

URBAN DESIGN: STREET AND SQUARE

Third Edition

Cliff Moughtin



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VISUAL ANALYSIS

Miguel Mertens and Cliff Moughtin

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INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the procedure used to analyse the form, function and significance of the street and square as elements within a given urban context. The second aim is to make concrete the practical significance of the book's main content, which has been written largely from a theoretical perspective. Finally, the chapter introduces the idea of urban design survey techniques.

The case study for this chapter is Tavira, a town in the Algarve, Portugal, comprising a number of lovely squares connected by narrow traditional streets set within an historic core, structured around a series of named quarters. The first part of the chapter deals with an analysis of the history and development of Tavira. Such a study is important for an understanding of the town and its *genius loci*. The study of the town's history also forms a basis for conservation policies and is an instrument for the promotion of ideas for development compatible with local traditions.

The second part of the chapter discusses townscape analysis, permeability, land use and visual analysis, particularly in relation to the squares and

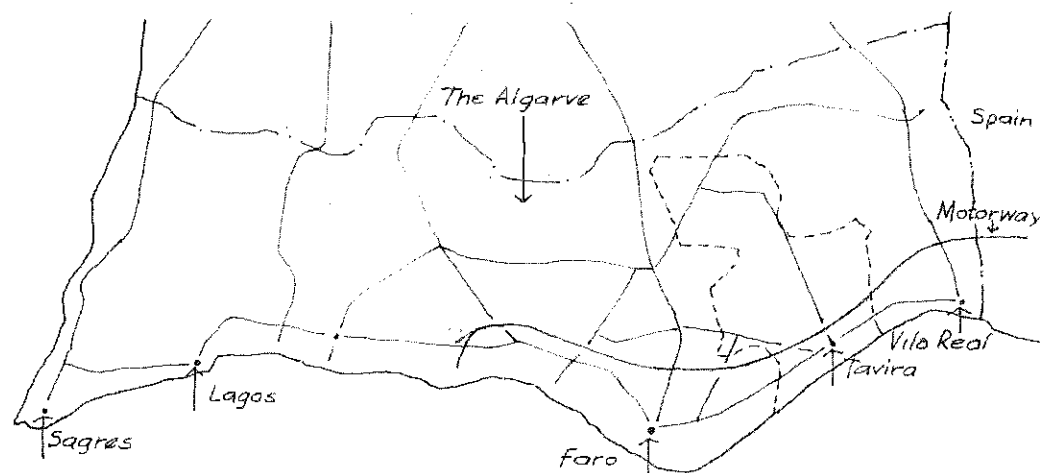
streets of the historic core of Tavira. The chapter will conclude by illustrating how such an analysis can be used to inform the urban design process.

TAVIRA AND ITS REGION

The administrative district of Tavira is situated on the coastal belt in the south of the Algarve and to the east of Faro, the region's capital (Figure 8.1). The district of Tavira occupies about 12.2 per cent of the region's land area: it has a population of approximately 24,000 people, which is about 7.2 per cent of that of the region. This population doubles in the summer months with an influx of tourists from the rest of Portugal, in addition to those visitors from Britain and the rest of Europe. It is this influx of people, which supports the tourist industry, one of the main economic activities of Tavira.

The town of Tavira is in the south of its district lying astride the River Sequa which becomes the River Gilão as it passes under the Roman Bridge at the heart of the town and then heads for the sea. Tavira is also on the main road and rail routes that traverse the Algarve connecting Vila Real de Santo Antonio on the River Guadiana and the Spanish

Figure 8.1 The Algarve



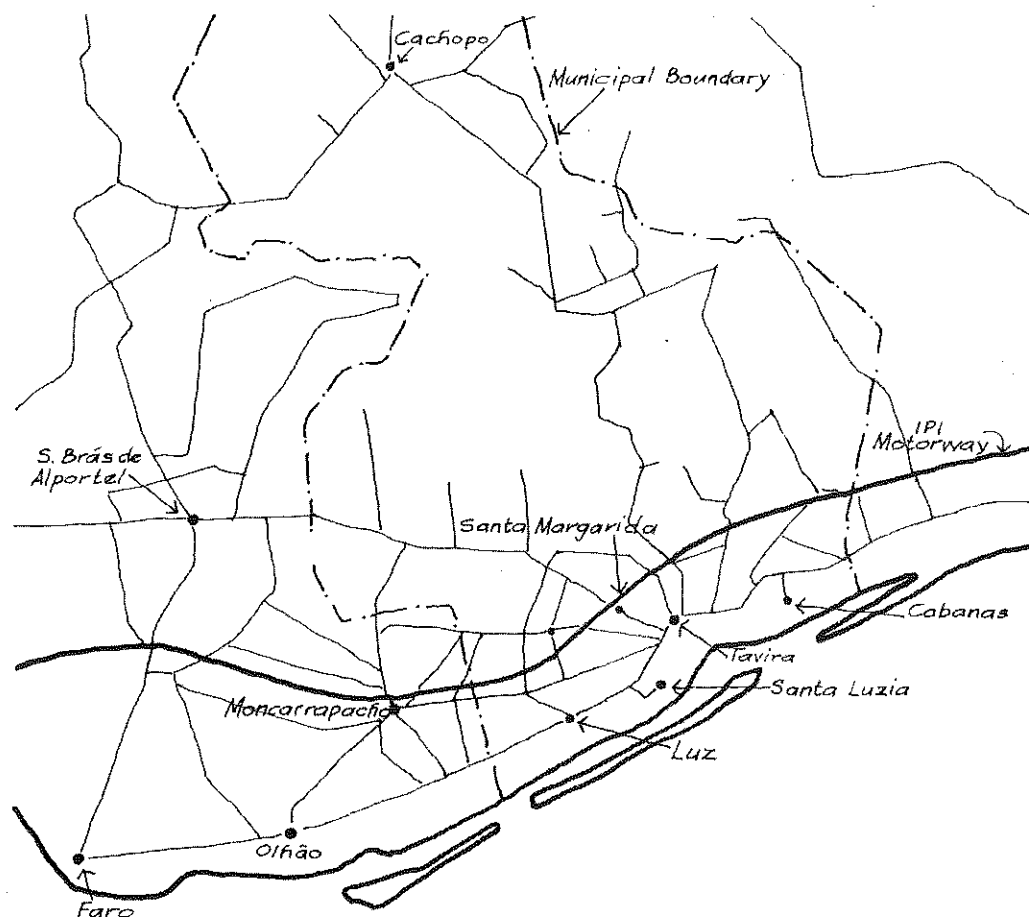
border in the east, to Lagos and the Atlantic coast in the west. The region is connected to Lisbon, the capital, to Spain by motorway, and to the rest of Europe via the busy airport at Faro. Locally, Tavira's influence extends to the mountain area to its north, competing with such towns as São Bras de Alportel and Loulé. Closer to Tavira there are a group of subsidiary small settlements, also in the coastal zone, comprising Luz de Tavira, Santa Luzia, and Cabanas. Figure 8.2 shows the administrative district of Tavira.

The location of Tavira within its regional setting and in its relation to the transportation network has implications for the role, function and significance of the streets and squares of this small town. Figure 8.3 is a schematic map of Tavira showing the town's main quarters. For most of the year the town serves the needs of the people of Tavira and the population of its rural hinterland. For eight months of the year Tavira is a small market town with an urban infrastructure that performs a purely local function. In the bustling tourist season that same infrastructure, and in particular the town's streets and squares, take on quite a different role: they become sources of entertainment and places of

relaxation for the many visitors. Tavira, to date, has combined these two functions without losing its character and without losing too much of the environmental quality that is one of the town's main attractions.

The development pressures arising from both a rapidly expanding tourist industry and the wealth created by membership of the EU, are increasing at a rate never before experienced in the eastern Algarve. These pressures are manifest in many factors: growing car ownership with its associated road congestion; movement of local populations from the countryside to Tavira and its suburbs; increased demand for retirement and holiday homes; the building of more hotels and other accommodation for tourists; and the growing demand for development such as supermarkets that are associated with growing prosperity. Can those planning for the future of Tavira and its satellite settlements avoid the environmental destruction that has often accompanied tourist development in, for example, some parts of Spain or in some places in the western Algarve? Can this small but attractive town capitalise on its great tourist potential without destroying those very qualities that make it a desirable place in

Figure 8.2 Tavira and its region



which to live, work or visit? These are the difficult questions that have to be addressed by those responsible for the future of the town.

DEVELOPMENT OF TAVIRA

THE ORIGINS OF THE TOWN

Little is known about the origin and early history of Tavira. Some writers have referred to the area as

having once been occupied by the Greeks, the Phoenecians and the Carthaginians. Recent excavations in the oldest part of Tavira have uncovered Phoenecian ruins, which indicate that this is indeed an ancient foundation. The remains of a Roman port have been discovered on the coast between Santa Luzia and Luz de Tavira while there is evidence of a Roman road connecting Castro Marim, (Baesuris) near the Guadiana on the Spanish border and Faro (Ossonoba). The Romans also constructed bridges

Figure 8.3 Tavira and its quarters



Figure 8.4 The Roman bridge





Figure 8.5 The Arab town

Figure 8.6 Town walls

across the Almargem and the Gilão. The bridge connecting both parts of Tavira across the Gilão is known locally as the Roman Bridge though its present structure appears to date from much later (Figure 8.4). It is thought that the Romans occupied the highest part of Tavira but no archaeological evidence has been found to confirm this assumption.¹

THE ARAB OCCUPATION OF THE TOWN

Figure 8.5 shows the probable extent of the Arab occupation of the town. Most of the urban development was within the fortress walls, which also contained two Mosques. Figures 8.6 and 8.7 show the remains of the town walls. The port and farm areas were located beyond the walls. During the Christian re-conquest of Portugal Tavira was liberated in 1242. In the ensuing peaceful times the town began to expand beyond the walls outside the gates, taking advantage of its important location on the lowest crossing point on the river and also of its port facilities. The port continued to grow with

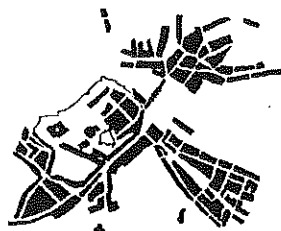


Figure 8.7 Town walls



8.8

Figure 8.8 Tavira after the Christian re-conquest



8.9

Figure 8.9 Tavira at its commercial peak



8.10

Figure 8.10 Tavira in the sixteenth century

development along the riverfront. There were also developments around the hill on which the Convent of São Francisco is located and on the eastern bank of the river. It was also at this stage in its development that the defensive walls were strengthened. This bears witness to the town's growing prosperity and strategic importance. See Figure 8.8, which shows the extent of the town after the Christian re-conquest.

TAVIRA DURING THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Tavira's close trading links with North Africa and its commercial connections with other countries led to the town's growth, particularly during what is known in Portugal as 'the Century of Discovery'. This great century of development is still reflected in the town's morphology. There was a consolidation of the development in quarters such as Ribeira, Alagoa, Malforo, and the heights around São Francisco. New quarters such as São Lazaro and São Bras were founded at this time. Tavira merged into a series of towns within a town (Figure 8.3). Each town district had its own identity and to some extent was self-sufficient or autonomous. This structure is very much in evidence today, though the degree of self-sufficiency of each district is much reduced. Figure 8.9 shows Tavira at the height of its commercial activity during the middle ages.

DECLINE AND REVIVAL

In the sixteenth century, Tavira lost much of its commercial base. The port declined and many of the traders moved to Seville. It was a period of decline and stagnation with a general movement of population from the town back to the countryside. Figure 8.10 shows the town at this time. It wasn't until the middle of the eighteenth century that commerce once again revived. Commercial activity in the eighteenth century was exclusively associated with fishing and coastal trade along the Algarve. The earthquake of 1755 caused great damage - the Ribeira district, in particular, being affected most. Parts of the Hospital, the Convent of São Francisco and the church of Santa Maria were also destroyed. Economic recovery in the wake of the earthquake was given impetus by the founding of a factory making tapestries and the development of the salt trade. The salt industry is still an important component of Tavira's economy and a prominent feature of its landscape (Figure 8.11). With economic recovery in the latter part of the eighteenth century, new urban areas were developed and existing ones rehabilitated and extended.

The second half of the nineteenth century was another period of growth and development: the urban core of the town centre was transformed with the construction of a garden by the riverside



8.11

and the municipal covered market. The old market has now been converted into a covered public square surrounded by cafés and boutiques (Figures 8.12 and 8.13). The river was regularized with stone-retaining walls, as it passed through the town. These pleasant riverside walks are still a feature of the town centre. Tavira faces directly onto its river, which is an important visual feature, giving the town much of its character (Figures 8.14 and 8.15).

TAVIRA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1904 the railway line was opened, heralding the start of another period of growth and expansion for Tavira. A new avenue was built from the railway station in the south-west of the town to the centre. Along this avenue new residences and a primary school were built, while on the access roads into the town newly established canning factories were located. For the first seventy years of the twentieth century Tavira expanded, much of the development being at a lower density and quite different in form from the tight urban streets and squares of the older parts of the town. The land subdivision was largely unplanned, with scattered development bearing little visual relationship with the older, attractive core of the town. Meanwhile, parts of the historic core of



8.12

Figure 8.11 The salt pans
Figure 8.12 The waterside park

Figure 8.13 The former
municipal market

Figure 8.14 The waterfront



8.13



8.14



Figure 8.15 The waterfront

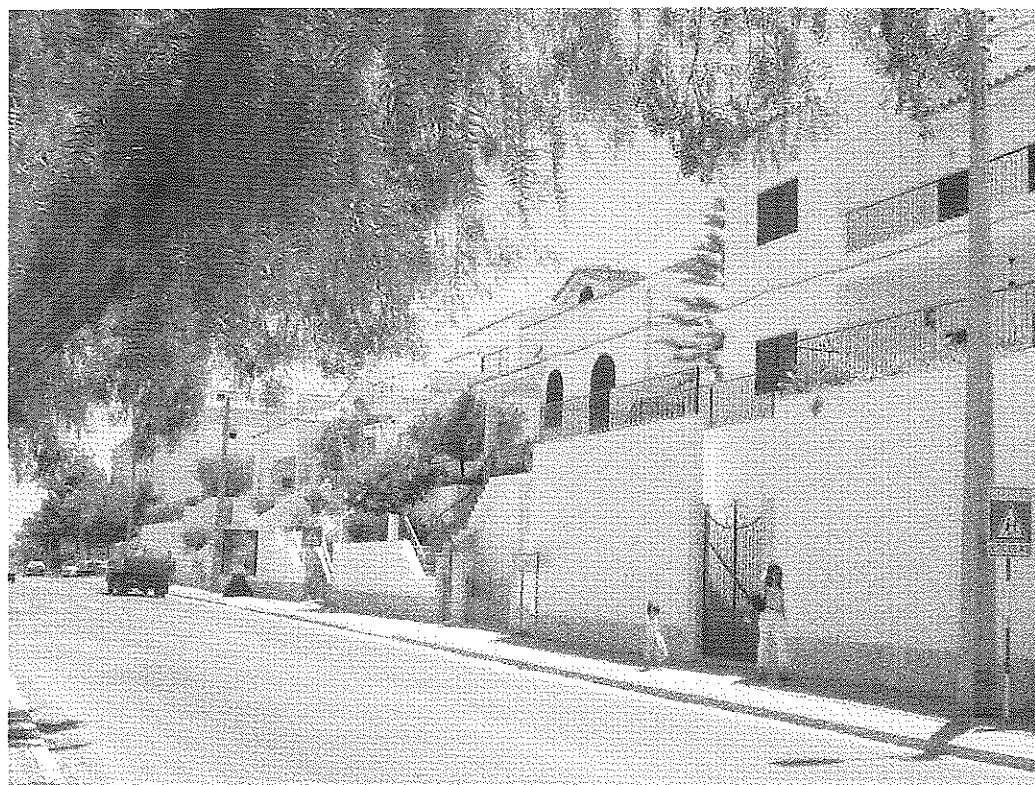


Figure 8.16 Early twentieth century development



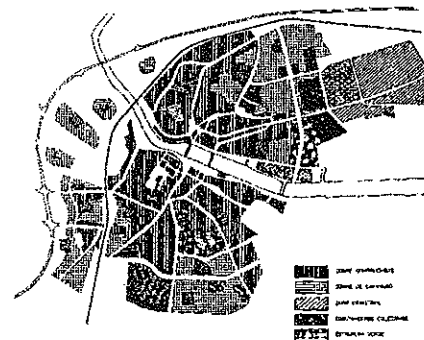
Figure 8.17 Modern frontage in a traditional street

Figure 8.18 Plano Geral de Urbanização

Figure 8.19 Urban decay

the town itself went through a process of demolition and reconstruction. Consequently parts of the older town have been destroyed, weakening its character and image (Figures 8.16 to 8.17).

A plan was made for Tavira in 1981: the Plano Geral de Urbanização (Figure 8.18). This plan



8.18



8.19

attempted to control and direct spontaneous development and, where possible, to reverse some of its worst effects (Figure 8.19). Unfortunately, the plan was not formally approved until 1992, during which time the town continued to expand and grow, without any real consideration being given to the impact on the environment. In 1997, the town boundary was extended to permit the suburban extension of the town. This suburban expansion was caused both by an influx of population from the surrounding countryside into the town, and by a movement of population out of the town where pressure to meet the growing needs of commerce and administration proved irresistible.

The traditional settlement pattern of Tavira is structured around streets, squares, quarters, fine public buildings, sculpture, and street furniture of quality. The new suburbs are quite different. These new developments are no longer clearly defined self-sufficient quarters; rather, they are a series of amorphous single-use zones with little urban design quality. They are not built for the benefit of the pedestrian, but primarily to serve the motor car, which has now become the main cause of traffic and parking problems in the historic core.

The development of Tavira in the late twentieth century mirrors similar developments in towns and

cities across Europe. This development has come late to Tavira and pressures have not been as great as in other places. This presents the town authorities with the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others. The twin aims of seeking environmental excellence and sustainable development may yet inform the planning and design process for the coming decades of the new millennium in this still fine town. There are positive signs that these concerns are being addressed. Some important buildings in the historic core have been restored; a town bus service linking various parts of the town to the centre has been launched; a planning study has been prepared, which advises on ways to ameliorate the worst features of the faceless developments of the twentieth century and to suggest the direction of new development in the town (Figure 8.20).

TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

This section of the chapter will discuss four aspects of townscape analysis. The first is legibility. That is, the ways in which people perceive, understand and react to the urban environment: it concerns those qualities of place that give the town a distinct identity, one which is easily grasped and perceived by its users. The second aspect of this townscape analysis is concerned with the permeability of the environment. That is, the choice of movement the environment presents to the user. The third aspect is the vitality of the environment, particularly in terms of the variety and mix of land uses and the activity thereby generated. The fourth aspect of the analysis is the visual study. This study conforms more to the traditional meaning of townscape analysis as used, for example, by Cullen.² The visual analysis includes a study of town spaces and their connections: it will focus on a selection of streets and squares in the historic core of Tavira, examining the treatment of façades, pavements, rooflines, sculpture and street furniture.



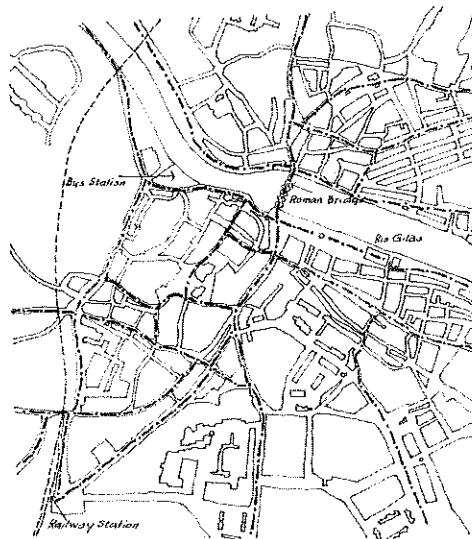
Figure 8.20 Restored buildings: used now as town's main exhibition gallery

PERCEPTUAL STRUCTURE OF TAVIRA

This section of the chapter is based on the work of Kevin Lynch.³ He developed a technique for analysing legibility and suggested ways in which the concept can be used to structure new urban development and strengthen the legibility of existing areas where the environment has been degraded by inappropriate modern development. In order to appreciate the function and form of a street or a square it has to be viewed, initially, as an element in this perceptual structure. Lynch demonstrated with his studies in mental mapping that a legible environment is one that is capable of being structured by people into accurate images. With this

Figure 8.21 Main Paths in
Tavira

Figure 8.22 Street decoration

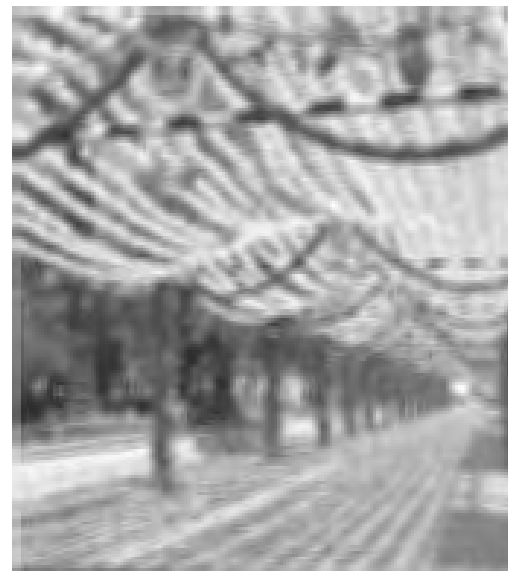


8.21

clear perceptual image of the town the user can react to the environment more effectively. Lynch also found evidence that individuals share features of a common image with other members of the same community. It is this common or shared image that is important for urban design. Some of these structuring features of the image have been discussed earlier in the book - they are: paths, nodes, districts, landmarks and edges.

Corridors The path

The path is probably the most significant structuring element in image building. Most people relate other imaging features to their main network of paths. The main paths in the historic core of Tavira are shown in Figure 8.21. The main paths in the historic core of the town radiate from the Roman Bridge, the ancient crossing point of the river. The bridge has now been pedestrianized, thereby enhancing its image as a meeting point. The paths link the main public buildings, usually located

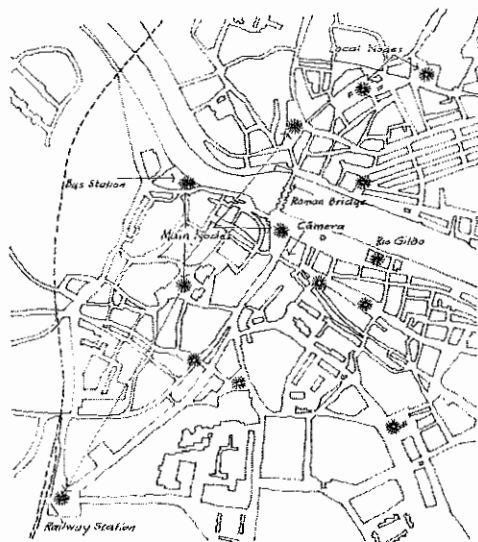


8.22

within important public squares. The main paths are the routes taken by processions at times of public festivals and together with the main public squares such as Praça da República, Praça Dr Padinha and Largo de São Bras they become richly decorated and form the backcloth for public display (Figure 8.22).

Centers Nodes

Nodes are focal points of activity such as the junction of paths, meeting places, market squares, or places of transport interchange. A town may have nodes, which serve a purely local purpose, and others that have a wider significance in the region. This is true of Tavira. The main local nodes are shown on Figure 8.23: also indicated are those nodes that are of particular significance. For example, the Praça da República is the symbolic town centre: it is here that the Câmara, the Local Government Office, is located and it is here that the Mayor has his office. The Praça Dr Padinha is an important square, the centre of a thriving restaurant

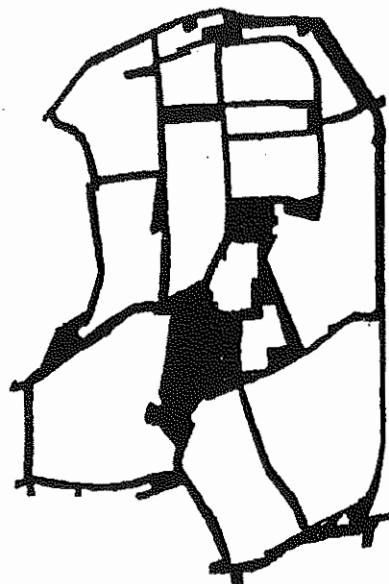


8.23

complex serving the resident population and visiting tourists; there is an important group of spaces surrounding the churches of Santa Maria and Santiago. In former times this was probably the town centre but is now a major tourist attraction, soon to be given added importance with the proposed conversion into a Pousada of the Convento Nossa Senhora da Graça, the third major religious building of the group (see later, Figure 8.30). These spaces are not the only ones in Tavira associated with churches or other former religious foundations; indeed, most squares, in addition to their modern function of meeting places and centres of activity, are also the setting for one of the many churches that decorate the town.

Districts *neighbourhood*

The city, according to Lynch, is divided into quarters or districts, each having some identifying characteristic. The quarter or district is a medium to



8.24

Figure 8.23 Main Nodes in Tavira

Figure 8.24 The Quarter of Santa Maria

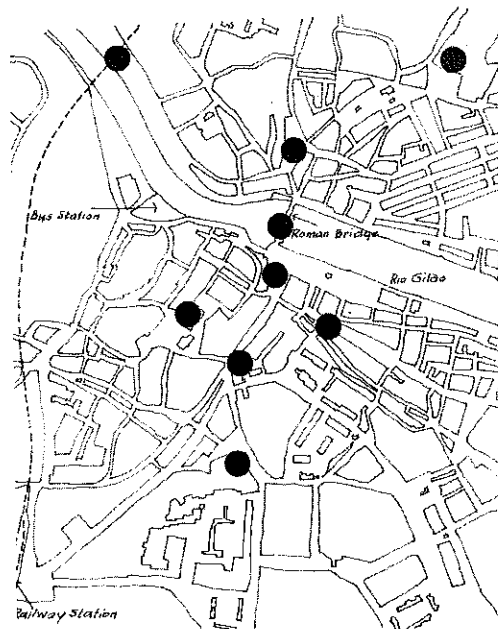
large section of a city, such as the well-known areas in London like Soho and Mayfair. Following Lynch's categorization, Tavira can be viewed as divided by the river into two quite distinct parts; the connecting link between the two main areas is the Roman Bridge. However, Tavira is miniscule in scale when compared to a large city. This is reflected in the size of the town's main quarters, shown on figure 8.3. These quarters have their roots in the history and development of the town: they are named and usually built around a church and square which acts as the quarter's main node or centre (Figure 8.24). It is from this focus that the main paths radiate, connecting the quarter to the rest of the settlement.

Landmarks

Landmarks are points of reference that are experienced at a distance. They are three-dimensional sculptural objects in contrast to nodes, which are places to be entered and experienced from within.

Figure 8.25 Tavira and its landmarks

Figure 8.26 Landmark in the square of Dr Padinha



8.25

The most significant landmark in Tavira is the group of towers belonging to Santa Maria and Santiago. Together with the town's water storage tank the towers mark the hilltop at the centre of the historic core of the town. Other important landmarks are the great auracaria trees that mark the position of important squares in the town (Figures 8.25 and 8.26). The Roman bridge is an important meeting point for young and old alike: for that reason, it is a point of reference and landmark for local people and indeed for tourists.

edges

Edges

The fifth major structuring element for the perceptual image of the town is the edge. Edges are two-dimensional elements where the function of



8.26

pathway is of less importance than the role of boundary. The most obvious edges in Tavira are the river and the old town walls. In Tavira the main pathways, together with the enclosing street façades, perform the dual function of path and dividing edge between adjacent town quarters. These are the type of 'fleshy' boundaries that Alexander recommends.⁴ 'Fleshy' boundaries, which permit the movement of goods and people, reflect the complexities of modern urban life where activities overlap in numerous combinations. This is particularly necessary for the boundaries between town quarters. Figure 8.27 shows the position of important edges in Tavira. It includes both the hard edge such as the river, town walls and railway line, in addition to the more 'fleshy', and less distinct boundaries of the quarters.

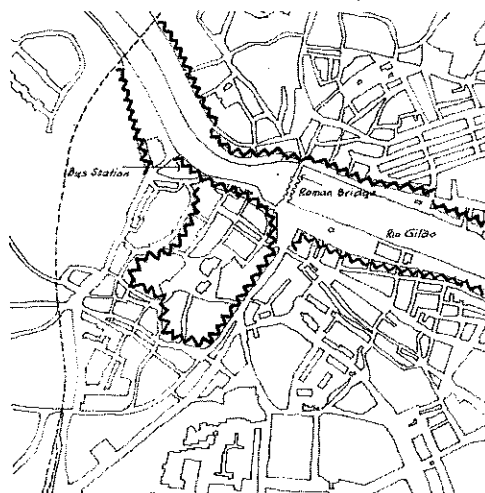
Paths, nodes, landmarks, districts or quarters, and edges all play a significant role in structuring Tavira and determining the town's legibility, this being particularly true of the older parts of the town. Some suburban developments in the town dating from the late twentieth century do not possess this clarity of structure, being planned as single use dormitories and designed primarily for the efficient use of the car.

PERMEABILITY AND LAND USE

We all live public and private lives. A function of urban government is to ensure the safe use of the public realm. A second role of urban government is to guarantee its citizens the level of privacy required by its culture. A third role is to provide suitable conditions for social and economic exchange.

These, sometimes contrary, requirements are resolved at the interface between the public realm and the private or semi-private domains of home, shop or office. The nature of the design of the interface between the public spaces of street and square, and the more private areas of individual properties in Tavira, is the concern of this section of the chapter.

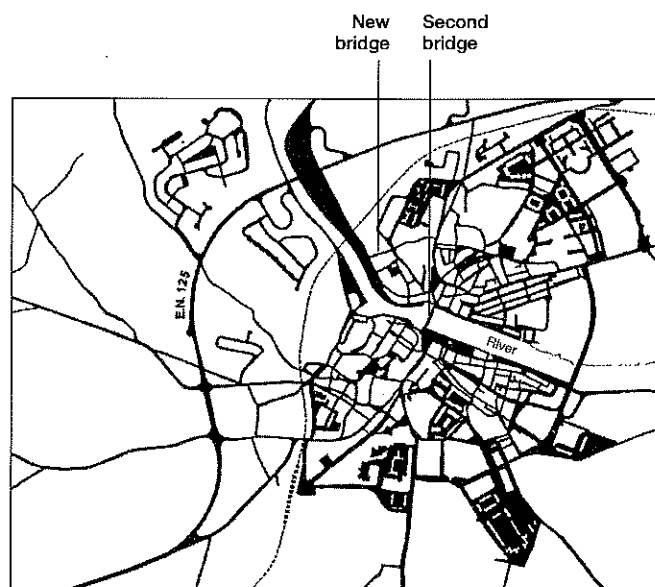
According to Bentley *et al.* 'Both physical and visual permeability depend on how the network of public space divides the environment into blocks: areas of land entirely surrounded by public routes'.⁵ Clearly an area divided into small blocks gives the user a greater choice of routes and therefore greater flexibility of movement than one divided into large blocks. This fine grain of land subdivision is evident in many areas of the historic core of Tavira (Figure 8.28), a quality that has been lost in the larger scale developments of the last century (see Figure 8.16). Where street blocks vary between half to one hectare in size, street junctions occur at about 70 to 100 metres giving a wide variety of routes in moving from place to place on foot and therefore, according to Bentley *et al.*, a high degree of permeability. This is the experience for most of central Tavira, which is a town of great environmental



8.27

Figure 8.27 The edge in Tavira

Figure 8.28 Main public spaces in Tavira



8.28

Figure 8.29 Street scene

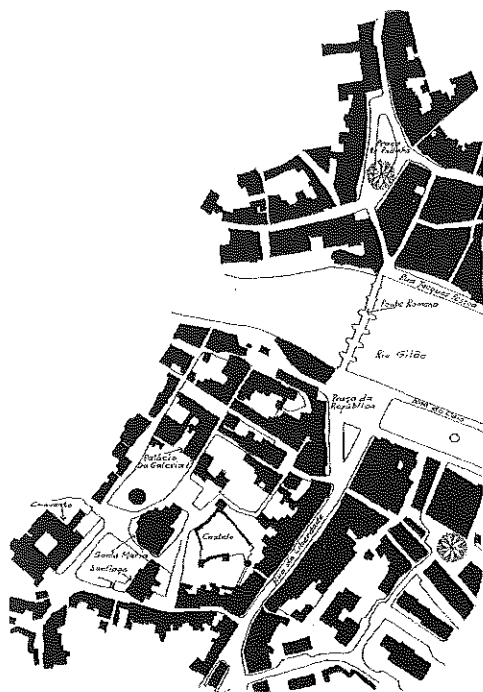
quality in no small measure due to the variety – almost maze – of lovely pathways through the urban structure.

To some extent, public safety in streets is related to the intensity of their use and the activity they generate. Streets are safer if they are heavily used, and if they are overlooked by occupants in the surrounding buildings. Busy streets by both day and night are in the words of Jane Jacobs: 'self policing'.⁶ In Tavira old town the pattern of land-use is mixed. It still retains a large residential population giving life to the town, but even residential streets contain numerous shops, bars, restaurants and small offices (Figure 8.29). It is only in those areas that were redeveloped in the last half of the twentieth century that this particular pattern has been broken. In some places largescale administrative or commer-

cial buildings have been introduced with little thought being given to the quality of the urban environment. It is the ground floors of the buildings in a town that act as the zone of social and commercial exchange generating the activity which makes streets both safe and lively, with the frontage between public and private space being the mechanism of ensuring privacy. In Tavira privacy is not maintained by the ubiquitous front garden often found in the British residential street. In Tavira the terrace frontage of the street is built right up to the pavement. Narrow windows light and ventilate the interior of the building, permitting a view of the outside world but keeping the dark interior private, out of public view (see Figures 8.35, 8.36). Current ideas about the planning of residential areas in Britain and the rest of Europe advocate mixed land use as a method of achieving a degree of self-sufficiency in city quarters and a move towards sustainable urban development: in Tavira this practice is common, but under threat from pressures for redevelopment, particularly if future developments in the town are permitted to follow short-sighted market trends. Such developmental pressures would destroy a fine urban environment while in the long term reducing the town's sustainability.

VISUAL STUDY

The visual study presented here is in two parts: a three-dimensional study of the main public spaces and a study of the two-dimensional surfaces that enclose public space, together with their architectural details, which give the town much of its character. Figure 8.30 shows the area of the study: it includes the spaces around Santa Maria and Santiago in the oldest part of the town: they are connected to Praça da Republica via the main street of the town Rua da Liberdade. Off the Praça da Republica is the lovely green riverside park abutting the Rua do Cais. The Praça da Republica – the centre of the town – is connected across the Rio Gilão via the Ponte Romana to the Praça Dr. Padinha. These main public spaces are connected to



8.30

further visually important public spaces, which punctuate and structure the rest of the town. It is only for convenience and brevity that they are excluded from the study.

In Figure 8.31 the spaces are shown in black and the surrounding buildings in white: it is a reversal of the presentation technique used in the previous figure. It follows an idea from Ghiberd for alternating the way form and ground, building and space, are presented.⁷ This change of perspective concentrates the mind, not on the buildings and their forms, but upon the spaces and the volumes between buildings. It is this anti-form which is so distinctive in Tavira, where narrow passageways twist and turn, finally to open out onto the larger space of a public square or more formal commercial street. Figure 8.32a-g shows a series of perspective



8.31

drawings illustrating this feature of Tavira's townscape form. This way of illustrating movement through spaces in a town is based on Cullen's suggestion that we see and appreciate a town as a series of unfolding pictures⁸ Cullen called this way of seeing, serial vision. Serial vision is most memorable in picturesque landscapes like Tavira. The route taken for the illustration of a typical spatial sequence through the town is shown on Figure 8.30: it follows the path from Santa Maria through to the Praça da Republica, which is the main town square, its heart both politically and socially. This, the main square of the town is triangular in shape, apparently small, being about 100 metres by 100 metres, with a war memorial at its centre. The square, however, expands along the length of the river in the form of a garden with

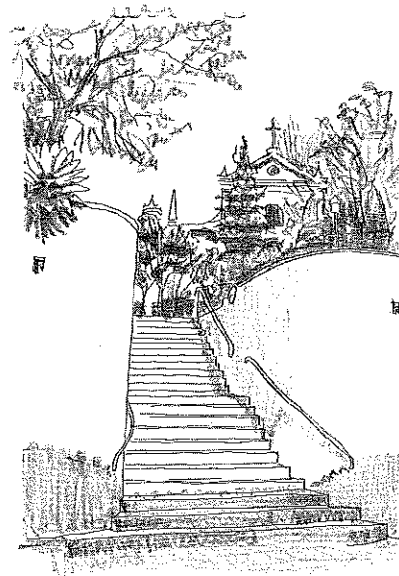
Figure 8.30 The main squares in Tavira

Figure 8.31 The main squares in Tavira. Ground study

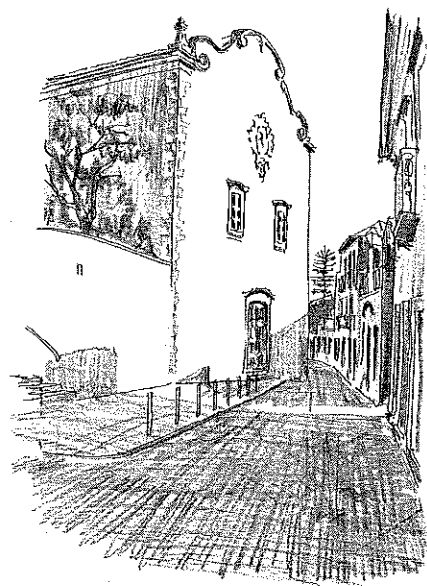
Figure 8.32(a)-(g) Townscape in Tavira



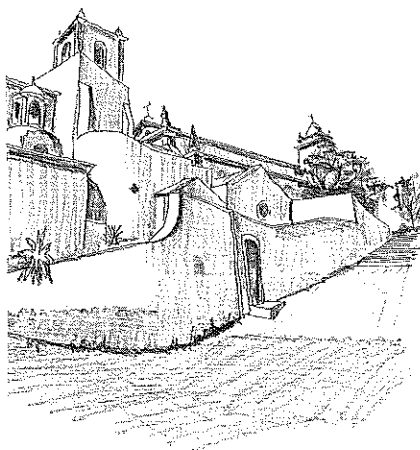
8.32a



8.32b



8.32c



8.32d



8.32e



8.32f



8.32g

bandstand, places for dancing, concerts and outdoor eating. The Praça da Republica is enclosed on two of its sides by buildings. The third side extends beyond the river's edge expanding across the Rio Gilão, terminating visually on the frontage of Rua Jacques Pessoa. In this way the river is enclosed as part of the very heart of Tavira; along with the Ponte Romana; it successfully connects both halves of the town.

The building height in the historic core of Tavira is generally two storeys, about 8 metres high, though there are both single and three-storey buildings. This height is disrupted only in the areas where rebuilding was carried out during the last century and where a church tower punctuates the roovescape. Roofs are constructed throughout the town of clay tiles, which weather a rich brown colour. A distinctive feature of the town is a pyramid roof: a long rectangular space being roofed by a series of small square gabled roofs where ridge and valley alternate along the length of the building. This highly decorative roofline, brought to Tavira from Goa in India, is at times partly hidden behind a balustrade but generally it is the pyramid roof that dominates the urban scene making it one of the most memorable features of Tavira (Figure 8.33).

Figure 8.33 Roovescape



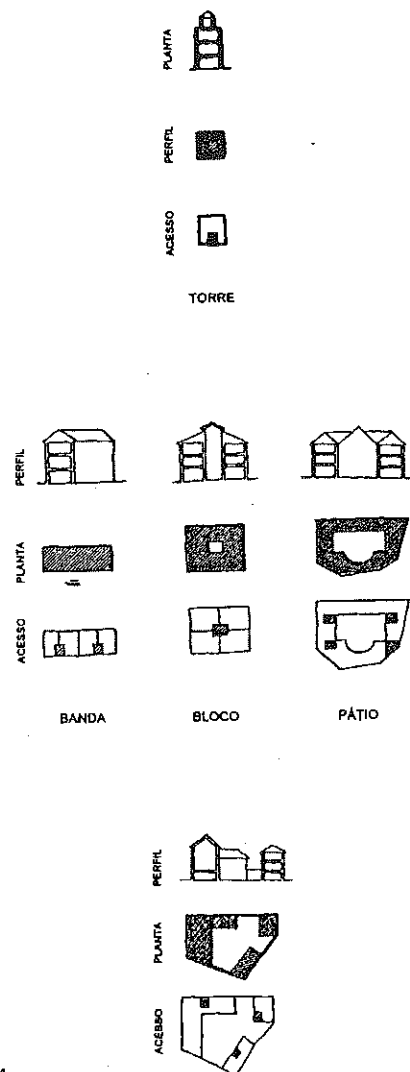
Building plan forms are based on a variety of courtyard designs following Arab and Mediterranean traditions (Figure 8.34).

Façades tend to be white throughout the historic core of the town: they are divided into bays about 3

metres wide comprising a window and doorway aligned vertically. This bay is surmounted by the pyramid roof and gives a small, intimate scale and insistent rhythm to the town. The façades are usually edged in classical detailing, formed either in stone or decorative plasterwork. In addition to these classical details of plinth, end pilasters and cornice, the windows and doorways are edged with decorative surrounds. This simple and satisfying urban terrace architecture still retains traces of Arab influence: shuttered windows, latticed balconies and solid ground floor doors with 'spy holes' permit views of the world outside and act as a source of ventilation but retain privacy for the occupants - an important requirement for the Muslim family (Figures 8.35-8.36).

Figure 8.34 Building plans

Figure 8.35 Architectural detail



8.34



8.35



8.36

Figure 8.36 Door detail**Figure 8.37** Balcony detail**Figure 8.38** Floorscape

Pavements for pedestrians are constructed from small limestone and basalt blocks about 8 centimetres square. The granite blocks vary in colour from off-white to dark grey and are used to create delightful mosaic-like patterns, which in some cases take the form of largescale complex geometric shapes. Street furniture is simple, dignified and functional: railings to enclose the river, street lighting and fountains. The decoration of the town is completed by a series of small gardens with shade trees, flowering shrubs, scented flowers and small-scale sculptures to honour local people of distinction (Figures 8.38 to 8.40).



8.37



8.38

Figure 8.39 Garden square
of Dr Padinha

Figure 8.40 The new
galleries – a local landmark



8.39



8.40

TAVIRA IN THE FUTURE

There are clear indications that the degeneration of the urban environment, which was a feature of Tavira in the last decades of the last century, may have been arrested. Several old buildings in the core of the town have been rehabilitated while others are in the process of reconstruction. In some cases the buildings have been completely revitalized, taking on a completely new function. For example, the town has just refurbished a large domestic property, converting it into a fine set of galleries (see Figure 8.20). The former Convento de Nossa Senhora da Graca at the centre of the old walled town is being converted into a Pousada, or state-run hotel. A number of small-scale sites now have buildings that follow the pattern set by the traditional vernacular architecture of the town. When they are renewed, roofs throughout the old town keep the original shape and are constructed in local tiles to match the existing colour; and most building façades are painted white giving the town a great sense of unity. Not all recent developments in Tavira maintain the human scale of the town's urban grain. While, for example, the new hotel by the riverside is generally three storeys high, the building's footprint or ground coverage is such that it restricts easy pedestrian movement. Generally, buildings maintain a height that is compatible with the traditional streets and squares of the town. Nevertheless, developments such as the new hotel reduce easy access and impede pedestrian movement (Figure 8.37).

Figure 8.41 shows a plan for the extension of Tavira, which is designed to cater for an expected increase in demand for housing. This planned extension of the town, Plano de Pormenor de Pêro Gil, is based on the concept of the quarter.⁹ Four quarters are planned, each with its own quite distinct architectural character: a firm edge or boundary; a mix of land uses, which will include shops, schools, public buildings; green areas; and work places in addition to residential properties. The design of each quarter is based upon a highly structured



Figure 8.41 Plano de
Pormenor de Pêro Gil

public space taking the form of streets and squares, along which, and around which, the buildings will be arranged. The design and ideas for the structure of the new neighbourhoods are the result of a detailed urban design study prepared for the Camara, the planning authority for Tavira.¹⁰

NOTES

- 1 For a brief history of Tavira see Mertens, M., *Plano de Pormenor de Pêro Gil*, Camara Municipal de Tavira, Tavira, 2001
- 2 Cullen, G., *Townscape*, Architectural Press, London, 1961

- 3 Lynch, K., *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960
- 4 Alexander, C., et al., *A New Theory of Urban Design*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987
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- 7 Gibberd, F., *Town Design*, Architectural Press, London, 2nd edn, 1955.
- 8 Cullen, G., Op cit
- 9 Mertens, M., Op cit
- 10 Duarte, C., et al., *Plano de Reabilitação e Salvaguarda do Centro Histórico de Tavira*, Direcção Geraldo Equipamento Regional e Urbano, Tavira, 1985

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