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The roads planned in Asturias between 1893 and 1936. Conceptual framing and current potential as scenic roads

In Asturias a significant part of the current roads were planned or built between 1893 and 1936. The projects were determined by the mountainous nature of the country, by the limitations of the last phase of the traditional agrarian cycle and by the concepts of its time. Today, many are slow roads that cross high-interest landscapes or areas classified by their natural and ethnographic values. As a resource, they constitute a support for a territory that has lost its traditional functionality and seeks another once before naturalizing. It is considered that these routes can be platforms for activities other than primary ones, thus helping to keep the rural territory dynamically occupied. For these purposes, and by their characteristics, they could be classified as scenic roads, discovering cultural, ethnographic and gastronomic attractions, linked to the road and that are active in local development.

We investigated which premises forked its construction. We set our sights on the USA, where roads were built at that time with the broad parkway concept that we translate through picturesque roads or landscaped or scenic roads.

The objectives are to specify which concepts guided its construction; how they physically arrive to the present and to what extent they can be used as platforms of activities that contribute to the dynamic occupation of the rural territory through the enjoyment of the landscape, nature and sport, constituting a brand of their own: the ReCEA-ASRoNet (Asturias Scenic Roads Network) composed of elements classified assets.

It is significant the relationship with Asturias maintained by the engineers of roads that began in the trade

during the 1920s. They have as a professor in their School Superior J. E. Ribera Dutasta (1846-1936), a pioneer in the use of reinforced concrete in Spain and that during twelve years had worked as an engineer of the State in Asturias, where Sánchez del Río would begin to work and who would meet M. Diz de Brecedoniz, head of Public Works of the Provincial Council of León, linked to the Free Institution of Education, in whose Institute School studied Sánchez del Río. Diz de Brecedoniz, was project manager (1893) of the road from Ojedo to Riaño by the port of San Glorio. There is, therefore, evidence of an Asturian connection in these dynamic generation of engineers who imbibe current trends and from them, J. Ortega Spottorno said that “we can very well speak of a generation of 27 remarkable engineers” that he takes as a reference to those who, in railway matters, carried out works such as the Pajares ramp and, now, on the road, move between the incorporation of new designs for automobile traffic and traditional concepts, according to which the roads were a necessary complement to enlist the locations to which the railway did not arrive.

Rodríguez Lázaro found in 1928 the first use of the term parkway in Spain, although, according to him, it did not materialize on any highway here. However, the engineer of the City Council of Barcelona José María Lasarte, translated and published in 1917 the work of Nelson P. Lewis *The Plan of the Modern City* with the title of *Urbanization*. In it, he calls avenue-park to Lewis’s parkway, with the same meaning as J.C.N. Forestier faced the avenues-promenade and the landscaped public spaces, which he has occasion to project in Spain in the company

of N. M. Rubió Tudurí. They link the concept of avenue-park to the urban technique, referring to one of the urban systems that together make the good city. This is what Olmsted had done in 1857, when he conceived Central Park in New York, or C. Vaux and F. Law Olmsted, when projecting the 1891 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. By the same dates, 1897, A. Soria founded the magazine *The Linear City. Journal of Hygiene, Agriculture, Engineering and Urbanization*, which underpinned the ideas that would later materialize in its Linear City (1895-1911), and that will serve as the basis for the General Proposal that C. Cort and J. Stübben presented to the Project Competition for the Madrid Expansion of 1929.

The projects of landscape roads in Spain are found with both directions: one linked to highways and the other to urban roads. About the second category, in Asturias there is a "colonization project", based on a large functional structuring axis for the different traffics between Oviedo and Gijón. The project is imbued with the regenerative constructive concepts of the time, in which the respect for the landscape and the quality of life, were pillars compatible with the response to the needs of the industrial district of Asturias, which was then hyperactive; so it would serve to organize the territory of the center of Asturias, accelerating its transformation process towards a metropolitan entity and offering an opportunity of complementary development to the towns and villages of the coastal and interior sectors. It would be the first metropolitan highway in Spain, which together with the Madrid-Irún and Madrid-Valencia radios, were promoted by the Special Pavements Commission. The designer of the Asturias highway is the municipal engineer of Oviedo, I. Sánchez del Río y Pisón, who conceives it as a parkway. It presents the preliminary project in 1928, similar to the ornamental street that Olmsted described in 1925, and with influences from the Linear City of Arturo Soria.

In the article we focus on the first category and we limit it between 1893, the year in which the project to cross the Cares gorge, on the road Arenas de Cabrales-Portilla de la Reina (Leon), and 1936, the year that closes a cycle. The projects correspond to the files found in the file of the Demarcation of Roads of the State in Asturias of the Ministry of Public Works. In them, we find the documentation with which we work: 29 project memories, 16 specifications, corresponding to the 37 types of projects found. The selected sections were recognized on site and registered in chips. All the projects for the sections were grouped into 25 line units that we call roads, contained within some level of the Roads Network of the Principality of Asturias.

The roads of the period under consideration are mountain roads, which were designed with the objective of forming a network sufficiently dense to prevent the creation of enclaves, separated from the regional economic poles. It was also to form internal structuring axes and with the outside of the province that broke its traditional interlocking, both in its connection to Galicia, the most neglected, as to Leon, to give alternative output to the industrial district, through the multiple valleys that radiated from it and were closed by the Cantabrian front. In the projects, there are influences of the concepts recommended by Diz Brecédoniz for their suitability both for the Pyrenean highways and for those of the "leonesa-astúrica" mountain range. But, above all, they are determined by austerity, subject to the imperative of cost reduction, so they minimize the visual impact by adapting to the topography and local resources. There are few references to the vocation "hiker" of these roads. We have found them on the road Arenas de Cabrales-Portilla de la Reina, and in which should cross the sickles of the Esva (road Tineo-Paredes).

Spanish engineers are aware of the new ideas and they apply what best suits and can to the local circumstance. The parkway or Spanish roads-park are mainly urban. In them, the segregation of traffics is not considered, although the opportunity to specialize some is pointed out, such as the Abroñigal road in merchandise, and La Castellana in the "luxury" residential. They are conceived as means of payment, when in the USA they are freely accessible, and references to the landscape are rare, which appear only on the Oviedo-Gijón and Guadarrama motorways.

The approach of the roads studied, based on the overcoming of the mountain and the reduction of costs, is what today gives them great appeal. The wounds that in the landscape could have caused its construction were slight and are already scarred. Its tightness to the level curves, the dry masonry of its support walls, built with contributions of stone from the sectors on site, and the professional expertise and the aesthetic care of some artisan workers, get artifacts perfectly integrated into the landscape. To this contribute the parapets, in good part already demolished; but where they last, they show a remarkable taste. The layout is comfortable for driving, to which the Asturian mountain gives a point of adventure. The vegetation of the margins, already grown after so many years, protects slopes and covers part of the factory works, mimicking them. The narrow box allows the road to circulate on the low and middle slopes under a canopy that, in the zenith stations, astonishes and refreshes the

scarce traffic that circulates at low average speed, so they are safe to combine different ways of traffic. They are quiet and peaceful counters allows you to contemplate the variety of surprising landscapes, associated with the different floors of the most pure and elevated Cantabrian mountain, colonized from picturesque villages, command centers of local worlds, bearers of a millenary agrarian culture. They are more or less frozen testimonies of their time, of construction techniques already abandoned, that deserve to be preserved as historical heritage; but, in addition, they are potentially active elements for a system that allows the dynamic occupation of the mountains, now empty. They are a capital of essential relationship for territorial cohesion, basic for internal connectivity and attractive for external.

Although, apparently, the Asturian roads respond to successive plans simply formalized, we do see in them a need to unlock, a productive drive, a regenerationist consciousness, a modernizing impulse and an optional expertise formed in contact with rigorous schools. All this crosses the Asturian society and its country, which seem to live an age of strength. And it is shared by the different avant-gardes that for several generations maintain the ambition to fight the secular isolation of Asturias, making accessible the Mountain range through the numerous steps of highway that in this time are projected and that a ruthless history frustrated or delayed half century.

Currently, the tracks have been mimicked with the landscape of the most powerful sector of the Cantabrian mountain range, so they have become scenic roads, which can join their constructive characteristics, remodeled following the classic criteria that have been exposed here, with the landscape that they show, to be vectors of the recolonization of the territory, in a similar way to the one explained by the facultative ones of regenerationism. Today, Geography has become a qualified heir to recreate the spirit of rationalist sensibility that lies behind the landscape concept, considering it a critical element of spatial planning and vector of terri-

torial development through strategies of an intelligent place branding.

Therefore, we propose the project to create the ReCEA a brand and a style guide to treat certain classified roads. Brand added and complementary to the scheme of the Road Network of the Principality of Asturias. ReCEA would be the systematic attempt to expand these capacities of the territory and to use local initiatives with strategic intent and regional perspective, in need of interconnections and synergies with each other and with the long itineraries or long-term cultural routes recognized by the Council of Europe, such as the now very used Camino de Santiago, or the routes Charlemagne and Carolus V Imperator, also in Asturias and endowed with the same Europeanist sense.

ReCEA would be a qualifying mark to assure those who intend to use their roads, that they will have an experience felt to be excellent, both in the surrounding landscape and in the road itself, in the way that the editors of the first North American parkways wanted, to enjoy it in safety conditions and complemented with pleasant services. Therefore, all deserve the treatment that allows them to recover the original scenario through their own constructive elements, such as parapets, walls and other works of stonework; avoiding remodeling involving landscape impact interventions, often derived from the transportation needs of large parts (wind turbines); installing rest areas in panoramic places; eliminating signage and graffiti and improving the information of the route; enhancing its use as cycling rings and access routes to hiking itineraries; expanding its security conditions, developing plans for protection and dissemination of places, monuments and environments of historical, ethnographic, artistic, scenic, natural or scientific interest linked to them and integrating them into the plans for the exploitation of recreational resources and local tourism businesses. In short, ways to link distant worlds and not only those that served in the last century, thus contributing to fill the demographic vacuum of the mountain before rural.