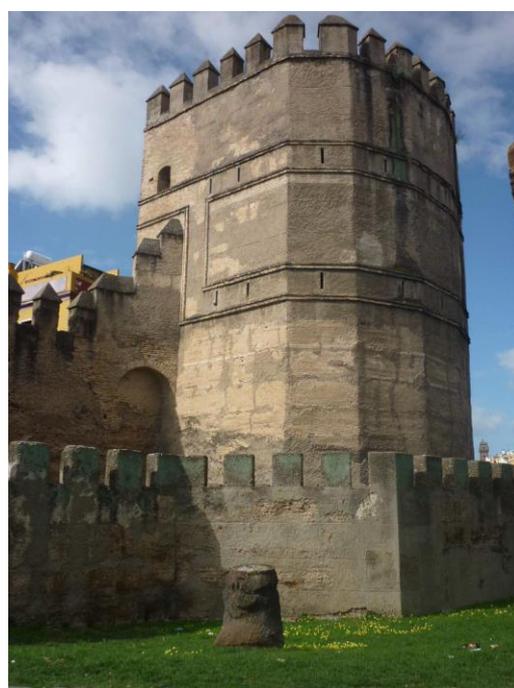


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# Walled Cities & Open Societies: Managing Historic Walls in Urban World Heritage Properties

## Siena, Italy. 26-27 January 2017

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## Seville (Spain)<sup>i</sup>

### Info sheet

## 1. City Background Information

The first archaeological data of the city of Seville goes back to the second half of the IX century BC. and tell us about a Phoenician foundation that takes advantage of the river Guadalquivir as an important communication route. This protohistoric urban enclave will be commercially linked with the Near East, at least until the 6th century BC. After a critical period, the city seems to recover from the fifth century BC. under the orbit of Carthage, until Rome, in its struggle with it during the second century BC, succeeded in wresting its influence from the Iberian Peninsula.

It will be under the orbit of Rome when Seville reaches its maximum urban expression during the Antiquity, soon acquiring the basic infrastructures of all classical city, especially the fortifications, layout and public buildings, besides the condition of colony in the time of César and Augustus and happening to be capital of a "*conventus iuridicus*". The definitive increase took place between centuries I and II A. C. supported mainly in the trade of the oil of the Bética. However, from the third century A.C., the fall of this trade and the consequent port activity, plus the reactivation of the river flood regime, caused the occupied area of the city to contract significantly and to organize on the basis of other urban patterns derived from Christianization, although in a weaker way an attempt was made to maintain a certain image of a classical city, especially during the Visigoth period.

Between centuries VIII and X, Seville will be important part in the conformation of the State Omeya in al-Andalus. After a first period of transition and adaptation of the city to the new modes, which is unknown much of the urban information, it will be in the eleventh century, during the Kingdom of Taifas, when the true transformation begins in "*madina*".

But it will be during the North African period, between 1091 and 1248 (the latter date of the city reconquest by the Castilian troops), when it reaches great urban notoriety: the only known walls will be built (of the previous ones no rest has been found), large palaces, citadels, recreational villas, a new major mosque, an aqueduct and the first known bridge over the Guadalquivir, Seville becoming the capital of the Almohad empire in al-Andalus. It is necessary to keep in mind that the last walled enclosure of the Almohad Seville, whose remains can still be seen, frames an urban area of about 278 ha approximately, and with a perimeter of something more than 8.000 m. This area would not be taken up until century XVIII.

After a slow process of repopulation during the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the Discovery of America and the consequent benefits of becoming the port of the Indies, will make it one of the most populous cities in Europe between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most distinctive feature from the urban point of view was the high number of foundations and religious buildings spread out in the city, arriving to coined the term city-convent. The plague epidemic of 1649 (it is estimated that Seville lost half of its population, going from 120,000 to 60,000 inhabitants) and the transfer of the activities related to the American trade to Cadiz, in the early eighteenth century, plunged the city into a long lethargy that would hardly come until almost the Twentieth Century. Before, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Sevillian bourgeoisie would interpret the entry into "modern times" by a traumatic rupture with the Old Regime, which at the urban level would involve the demolition of most of the gates and walls of the city.

## 2. Basic description and brief history of the walls

The technique of construction of the walls of Seville is the one known as "tapial", that is to say, concrete of lime and arid, put in work by means of formwork. The stone is used punctually in doors, towers and spans as reinforcement, as well as brick, which is also used to delineate simple decorative motifs.

The basic defensive system consists of moat, barbican of lower height and wall proper, flanked to regular spaces by towers of square plan. In specific points, of special defensive interest, these towers become polygonal and of greater height, as in the walls of Alcázares and castles, in the South end of the precinct.

Although there are different hypotheses about the exact date of construction of the last walled enclosure, it appears that it began around 1125-1126, during Almoravid domination and as the result of an ambitious fortification project of its empire against the pressure of Christians in Al-Andalus and in front of the Almohads in the Maghreb. We do not know if it came to an end or not, what we do know is that during the Almohad period, between 1150 and 1221, the walls were reformed or redefined in any case: the walls were enlarged, chambers were included in the towers and others were erected with polygonal plan, a barbacana with moat and fortified ramps in the doors were constructed, all this plus the defensive reinforcement of the south of the "madina" with two citadels (including a new fortified major mosque) and, finally, in 1220- 1221 the Tower of Gold construction, at the edge of the river, for the defense of the port.

This is the basic defensive scheme that would be maintained throughout the centuries, with the logical restorations and reforms for its maintenance until, in the middle of the XIX century, first on the occasion of the construction of the railroad and, later, due to the movements Revolutionaries, the walls and doors began to be demolished.

## 3. Current functions and management/governance framework

Besides the logical defensive functions and the own administrative delimitation of the urban entity, the walls fulfilled until the nineteenth century a crucial work of protection against the floods of the Guadalquivir river. Nowadays, as in most of the contemporary walled cities, walls are one of the tourist attractions in the city, either by way of contemplation or by encompassing other buildings of interest such as the Real Alcázar. In some cases, towers of great proportions became some public institution. In some other cases the walls have lived for centuries as support or foundation of many houses in the city center.

At present, we can say that, not counting the Real Alcázar, still stands 30% of the original layout, about half of which is available for more or less complete contemplation. Only in the so-called walls of the

Macarena can be seen a fragment of 537 meters with the entire defensive device (wall, barbican, moat, towers and two doors).

#### 4. Role of the walls with the regard to the OUV of the WH property and its management system

The wall of Seville, or more concretely the section conserved in the environs of the Macarena Church and borough, constitutes one of the most significant urban elements of the city. Its extension, its isolated position from other buildings, its location in an essential artery of the city center, strongly characterize a large part of the urban planning.

This poses a triple reflection on the wall and its treatment: as a monument with historical value by itself and with all the demands that normally entails; as a milestone and urban element, it symbolises a very significant part of the image of the city and, as a sign of identity, permanent and defining reference of an entire neighborhood.

The Wall of Macarena has been protected by municipal regulations since 1870, when it is saved from the general demolition to which the rest of the Almohad fence was subjected. In Royal Order of 11 of January of 1908 was declared National Monument the walls included between the doors of Cordova and the Macarena. By Decree of April 22, 1949, it was ordered that all castles in Spain, whatever their ruined state, should remain under the protection of the State, holding the Municipalities responsible for any damage that might befall them. The Spanish Historical Heritage Law, declared such Heritage of Cultural Interest. The planning of development is the Special Plan for Protection of Sector 1 of the Historic Center: "San Gil-Alameda", finally approved on January 30, 2003. This document catalogs the section between Macarena Gate and Córdoba Gate with the Level of Integral Protection.

#### 5. Main challenges and opportunities concerning walls management

The main challenge of maintaining the walls is to find a mechanism of intervention appropriate to it. Since its composition has a very high percentage of sand, the erosive process is constant, so it's important to use restoration techniques that do not seriously impact the building visually or from the structural or chemical point of view. Obviously it's necessary to plan continuous funding for this purpose, avoiding major traumatic actions and trying to make small "surgical" maintenance interventions. It may be considered that most of the responsibility for the conservation of the walls belongs to the public sector.

The greatest opportunity concerns the strengthening of local identity as a distinctive sign in comparison with other European cities, since, although there are other Almohad monuments in the Iberian Peninsula, the establishment of the Almohad capital of al-Andalus in Seville, means that today it's possible to find these kind of Heritage Monuments only in the Maghreb area.

## 6. Main past, on-going or planned activities for enhancing the walls

The model of action of the City of Seville (holder of most of the walls) can be divided into three main lines:

- 6.1. Preventive maintenance: by identifying the layout of the walls and its status of preservation for later inclusion in urban planning instruments that provide a legal framework for a correct intervention.
- 6.2. Restoration: working on the different sections of preserved walls that are in public space, since, in those that are included in private spaces, the conservation is the responsibility of the owners.
- 6.3. Marking, using different types of pavement, the layout of the wall in public spaces where its existence has been verified below ground.



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<sup>i</sup> This document has been drafted by Oscar Ramírez Reina and Carmen Hernández Rey. Photos were taken by Fernando Sánchez Navarrete and Oscar Ramírez Reina. Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this paper and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization