

# EL PATIO POPULAR

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PATIO POPULAR  
DURING THE 20TH CENTURY





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# PREFACE

This academic paper has been written during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has brought some challenges such as not being able to travel to Córdoba, not being able to access all Spanish libraries resources, and not meeting in person great people such as Miguel Ángel Roldán, president of the association of Amigos de los Patios Cordobeses.

While this might have limited my sources for this research, I have counted with the close supervision of Catja Edens, who has helped me narrow my research question and stay on track.

# ABSTRACT

This academic essay focuses on the origins and development of the patio popular, in specific in the 20th century when this typology appears in Córdoba. It aims to not only contribute to the lacking of English academic literature about the topic but also to create connections between the historic context and its influence on the architecture of the patio. This last is not present in the overall literature either.

The academic essay explores the historic context of Cordoba while also making connections to the European and Spanish situations. It presents events such as the agricultural crisis at the end of the 19th century, the Spanish Civil War of 1936 and the Post-war situation deeply influenced by the aftermath of the Second World War. With this relationships have been drawn with the patios and their residents. Lastly, the academic essay demonstrated the past difficulties of the residents of the patios popular. This resulted in the organic growth of the courtyard house and its adaptation to the circumstance of the time. Also, a sense of community was created among its inhabitants despite their difficulties.

# INTRODUCTION

The patio is an indispensable and intertwined part of the Cordovan culture. The existence of the courtyard typology in this city dates back to the ancient Roman settlements. Over time it became more than a functional attribute of the house by acquiring cultural relevance. So much so that in 2012 UNESCO declared the Cordovan Patios a World Heritage. Yet, the typology of the courtyard is not unique to this city alone, but it is found all over the world. Its perception in different regions differs due to different climates and cultures. While, in the north of Europe, most courtyards are formed by different buildings that enclose a space, in Córdoba, it is incorporated in the house floorplan which later was divided into different dwellings. The term used in Spain for the courtyard is “patio” which will be used in this academic essay.

When talking about the Cordovan patios, the main attention goes to the “patio popular” typology. These have deeply influenced the way people in Córdoba interact and behave culturally. So much so that some individuals connect the emergence of the patio popular with the warm Andalusian urban sociability such as the life on the street, the closeness of the rural community, the strong family- and neighbourhood ties, etc. Remarkably, this type of patio did not exist before the twentieth century. It is then that massive migration from the countryside arrived in Córdoba, establishing and transforming themselves into stately courtyard houses. The high density and bad social-economical circumstances did not stop its inhabitants to continue developing (?) its architecture and making the courtyard unique and beautiful.

This thesis aspires to give understanding to the creation and development of the Cordovan patio popular during the twentieth century. Who the users were, including their background and economic status, how they used the patio and how this use changed over time, and what are the architectural elements that make these patios unique. All these sub-questions will help answer the main question of this thesis *“How has the typology of the patio popular in Córdoba developed regarding its use and architecture during the twentieth century?”*

These questions include topics such as private and collective domains, placemaking, social interaction, typologies, and historical, economic, and social contexts. Connecting history and architecture. This thesis would fill a lack in research regarding this topic in English academic literature. Furthermore, it also connects architectural and social-economical circumstances of the time which is not present in the overall literature.

The research was conducted through academic literature viz. books, journal articles, reports, thesis, Spanish government websites etc. This has been further supported by other secondary and tertiary sources such as newspapers, photographs, cadastral plans, interviews, a brief site visit and documentaries.

Since this thesis research investigates the development of the patio, it will be organized chronologically.

It is divided into three chapters each connected to a different period. The first chapter gives a compact historical context of the patio from its origins during the Roman era until the 19th century with the Christian patio. The second chapter focuses on the origins of the future inhabitants of the patio popular, identifying their living conditions and customs. For this, the typology of the Cortijo, a countryside building where people of the towns would spend long periods working, will be analysed. The third chapter investigates the creation of the patio popular and its development in the 20th century; accordingly, it will be subdivided into three subchapters connected to three different periods: The first one is when the patio popular appears around 1900; the second one focus on the unstable period before the Spanish Civil War broke out in the 1930s'; lastly, the third one is about the period of Spain suffering the consequences of the war and 'miraculously' resurfacing with an economic boom in the 1960s. In this last subchapter, a case study will also be analysed by connecting its different components to the research findings of the previous chapters. These three subchapters will thus illustrate the social-economical context of the time in Córdoba and Europe as well as its influence on the residents and the architecture of the patio.



# CHAPTER 1

## ORIGINS OF THE PATIO UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY

The origin of the Cordovan stretches back to Roman times. To understand the structure and logic behind the “patio popular”, a brief historical context will be covered. This is especially important in the case of patios in Córdoba since they have always been inhabited, thus having a linear constant development. The following chapter will be divided by the different cultures that inhabited the patio in Córdoba until the 19th century explaining their main interventions in the patio while relating them to its social context.

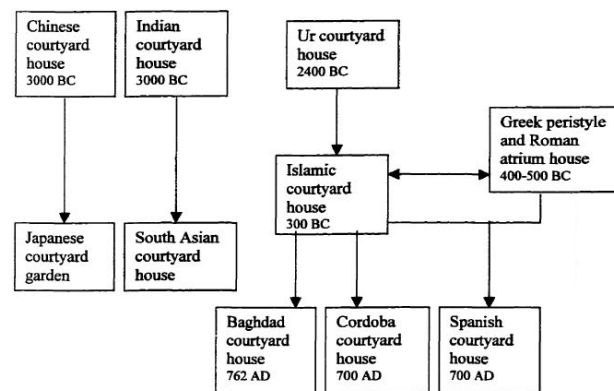


Figure 1. Scheme of the patios origin (Yu, 1999).

### 1.1 ROMAN

Córdoba was founded between 169 and 156b.C. by the Roman General Claudio Marcelo. Initially, the city did not have a high status, but it is with the emperor Augusto that veterans that participated in the northern wars got lands in Córdoba. It is then that the typology of the patio spread around the city. The option of having a patio in the house was reserved for the highest roman class, it was perceived as a symbol of power and precious solemnly in public spaces. Very few could afford to have such ‘unusable’ space in their houses. It went so far that the size of these became a representation of the social status among the richest (García-Entero, 2003).

The typical Roman courtyard house was adapted from the Greek courtyard house. It consisted of a one-story high building with an axial floorplan. The house was accessible through a narrow hallway that led to the first of the two patios in the house, the atrium. The atrium functioned as a reception space accessible for the guests and slaves. The second patio, much bigger than the atrium, was the peristyle. It was connected with the atrium with narrow passageways.



The peristyle was private and exclusively used by the family. It was surrounded by bedrooms that opened to the space. Between the bedrooms and the open courtyard, there was a covered open space carried by columns that were used as circulation. In the peristyle occurred most of the life of the family, especially among the women and the children since these were encouraged to stay home. It became a place for family gatherings and a safe playground for the children. It was also richly decorated with frescos on the walls, marble or mosaics floors, gilded timber ceilings, and lavishly adorned with statues, vases, and fountains (Schoenauer, 1981). This richness was not perceived from the exterior of these houses. They did not have any openings except for the necessary doors, giving a very neutral, simple, homogeneous façade.

The atrium and the peristyle also had an important climatological function. They originally made them small to avoid sun exposure. When they started making them bigger, fountains and potted plants were added to cool the hot air. In addition, they hung curtains by the columns that separated the bedrooms and circulation from the open and exposed area of the peristyle (McKay, 1998). This kept the cool air inside and protected the artwork from the sun.

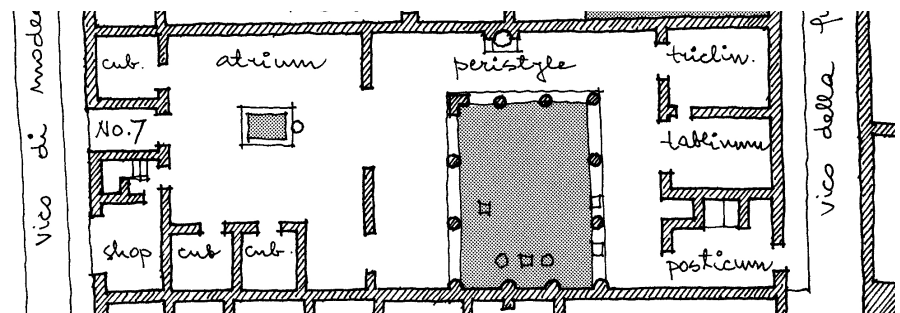


Figure 2. Typical Roman house floorplan (Schoenauer, 1981).

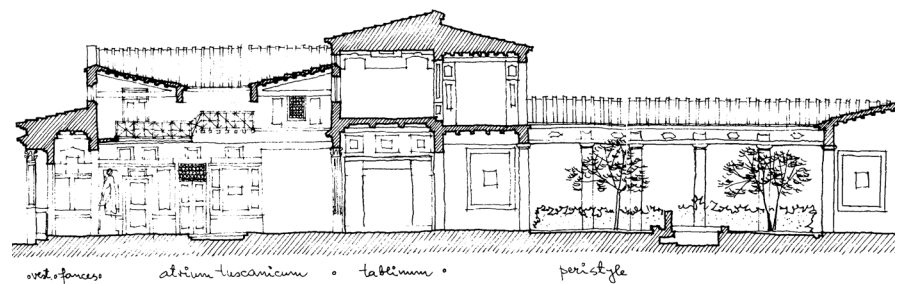


Figure 3. Typical Roman house section (Schoenauer, 1981).

## 1.2 VISIGOTH AND OMAYYAD

After the collapse of the Roman empire in 426d.C. vandals took over the city. It is in the sixth century when another big culture appears, the Visigoths. From their time, the Cordovan patio did not change. However, it is in the eighth century with the Umayyad conquest of the Iberian Peninsula that the courtyard started changing. The Moors who represented the majority of the Umayyad troops built new courtyard houses and transformed the existing ones using Islamic architecture.

Moorish courtyard houses emphasized the privacy of the family, the densely urban setting, their traditions and as well as the Roman courtyard house, which responded to the hot-dry climate. Contrastingly to the Roman courtyard houses, the Moorish courtyard house consisted of one central courtyard where the everyday-life of the family revolved around. The courtyard was not only an extension of the house but the main circulation element of the house. Their approach to decorating the courtyard was mostly related to climate and ideology.

The Moorish house had an introverted character, built from the exterior to the interior. Originally, the construction started by building a wall on the perimeter of the house. It was normally a one-story building with a square, rectangular or trapezoidal shape floorplan. However, this form did not last long since they used to expand the house towards the patio when the family grew, making the Moorish house a constant unfinished project. From the exterior, the house could only be accessed through a unique main door placed on one of the sides of the building facing a small, quiet street. The main door connected with a zaguan, a deep threshold that worked as an entrance. The zaguan was considered an intermediate space that connected the public street and the private character of the courtyard. Depending on the level of privacy of the family, they would choose a massive wooden door that completely isolated the courtyard from the street or iron gates. The iron gates were not as common as the wooden doors because of the impression they gave of a lack of privacy. However, the families that chose this option found a way to block the view of the courtyard from the street. By not having opposing doors in the zaguan and having dense vegetation in the courtyard, the family could keep their privacy (Reynolds & Lowry, 1996).

Except for the main door, the exterior of the Moorish house lacked any type of opening. All windows were situated either on the roof or facing toward the patio. The patio became this interconnecting space of light and ventilation of the house. Also, the use of the different traditional materials such as the compressed soil for the courtyards floor or the marble for the floor under the arcade helped create convection currents that softened the temperature in the patio (Murillo et al., 1997). Besides the materialization, they also introduced plants and water elements which cooled down the air. This not only had a climatological reason but also ideological. With the water, shadow and green, they tried to create a symbolic reflection of paradise (see figure x). The fountain with water placed in the centre of the courtyard also

has a meaning. For Islam, water is particularly important, it is an element of life that refreshes the body and spirit. The original rectangular, square form of the courtyard symbolized stability and the private protected nature of the courtyard symbolized the inner life of the individual. (Lehrman, 1980).

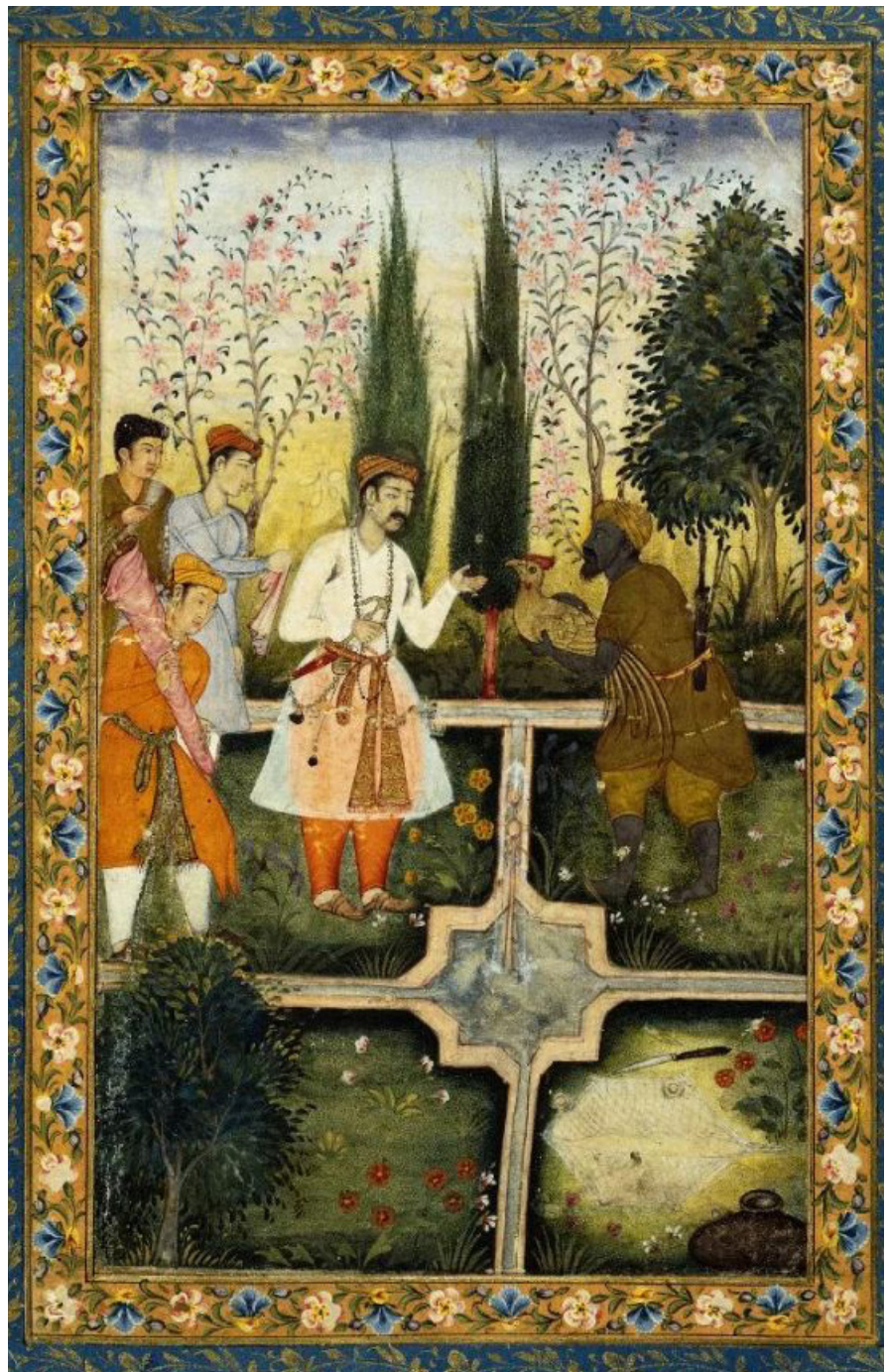


Figure 4. Traditional Islamic garden. Photo from the British museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)



### 1.3 CHRISTIAN RECONQUISTA

In 1236, during the Reconquista, the siege of Córdoba occurred. With this, the Christians led by king Fernando de Castilla, recover the Moorish-held lands of Córdoba (Duxfield, 2019).

Christians inherit the Moorish courtyard as a central element of the house, making minor changes to the existing courtyard houses and building many more. Except in institutional and stately houses, the modesty of the house was kept by using local materials such as tiles, bricks, and sun-dried bricks (Escobar Camacho, 1994). One main transformation of the courtyard house was to open it toward the street. For that, new windows were made on the façades, appearing the first biforas in Córdoba, a genuine Hispanic-Muslim architectural element. The invention of the wrought iron also allowed having bigger windows. By having bars in front of the windows the house would be kept safe.



Figure 5. Entrance of Los Ceas Palace. Retrieved from Cabra en el Recuerdo.

Besides the openings in the façade, some changes were made to the structure of the existing courtyards like the vertical expansion of the house or the form of the zaguan. The Christians instead of expanding the house towards the courtyard, were able to add the first floor to the houses.

About the form of the zaguan, an important but slight change was made. Due to various riots and conspiracies that were commonly organized in these courtyards during the time, orders were given to transform the form of the zaguan to have direct views from the street to the courtyard. In addition, small zig-zag corridors disappeared, and the massive wooden doors were replaced by iron gates. (Lope y López de Rego, 1991) Inside the patio, the walls and floors changed. The compressed soil floor was exchanged for cobbled floors although less frequently it could also be brick. The walls were covered with lime as a result of many epidemics. The lime also had a climatological improvement by reflecting the heat and waterproofing the house, keeping the structure in a good state. Plants and trees were kept, and a new form of water was introduced, the water well.

New courtyard houses expanded their floorplans introducing various patios. Having in the city centre 43% of the courtyard houses three or more patios, 20% with two patios and 37% with one patio. In many of these courtyard houses, a kitchen was introduced with a chimney inside the patio. Through this kitchen, it was then possible to get to an area designated for laundry, a chicken coop and a sink. Also, depending on the economic status of the owner and the function of the house, like an inn, next to the main patio there would be stables with a trough (Pelaez del Rosal, 1991).

During these Christian Medieval times, several types of courtyard houses appear: Institutional, stately, conventual and parish, and residential. It is not until the end of the 19th century that the patio popular appears.

# CHAPTER 2

## ORIGINS OF THE PATIO POPULAR: "EL CORTIJO"

### 2.1 SOCIAL- ECONOMICAL CONTEXT I START OF THE MIGRATION

The patio popular originated when people of the rural areas of Andalusia, moved to the city of Córdoba. This migration started around mid 19th century, however, it has its highest peak at the beginning of the 20th century. To understand the living circumstances of these people before they moved to the city centre of Córdoba and the influence they had on the patio popular, the social-economic context of Andalusia will be exposed, their living conditions explained, and the building they lived in analysed.

Back in the 19th century, the province of Córdoba predominated agriculture. People lived in small towns spread around the countryside, however, they would also stay for prolonged periods in *cortijos*, working on the crops. The *Cortijo*<sup>1</sup> is a building typology found in the countryside of Andalusia. They belong to the landowner and serve the function of housing for the lessee or owner of the land, house and feed cattle, storage of goods and farmer's personal effects, and accommodate workers (Naranjo Ramírez, 1991).

Since these big structures were isolated and extremely remote from the surrounding towns and automobiles did not exist, workers would stay in the *cortijos* for extended periods until the crop season was done. It was so extreme that many would only return to their towns once or twice a year. Consequently, many started considering *cortijos* their second house, becoming part of the heritage of the town people even if it was not located in it. Besides the seasonal workers, there were also full-time workers which lived in the *cortijos* and took care of the cattle and the landlord's house. The number of people living in the *cortijos* increased when at the beginning of the 19th century a big disentanglement of ecclesiastical and institutional lands occurred. These lands included *cortijos* which were later put up for auction and bought by an emerging powerful agrarian bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie built big countryside houses next to the *cortijos*. These houses needed service, so many women move to the *cortijos* too to work. By 1858, 53% of the disseminated population lived in *cortijos* (Florida Trujillo, 1989).

However, the situation in the countryside worsened by the end of the 19th century. In 1880, Europe suffers a big agricultural and livestock crisis.

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1. It can also be known as *Lagares*, *Hacienda* or *Molino*, depending on the type of crop they were built for. *Cortijos* were built for cereal crops, while *Lagares* were built for vineyards and *Haciendas* or *Molinos* were built for olive groves (Efe, 2010). Since they all are commonly known as *cortijos*, this will be the term used in this academic essay.

Countries outside Europe such as the United States, Canada, Brazil and Argentina started producing and exporting large amounts of grains and livestock. Even with the overseas transport costs, these products were much cheaper than the ones produced in Europe. This affected negatively the European economies which could not compete with such low prices.

In Spain, this crisis especially affected the grain sector and with greater severity in the area of Andalusia. There the survival of marginal farms got compromised which resulted in the reduction of sown area and the abandonment of crops (Hernández et al., 2002). The low production costs of the extra European grains were possible because of their lands without landlords, and therefore rents. Also, the exuberant fertility of their lands produced more and better quality grain. Lastly, the reduced workforce needed to collect the grain was lesser than in European countries. While Spain continued with an antiquated system of collecting the crops with a machete and large work labour, countries like the united states invested in new machinery such as mowers and threshers which needed a lesser workforce (Alvarez, 1981).

This cereal crisis, combined with the Andalusian hunger of 1882, resulted in dissatisfaction of the population leading to the *Mano Negra affairs*.<sup>2</sup> This situation stimulated the polarization of the population and the start of the migration of agrarian workers to the cities.

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2. The Mano Negra was an organization, rooted in the agrarian south, accused of attempting to bring down the Spanish government. It was accused of perpetrating a series of crimes against landowners and their property. Called by the government and authorities a secret society, soon it became obvious, by the number of people incarcerated, that it resembled more like a public political party. The persecution became a way of silencing any political activity among the workers and suppressing public dissatisfaction. It is then that the population started noticing the abuse of power of landed groups and the government (Lida, 1969).



## 2.2 ARCHITECTURE I EL CORTIJO

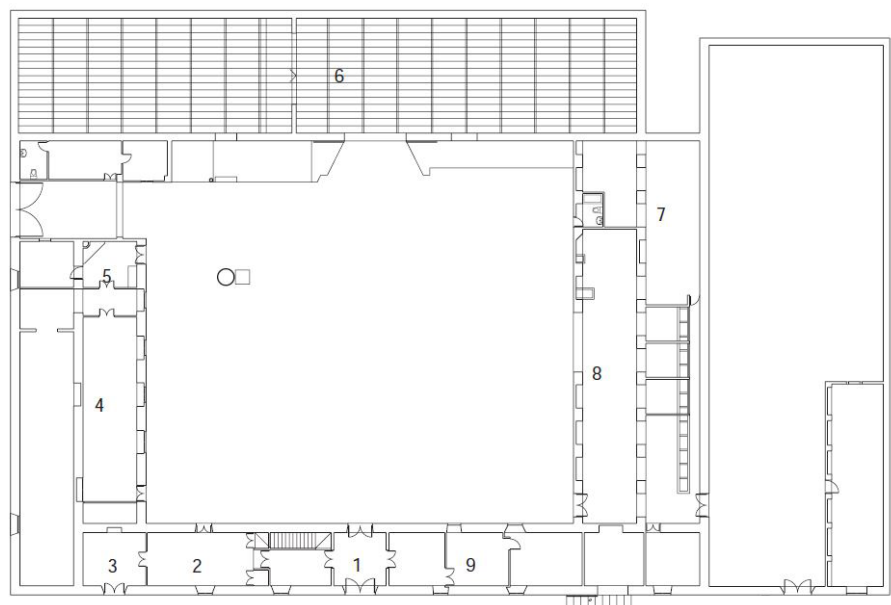
The structure and characteristics of the cortijos are very homogenous all over Andalusia. They were big, long, horizontal structures. Yet, it has many similarities to the courtyard houses of the city.

To analyse its characteristics and identify its similarities with the cordovan courtyard house, the case study of the “Cortijo de Don Pedro” in Aguilar de la Frontera will be used. It has a clear traditional floorplan and all the typical characteristics of a cortijo.

Like the courtyard house, the cortijo was organized around a patio. The patio functioned as a central system of circulation and distribution. It brought together the residential and the production function of the building. All functions of the cortijo were organized around it, the barn and room where workers would sleep (4), the worker’s kitchen (5), the mill (6), the haystack (7), the stables (8), and the landlord’s house (9) (see figure 6).

As well as the Moorish courtyard house, the building was open to the interior patio (see figure 8) but enclosed to the exterior (see figure 7). Besides some openings in crucial rooms like the kitchen, for ventilation, or the main entrance, the rest of the structure would not have any. However, this was not done for privacy like the Moorish courtyard houses but to avoid robbery during the night.

Another similarity between the cortijos and the cordovan courtyard, in this case, the Christian one, was the materialization.



1. ZAGUAN 2. OFFICE 3. CHAPEL  
4. BARN 5. WORKER'S KITCHEN  
6. MILL 7. HAYSTACK 8. STABLES  
9. LANDLORD'S HOUSE

Figure 6. Floorplan of Cortijo de Don Pedro (Junta de Andalucía, 2001).



Figure 7. Exterior facade of Cortijo de Don Pedro (Junta de Andalucía, 2001).



Figure 8. Patio of Cortijo de Don Pedro (Junta de Andalucía, 2001).



Figure 9. Interior ceiling of Cortijo de Don Pedro (Junta de Andalucía, 2001).

Materials used for its construction were often found in its surroundings. The main structure was masonry in the form of ashlar which were later whitewashed for the same sanitary and climatological reasons as the courtyards in Córdoba. For the floors, pebbles and jabaluna stones<sup>3</sup> were used (see figure 8). And for the roofs, originally, straws were used but later they were replaced by curved ceramic tiles, of Moorish origin (Junta de Andalucía, 2001). Since wood was expensive and hard to find, it was reserved for the interior bearing construction of floors and roofs (see figure 9).

As previously mentioned, new landowners built their private country houses next to their *cortijos*. Consequently, not only men were living in the *cortijos* to work on the crops, but also women to clean and cook in the new country

3. Also called Tarifa's stone, it is a very compact consolidated limestone. It is a material used for construction since Roman times (Canteros Artesanos Almenara, n.d.).

houses. There is little known about the routine of the women, however, there is close documentation of the living conditions of the men working on the crops. These were severe. Naranjo Ramírez, a professor at the University of Córdoba, calls these conditions semi-slavery.

Their day would start in the early morning, some of the workers would wake up then and take care of the cattle. The rest of the workers would wake up later, around 4-5 in the morning, have *migas*<sup>4</sup> for breakfast, and they walked to the crops. Depending on the time of the year sometimes they had to wait until sunrise to be able to work. Around midday there was the first break, it is then when they could refresh and have a heavy lunch, usually *cocido*<sup>5</sup>. Once they switched oxen, they continued the work until sunset.

Finally, they would end the day in the kitchen around the fire discussing the day and having gazpacho<sup>6</sup> with bacon for dinner (Naranjo Ramírez, 1991). These workers did not have a bedroom, but they slept on the haystack, stable or kitchen. In the case of the “Cortijo de Don Pedro”, by the barn. If it were in the summer, they would even sleep out in the open. These hard living circumstances can give a hint of how much these people were enduring and can explain how later they were able to live in such confined spaces around the cordovan patios.

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4. Typical spanish dish consisting of cooked breadcrumbs with chorizo.

5. Stew prepared with meat, bacon, legumes and vegetables.

6. Cold soup typical from Andalusia made with tomato, pepper, oil, vinegar, garlic and salt.



Figure 10. Two women doing the laundry in the cortijo. Retrieved from *Cabra en el Recuerdo*.

# CHAPTER 3

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PATIO POPULAR IN THE 20TH CENTURY

### 3.1 THE FIRST PATIOS POPULARES 1900

#### SOCIAL ECONOMICAL CONTEXT I END OF THE 19TH CENTURY BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY (1880-1920)

At the end of the 19th century beginning of the 20th century, the government decides to take a protectionist direction. This way they tried to preserve the productive fabric damaged by the agricultural crisis and stabilize the tensions caused by the indebtedness of the state due to the colonies' independence wars. However, with this protectionist measurement, the peseta, the Spanish coin of the time, devaluated. This reduced foreign purchases, blocking the incipient mechanisation of the agricultural sector (Hernández et al., 2002). While the rural areas stayed in the past, cities in Spain benefited from the Second Industrial Revolution which had started already in other European countries.

Developments and innovations in manufacturing and production enabled the widespread of railroads, gas, sewage systems, etc. Córdoba, while being a merely provincial city, did not stay behind. In 1880, the municipality started building a sewage system. Around that same time, street lightning was placed, streets were paved, and rubbish started to be collected. Also, new public urban elements were introduced such as parks, avenues, and the train station. The city not only offered new jobs anymore, but it was a place where modernity was taking place (UNESCO, n.d.). The modernity and facilities that the city offered in comparison to the countryside became a big attraction to many living in the rural areas. This, in combination with the call effect<sup>7</sup> from the migrants, resulted in a massive migration to the city of Córdoba at the beginning of the 19th century (Martínez López, 2015).

Córdoba expanded rapidly in population, however, it did not grow in dimension. Only, new industries were built outside of the city walls. This meant that the demand for housing increased exponentially to the income of migrants. Not only newcomers were not able to find a house, but middle-class inhabitants of the city could not afford to buy either, adding to the demand for rent in the city centre. It is then that developers find an opportunity in abandoned stately houses (Barrios Rozúa, 2019). These were left behind when these important families moved to the former colonies, bigger cities, or when their lineage died. These houses with many rooms and

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7. In the absence of more formalised labour markets, kinship and friendship networks played essential roles in the labour integration and settlement of migrants in the city. Contacts provided basic information about job opportunities and housing to the potential migrant. This was possible due to the continuity over time of social interactions between departure and the destination place (Martínez López, 2015).





Figure 11. People of the rural areas. Archivo General de Andalucía. Fondo La Sadera. Retrieved from the Archivo Municipal de Córdoba.

multiple patios were subdivided into multiple single-room houses rented to the new incomers of the city. Initially, young couples and small families moved to these rooms, yet over time families grew to create a scenery of high-density housing in the city. Eventually, around 8 to 16 families were reported to live around one patio in rooms of twenty square meters.

Comparing to other big European cities of the time, Córdoba experienced extreme growth in population, because of the migration and the lower levels of mortality. Only, between 1900 and 1930 Córdoba's population doubled, from 56.097 people to 101.701. It was an exceptional case that had never happened to the city before (Aguilar Gavilán, 2010). The rapid growth in such a short time brought insalubrious housing environmental conditions to the city. And the high density helped the spread of infectious diseases like the influenza epidemic of 1918.

## ARCHITECTURE I THE FIRST PATIOS POPULARES

Most of the transformed courtyard houses were located in the South-East part of Córdoba, in the Alcázar Viejo. There, it is where most workers which migrated from the rural areas ended up living. The transformation of this area had little planning, however, a general house transformation occurred.

Because of the rapid spread of diseases especially in the high densified area of the Alcázar Viejo, the municipality proposed a unified transformation of the neighbourhood. Facades became more hygienic and salubrious, and a plan to make orderly and proportional openings in the facade was proposed (see figure 12).

Also, the patio slightly changed, on the patios facing blind walls, a continuation of the covered corridor/portal was built, reducing the space of the patio even more. Besides, because of the huge increase of people in the courtyard house, some functions became collective such as the kitchen, the laundry, the toilets, and the water source which used to be the water well. All of them were placed in the courtyard (Cabello Montoro, 2017). Since the rooms were so small for people, the courtyard became the place where much of daily life was done. It became a combination of garden and room, basically, an extension of the house (Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, 2021) and the street, since many people of the nearby streets would also use them.



Figure 12. House transformation, beginning of the 20th century (Cabello Montoro, 2017).



Many Costumbrist writers which wrote about the everyday life, mannerisms and customs around that time had very contrastingly descriptions of the patios. For example, Méndez Vellido describes in 'Novelillas Granadinas' (1898) the patio very kindly describing it with a pond or a fountain in the centre, and many objects surrounding it like washing bricks, burning stoves, and pots filled with flowers and fragrant herbs which occupied the benches. Its descriptions were neutral and very detailed:

*"The gazebos, shady and humid, were a storehouse for the tools and artefacts that met the needs of the men and women of the trade. Shattering lasts, lathes for weaving straps and breastplates, winders, animal bones for shins, pleita baskets full of fabrics and percaline linings for making vests and bodices. In the corners, scattered and revolted, tablets and sticks from a decomposed loom, bleaching canes, brushes thrown into pieces, broken buckets and shoes occupying a table of prime work, crowded with remnants and scraps; and all this among rubbish, cobwebs and the waste of the day, stacked from section to section, for the better comfort of the hens and turkey poults that cluck and fluff up with pleasure, prowling from one pile to another".<sup>8</sup>*

In contrast, Romera y Guger in 'El Defensor de Granada' (1886) described patios in Andalusia harshly, writing that "when you enter what are called casas de vecinos and that I know as pigsties, we get convinced about the danger that threatens the poor who inhabit them. There, we will find in dark, small and dirty rooms, a crowd of families huddled together, breathing impure air, devoid of oxygen and loaded with the suffocating miasma that the filth gives off".<sup>9</sup>

Maybe the time which was written affected the observations of these authors, but what is seen later on with the Festival of Patios, is that despite the high density of housing and the bad conditions, residents, especially women, took pride in their courtyards and made them as beautiful and

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8 "Los cenadores, umbrosos y húmedos, eran almacén de los útiles y artefactos que subveníán a las necessitudes de los hombres y mujeres de oficio. Hormas de arrasado, tornos de tejer cinchas y pretales, devanaderas, huesos de animales para canillas, espuelas de pleita llenas de telas y forros de percalina para la confección de chalecos y almillas. Por los rincones, desperdigadas y revueltas, tabletas y palitroques de un telar descompuesto, cañas de blanquear, escobillas arrumbadas, cubos hechos pedazos, zapatos y botillos ocupando una mesa de obra prima, atestada de retales y cascarrias; y todo esto entre basuras, telarañas y los desperdicios del día, apilados de tramo en tramo, para mejor comodidad de las gallinas y pavipollos que cacarean y se esponjan de gusto, merodeando de uno en otro montón." Original text from Méndez Vellido in "Novelillas Granadinas".

9 " Si penetramos en esas que llaman casas de vecinos y que yo conozco solo por pocilgas, nos convenceremos del peligro que amenaza al pobre que las habita. Allí, encontraremos en oscuras, reducidas y sucias habitaciones, multitud de familias apiñadas, respirando un aire impuro, faltar de oxígeno y cargado de los miasmas asfixiantes que desprenden las inmundicias " Original text from Romera y Guger in "El Defensor de Granada". The term casas de vecinos is used as synonym of the house with a *patio popular*.

comfortable as possible. Women were the ones spending most of the time on the patio. The rest of the family spent most of the time outside of the house. Sons were sent to schools or were working as apprentices in workshops, daughters were studying to become good housewives at girls' schools, and men went to work where they would also take their lunch. Additionally, many of these men would not even pass by their houses for dinner and go directly to the tavern (Barrios Rozúa, 2019). This left the women being the ones doing the hard housekeeping, preparing meals, cleaning the house, and taking care of the kids and the patio. They also took side jobs to earn some extra money by doing knitting or sewing or working in well-off homes.

The only moments when everyone came together and spend time on the patio were on Sundays and festive days. It is then that all residents would take time to beautify the courtyard by painting the walls, cleaning the floors, taking care of the plants and exchanging pots. On the patio, they would gather and chat until late at night. And if they had some spared money, they would organize baptisms and weddings in them (Barrios Rozúa, 2019). This coexistence created bonds of solidarity between the neighbours. On the patio, there was life twenty-four hours a day and a common spirit of swarming, for better and for worse. They spent so much time together in this place that a whole informal language developed among them, full of proverbs and sayings<sup>10</sup> related to the life in the courtyard. (Cuevas Navarro, 1986).

Their dignity and proudness of the patio became obvious around 1918 when their residents decided to open their patios to everyone. Probably this process was gradual, opening first the patios to other neighbours for social interactions and the creation of bonds. Then they could take turns to take care of the kids, exchange ideas for food, have dinners together or share plants and pots for their patios. Afterwards, it developed into a sense of cultural pride, when they wanted to show their flowers and patios to the rest of the city. It is in 1921 when they decide to institutionalize it, starting the first Contest of Courtyards, Shop Windows, and Balconies (Sillero Fresno, 2021). The Contest gave certain importance to these patios and the work their inhabitants put into them. Today, UNESCO even protects this practice as an intangible heritage of Córdoba.

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<sup>10</sup> One expression that has extended to most of Spain is “¿Cómo está el patio!” translated as “How is the patio!”. It is used when someone enters a place where people are having a strong discussion.



Figure 13. Group of women standing proudly on their patio. Retrieved from the Archivo Municipal de Córdoba.

### 3.2 PAUSE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PATIO 1930

#### SOCIAL ECONOMICAL CONTEXT I BEFORE AND DURING THE CIVIL WAR (1920-1939)

In Europe and therefore Spain, the economic growth continued. In Córdoba, new industries were established such as food factories, foundries, and mechanical manufacturers. Also, large entities like banks came to the city, boosting construction activity, and boosting silver and gold crafts. With this, greater relevance came for urban middle classes, workers, trade unions and left regionalist parties.

Yet, Cordovans were dissatisfied due to the strong roots of local caciquism<sup>11</sup>, and a corrupt and ineffective political system (Aguilar Gavilán, 2010). This political dissatisfaction was not unique to Córdoba, but all over Europe. The crisis of parliamentary democracies threatened by left-wing and right-wing extremism paved the way for authoritarian regimes and ultimately to the first world war in 1914 (Hernández et al., 2002). However, because of the neutrality of Spain during the war, no economic reforms were made. And while other countries found social cohesion because of these reforms, Spain continued polarizing.

It is in 1923 when a general, Primo de Rivera organizes a coup against the government that leads to a dictatorship. It is this previous dissatisfaction that makes Cordovan inhabitants from all social classes welcome this dictatorship. It brought the Cordovan society great improvements. Some of these were having urbanistic planning for the city centre, expanding squares, and widening streets, paving streets, increasing green areas, expanding the sewing system, and creating a base planning to provide a future water supply to the whole city.

However, all these new measurements did not fix the existing problems and imbalances that affected the Spanish and therefore, Cordovan people, such as the chronic worker unemployment, the rise in food prices due to the first world war, and the intermittent and dramatic famines. The economic crisis, the social alterations, and the weak state of Primo de Rivera led to its resignation in 1930 (Congreso de los diputados, 2022).

Since then, a new era of polarization and conflict begins. Initially, the Cordovan people welcomed the new period of the Second Republic as excited as the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Nevertheless, close after, incentivized by the failed coup of General Sanjurjo in 1932, the population started polarizing.

It reached its critical point when left parties and syndicates tried to prohibit religious celebrations such as the holy week procession in public spaces and

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<sup>11</sup> Caciquismo was a clientelist practice by local notables. It is the political expression of the economic dominance of oligarchies led by the large landowners, whether rural (agricultural activities) or urban (real estate activities). These complex networks tend to control institutions, and forms of political, social and cultural organisation (Rodríguez Acevedo, 2009). However, this was not a unique practice of Spain, but it was seen all over Europe. For example, in Italy with Giovanni Giolitti's presidency, in France with Napoleon III's presidency or in England with the old corruption between 1780 and 1860 (Moreno-Luzón, 2007).



Figure 14. Paving of the slope of Luján in 1927. Retrieved from the Archivo Municipal de Córdoba.

roads (Aguilar Gavilán, 2010). Many Catholics, left and right-wing, found support from the conservative parties. This might be one of the reasons why when the Civil War started in 1936, Córdoba supported from the beginning the National side which was connected to the conservative parties.

During the Civil War, the population gets divided in two, supporting either the Nationalists or the Republicans. It would not be surprising that the dynamics of many patios changed. In a civil war, there is no common enemy that unites the nation, but it is a fight among each other. It is not clear who is against your ideals, it could be your family, friends, neighbours, etc. Probably, this distrust became part of the patio's dynamic too, where they could not be open to each other in case they were betrayed and brought to the opposition.

Some could also think that the patio could have been the perfect place to organize coups inside the city. They were enclosed and private. However, due to the changes made to the entrances of these houses after the Christian Reconquista, it is quite improbable. They would have lacked privacy and the patio was far too populated to not have eardrops. Nonetheless, the famines and the misery of the time could have brought them together anyway besides their political ideas. It would not be surprising either that due to the lack of food residents also started planting food in their courtyards. Since during this time there is little to no information about how people lived on the patio, all the statements about the dynamics are based on hypotheses.

## ARCHITECTURE | INFLUENCE OF THE WAR ON THE PATIO POPULAR

Regarding the structure of the patio, no important changes were made. Only in the neighbourhood of Electromecánicas aerial shelters were built on the patios. During the war, Córdoba endured about forty-six aerial bombings from the Republican side (Patricio Hidalgo, 2013). These were mostly targeting the neighbourhood of Electromecánicas which was situated next to a Nationalist airfield. In addition, this neighbourhood was known to be manufacturing ammunition for the National side.

Since the population living there could not afford to build air shelters and there were no public ones in the city, the company from which the neighbourhood took its name, The Spanish Society of Electromechanics constructions (Sociedad Española de Construcciones Electromecánicas, SECEM), built some to protect its workers. Today, only two are known to be left and only one of them is in its original state (Reina, 2022). The areal shelters were built in the courtyard and were shared by two houses. They were small and barely noticeable from the exterior. They consisted of a narrow corridor of 50cm wide which connected the house with the main space of 1.8 meters high. This corridor had a zig-zag form to avoid the direct entry of shrapnel into the main space (Vacas Dueñas, 2020). This main space is where the families would take refuge during the bombings. It had a size of around 3m<sup>2</sup> (2.35meters by 1.2 meters). (Lozano, 2022). An exceedingly small space to accommodate so many people during the long hours of bombing. Probably, the size was connected to the time and money that SECEM was able to invest in them.

Another major change was the cancellation of the Patios Contest due to the war. This pause in the contest contributes to the lack of information and images about the development of the patios of the time. It would only resume in 1944 when the municipality incentivises it with big prizes for the winners and economic subsidies for the rest of the participants (Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, n.d.). It is also then that they established the first criteria for the contest. It did not suffice anymore just the decoration of the patio, but the jurors would take into account its architecture and its unique characteristics.



### 3.3 ECONOMIC MIRACLE AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PATIO 1960

#### SOCIAL ECONOMICAL CONTEXT I POSTWAR AND ECONOMIC BOOM (1939-1960)

In 1939, the Civil war ends, followed by a dictatorship that would last until 1975. The post-war period and first half of the dictatorship was a period filled with aftermath pain. It was a step back for Spain, the misery and the complete isolation from the international community, brought the Spanish and therefore, Cordovan people back to the past.

By the fifties, the situation did not improve, and the migratory effects of an unprecedented rural exodus did not help with the situation in cities. Córdoba grew from 101.701 in 1930 to 160.347 in 1950, reaching 189.671 in the 1960's and 232.343 inhabitants in the 1970s. Only in 40 years, the city's population more than doubled. This created an increase in urban housing demand which could not be satisfied by the government, resulting in the creation of slum belts on the outskirts of the city. In addition, due to the isolation of the country from the international community and the devastating effects of the past war, the population suffered from hunger, rationing of food, and prominent levels of unemployment (Aguilar Gavilán, 2010). While a similar rural exodus was happening in Europe after the Second World War, most countries experienced economic growth until 1970 (Fielding, 1989). This economic growth helped these countries rebuild their cities and expand them as a response to their migration.



Figure 15. Las Tendillas square during one of Franco's visits. Retrieved from the Archivo Municipal de Córdoba.



This situation drastically changes in the second half of the dictatorship, by the end of the fifties, beginning of the sixties. Due to the Cold War between Capitalists (US) and Communists (Soviet Union), Spain became a strategic point for the US to have their military bases. This situation forced the US to create an alliance and start commerce with Spain in exchange for building their military bases on Spanish soil. This alliance resulted in the UN General Assembly revoking their recommended sanctions in 1946. However, it is not until 1956 that Spain enters the UN as a member (Aliaga, 2018). With this, Spain was closer to end with its international isolation but it would not be until 1985 when it enters the European Union that all barriers and sanctions are removed.

Still, in 1959, Franco's government approves a Stabilization Plan<sup>12</sup> which lead to an economic boom. It is about that time when Córdoba is endowed with its first General Urban Planning Plan. The plan was directed by the architect José Rebollo making predictions of a future population of 350.000 people. Besides the different new policies for the city centre like the widening of streets or the protection of the old city centre, the expansion of the peripheral neighbourhoods was incentivised and plans for social housing in the outskirts of the city were created (UNESCO, n.d.).

## EXPANSION OF THE CITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE PATIO POPULAR

The new housing plans of José Rebollo offered better living standards with a modified traditional housing program, which included a private kitchen and toilet. Because of this, and the increasingly better economic conditions of the inhabitants of the courtyard houses, many decided to move to the suburbs.

Consequently, the population density of courtyard houses decreased.

The old courtyard houses of the city went gradually from accommodating eight-sixteen families to one or two families. This had a substantial effect on the structure of the house. In addition to this, in 1977, the government publish a new law called "Normas de Diseño y Calidad de las Viviendas Sociales" which stipulated the minimum living surface per person in Córdoba. It established that for a couple 36m<sup>2</sup> was needed, for a family of three 46m<sup>2</sup>, a family of four 56m<sup>2</sup>, and a family of five 66m<sup>2</sup> (VIMCOSA, 2010).

Hence, the interior of the courtyard house had to be restructured. Connections between several rooms were made to expand the dwelling and comply with the new norms. Also, many courtyard houses were expanded towards the patio adding new volumes attached to the existing structure

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<sup>12</sup> While the economic growth improved in 1950 in Spain, the growth was autarkic and there was an accumulation of serious imbalances. The plan reduced interventionism, starting a process of liberalization. It promoted economic growth and helped change attitudes and mentalities among the population and other countries (Martínez-Ruiz & Pons, 2020).

and/or expanding in the height by adding new floors. These new additions were not built with local materials like in the past, but they were built with the newest techniques and materials such as reinforced concrete, hollow bricks and metallic elements. Since these were produced in factories, they were much cheaper and quicker to build.

Not only were new construction materials and techniques developed, but many home appliances were designed and manufactured during this time. This allowed residents to have in a very compact space their own private kitchen, laundry, and toilet. Inevitably, the communal functions of the patio fell into disuse and eventually they were removed from the courtyard. Only a few courtyard houses maintain some elements of the kitchen or laundry, but mostly as decoration or to illustrate the past.

If we look at the time Spain got these private kitchens compared to other Northern European countries, its modernization of the housing arrived extremely late. In Germany for example, they were already very compact and modern kitchens in 1926. These were designed by the Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and were designed for low-cost housing in Frankfurt. In the following four years, around ten thousand units were incorporated into housing projects (Melching, 2006).



But it is not until almost 50 years later that Córdoba starts introducing private kitchens in their social housing. This could be due to the lack of laws regarding housing, and the strong insolation of Spain during Franco's dictatorship. Nevertheless, we could speculate that these extra 50 years of sharing facilities brought a sensibility of community and sharing among the Cordovan population which in many European countries is disappearing. To illustrate the changes the patio popular experienced during this period, Martin de Roa 7 and Martin de Roa 9 will be analysed (see figure 16). Connections to previous chapters will be made as well.

Figure xx shows the floorplan of Martin de Roa 7, on the left side, and Martin de Roa 9, on the right side. These two buildings have only one zaguan that connects both courtyards to the street, suggesting that in the past it might have been a big stately house with two patios. Probably, in 1900, it was divided into two buildings and afterwards rented out by rooms. The floorplans also show the organic growth of the houses such as small volumes which stick out into the courtyard or exterior stairs that connect the courtyard with the first floor. The extension of the houses by making new doors in the existing walls is clear and subdividing the spaces. The original walls are probably the thickest ones while the thinner walls have been added later to divide the space.

In the floorplan, it is possible to see where the new kitchens and toilets are placed. Yet, the owners of Martin de Roa 7 have decided to leave the old laundry pile on the patio as a remembrance of what these houses used to be. Not only has the structure of the house have been modified, but its residents changed and therefore, the dynamic around the patio. Nevertheless, the women of the households remained as the main caregivers of the patio and thanks to them the tradition of the Patios Contest has continued until these days. The continuation of the Patios Contest might be one of the reasons why the sense of solidarity among the neighbours is still alive even if the common functions have disappeared. Also, the contest encouraged their inhabitants to maintain certain elements that make the patios populares unique such as the white limestones, the plants, the water well, etc.

# CONCLUSION

The patio popular is a “new” typology that has deeply influenced the Cordovan population in the last two centuries. The risen question *“How has the typology of the patio popular in Córdoba developed regarding its use and architecture during the twentieth century?”* has been answered along with this academic essay. However, there is no simple answer.

The origin and development of the patio popular is complex. The patio popular brings old architecture, modern history, and anthropology together. Its foundations come from a past full of different cultures, the roman empire, the Moorish conquest, and the Christian Reconquista. Its origins and development have also been closely influenced by the different social-economical situations of Spain and Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries: from the rural exodus to the cities in 1900, the pause in its development during the civil war, and its further development with the Spanish economic boom in 1960. In addition, not only the social-economical situations of the country have had an influence on the patio popular, but the residents and their origin have guided how the patio has been used and perceived. Also, the way how it has been taken care of the sense of community that prevails today in Cordovan society. To sum up, regarding architecture we could say that the patio popular has had an organic growth adapting to the situations of the time. However, has remained simple and homogeneous over time. Regarding its use, the patio popular has been only residential. But the social context and the number of people living around it have changed over time, and therefore how the space has been used.

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