Guesthouses and Inns in Spanish Southeast. The Decline of an Architectural Typology Linked to the Roads

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Abstract. Guesthouses, inns and hostels linked to travels and roads, arose as a result of the need to stop during long and difficult journeys. Throughout the centuries, the existence of the rest points that marked the roads which crossed Spain, allowed the development of such routes. Its inclusion in historical cartography and in geographical dictionaries as well as the existence of specific legislation reflects their importance for hundreds of years. They were distinguished as an architectural typology of their own, up to the point of been the subject of a project and the examination proposal for the access to the titles of architect or master of works in the different Academies of Fine Arts that arose in Spain for the regulation of the exercise of architecture. The roads constituted the elements that subordinated the formal qualities of this type of architecture, qualities that depended on its hospitality function and on the basis of which the elements that make up these establishments emerged, becoming a characteristic image that distinguishes it from the rest. It is constructions of simple forms with bearing walls that organize the space in one or two bays, always using the materials of the immediate environment in its construction. It highlights the courtyard, a large open space to which all the dependencies of the hostel ended in, and the main block of the set, where the kitchen is located, an essential element in guesthouses and inns since it was the place where, in addition to cooking, guests could warm up and gather together as well as the bedrooms, of which the wealthy travellers made use of, in spite of being very modest. However, despite the fact that they are pieces that are part of the history of communications, and in spite of their value for being part of the Cultural Heritage and public works, they are in danger of disappearing completely without being properly documented or inventoried. The lack of sensitivity and recognition as a patrimonial asset by society, together with the lack of cataloguing and guardianship as well as a more direct intervention by public institutions in the preservation of this architectural typology, has led to the transformation of some, with the consequent loss of most of its architectural and patrimonial values, or the abandonment and later disappearance of many of them. We are faced with buildings of great wealth and heritage value. Hence, their intervention must be promoted, provided that we act with sensitivity, respecting their functional and compositional aspects to the maximum, finding compatible uses for them and using them appropriately, so that they do not lose their trait as a place to stop.

1. Introduction
Until the end of the 19th, the journey through Spain was hard and difficult, the walkers found terrible and precarious conditions almost everywhere: dirt roads with little width, dusty in summer or full of mud and obstacles in winter and impossible roads of being trafficked for several days. To these
inconveniences it was necessary to add the insecurity of the trip; It was almost a constant being assaulted in some way.

Due to such difficulties, along with roads, guesthouses and inns for travellers arose, where people and beasts could find food and rest, since the long duration of the trip between two populations gave them special importance [1]. They used to be located at points where the poor state of the road or the complexity of the orography made impossible for a carriage to pass or at the crossroads of a certain entity and at certain distances from each other since, any journey that it required more than a day, it made a place necessary for the rest and refreshment of the travellers and their animals. Beginning in the 18th century, when the government became aware of the need for a rational and functional road system, modernization began, which translated into an increase in travel and merchandise traffic, increasing the number of inns and guesthouses and causing, in turn, the competition between them [2].

Although the existence of these establishments is general throughout the Spanish territory, due to the considerable number of guesthouses and inns that exist along the Spanish roads, it has been necessary to delimit the spatial framework in the study of these constructions, being the object of this analysis those of the Spanish Southeast. On the other hand, it is essential to mention that this work is part of the doctoral thesis "Guesthouses and Inns in the Region of Murcia, an architecture in danger of extinction", thesis awarded by the Juanelo Turriano Foundation.

2. A typology linked to roads

Guesthouses and inns in Spain correspond to a type of architecture of simple forms whose formal qualities will depend, to a large extent, on their hotel sense. Its function will clearly characterize these accommodations, endowed with a series of components that make them an architectural typology, since it will determine the program of these buildings. The most notable feature of this typology is its location; guesthouses and inns were always located on the side of the road and depended on the possibility of having the necessary water supply in their vicinity. In addition, they also appeared at crossroads of certain entity and at certain distances from each other, since any trip that required more than one day would require a place for the rest and refreshment of travellers and mainly, of their animals. ‘Figure 1’. Based on its hotel use, the blocks, the volumes and the constructive and compositional needs that are going to constitute this architectural typology arise. The own and exclusive characteristics of these buildings came to distinguish them as a specific architectural typology to the point of being the subject of a project and an examination proposal to access to the titles of architect or master of works in the different Spanish Academies of Fine Arts.

These establishments do not constitute a single building but they are real estate composed of several blocks or volumes attached and related to each other. The relationship between them gives rise to the image of a building that manifests itself from a distance as a resting place. The articulation between the courtyard, the main body and the buildings and auxiliary elements define the composition of these sets in plan, composition marked by symmetry, emphasized by the entrance and the location of its staircase and the existence of a large chimney.

The core of the relationship and one of the main elements of these buildings is the courtyard. Guesthouses and inns had a large open space, a large yard through which cars got inside directly from the road through a gate, or through a hall with its closed sides. They are courtyards of great dimensions with the purpose of lodging the greatest number of cars inside, and of carrying out the necessary manoeuvres to enter and to leave. They were fenced by a wall or were well confined by the rest of the premises of the guesthouses and wells and drinking troughs were frequent in them. All the dependencies of the shelter are overturn to it, like the stables that had to have the sufficient quantity of cribs and space to lodge donkeys and mules as mule drivers and wheelwrights. Moreover, in most cases, the muleteers were lying next to their animals. The more cribs there were and the larger the stables were, the more important was the establishment due to the flow of visitors that received. The most important hostels also have open sheds to the courtyards, spaces used for sheltering cars.
In general, these buildings were made of a main piece, a large house with a rectangular floor plan, usually with two floors, which served as the reception building of the complex, which is why it is usually located next to the road, generally parallel to the way 'Figure 2'.

![Figure 1. Photograph of 1956 of Venta del Puerto de la Mala Mujer, Cieza (Murcia). General Archive of the Region of Murcia. Signature: FOT_POS,21](image)

The compositional idea is mainly manifested in this main block, which stands out in height from the rest of the constructions of the host group. This building appears as a compact volume, a finished block composed of two or even three bays that houses the reception or the lobby, the kitchen, the warehouses, the oven and the bedrooms, which were only used by wealthy travellers. The kitchen is an indispensable element in the guesthouses and inns; it is of great dimensions since the home is located under a large fireplace with a large bell there, which could be attached to the wall or located in the middle of the room. Around the bell, the users of the establishment were placed to warm up while they ate, dined, told stories, sang or just chatted. The kitchen was, therefore, the room of the hostel where life developed, which symbolizes "the soul of the guesthouse" [2]. There are also other units that could be found on the ground floor of the main house, such as the cellar, the oven, storerooms, small warehouses or the residence of the innkeepers.

Other rooms can also be seen in the courtyard, such as the dovecote, the cellar, the hayloft, a barn or the room of the innkeepers. Sometimes, certain elements of interest such as cisterns, hermitages or mills excel in the set of the guesthouses or inns.

2.1. The entrance
The first thing that the traveller visualized was the access for carriages 'Figure 3'. This entry could be made through an open gate in the wall, so people entered directly into the courtyard, or through the main block of the set by means of a hall. In this case, the entrance crossed this block orthogonally, normally through the middle, which led to the courtyard. There were different ways to get inside the group of buildings, which can be classified as follows:

2.1.1. One entrance through which pedestrians, carriages and animals enter. If there is only one door, it is usually located centered on the main block. In this way, there is a hierarchy in the main facade of the building, symmetry with windows on both sides of the entrance door. Due to the fact that carriages and animals crossed through it, this entrance had large dimensions.
2.1.2. Two entrances for carriages. The existence of two entrances facilitated the traffic of visitors, the entrance and the exit of carriages avoiding possible bottlenecks as well, especially at departure times since the guests used to leave early in the morning while the arrival time was produced more gradually. These two doors could be placed both in the main buildings or one in the wall, with direct connection to the patio, and the other in the main building.

2.1.3. Two entrances, one for carriages and another pedestrian. On this occasion, the pedestrian entrances located in the main block, entering directly into the kitchen or dining room, while carriages can appear in the courtyard wall or in the main body.

Figure 2. Venta Morote, in Mula, Murcia, before its restoration. Private file of the owner of the establishment

Figure 3. Main facade of the Venta del Pintado, with access for cars and other pedestrian. Own elaboration
2.2. Composition in façade
As for the façades of these establishments, their uniqueness lies in the regularity, order and symmetry of the system of holes in the main façade. This presents an already studied composition, since its openings are arranged in both vertical and horizontal lines of the cloth, maintaining a hollow-solid rhythm, especially if it is tangential to the road. Their holes are usually rectangular, of the same size and sometimes flared. Another aspect that characterizes this elevation is the symmetry, normally marked by the access, with windows on both sides of the same 'Figure 4'. Sometimes, this is emphasized by highlighting the central hole of the upper floor, which is above the entrance, giving a greater range, larger size and flight. In other occasions, it is the only vain with a balcony. This meticulous arrangement of openings is the result of the need to provide a good exterior image of the establishment, an image that reflects the proper functioning of the hotel in order to attract potential customers [2].

![Figure 4. Main façade of Casa de Postas de Librilla. Own elaboration](image)

The order present in the main facade of guesthouses or inns disappears in the rest of the facades, both in position and size. The rear facade of the main body, which is located in the courtyard, is not the visible image of the establishment so it does not require proportion and symmetry. The same happens with the facades of the stables, the garages and the rest of the warehouses and outbuildings that delimit the corral, which present the only necessary openings to go inside their bodies from the courtyard and small ventilation holes. The scarcity of the gaps and the small dimensions of these volumes is the consequence of the fact that the animals and customers stopped there mainly during the night, which meant that daylight was not necessary. It was, on the other hand, a way to cut prices on construction and protect the building from possible assaults [2].

The sloppy finishes and poor materials of the environment unify all the facades that are usually carried out with plastered masonry based on sand in reddish tones, or whitewashed.

2.3. Composition in section
The section of these architectural ensembles allows the volumetric hierarchization that exists among them, since a greater volume has been granted to the main building of the group of buildings than to the rest of the blocks. This is due to the fact of being parallel or orthogonal to the road and being the
first thing that the traveller saw 'Figure 5'. The availability of a greater height and volume gives it a more representative character, hence, commonly referred to as the main building [2].

![Figure 5. Section of Casa de Postas de Librilla. Own elaboration.](image)

The rest of the dependencies of the complex (blocks, warehouses, granaries...) form blocks of smaller volumetric impact, narrower, of one or at most two bays, and usually of a single floor, although sometimes they have a second floor where the haystack is included, but these volumes are always lower than the main building. These are transitional buildings and therefore they are not parallel to the road, but are located as delimiting elements of the courtyard.

2.4. Classification of guesthouses and inns in the southeast of Spain according to their morphological characteristics.

Likewise, the existing guesthouses and inns in the southeast of Spain will be differentiated and classified into five different types, depending on the location of the main building and the entrance to the shelter 'Figure 6'

The first group, which can be referred to as type A, can respond to the scheme of a group consisting of a main building, parallel to the road, with a patio, also facing the road and next to the main block, which people could access to through a gate in the wall directly from the road. The rear facade of the main block also turns to the courtyard. We should not forget that it is a large yard, which is also delimited by the rest of blocks or auxiliary buildings.

The second group or type B is a variant of the previous one and appears less frequent than the first. This time, the main building is arranged perpendicular to the road and access can be produced directly from the main road through the entrance hall located in the wall.

The third group or type C consists of those establishments in which people could not access from the road, but through a small path that leads to the entrance of the set. The entrance to the enclosure can be produced from the main body, orthogonal to the road, or through a gate located in the wall of the courtyard.

The fourth group or type D belongs to most of the establishments studied in the present work. In this case the main body is parallel to the road and two other blocks are attached to it, together with a third body and parallel to the main one, delimit the courtyard. Therefore, there is a wall that delimits the central space. On this occasion, the entrance or entrances to the site (since it can have a specific entrance for cars and another for people or both) are produced from its main facade, being necessary to cross the entire block to reach the courtyard. In this group, the compositional intention of the establishment appears with greater emphasis since what only the traveller now perceives is that façade.

The last group or type E places the main block at the bottom of the set, moving it away from the communication path and placing the courtyard in front of it. The access is through an open gate in the wall.
3. A typology linked to roads

From the constructive point of view, these kinds of establishments present the constructive characteristics of the common architecture in their environment: stone for the foundation, which is usually a ditch run filled with masonry, and masonry for the enclosure walls, sitting with lime mortar as binder, or soil for the walls. Wood solves the structural problems of the roofs and the trusses of the different floors and was also used in lintels and its union with the rest of the materials was usually produced by winding a rope of esparto around the wood to facilitate the adherence between the different materials [3]. The lime is used to whitewash the exterior and interior surfaces, plaster for plastering and sand to make mortar or mortar [4].

In the Spanish southeast, the masonry was normally used both, in the enclosures of the bodies that made up the hotel property and in the wall, rarely used adobe or mudwall. Occasionally, the seating appears and, when it does, it is with ornamental character and on both sides of the jamb of the entrance doors to the main body of the set to protect them from the chafing of the wheels of the cars. The same happens with the brick, only used to lock the masonry walls.

As it has already been mentioned, the constructive characteristics of Spanish guesthouses and inns will be conditioned more by the immediate environment than by their function as hostel, although this will also be reflected in the construction [3]. Thus, the structural system is that of bearing walls replaced, sometimes, by large pillars, where they support the unidirectional slabs and wooden beams; the inclined roof slabs, composed of wooden logs, crossbeams, hurdle, earth and tile; or the arcs.

Figure 6. Schemes of distribution plant for guesthouse or inn. In red, carriage entrance, in blue, pedestrian entrance. 1. Main building, 2. Patio, 3. Stables or stables, 4. Sheds or garages, 5. Warehouse, animal pens, auxiliary block. Own elaboration.
These bearing walls appear according to the bays. Normally, the Spanish Southeast establishments have two bays in their main building, so that three load walls appear organizing the space, or a single bay in the other bodies of the establishment. Sometimes, buttresses appear supporting the wall that forms the patio.

In spite of their constructive complexity when needing scaffolds, the semicircular arches appear frequently in these establishments, since they allow greater lights than wooden beams and have a strong aesthetic component [3]. The arches usually appear by piercing the central loading wall of the main block, therefore allowing communication between both bays.

The floors are based on logs where the wooden beams rest on, which at the same time are embedded in walls. As for the roof, the covers of the Spanish Southeast buildings are inclined to one, two or four waters. They are topped with Arabic tile over gables of reed that support the reddish wood. Finally, the stairs are usually of a partition wall with a thread, L-shaped or U-shaped, although in many cases there are no remains to verify what their layout in the floor plan was.

4. The decline of guesthouses and inns
For centuries, the existence of guesthouses and inns that marked the precarious and dismal roads of Spain enabled the development of travel routes. Without a place in which to stop on the road to rest, feed and effect the change of shots, it would not have been possible to make the transfer through the roads through Spain. Its importance is reflected both in the specific legislation on guesthouses and inns that existed since Middle Age and in its inclusion in historical cartography or in geographical dictionaries. They came to be distinguished as an architectural typology of their own, to the point of being the subject of a project and examination proposal to access to degrees of architect or master of works in the different Spanish Academies of Fine Arts [2].

Due to the concern for the existence of good catering establishments, it was possible to create the figure of an inspector who went over the guesthouses and inns analysing the quality of the establishment [5]. On the other hand, in 1756 Tomás Manuel Fernández de Mesa designed and published how the ideal inn must have been: located in a strategic location, it was to be positioned four or five hours away from other inns and always close to a place where they could get plenty of water and conditioned according to the climate of each region.

However, the proliferation of the use of mechanical means of transport that replaced the use of the blood engine allowed to reach the destination in a much faster way. Since then, this kind of establishment was absorbed by the widening of the roads and the growth of the cities, which caused many of them to disappear. In addition, some of these are buildings that lost the usefulness for which they were conceived which has caused that this architectural typology, which was daily until not too long ago, is also disappearing.

Among those that remain standing today, most have been intensely transformed, turning into private residences, farmhouses or recreational homes. In some cases, despite having suffered numerous alterations, they continue to perform the hospitality function, as restaurants, retaining their original structure. In others, they have been demolished and a new restaurant has been built on its site due to its strategic location. But there are those who have suffered worse luck and are abandoned and in absolute ruin, which leads to their disappearance. Very few are protected by the regulations of Heritage Protection and, although they are protected, their detriment has not been avoided.

They are constructions intimately linked to the way of life and the organization of Spanish territory, so they are part of the heritage of the civil work and, therefore, of the Cultural Heritage, of the cultural heritage of the past of a society that must be transmitted to present and future generations. These buildings have an importance not only based on aesthetic or historical criteria but also on being a reflection of Spanish culture and society until the 19th century. They have a documentary value, historical and in some cases architectural. Although they have lost their symbolic value since the memory of their use is disconnected from the current society, the maximum value lies in being part of the traditional architecture and, above all, in being essential pieces of the public works heritage. This
reason requires the cataloguing and guardianship of these establishments that served as support for communication channels for centuries.

However, the lack of social recognition has led to the abandonment or disappearance, in many cases, to hinder the path of a new road or the expansion of a population. Among those that are still standing, very few are to be found catalogued despite its relevance. That is why it seems necessary to study this real estate in order to protect, conserve, identify and promote and disseminate its importance as heritage elements.

5. Conclusions
The hostels linked to travel and roads arise as a result of the need to stop during long and difficult journeys. This type of buildings is conditioned by their function, their use linked to the road conditions their composition in the plant. At the same time, they have some standardization, with a certain compositional idea that gives them a sense of regularity. The symmetry and order that characterizes them does not give them greater functional advantage than the compositional chaos could grant; It's only purpose is to provide good image, good appearance to attract potential customers. For all these reasons, due to its composition conditioned by their function and its certain regularization in elevation and section, they constitute a differentiated typology of any other building in its environment.

However, although they are pieces that are part of the history of communications, and despite the value they have for being part of the Cultural Heritage and public works, despite their ethnological wealth, they are in danger of disappearing completely without having been properly documented or inventoried. The lack of sensitivity and recognition as a patrimonial asset by society, the lack of cataloguing and guardianship and a more direct intervention by public institutions in the preservation of this architectural typology, has led to the transformation of some of them. This also brought the subsequent loss of most of their architectural and patrimonial values, or the abandonment and later disappearance of many, and of the most probable of those of which some vestige remains.

We are faced with buildings of great wealth and heritage value, so the intervention in them should be promoted, provided that we act with sensitivity, respecting to the maximum its functional and compositional aspects, finding compatible uses for them and using them appropriately, so that they do not lose their reading as a place to stop. Granting them with a new use would certainly guarantee their conservation.

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