



AIC 2014 INTERIM MEETING

TERCER ENCUENTRO MEXICANO DEL COLOR

*Color, culture and identity:
past, present and future*
Color, cultura e identidad:
pasado, presente y futuro

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PROCEEDINGS

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The Chromatic Project as a Proposal to Reappraise the Urban Image, Co-management Experience Between the Municipal Government and the University

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary city is expressed in the building of complex scenarios, and thus inhabitants find it more and more difficult to represent, understand or signify it. In this context, color, textures, cesias and other components of urban language become essential in the structuring of the physical environment and in the construction of memorable spaces.

The traditional perception and familiarity with the public space is replaced by new experiences that bring about new ways of communication and experimentation. It is therefore necessary to recover a coherence principle which allows the construction of a contemporary urban reality and its all-embracing image. (Améndola, 2000).

The public management of towns sets as an objective the search for specific urban instruments with the aim of reinforcing local identity.

Within the Institute of Color of the Faculty of Architecture, Town Planning and Design of the National University of Córdoba a proposal is shaped up to reappraise the image of the public space in the micro-area “Center West” in the city of Villa Carlos Paz. The municipal management, with the participation of the university and neighbors, works towards the reappraisal of the image expression of this area, mainly by means of chromatic design of facades and other language components to foster in residents experiences of belonging, remembrances and construction of the sense of urban living.

Concerning this and taking into account the landscape and the architectural, urban, touristic and commercial values that distinguish the hilly village, the chromatic project sets out a palette of colors with a clear aim to contributing to the reinforcement of the area’s identity.

In this way, the urban color plays the role of a leading instrument that structures and defines the environment allowing the residents to signify it and in time make it their own.



Strategic action to reappraise the “Center-West Area” Urban Image, Villa Carlos Paz

The city of Villa Carlos Paz is located 36 km west of the city of Córdoba with an estimated population of 57,000 inhabitants. Founded in 1913, the village has experienced a sustained growth since the construction of the Chair Lift in 1955 and the Cuckoo Clock in 1958 being at present one of the main touristic resorts of the country. Therefore, its logic of growth brings about important problems in the city functioning as an urban system. For example, the great variety of uses, the real estate speculation and their negative influence on the global image of the city top off a complex landscape panorama (figure 1).



Figure 1. The urban and natural landscape of Villa Carlos Paz.

The local government, aware of this situation, realizes the need for specific action instruments to avoid the alteration or disappearance of natural, architectural or urban landscapes in the city. The government together with CPUA (Environmental Urban Planning Council) develops proposals to protect paradigmatic areas so as to promote sustainable tourism.

The reappraisal of the image of the “Center-West” micro-area of the village has been an unresolved matter for many local governments. The area goes from the Cuckoo clock along the imaginary line drawn by Sarmiento Boulevard and 9 de Julio Boulevard to Puente Viejo, which constitutes the entrance to the central area.

The area is defined by a diversity of commercial activities which take place in architectural typologies of significant value that existed before and were not originally designed as commercial architecture. This commercial characteristic is strongly supported by advertising signs with different shapes, brackets, typographies and colors that do not follow any legislation and turn the buildings into de-materialized facades with no distinctive identity. On top of this, the components of urban furniture are not systematized causing a clear disorder in the visual morphological expression of the city.

As a result, residents and tourists find it difficult to interpret or understand the area being unable to recognize the origins of the hilly village in its image (figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2. The urban image of “Center-West”.

The elements considered for the proposal of the chromatic palette were:

- *The natural hilly landscape*, with prevailing earth colors (oranges and reddish browns) and greens in different ranges (from greenish ochres to bluish greens)
- *The distinctive architecture of the hilly village* since its founding at the beginning of the 20th Century until the late 70s (chalets, hotels, sailing clubs, etc) characterized by the use of traditional materials such as stones, flagstone, tiles, wood and brick among others (figure 4).
- *The present urban landscape of the area*, mainly commercial, with a predominance of saturated colors, especially in advertising signs (figure 5).

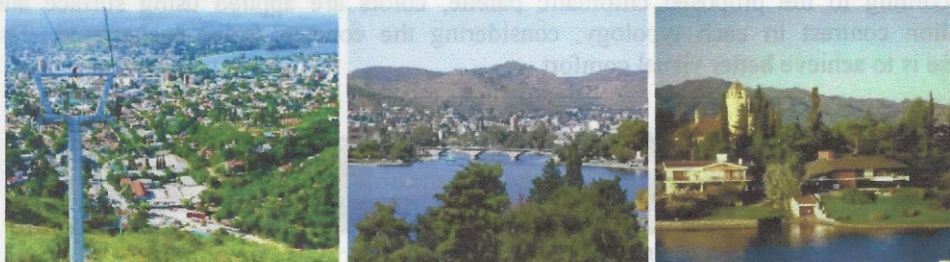


Figure 4. *The natural hilly landscape and the distinctive architecture of the hilly village.*



Figure 5. *The present urban landscape of the area*

Afterwards, the chromas of a polychromatic color chart are defined and it comprises two groups of harmonious colors. The first one includes the reddish-dun hues, with prevailing ochres of medium values and saturation and warm temperature. These are used in facades background wall and for details. The second group is made up of bluish greens, of medium saturation, low values and cold temperatures. These are used in carpentry work, closures, iron bars and other elements of facades (figure 6).



Figure 6. *First polychromatic color chart*





Figure 9. Chromatic design of facades – Individual typology

- On site work follow-up
- Action verification and re-formulation and/or adjustment of chromatic design

At present, the project is in its first phase of execution. Infrastructure works and sidewalk widening are being carried out. The chromatic project is to be executed in the second phase of the project (figures 10 and 11).

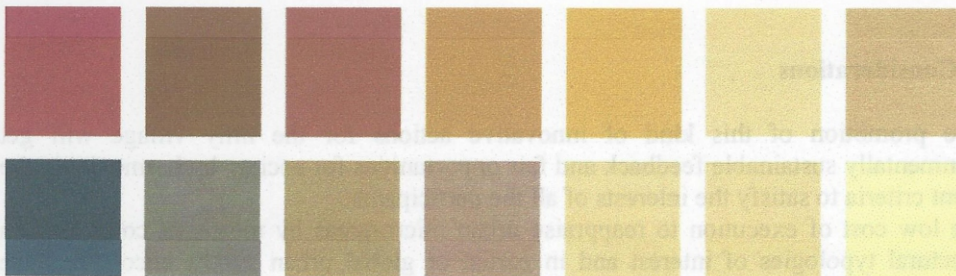


Figure 10. Final polychromatic color chart





Figure 11. Project of urban chromatic design - before and after

Within the frame of general strategic action for the area, it is important to point out that each front facade will have to comply with the current municipal legislation and solve individual problems. The project is quite feasible since both the chromatic design of facades and the advertising artwork and awnings were agreed on by the shopkeepers.

As an additional action, the Institute of Color contacted paint-selling businesses in the area and asked them to support and contribute to this project of urban reappraisal. The Municipal Government signs agreements with Alba and Quimex, which in exchange for urban advertising donate paint and materials for the chromatic intervention.

Final Considerations

The promotion of this kind of innovative actions for the hilly village will get environmentally sustainable feedback and fair opportunities for society by harmonizing the different criteria to satisfy the interests of all the participants.

The low cost of execution to reappraise urban micro-areas by means of color both in architectural typologies of interest and in partial or global urban syntax encouraged the Municipal Government to foster the intervention.

To summarize, the chromatic Project reinforces the construction of the image of the area and the city. The vital influence of color in the urban scene allows residents to use and appropriate the public space. In this way, experience will consolidate the sense of belonging of inhabitants, reinforcing their identity and contributing to a memorable city.



The color of each city depends, to a large extent, on its natural determinants and its history. The natural determinants are decisive for the choice of materials or the predominance of one material over others; history decides by leaving traces of periods of time with special vitality or peculiar dynamisms: times, therefore, responsible for many of the final aspects that make up the urban physiognomy. (Düttmann 1982:111)

The reappraisal of the "Center-West" area, in a context of a weak urban image, will contribute to a spatial configuration that identifies the place promoting unity and identity and putting emphasis on the commercial-touristic character of the area. Besides, it will stimulate the necessary synergy to reconsider the management and planning of the city.

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