

SPANISH CULTURE AND THE GUARDIANSHIP OF HISTORICAL SITES: 40 YEARS AFTER THE CHARTER OF AMSTERDAM (1975)

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ABSTRACT The problem of historical centers in Spain facing their development, fits into the frame of a country that was integrated into the Council of Europe (hereafter CoE) on November 24, 1977, participating from that same instant in the box of actions organized by the CoE for the protection of architectural heritage. The arrival of the → *Amsterdam Declaration* of 1975 (see appendix) was an event of enormous importance that helped a lot in planning regulations and laws during the new democratic stage of the Spanish transition. Spain is experiencing a period of substantial changes in the cultural and social life, the urbanism of the historic downtowns is undergoing significant changes. Moreover, this new concept facing the conservation of historic centers cannot be absent from critical reflection on social issues (how to revitalize Spanish historical city centers) on the new demands of our current contemporary life.

1. SPAIN IN THE LIGHT OF THE *DECLARATION OF AMSTERDAM* (1975)

Cities are an embodiment of many things: memories, desires, signs of a language; they are places of exchange, as all the history of economy books explain, but this exchange is not only of merchandise but also of words, desires, memories.

(Italo Calvino, *Las ciudades invisibles*¹)

The issue of the development of Spain's historical sites came to the fore when this country became a member of the CoE on 24 November 1977. From that moment on, Spain has taken part in the framework of actions organised by the CoE to favour the conservation of the architectural heritage. In previous years, three debates had taken place about the restoration and conservation of urban complexes. The first, held in Edinburgh in January 1974, was about the economic costs of conservation; the second, held in Bologna in October 1974, addressed the new and fundamental question about the social aims of restoring urban sites, and the third, held in Krems in April 1975, centred on the topic 'How can we revive an average historical city?' 1975, declared European Architectural Heritage Year (hereafter EAHY 1975), concluded in October with a conference in Amsterdam, which summarised the recommendations and took stock of measures carried out by several European countries in order to safeguard their towns and cities. The main theme of the EAHY 1975 was "integrated conservation," which clearly refers to the "environment." Once the → *European Charter for the Architectural Heritage* (see appendix) had been adopted, several meetings ensued. The fifth meeting, held in Granada from 26 to 29 October 1977, was of special importance for Spain which influenced a publication on rural resp. popular architecture (Fig. 1).

It concerned novel aspects, the most notable of which are as follows:

- a) rural architecture and landscape are under threat;
- b) abuses in the exploitation of nature bring about dangerous ecological imbalances;
- c) conservation of high-quality natural environment in Europe demands strict compliance with ecological laws;



Fig. 1: Cover of the publication *Exposition Arquitectura Popular de la Alpujarra* (1977)

- d) it is necessary to balance the spread of the population over the territory as a whole;
- e) it is necessary to revitalise communities so that they integrate their values into society as a whole. Conservation of the natural and architectural heritage must be a fundamental element in this revitalisation;
- f) this integrated conservation should become one of the objectives of land ordinance, as it involves development policies directed towards a balanced relationship between Man and Nature.

Tourism in Spain meant a drastic transformation in the traditional model, and has had repercussions not only as regards habitat, but in the social and economic relations of its people. Great swathes of land, especially those of outstanding natural beauty next to the coasts, have been quite profitably parcelled and urbanised for residential use, ignoring the values of traditional architecture and of the landscape itself (Benítez de Lugo y Guillén 1988, 9).² The *Ley sobre Régimen del Suelo y Ordenación Urbana* (*Law for Land Management and Urban Ordinance*), whose modified text was approved in

Royal Decree 1346/76, 9 April, Article 8, referred to “protection measures to be adopted as regards defence, improvement, development and renovation of the natural environment and of the Historical-Artistic Heritage.” Article 18 of this Law alluded to the “natural and urban elements which together contribute to characterise the landscape.” Article 73 required that buildings should be adapted to the surroundings in which they are situated.

There are three principal means of protecting the historical-artistic Heritage, according to the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* (1975), approved by the → *European Charter for the Architectural Heritage*, which was held under the auspices of the CoE: economic measures, education measures and legislative measures. Thanks to their breadth and novelty, these measures had great repercussions. In its text a new heritage culture was coherently reflected, which in the case of Spain had notable social consequences (Benítez de Lugo y Guillén 1988, 10):

1. Economic measures: These are easily understood and may take many forms: non-recoverable subsidies for property owners, low-interest loans, tax incentives, etc. What is more, the UNESCO has created the World Heritage Fund with the aim of providing economic help for projects in member states for the protection, conservation, revaluation, and rehabilitation of that Heritage.
2. Educational measures: However, people must also be educated culturally (Álvarez 1999, 17–24) pointed out that we must introduce to the nation the fundamental idea that heritage is a treasure belonging to everyone, for which reason all citizens must love and conserve it. So society must go from passive to active to belligerent attitudes.
3. Legislative measures: In Spanish positive Law there are many measures. Spain may be considered a pioneer in this trend of protecting the environment, although as has happened in so many cases, the Law has not been applied correctly and has often taken second place or has been ignored.

The → *Declaration of Amsterdam* defends that the rehabilitation of old neighbourhoods must be conceived and carried out as far as possible in such a way that the social make-up of the residents is not substan-

tially modified and that people from all social strata benefit from transactions financed by public funds. Significantly, the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* asserts that historical cities are a last stronghold of social integration in the face of grave dangers caused by ignorance. Neglect, economic pressures, speculation, the demands of motor traffic, and above all inadequate restorations are all dangers they face.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INITIATIVES FOR SAFEGUARDING AND RAISING AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Spain was seeing substantial social and cultural transformations, and historical city centres were undergoing significant modifications, “sacrificing art and history” due to the “overwhelming process of technical advances, the population explosion, and the needs of motor traffic,” which were to change the urban structure to catastrophic effect (Fernández Pardo 2007, 311). It was at this time that in Spain, according to Chueca Goitia in *La destrucción del legado urbanístico español*,³ development and ignorance were destroying its cities (Chueca Goitia 1977, 17). Up until then, the conservation of monuments and complexes had been in the hands of the state, while in other countries of our continent societies of different kinds had contributed to safeguard their heritage. The Spanish government did not contribute to the upkeep and conservation of the ‘old and noble houses’ of the historical town centres, so that many of them remained empty and in disrepair. For this reason Chueca recommended tax benefits, as occurred in other European countries, so that cities were not neglected. He also proposed the rehabilitation of old edifices by adapting them for modern life through putting them to new uses as the best means of conservation.

In the Spain of that time, the → *European Charter for the Architectural Heritage* of 1975 went virtually unnoticed for the first few years, except among a small group of architects who had international connections. At the beginning of the 1980s, however, rehabilitation policies in Spain were put in place, with special help for buildings of historical and artistic interest, thereby boosting both public and private initiatives.⁴ In this way, protection of historical sites was favoured, since although some of these places were declared historical complexes, no real protection was given, as the government usually laid down directives and devoted the whole of the budget to monuments without restoring popular and residential architecture.⁵

3. THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF SPAIN AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE *CHARTER OF AMSTERDAM* (1975)

On the occasion of the EAHY 1975 an exhibition on conservation and revitalisation entitled *Monumental Heritage of Spain* was organised in order to present interventions which had been carried out up until that year.

The *Italian Charter for Restoration* (1972) set a precedent for the → *European Charter for the Architectural Heritage* of 1975, which introduced the new concept of ‘integrated conservation’ into Spain. The absence of a true restoration culture in Spain, in university circles as well as in government administration, meant that historical sites were contested between criteria of ‘maximum conservation,’ which in general was defended by Provincial Heritage Commissions and autonomous organisms arising from the new judicial organization of the democratic transition, and those who proposed innovation. Historical site projects in Spain, still on the sidelines of the *restoration culture* which Italy was responsible for spreading throughout Europe, based everything on creative intervention, which was defended by staunchly conservationist criteria. On many occasions, the Spanish scene was dominated by *kitsch* or historicist interventions, which attempted to create a harmonious architecture through the imitation of an ancient language. Most architects were unaware of this new perspective, which because of its modern approach was groundbreaking, and was “critical restoration” (Rivera Blanco 2001, 163).

In these booklets there is an outstanding article by the architect Alberto Garcia Gil, referring to the new concept of “integrated rehabilitation.” The “rehabilitated city” was conceived as a “model of urban development;” the conservation-restoration dialectic was replaced by a notion responding to the Spanish situation and to the resulting aspiration of change in Spain. This new concept, coined by the CoE, as a cultural proposal of the moment, was “integrated rehabilitation,” understood as restoration together with “an the application of a use, a novel proposal in the treatment of the architectural heritage of the past, a formula based on the up-dating of the theory of monumental restoration” (Garcia Gil 1985, 3).

4. THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN A SPAIN OF TRANSITION

In those days markedly traditionalist criteria still prevailed in Spain, giving too much importance to the aesthetic value of the building, and following a stylistic model far removed from the *Charter of Venice* or even the *Charter of Athens* (Rivera Blanco 2001). On an institutional level, changes in guidelines by the *Directorate General of the Artistic Heritage, Archives and Museums* dependant on the Ministry of Culture, were carried out unhurriedly and the effects of these changes took some time to be noticed. Although in general the ideas of the restoration or stylistic school were starting to be questioned, the guidelines of the *Town Halls and Heritage Commissions* were still in force in many cases. A co-existence arose between the two tendencies: stylistic restoration and the new Italian theories, which would take on more and more prominence in Spanish life.

The creation by the *Directorate General of Fine Arts, Archives and Libraries* of the *National Awards for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of the Architectural Heritage* aimed to recognise work carried out in the field of conservation, as well as urging government administration to accept the “validity of multiple alternatives in solving problems posed in each of the restored monuments,” and to value respect for the existing building, discernable contributions, and planning prior to any intervention. In 1977, the Ministry of Culture came into being, and took over the *Directorate General of Artistic Heritage, Archives and Museums*.⁶ After 1980, its name changed to Directorate General of Fine Arts, Archives and Libraries, and from 1982 onwards it was called Fine Arts and Archives. With the transfer of competences to the autonomous communities, its functions were taken over by the Department of Monuments attached to the *Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets*, dependent on the Directorate General of Fine Arts, known today as the Cultural Institute of Spain. With the creation of the new ministry a change occurred in the organisation of the old Directorate General of Fine Arts, which was a decisive factor in modifying the focus of interventions, “breaking away from previous orienting criteria.” The Directorate General promoted a new conservation policy more in line with real needs. In some cases there were overall conservation interventions on the architectural heritage, working on complete areas and imposing consolidation criteria, in the sense of building necessary for the consolidation and adaptation of edifices for a new public use, as well as interior remodelation substantially modifying pre-existing architecture, or even extensions carried out with diverse restoration criteria.

5. SPAIN’S MONUMENTAL HERITAGE. AN EXHIBITION ON ITS CONSERVATION AND REVITALISATION

The CoE declared the EAHY 1975 in 1973. Spain, one of the three European countries whose historical-artistic heritage is the largest, most varied and of the highest quality, enthusiastically joined this initiative. At the beginning of 1975, the Spanish National Commission, under the honorary presidency of their Royal Highnesses Prince Juan Carlos and Princess Sofia, was set up in Barcelona, and entrusted with organising and taking part in actions held to mark this celebration inside and outside Spain. The presi-

dent of the Commission was the Marquis de Santa Cruz.

Spain participated brilliantly in all the international meetings scheduled that year in different European countries, culminating in the Closing Assembly in Amsterdam with an exhibition in the *Rijkmuseum*, in which the Spanish contribution was among those which received most praise. Also, in Spain itself, many fruitful meetings and functions were arranged, sponsored by various public and private institutions. For the closing ceremony, an exhibition was organised on the most outstanding restorations on Spain's archaeological heritage and historical-artistic monuments that had been carried out over recent years. Its organisation was entrusted to the *National Commission for the Artistic Heritage* and its venue was the Cristal Palace in Madrid, which had been restored for the occasion. On 22 December 1975, the Spanish monarchs, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia officially closed the year which months before they had opened in Barcelona, with the inauguration of the restored Cristal Palace and a superb exhibition, described in a splendid catalogue (Fig. 2) by José Miguel Merino de Cáceres, architect of the National Commission for the Artistic Heritage, who was in charge its organisation. "This catalogue will be a teaching tool of extraordinary value in the education of our young architects who have a vocation for conserving monuments and it will motivate those who have devoted their lives to a labour of such vital importance, who will see an illustration of the fruits of so many years of their devotion to a profession that is less profitable and at times less well esteemed than others" (Merino de Cáceres 1975, 4).

The exhibition illustrated restorations conducted not only by the Ministry of Education and Science through the *General Directorate of the Artistic and Cultural Heritage*, but also by the Ministry of Justice, which adapted *monumentos* for Palaces of Justice, through the Ministry of Information and Tourism as regards *Paradores* (state-owned hotels), and also by the Ministry of Housing, the Provisional Council of Álava, the College of Architects of Cataluña and Baleares, the Association of Friends of Castles, and the Trujillo Association.

6. CHAPTERS OF THE CHARTER OF AMSTERDAM EXHIBITION (1975)

In 1958 the General Directorate of Fine Arts presented for the first time in Spain an account of restorations on edifices that had been conducted by the Commission for the Defence of the National Artistic Heritage, entitled *Twenty Years of Restoration of Artistic Monumental Treasures*.

The Crystal Palace in Madrid's Retiro park was restored especially to house the 1975 exhibition, which coincided with the EAHY 1975. The Exhibition aimed to show a varied sample of restoration work taking place in Spain on the part of the *National Commission for the Artistic Heritage* as well as official institutions and public and private bodies, which contributed to the tasks of safeguarding its architectural

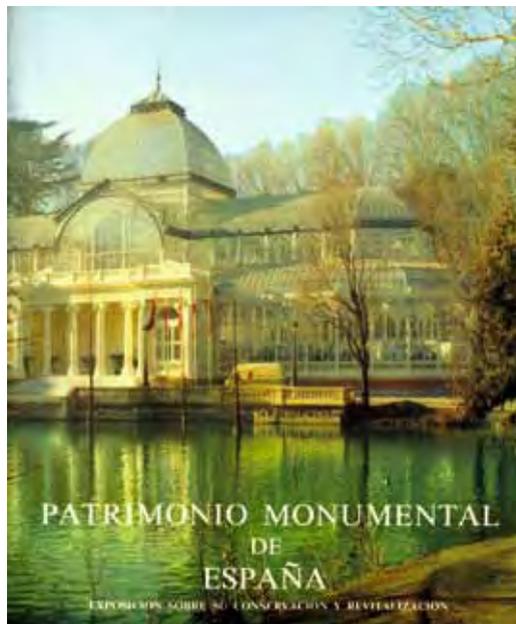


Fig. 2: Cover of the publication *Monumental Heritage of Spain: An exhibition on its conservation and revitalization*, published by the Ministry of Education and Science, on the occasion of the EAHY 1975

heritage. It presented, in an exhibition meant for the general public, a series of lesser-known buildings and sites, not focusing on large, prestigious monuments, unless work carried out on them were of particular interest. It is well known that our most famous monuments are in an acceptable condition and are soundly protected. Sadly, the same cannot be said about smaller monuments. This is even more true of our popular architecture, whose typical, anonymous edifices of great character are always under threat from abandonment, age, or the jackhammer. Small sites and vernacular architecture were themes which received special attention in the Exhibition, and some of the numerous though still insufficient restorations were displayed.

The Exhibition catalogue was divided into nine main chapters, the first seven of them corresponding to a circumstantial classification of the monuments, and the final two to new uses and to damage and risks for the monuments. The first chapter is about 'Monumental Archaeology'. The second chapter is about interventions on 'Monumental Complexes': small-scale repairs, improvements, paving, etc., work planned in most cases as overall restorations, without a direct or massive intervention on such and such a monument (Fig. 3a). In this chapter we highlight the investigation carried out by the College of Architects of the Balearic Islands on the revitalisation of the Sant Pere neighbourhood in Palma de Mallorca (Fig. 3b). It is a far-reaching analysis of both the current state of the neighbourhood at all levels and how it could be adapted to modern life, while conserving its character. The study is a model of its kind, with an extremely informative analysis of typologies of edifices, which would later be used as a guide for similar successive interventions, which are so necessary today. The third chapter deals with an example of the restoration work on small complexes of 'Public Architecture', that anonymous and less imposing architecture which sadly is fast disappearing. This section deals with such interesting works as the restorations on the Temple Square, the Corral de Comedias in Almagro, the Jewish Quarter in Segovia (Fig. 3c), and Santa Gadea del Cid.

The next chapter refers to different aspects of 'Military Architecture': defended gates, city walls, castles, fortresses, etc. In the chapter on 'Civil Architecture' examples of different types of palaces are shown, from the most ancient royal Moorish residences up to Gaudí's creations, which were still recent at that time. Outstanding amongst these are the magnificent works undertaken in order to salvage the Aljafería of Zaragoza, after the damage it had recently sustained, and the restoration of the Palace of Velázquez, one of the works which represented Spain in the EAHY 1975 Exhibition held in Amsterdam. The shortest chapter is about 'Engineering Works', in which only three bridges and an aqueduct are described. The controversial restoration of the Segovia Aqueduct is notable, as much for the category of the monument as for the special characteristics of the scheme. This was another project which represented Spain in the Amsterdam Exhibition, and in the documentation presented it is easy to follow the consolidation and restoration carried out by the Ministry of Public Works on this universally-famous aqueduct.

By contrast, the next chapter is the longest in the whole catalogue. It refers to 'Religious Architecture', in all its multiple aspects and manifestations: monasteries, collegiate churches, hermitages, churches, basilicas, and cathedrals, providing a wide and varied overview of all the religious architecture in Spain, as well as illustrating different problems posed and suggesting possible solutions. The challenges faced in the recuperation of the Monastery of Guadalupe, and the remarkable study on the reconstruction of the ruins of the Monastery of Parral are particularly notable. The next section deals with 'New Uses for Monumental Edifices', the only option for so many structures whose original purposes had been lost: old palatial residences now converted into museums, libraries, schools, etc. We must also point out the intensive restoration work conducted by the Ministry of Information and Tourism in salvaging many palaces and castles in order to convert them into *Paradores* (State-Run Hotels), while efficiently promoting new areas for tourism, saving sites that were on the decline, and cooperating directly and indirectly in preventing many elements from disappearing (Fig. 3d). Finally, examples presented by the *Association of Friends of Castles* and by the *Friends of Trujillo* are notable for their endeavours in recuperating our Architectural Heritage.



Figs. 3a–d: Illustrations from *Monumental Heritage of Spain: An Exhibition on its Conservation and Revitalization* (1975). 3a: Complex of buildings in Baeza (Jaén). Architect: José Antonio Llopis Solbes. Section 3. Vernacular Architecture (Lesser-known complexes of buildings); 3b: COACB. The need to revitalise old quarters: el Puig de Sant Pere (Palma de Mallorca). Culture Commission of the Balearic Isles Delegation of the College of Architects of Cataluña and the Balearic Islands. Section 2. Interventions on complexes of buildings; 3c: The Judería quarter (Segovia). Architect: José Miguel Merino de Cáceres. Section 3. Vernacular Architecture (Lesser-known groups of buildings); 3d: Adaptation of the ancient Convent of Saint Francis in Granada to a State-Run Hotel in 1946. Architect: Francisco Prieto Moreno. Section 8. New uses for buildings. State-Run Hotels

7. CONTRIBUTORS TO THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE EXHIBITION (1975)

Many people contributed to the structure and organisation of the Exhibition.

Director and General Coordinator: Don Ramón Falcón Rodríguez; National Curator of the Artistic Heritage, Planning and Staging: Jose Miguel Merino de Cáceres; Architect of General Administration of Artistic and Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Education and Science. Special collaborators: Fernando Serrano Suñer (Head of the Department of Artistic Activities of the General Administration of Cultural Relations, Ministry for Foreign Affairs); Luis González Robles (Principal Curator of Exhibitions of the General Administration of Cultural Relations, Ministry for Foreign Affairs). Collaborating architects: Antonio Almagro Gorbea; Eduardo Barceló de Torres; Amparo Berlinches Acin; M^a Ángeles Hernández-Rubio Muñoyerro; Ana Iglesias González; Eduardo González Mercade; Manuel Manzano-Monis López-Chicher; Cervantes Martínez Brocca; José Miguel Merino de Cáceres; Carlos Montero López; José Sancho Roda (General Administration of Artistic and Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Education and Science); Manuel Sainz de Vicuña (General Management of Tourism Ordinance, Ministry of Information and Tourism); Alfonso Villamarín (General Administration of Architecture, Ministry of Housing).

The Spanish Executive Committee of the EAHY 1975: President of the Committee: José Fernández Villaverde y Roca de Togores, Marquis of Santa Cruz, Ambassador of Spain, Permanent Advisor to the State. General Secretary: José Antonio Vaca de Osma y de la Reguera, Executive Minister.

Members of the Board: José Luis Messia y Jiménez, Marquis of Busianos, General Director of Cultural Relations; Miguel Alonso Baquer, General Director of the Artistic and Cultural Heritage; Juan Díaz-Ambrona Bardají, General Director of Local Administration; Fernando Ballesteros Morales, General Director of Architecture and Building Technology; Ramón Falcón Rodríguez, National Curator of the Artistic Heritage; Manuel Sainz de Vicuña y Garcia Prieto, Marquis of Alhucamas, Assistant Director, Planning of Tourism Ordinance; Xavier de Salas Bosch, Director of the Prado Museum; Juan González Cebrián, President of the Superior Council of the College of Architects of Spain; Javier Carvajal Ferrer, President of the Spanish Institute of Tourism; Gabriel Alomar Esteve, President of the Spanish Association of Friends of Castles.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the most outstanding and significant Spanish contributions to the EAHY 1975 was the publication in 1975 of *Patrimonio Monumental de España: Exposición sobre su conservación y revitalización* (Monumental Heritage of Spain: An Exhibition on its Conservation and Revitalisation), as it highlighted the change in direction that had come about in policies of monument protection. These had taken shape in the late 1950s and were further developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. These policies originated in the reconstruction and restoration of what had been destroyed during the Civil War, in an economy shaped by post-war restrictions and autarchy, and developed into projects marked by the same urge to recreate and manage history. They then moved towards the exploitation of resources and of the image of our heritage for the sake of tourism, and of opening up Spain towards outside influences.

In Spain the new concept of 'integrated conservation', coined by the CoE as the cultural proposal of the moment, was understood as the restoration of buildings and their adaption to new uses, a groundbreaking approach when considering the architectural heritage of the past. This stems from updating 'monumental restoration', stipulated in the *Charter of Venice* of 1964, and requires the term "use" to be understood in its full dimension, including in the concept of "architectural heritage" the whole range of existing edifices that make up a city, which without further classification had consequences over the following years for the revitalisation of historical sites.

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¹ In this work, Calvino describes imagined cities; he gives each one the name of a woman, and makes a comment which is valid for any city or for cities in general: "What is the city for us today? I think I have written something like a last love poem to cities, when it is ever more difficult to live in them as cities. Perhaps we are approaching a moment of crisis in urban life and *Invisible Cities* are a dream born of the heart of invisible cities. We speak with the same insistence about the destruction of the natural environment as well as the fragility of the great technological systems, which may give rise to a chain of damage and paralyse whole metropolises." (Calvino 1974).

² The *Law for Sites and Areas of Interest for National Tourism* of 28 December 1963, and the Ruling of 23 December 1964, refer to the harmony between buildings and local landscape and traditions. Article 2b of the Law-Decree of 9 August 1926, regulating "picturesque spots," included in its section on National Artistic Treasures sites and areas of recognised outstanding beauty, whose protection and conservation were necessary to maintain the typical, artistic and picturesque features of Spain.

³ In 1977 the Spanish architect and historian Fernando Chueca Goitia published a book which described the degradation of Spanish historical sites (Chueca Goitia 1977). This book conveys in many ways the crystallisation of the real situation of historical sites and is an attempt to reclaim the values of the heritage of ancient cities, raising new awareness which with the advent of democracy claimed the right of the Spanish people to conserve their architectural heritage.

- ⁴ This support was given by Law 12/1980 (26 September), namely *Impulso de las Actuaciones del Estado en Materia de Suelo y Vivienda* (Support for State Actions on Land and Dwellings), and developed in Royal Decree 375/1982, with the aim of granting official protection to the rehabilitation of buildings, and by Royal Decree 2329/1983 (28 July), concerning the protection of *Rehabilitación del Patrimonio Residencial y Urbano* (Rehabilitation of the Residential and Urban Heritage), and developed in the Ruling of 30 November 1983, concerning *Areas of Integrated Rehabilitation*.
- ⁵ Fernando Chueca Goitia reflects upon the situation of Spanish historical sites and their degradation in his book cited above (Chueca Goitia 1977, 84).
- ⁶ In 1974 the *Directorate General of Fine Arts* changed its name to *Artistic and Cultural Heritage*, later changing it again to *Directorate General of Artistic Heritage, Archives and Museums* in 1977, when the Ministry of Culture, created in that year, took on responsibility for the area of heritage. Article 148 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, assigned to all public authorities the protection and improvement of the whole Spanish heritage.