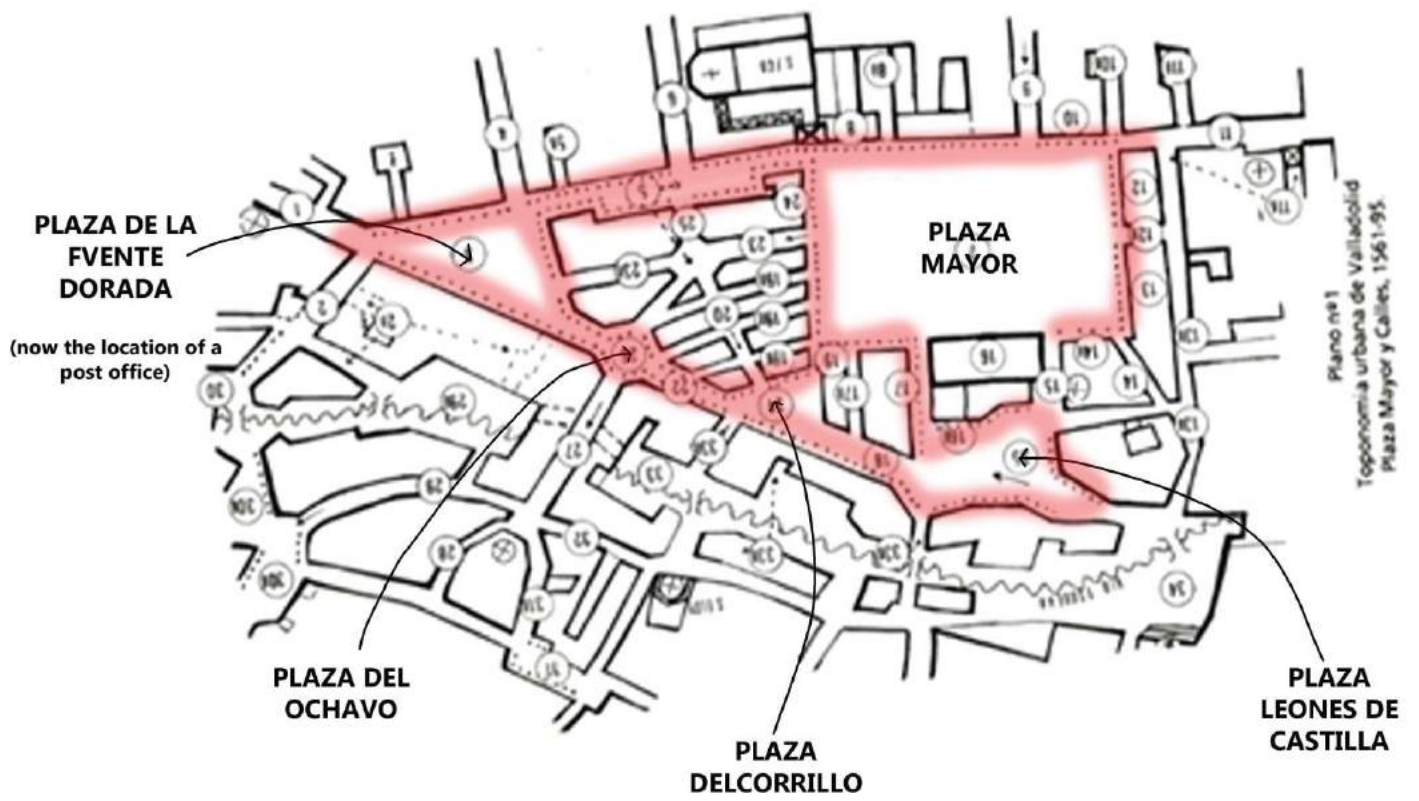


Figures 2: Valladolid



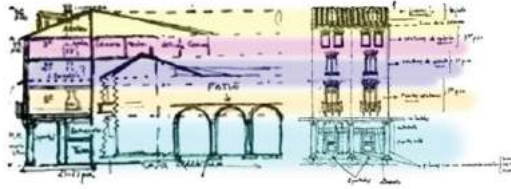
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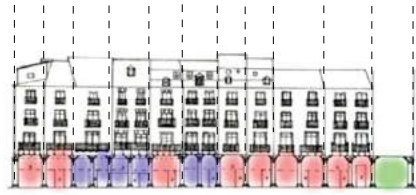


2c.

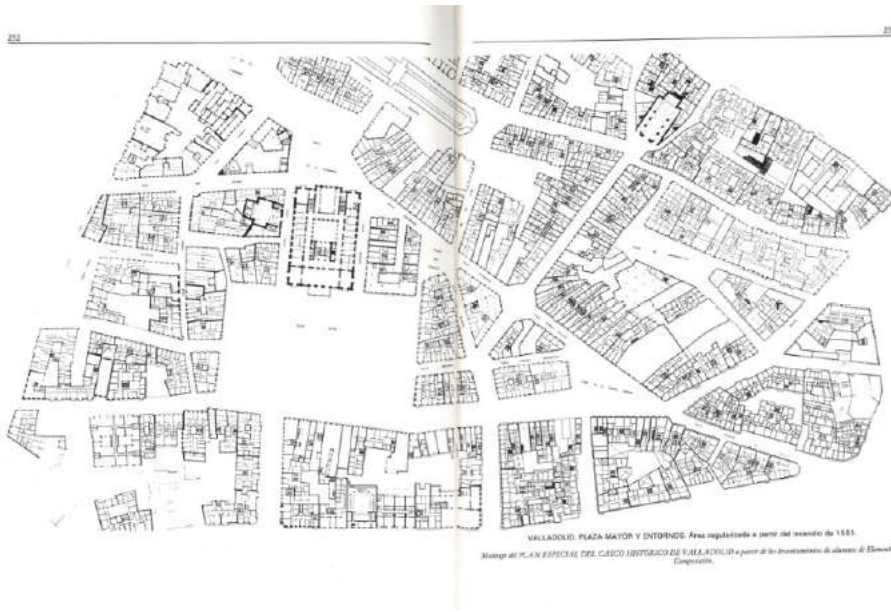
2d.



2e.



2f.



VALLADOLID. PLAZA MAYOR Y ENTORNOS. Área registrada a partir del incendio de 1681.
 Muestra el PLAN ESPECIAL DEL CASCO HISTÓRICO DE VALLADOLID a partir de la investigación de Alberto de Elorza de
 Compañía.

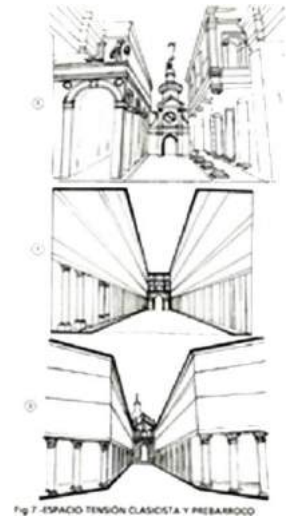


Fig 7 - ESPACIO TENSIÓN CLASICISTA Y PSEBARROCO



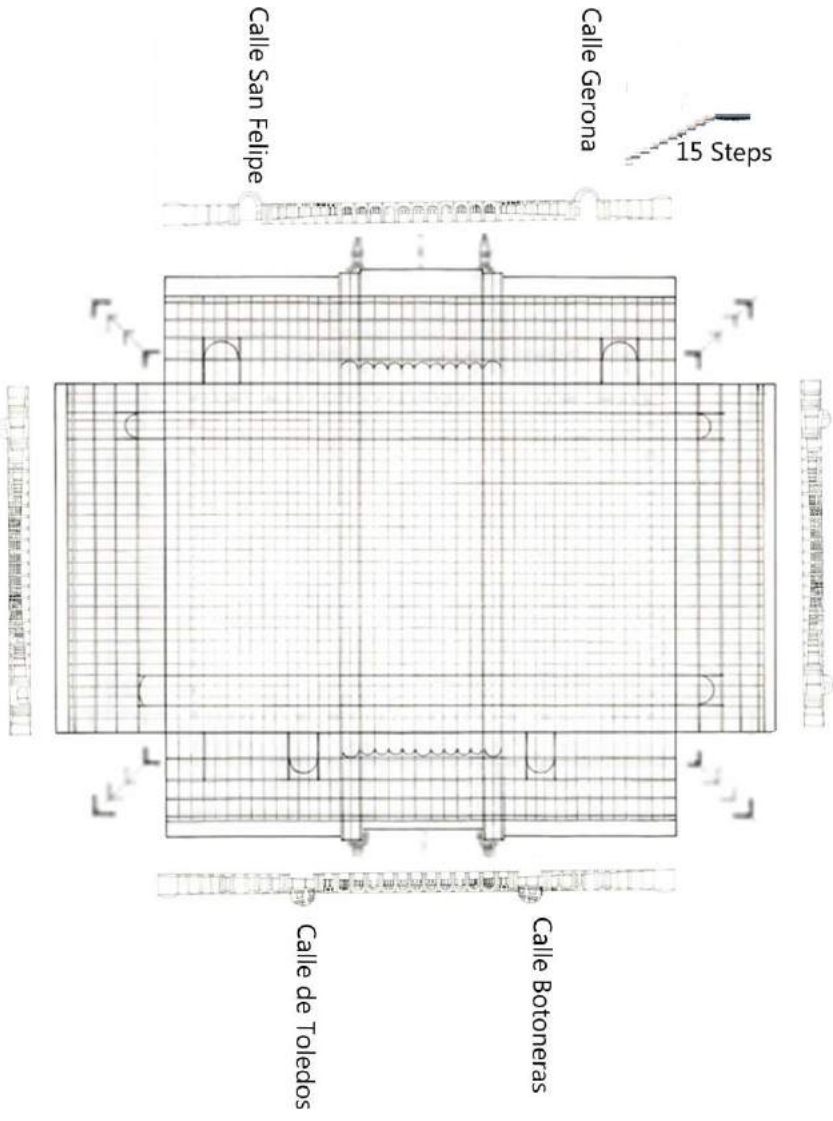
2g.

Figures 3: Madrid





Calle San Felipe Neri



Calle San Felipe

Calle Gerona

15 Steps

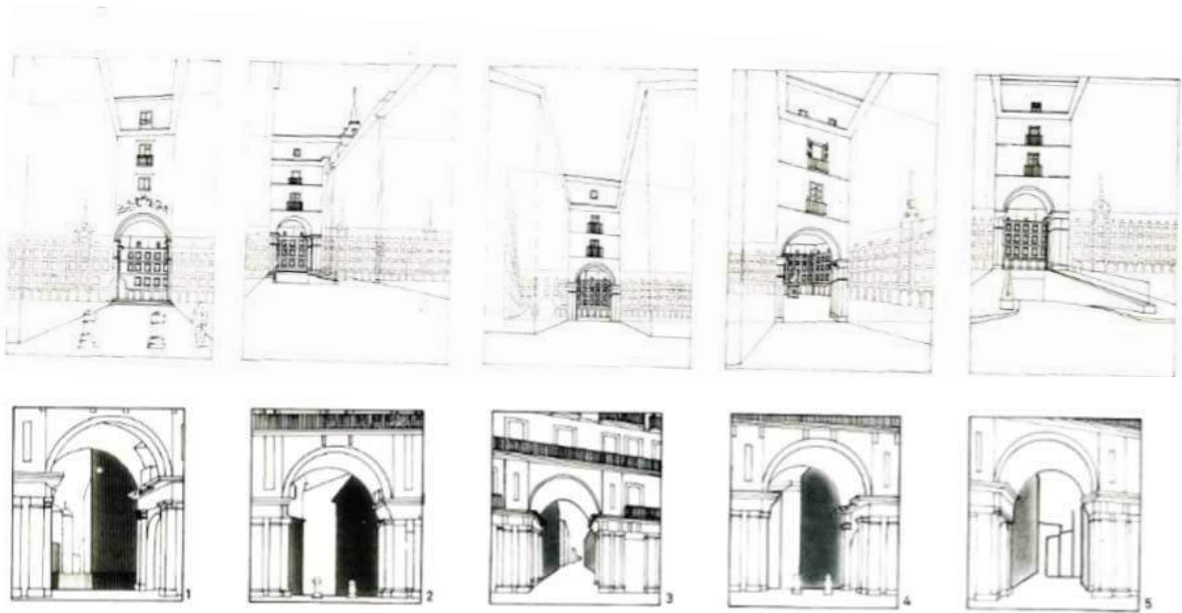
Calle Marques Vivdo Pontejos

Calle Gerona

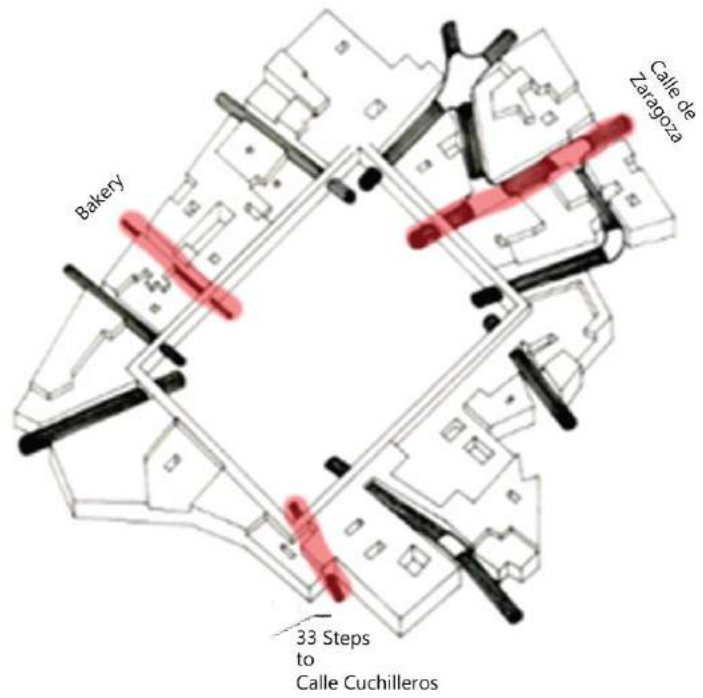
Calle de Toledo

Calle Botoneras

3d.



3e.



3f.

Figures 4: Salamanca



4a.



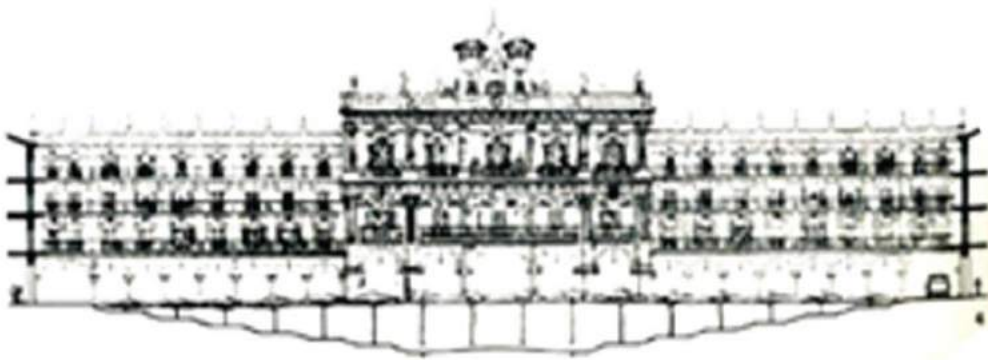
4b.



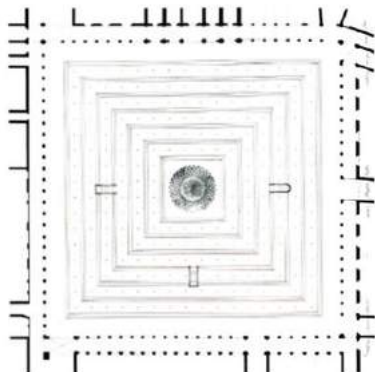
4e'.



4e.



4c.



4d.



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