

# The geographical environment of Spain's Paradores: values, changes and conflicts

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## I. INTRODUCTION

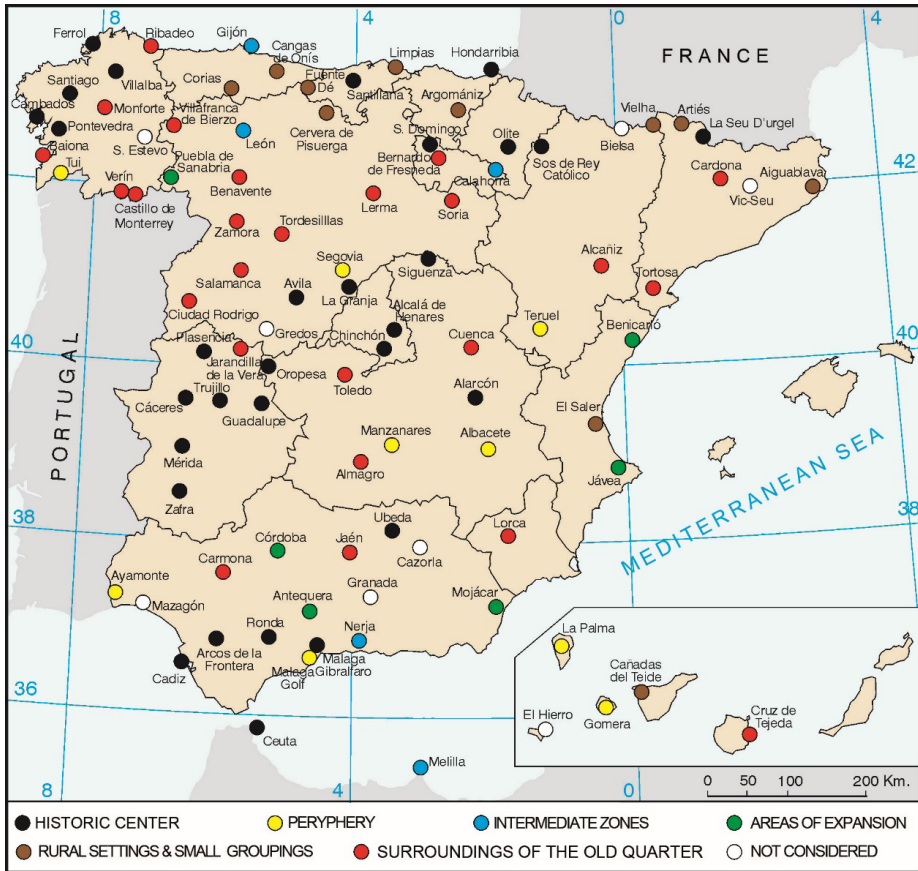
Between 1928 and 2013 the Spanish state opened 125 hotels of different kinds for tourists, reusing historic buildings, at least partially, in 47% of the cases (Rodríguez Pérez, 2013: 199). Subtracting those which have disappeared or been privatised, 95 remain in what is today the «Red Nacional de Paradores de Turismo» (National Network of Tourism Paradores). The principal source of information concerning these hotels comes from the aforementioned organisation, along with research of a general nature on the historical (Romero Samper, 2003) and architectural (Vadillo Lobo, 2001; Ulled Merino, 2004, 2005; Rodríguez Pérez, 2013) aspects, as well as those pertaining to their touristic activity (Cupeiro López, 2010). The most recent of these works provides an

urban analysis, while twenty years ago, Tejerina Fernández (1993, quoted by Rodríguez Pérez, 2013, p. 74) proposed the first geographical classification according to the location of the different hotels. What is certain is that an in-depth analysis from the geographical point of view is still pending. Geography is a science that considers the *paradores* to be irrevocably linked to their urban or rural environment so, with this idea in mind, the aim of this research is to gain a better knowledge of the relation between the *paradores* and their geographical location, where considerable changes have taken place over the last 25 years. To do so, a dual approach is used; that of the immediate surroundings, only some 300 metres, and exceptionally a larger area, but never larger than 500 metres. This radius is sufficient for an integral observation of the urban fabric, the public spaces and the buildings, in order to evaluate the interventions carried out and make a diagnosis concerning the processes, negative tendencies and needs. Special emphasis is put on the identification of any impact that could be prejudicial to the centres in the network, since the final aim of the study is to contribute to a better knowledge and planning of the framework within which they are set.

Apart from the abovementioned bibliography and the information from the *paradores* organisation, certain publications of a local nature have also been consulted which are not mentioned in their entirety in the final list due to lack of space. Searches were carried out in archives and data were gathered from municipal websites concerning planning, urban rehabilitation, city planning projects and European programmes. The search concluded with consultations in Google Earth, Google Maps and Google Street Views; though the use of aerial photography and urban mapping from different periods was also useful for comparison. At the time of choosing an issue and a way to deal with it, we took into account the fact that the geographical context of the *paradores* is not necessarily historical and that it may not possess cultural values. Their interest may lie solely in the richness of the landscape, especially when dealing with locations with contrasts, which are unstable or subjected to tensions. In order to organise the analysis, we discounted isolated establishments and ones which were an integral part of stable monumental areas like the Alhambra. The rest were classified in accordance with their relative location within the current urban or rural space, depending on the original purpose and the type of building that had been recuperated, when they were not new (Rodríguez Pérez, s.f.: 225). Dividing them up geographically allowed us to better understand the different logic, and this gave rise to parallelisms or to an evolution through distinct categories (Fig. 1).

The situation determines what is relevant for each group of paradores, so in the old quarters of the city those extremes concerning cultural heritage gain protagonism; yet, as one gets further from the centre, an urban approach in the wider sense of the term becomes necessary. Any parador, however peripheral or modern it may be, provides a good starting point for an analysis on a micro-scale, since practically all the recent urban dynamics can be seen nearby. This includes relocation, interior renovation processes, gentrification, or the effect of the housing crisis, in the form of abandoned housing estates (Córdoba). Urban recycling and other advances in sustainable development (green issues, mobility) are also represented; for instance, the project of Olite in Navarre to convert a religious property into a community allotment.

Figure 1. Geographic Classification of the Paradores studied



Source: Own compilation

## II. THE LANDSCAPES OF THE HISTORICAL QUARTERS AS FUNDAMENTAL SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK

### 1. BASIC FACTORS IN DEFINING THE GEOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK

Of the 84 *paradores* analysed, only 14% clearly correspond to the rural or suburban setting. The rest are part of cities or towns and, within these, the largest group is that of the thirty three situated in the main body of the historic quarter. Because of their location, fifteen are in flat, or flatish, low-lying areas; whereas seventeen occupy elevated locations, even higher than the centre, with more or less pronounced slopes in their immediate surroundings, and even steep hills or gorges in Alarcón, Arcos de la Frontera, Oropesa, Sigüenza and Sos del Rey Católico. Logically, a quarter of the total has an architectural type based on castles or defensive constructions that looked for protection from the steep terrain (Lobo, 2001; 98; Rodríguez Pérez, 2013; 212).

The dominant geographic situation is that of edge or line of contact, since they are on the coast or a river bank, use the interior part of the walls as support, or are on the edge of the populated area. In this case, they have open spaces in front of them (Oropesa, Trujillo) or countryside (Santiago). Those that are equidistant are rarer (Mérida, Zamora); although they are theoretically more central, this quality also appears in some of those already mentioned, depending on the particular distribution of the vital points. The hinge idea, between morphological formations and the urban nucleus (Ronda, Ferrol, Cambados), take on as much importance as the attribute of discontinuity, between the old quarter and the modern city (Seu d'Urgell), or being between the city walls and the outskirts (Ávila, Plasencia). This usually leads to a greater variety as far as the use and occupation of the land is concerned or a different pressure to build on areas close by.

In eight out of ten, the other element that is most influential when defining the setting is the public space, especially squares, in their interaction with the built-up areas. Their origins are very diverse, as they were often modelled on the gardens and courtyards of the converted buildings or the attached buildings, and their last renovation is usually quite recent. Others are the prestigious results of ancient city plans (Úbeda, Lerma), or places of exchange, flow distribution and social representation that appeared spontaneously and were then planned (Capel Sáez, 2002; 39). Some are directly associated with the *parador* as an anteroom or enclosure and continue to be a part of the

organisation of citizens' relations. This is due to their status as the main square or its equivalent (parade ground, town hall, Obradoiro), from Lerma or Santillana to Alarcón and Arcos de la Frontera, not to mention Hondarribia, Seu d'Urgell or Santiago.

In fourteen more cities, this principal public space of the traditional city is also close to the hotel, within range of its attraction effect. In addition, at least half of them have eye-catching public space systems (six in Pontevedra or Zafra), whose identity in the north of Spain is connected with the Pilgrim's Way to Santiago. Quite apart from the objective value of the architecture, their interest is proportional to the diversity of the planning, the continued existence of the traditional plants and old decorative elements, especially in the park-squares. More than ten locations still have the paving around the monuments created since the 1970s, using natural stone slabs forming rectangles with the interior cobbles. The historic gardens (municipal park of Ferrol, Cádiz's Genoese park), other recent green areas which are the largest of their respective historic centres (Zafra), or preindustrial cultivated areas, such as As Hortas in Compostela, can also carry considerable spatial weight (Martí Aris, 1995; 224-225).

Finally, the relation that each parador has with its surroundings depends on the nature of the nearby buildings and their functions. What is important in this respect is the existing ratio between noble constructions and civil buildings, between the vernacular architecture and the contemporary «cultured» architecture. The final balance depends, to a great extent, on the destruction suffered during the years of Franco's dictatorship and later. They are not always historical ensembles declared as being BIC (in Spain, heritage of cultural interest or «Bien de Interés Cultural»), and sometimes the analyzed area falls outside its perimeter, so the different cases are highly diverse. On the one hand, we have the areas of a monumental nature, in varying urban sizes, from Alcalá, Santiago, Cáceres or Úbeda to Arcos de la Frontera, Guadalupe and Santillana del Mar. Another fifteen areas surrounding paradores also form part of them as they make up fairly uniform sets, with a very high heritage value in half the cases and somewhat less in the rest. Sometimes, for instance in Alarcón or Lerma, it is the renovated castle or palace that contributes most, or almost completely and solely, to ennobling the site. Only in seven of the cases are the surrounding spaces unequal or heterogeneous, rich in inherited elements intercalated between more recent building models that break up the unity (Mérida, Ferrol, Ávila).

## 2. THE REALLOCATION OF FUNCTIONS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

The key factor was the availability of a high number of disused palaces, convents or welfare buildings susceptible to renovation. In Ferrol or Cádiz, some buildings were also left abandoned as their port activities were transferred or military properties were reconverted. This allowed the public function to expand, giving rise to a striking concentration of cultural facilities and institutional headquarters (Alcalá, Cáceres) or at least to a significant presence of the said facilities (Mérida, Ávila, Zamora), see figure 2. Twenty-one cities have undergone changes in use on every level, with or without reusing heritage. In the first case, the renovated buildings were of very different types: a provincial prison, the Bank of Spain, a theatre, the fish market, the barracks of the Civil Guard, a casino and an inn. The greatest degree of transformation, in surface area and number of affected properties, converting rejected elements or urban fossils into centres of activity that qualify the districts, is represented by the university heritage campuses of Alcalá and Cádiz; in particular, that of Alcalá promoted its external campus of Sigüenza, housing it in the «Doncel House».

The city or central facilities predominate over those of the suburbs and certain differences can also be established between those originating in the beginnings of post-Franco democracy and those of the last generation. To put it simply, the initiatives of the end of the twentieth century seem to have mostly been directed at setting up museums and resolving other cultural, bureaucratic or representative deficits, resulting in the appearance of libraries, archives, exhibition centres, courts or professional colleges (Clemente San Román; Cases Tello, 1988). Those of the twenty-first century bring maturity to this policy and go deeper into it, but they also at times redirect it towards very costly approaches which put greater stress on image and form part of a strategic intervention methodology aimed at tourism and fulfilling business objectives. This would, for instance, include the Ramos Carrión theatre of Zamora, converted into a congress hall through an extension which seems to be inspired by the Museum of Contemporary Art (MUSAC) of León.

Part of the activity described has served to extend the municipal offices, or to house every type of archive (naval, military history, municipal). However, the most part corresponds to museums and centres of interpretation, of which there are almost twenty. Of the former, the whole range is included, from the largest installations

(Ethnographic, Military) to the medium and small-sized ones, often with a novel character: The Museum of the Vineyard and Wines, of the «Barquillero» (children's games of the past), or the Casa de la Troya. Those dedicated to the city (Hondarribia, Mérida, Seu d'Urgell) are among the best investments, as well as the themed centres of interpretation (City Walls, Way to Santiago, Three Cultures), which bring extra value to different resources. Even the hotel schools (Alcalá, Santo Domingo de la Calzada) have a place, although this function is not universally present.

On the other hand, there are the initiatives aimed at reinforcing the economic base of the historic quarter or improving its environmental conditions via alternative uses that erase the past. For instance, the transfer of the existing cemetery to the back of the castle-parador of Oropesa favoured its conversion to a green zone (Cabrera, 2012). The excellent situation of the old cattle market outside the walls of Ávila, also close to the old cemetery, led to its transformation into a congress and exhibition hall. The other notable example among the great works is even earlier, in Ceuta, namely the project of César Manrique for the north coast (Mediterranean Maritime Park), which includes a recreational marina, as well as commercial and leisure facilities. A large percentage of such actions have encouraged the boom in tourism, taking shape in the urban fabric in different ways. Other establishments dedicated to the board and lodging of tourists have arisen beneath the shadow of the paradores in seventeen historic centres. Their typologies seem to be more diverse in the smaller towns (Oropesa), with the proliferation of inns, hostels, holiday homes and b&bs. They sometimes bring life back to traditional buildings, manor houses (Santillana, Trujillo) or historic inns (Chinchón). Restaurants, for their part, only achieve an appreciable density in seven cases: Ronda, Cáceres or Hondarribia, to name but a few.

The evolution of the commercial map is conditioned by the category of each town, the degree of residential occupation, the survival of the old urban centre and the weight of the touristic function. In general, the relocation towards the outskirts has considerably damaged historical, general and specialised commerce in the historic centre, as well as proximity services. In addition, a large percentage of the sector will disappear due to the ageing of and decline in the traditional population, who have particular shopping habits. However, over a certain size, especially if the historic centre has preserved streets or squares with commercial prestige and residents of a high social status move into the reformed housing in the centre, then the decline can be contained. In

such cases, processes of functional adaptation appear, during which the old firms coexist alongside new businesses, franchises of an ordinary nature in the case being dealt with here, and local firms of a specialised nature, encouraged by the formula of the Open Shopping Centre (Zafra) or Urban Shopping Centre in Pontevedra (Torres Outón, 2013: 124).

These changes find less resistance when the old quarter continues to be in the centre (Ceuta, Zafra), and they come more slowly if the area around the parador is in decline. This is what happens in the towns and local administrative centres, where the only novelty sometimes is the telephone companies. In this context, the remodelling of the food markets (Ávila) usually plays a central role, as many of them function below capacity and are long due for reform. In any case, the category of the towns under study does not give enough of a boost to the commercial gentrification, besides that of charming hotels and souvenir shops with a certain quality.

### 3. BUILDING RENOVATION, TOO LITTLE PROGRESS

Since Elena Vadillo published her study in 2001 to the present time, the number of historic towns declared as BIC rose from eighteen to twenty-three (70 % of the total), in which a Special Plan was approved, apart from Ferrol Vello which excludes the hotel. On the other hand, the number of paradores having the BIC qualification with the category of Monument (ten) did not change, and nor were there new incorporations to the UNESCO heritage list beyond the four cities included within the limits of the area of study. Whether the parador has the category of a monument, or another building nearby such as the monastery of Guadalupe, or is included in the list of the heritage properties of UNESCO, it is necessary to define and approve the BIC Environment Protection, even though it has not always been binding. To cite at least one example, Oropesa, whose Subsidiary Rules have protected the square where the parador is situated since 1994, does have this type of protection. Guadalupe also has it, even though it lacks an approved Special Plan. It does, however, have a General Plan which, in 2015, widened the sphere of the historic town to include the parador. Ávila too, also had a special protection plan until it was annulled in 2007; a new one was written in 2016.

We could speak of two generations of special plans, that of the twentieth century and that of the twenty-first century, made up in part of the revisions of the former (Sigüenza, Cáceres, the latter currently



being drawn up). As for what concerns us here, the first plans were very diverse and were dedicated almost entirely to cataloguing and regulating the interventions in the buildings (Sigüenza), even defining the homogeneous areas with respect to their typologies (Zamora). They favoured the reuse of singular properties (Alcalá), stimulated the residential function (Cambados), and gave permission for pedestrianisation. In addition, they recognised the value of the squares, such as that of Úbeda, protecting six of them within a two hundred metre radius of the parador. The second generation, if necessary, corrects the limits of the historic town, concedes greater attention to interior open spaces (patios, gardens) or to panoramic views (Sigüenza). The cataloguing is also extended to the complementary urban elements which define the urban environment, such as the traditional paving stones (Ferrol). However, as far as we know, some current revisions are following deregulating directives tending towards privatisation, far from the conservationism inspired by the Bologna model. The projects from before the housing crisis of 2007 considered the development of the small, existing land reserves (Trujillo) and the construction of car parks as a deterrent which will be dealt with later.

The principal achievement has almost always been the recuperation of noble or more singular architecture through public initiatives. As for the rest, the adaptation of buildings promoted by individuals and firms has had varying outcomes under the auspices of the ARI (Áreas de Rehabilitación Integrada or programme for restoring buildings and open spaces) and thanks to the Restoration Offices, for instance, in Cáceres or Santiago where the personality of the *rúa das Hortas* has been maintained (Luceño, 2014). However, as a general rule, complete blocks are not restored; the intervention is superficial and often only saves the facades. We are still far from the original concept of rehabilitation, understood as a recycling that at least conserves a part of the internal structure. Completely new construction has a dominant presence, with modern, or falsely historical, solutions that may go unnoticed or produce an artificial effect. They sometimes create such an impact that they are difficult to camouflage, such as the saturated colours in environments with traditionally pale or sandy tones. Brick facing may be introduced where stone or galleries dominate, the heights may be out of scale and metallic locks out of context (Olite, Oropesa, Seu d'Urgell). In smaller towns or more touristic ones, the building work is linked to second residences (Sos del Rey Católico), or to permanent terraced housing (Trujillo). This typology is only present on a large scale in Ávila, both outside the walls and within the fortification, where intense renovation has taken place.

In seven towns, the restored buildings have badly up-kept, derelict or closed buildings beside them, if not ruins or just abandoned plots, often used for parking vehicles. This is in line with an ageing population, emigration and loss of economic vitality. It usually occurs in the parts of the old quarter that are in the worst situation and are fragmented, making it difficult to save the ordinary, traditional houses on small plots of land. The problems are accentuated by the stagnation and decadence of the small cities and towns, while in the towns of a superior category, situations of decline or exclusion have allowed access to FEDER funds. This was the case of the City Plan in Pontevedra and the Urban Project in Cádiz, in the latter case concerning the quarter named «Balón» and linked to the old barracks. Both cases were sustainable interventions (accessibility, public spaces, activity and employment). The effectiveness in the case of Pontevedra was limited due to the difficulties of recuperating the residential use below a certain size of urban nucleus (Torres Outón, 2013: 124; Barral, 2016). Ferrol, the other most significant example of dereliction in the historic quarter (Carretero, 2014), is now immersed in a process of renewal by means of new architecture that is more or less integrated with its environment.

#### 4. URBAN INTERVENTION AND MOBILITY

Many resources have been used to update the technical networks, incorporate public installations and redevelop the public highways. On the micro-scale of analysis used here, perhaps the most important aspect is the fairly generalised incorporation of underground rubbish and waste bins and the transit and parking limitations for motor vehicles. This is not always easy in the main squares as it often arouses the rejection of residents and business persons. Thus, in the main square of Ciudad Rodrigo, the project went ahead; while in Arcos de la Frontera or Lerma, the entrance to the parador is still a surface car park. The actions aimed strictly at restoring the urban environment are few, but also well resolved. Whether following continuist lines, as in the monumental square of Vázquez de Molina (Úbeda), or with the aim of improving the landscape, in Colegios street in Alcalá, by planting conifer hedges. Not all cities have taken on large or medium scale reforms in their public spaces, and when they have, it has not always been in all the squares (Olite, Pontevedra). The work may also have been well done or discrete (Chinchón, Zamora), in line with the geometrically shaped cobbles introduced in the twentieth century.

These contrast most evidently with the more questionable projects, such as the Plaza de la Constitución in Villalba (Lugo), or the anodyne interventions that devalue a rich inheritance.

If we compare the public spaces that have seen the greatest transformations, certain reiterated planning defects can be seen (López, 2000: 6; Borja, 2003: 23; Borja & Muxi, 2003: 16). The greatest is nudity, understood as an insufficiency or total absence of vegetation and scarce use of trees, as well as a restriction or disappearance of areas where people can sit. The preference given to the new paving of natural or artificial stone, depending on the category of the street, usually reduces the area of gardens, thus working against environmental comfort. The lack of water and shade, and the reflection of the sunlight make it more difficult to enjoy the main squares of Cáceres or Trujillo, and that of the Socorro in Ronda, in the summer months. In such places, one must seek the refuge of the terrace bars, beneath rows of large white parasols that seem to have replaced the motor vehicles. On many occasions, the problems posed by bad fixing, scarce thickness or unsuitability of certain materials to withstand the passing traffic, end in breakages and collapses. This results in the necessity to be continually repairing the sections with traffic and, finally, the substitution of the paving. On the other hand, the spatial continuity is often interrupted by barriers (steps, ramps and low walls) or the abundant «urban furniture» (bins, blocks, concrete benches), including those that fit extremely badly with the historical context, such as metallic railings of rusted pieces. Vintage streetlights and bollards protecting pedestrian areas only highlight a patchwork of objects that is culminated with sculptures or plants that are foreign to the environment (magnolia, olive trees) (Bohigas, 2004: 183; Losantos, 2008: 12). When this model of intervention is applied on a large scale, or locally in the central squares, it causes part of the memorial references to be lost (García, 2011: 19).

The difficult compatibility of the motor vehicle with the abrupt slopes and winding streets of the medieval towns is accentuated where the touristic function forces large numbers of people to be channelled along particular streets. In order to resolve this conflict, a balance between restrictions and alternatives to mobility has been sought. As for the limitations, the most notable has been the introduction of retractable bollards to filter access by motor vehicles, but their deficient functioning led to their gradually being replaced by cameras (Cáceres, Plasencia). Apart from pedestrianisation, the different solutions offered for the different means of transport include the lift to the old quarter in Hondarribia, and nearby parking to compensate the loss of parking

spaces. In small towns, or larger towns where there is space, the car parks are on the outskirts but easily accessible (Sos del Rey Católico, Seu D'Urgell). In other cases, there are underground car parks, outside the walls (San Clemente in Santiago), on the coast (Santa Bárbara in Cádiz), or in the centre (Plaza del Socorro in Ronda). They may be associated with other civil works aimed at facilitating traffic and overcoming topographical barriers, as in the tunnel of La Alcazaba in Málaga. The debate concerning these car parks is one of city planning, due to their impact on the public space, but it is also economic, due to the possibility or not of a completely public management.

### **III. THE OUTLINES OF THE OLD CITY: THE PARADOR ON HIGH, SURROUNDED BY GREENERY**

#### **1. PARALLELISMS WITH THE PREVIOUS GROUP: THE GREATER WEIGHT OF THE NATURAL ELEMENTS**

Another seventeen paradores appear in the area around the old quarter, that is, they are close to or on the limits of the old city. Although half of this total uses modern buildings, they mostly coincide with the area of the old castles. This usually places them in elevated positions (mounts, hills, coastal reliefs) that are related to the course of a river, something that also happens when they are low-lying, such as in Cuenca, in the gorge of the river Júcar. The other component with the greatest responsibility for defining the surroundings of the hotel is the greenery, whether natural (Toledo), or inherited from the ancient gardens. It can also take the form of a garden or small copse of trees, on the most prominent topographical relief, and sometimes pointing the way to the rural landscape, for instance the hillside of the Alcor in Carmona.

City planning and urban projects provide almost all the remaining parallelisms with the new establishments, due simply to their relation with height and topographical levels. There are underground ones, for instance that of Benavente in the embankment of the hill; or at ground level, at the base of the hill upon which stands the castle of Cardona. The other major public works occurred along some maritime promenades such as that of Baiona, to adapt it to the varying means of mobility and recreational uses. Its correlation inland is the conditioning of the riverbanks (Soria, Santo Domingo de la Calzada). Landscaping criteria were also applied to the conservation of agricultural land, in the vineyards around Villafranca del Bierzo. If there was unoccupied land that was not worth conserving, then nothing would stop terraced

houses being built on it, also in Villafranca or in Jarandilla de la Vera. Both towns belong to a larger group with another uniting element, the highway, whose presence attracts tertiary uses or small industries that do not always coexist satisfactorily with the network of paradores.

The remaining similarities concern economic reinforcement and urban rehabilitation, commencing with facilities which are only evident to any great extent in Tortosa. However, the change in use that precedes them is present in seven towns, such as Jaén or Carmona, which reuse two palaces as their City Museum and the headquarters of the Pablo de Olavide University. The cultural, touristic or bureaucratic use justifies the rescue of properties of many different types, from prisons to casinos or health centres, even a quarry in Cuenca which has been converted into an auditorium through urban acupuncture. Another group of analogies has to do with the unequal treatment given to public spaces, either conservationist (Almagro, Alcañíz) or reformist, as in Tortosa, where new spaces were obtained that had been created through demolitions, in which profound rehabilitations were carried out in the pre-existing squares.

*Figure 2.* **Concentration of public services around the parador of Zamora**



*Source:* photograph by the author.

## 2. A GREATER DIVERSITY OF SITUATIONS: FROM DETERIORATION TO THE RENOVATION OF THE SUBURBS

The position concerning this type of housing follows a varied pattern. There are those that are in physical contact with the inherited city, on whose borders they are usually situated: some of them, flush or at a low height, since their position only has a noticeable slope on the opposite side (Benavente, Carmona); while others are in elevated positions, around 30 to 40 metres higher than the surrounding areas (Alcañíz, Tortosa). With a similar difference in height, Monforte and Soria are further from the centre, with no other buildings around them. However, they are not isolated, as are those where the difference in altitude with respect to base fluctuates between 60 and 144 metres (Cardona, Lorca, Jaén). In Baiona, it is not the elevation of the Monterreal, but its peninsular form, whose connection to the mainland is covered with trees, thus giving rise to the separation. Consequently, the surrounding area is also very diverse; in half the cases, it is the historic centre or its outskirts, only forming a whole in Almagro and Carmona. Besides these two, only Alcañíz, Monforte, Ribadeo and Tortosa have any heritage interest, apart from Toledo, because of its singular landscape. It is only natural that some coincide with urban limits, that is, they are located on the border between the historic quarter and the area of open development (Ribadeo), the modern suburbs (Jarandilla), or the line between the residential areas and that which contains the facilities (Almagro).

The differences in height, slope or orientation can produce significant contrasts over short distances (Alcañíz, Monforte). For instance, between traditional shopping streets, relatively wealthy or in a process of appreciation, modest suburbs, rural pockets and waste ground, or also a considerable jump between vital, inactive or decadent areas. Then again, the altitude question intervenes less as a catalyst of such differentiation (Benavente, Tortosa). The outskirts and suburbs have been defined, at least in part, as the halo around some paradores, especially in Jaén and Lorca, although they do not necessarily coincide with their access. The concentration of low rents and abandoned or deteriorated properties are undoubtedly connected with the bad accessibility of the streets on a hill and the presence of basic, popular housing or self-built housing. None of these ideas are useful, obviously, for the hotels surrounded by land not built on at all or little built on (Cuenca, Soria, Toledo), or for Baiona, which has another building over three hundred metres away.

With respect to the objective conditions, planning has followed specific orientations that provide greater interest. In Toledo, the division of farms, the building boom and the rise of the tertiary sector forced the council to create the Special Plan of the Cigarrales. This document exempts the surroundings of the parador, but does affect it as it protects elements and spaces, reduces the possibilities for building and controls uses. In addition, it foresees the future park of La Sisle to environmentally qualify the hotel's physical frame (*Plan Report*, 2007: 69). As for Los Cigarrales itself, where first and second residences are combined, there is a high volume of expensive properties for sale: 89 detached houses, other houses and some flats, as evidenced by the website *idealista.com* on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Tortosa, on the other hand, is completely different. The fragmentation of a dense and locally degraded hamlet led to the relative application of the Barcelona model of Ciutat Vella, through the Integral Plan of the Old Quarter of Tortosa (PINCAT), under the Law of Suburbs. It combines rehabilitation with lightening, opening up clearings in the town's fabric to achieve green areas and free the cathedral's facade from other buildings, as well as contact with the castle hill.

There are some similarities between that project and the Special Plan of the Suburbs of Santiago, in Alcañíz, characterised by the deficient access due to the change in height and a sector closed off by many empty plots, the result of demolitions. The solution is to redefine the roads and plots of land so as to improve connectivity, provide public spaces and new housing, with a certain public initiative (Castel, 2016; Timoneda, 2016). As in the previous case, these districts are still being rebuilt and it is taking longer than expected. Similar solutions have been carried out, using European funding, in the excluded districts of Jaén and Lorca, affected by earthquake. Both the planning programme of Jaén and the planning initiative of for the high suburbs of Lorca include, among the proposals of greatest geographical interest, breaking the isolation, making it more accessible and improving facilities, insisting on public spaces. The regenerating action of a multiple nature reduces invisibility and encourages the community to improve the single storey homes of workers, adding a second storey or replacing them completely with improved family homes. The elimination of old houses close to the castle of Benavente has occurred spontaneously (Pérez Mencía, 2013).

*Figure 3. Reform of San Marcos Square (León)*



*Source:* left, Ediciones Arribas; right, author's photograph

#### IV. OTHER LOCATIONS: INTRAURBAN, OUTSKIRTS, IN THE DIFFUSE CITY AND RURAL

##### 1. THE MID-ZONES AND TRANSITION AREAS

The six *paradores* situated in the outskirts and the first circle of suburbs mainly lack a historic dimension, like the built-up area around them, where heritage has little weight in the form of the landscape. One exception is the renaissance monastery of San Marcos in León, which forms an ensemble with the bridge of the same name and is the only one that has an ancient square of great proportions, renovated following highly debatable criteria (Fig. 3). Those of Salamanca and Calahorra are modern, but the former, at least, has a Roman bridge quite near it, and the other is open to the old Paseo del Mercadal. Some do, however, possess environmental value for being on the coast (Nerja), relatively close to the coast (Gijón, Melilla), or on a river (Salamanca, León). Height is only a favourable factor in the southern cities, where the *parador* of Nerja is on a cliff and that of Melilla at the top of the hill above the wooded park of Lobera. We can speak of uniform spaces in Calahorra, a central renovated area, and Gijón, where the Old Mill has been renovated and has an exclusive residential area beside it, with open and semi-open buildings in terms of height, modelled since the 1970s on the historic suburb of Bibio. The others occupy hinge or contact positions, that of León between the area of enlargement of 1904 and an industrial estate from the end of the twentieth century; that of Nerja, on the line separating the town itself and the more open circle occupied by hotels, apartment blocks, detached houses or "Mediterranean village" style housing estates (*Agenda Local 21*,



2011: 188; Cuesta Rodríguez, 2013). The greatest contrasts can be seen in Salamanca, between the outskirts on the other side of the River Tormes and the post-war suburbs; and in Melilla, with the presence of suburbs of basic self-built homes, around alleyways that skirt the steep slope, not very far from the cemetery and the prison. These have been classified by the Ministry of Public Works as vulnerable suburbs since 1991 (Hernández Aja; Vázquez Espí and others, 2013).

According to the relative position and degree of accessibility, the recent development of tertiary activity around the hotels offers very different manifestations. It may be a large shopping mall with curtain walls, as a result of a change of use (Calahorra), or a new centre, in the ample sense of the word, appearing in León because of the addition of large facilities (regional government buildings, auditorium, etc.). Nerja prioritised the touristic orientation by concentrating tourist uses around the Burriana beach, while Gijón allowed commerce to take over the land below the Molinón football stadium. Some of these operations added new car parking, though they are not the only ones, as the town of Axarquía has dedicated an enormous hole in the centre, the empty plot of the Huertos de Carabeo, to car parking.

When there is low rent housing nearby, the effect of the parador, added to the growth in surface area that improves the suburb's position, encourages other types of interventions. Salamanca is well known for its systematic demolitions and the consequent requalification of the outskirts which become more built-up as the typology changes. In the furthest parts, the suburb of Los Alambres eliminated the single storey homes for workers and then built new terraced housing. Meanwhile, in Melilla, public subsidies achieved the remodelling of the suburbs of El Carmen and Ataque Seco, where the original houses were replaced or extended, at the same time as the urbanisation was improved. Some of the transformations described have brought with them environmental consequences that are only perceptible in aerial photographs, such as the profusion of swimming pools in areas of summer residences.

## 2. THE AREAS OF INTEGRATED EXPANSION WITHIN THE URBAN CONTINUUM

Another six paradores are situated in urban enlargement sectors, basically consolidated over the twentieth century. Three of them (Benicarló, Antequera and Puebla de Sanabria) were conceived as road hostels before 1936, although only the first was inaugurated during

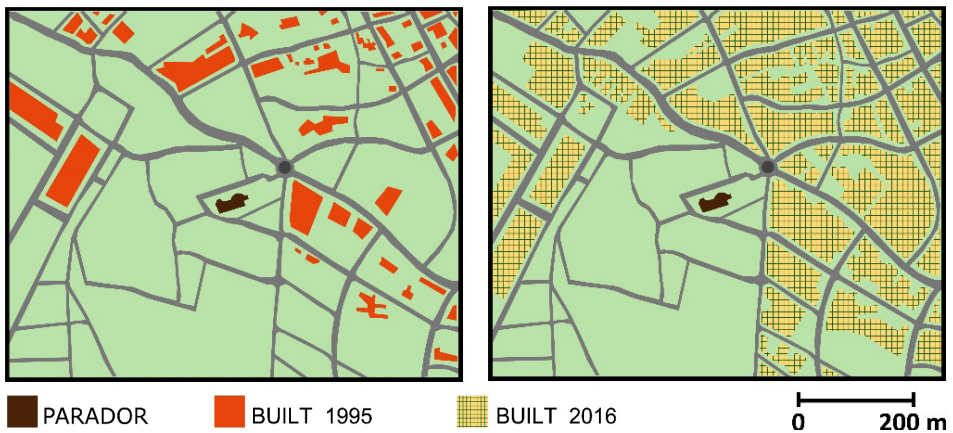
the Second Republic (Rodríguez Pérez, s.f.: 235). The surrounding area has absorbed an appreciable part of the recent growth, although there is still land that is not built-up, since it is on the outskirts of the town or, as in the case of Mojácar, the built-up area along the coast, separate from the first village. Those on the coast (Jávea, in addition to those mentioned above) occupy low lying sites, unlike the previous ones situated high up. The parador of Antequera is distinguished by the sloping ground, Córdoba's parador is situated on a small hill on the mountainside, while that of Puebla de Sanabria occupies the southern hillside of the river Tera, overlooking the historic town. Leaving aside the said views, the others have in common their lack of any heritage value in the surroundings, which is why the environmental interest takes on greater importance. This may come from the relief (in the case of Sanabria), from the woods in the hills of Córdoba, or the coast and the beaches in the others, with the negative aspect of intense housing pressure. Even so, they all have gardens, and some of them quite large and luxuriant, in particular the parador of Antequera, as it is connected to the larger municipal park.

The maritime promenades were modelled by the forms of urban tourism, with differing results. In Jávea, the commerce and hotels, combined with apartment blocks, detached houses or housing estates, make up a homogeneous, not very dense set. The surroundings of the parador of Benicarló are somewhat more varied, due to the interface with the historic centre; while Mojácar is rather more isolated due to the extension and dislocation of the land (Viciano Martínez-Lage, 2007: 165). The pattern followed in Córdoba is simpler, a vast city-garden (El Brillante), with housing and facilities, arose spontaneously on the other side of the railway and was set in order by the first plan created in democracy (*Report of the General Plan of 1986*: 90). In the two remaining towns, the area under study has diverse purposes, on the scale of a town of around two thousand inhabitants (Sanabria) or that of a city with over forty-two thousand, Antequera. In the latter, between the old railway station and the Highway of 92, an area of growth opened up to the north with combined uses (*Report of the General Plan of 2009*: 94).

The housing boom of 1997-2009 especially affected the coastal towns like Benicarló (*Report of the General Plan*, 2009: 27). In Mojácar, it gave rise to the emergence of urban land (Martín García, 2007: 131; Martín García, 2011); while in Jávea, it encouraged the clogging up of the coastal strip and the advance into the hinterland. In proportion to their status, the others also experienced the construction boom, which

would leave terraced houses and estates with separate blocks, for instance, in Antequera, for middle or lower middle class people. The comparatively better conditions in El Brillante in Córdoba determined a more intensive density in the best plots of land, with detached houses that multiplied the number of swimming pools, while the terraced housing also reached the very limits of the former (*Modification of the PERI B-1, El Brillante, 2007: 2*). The crisis would leave an urban corpse there alongside the parador, the Ciudad Jardín Poniente 1 (2007, 61 Has.), with streets laid out but to date no houses built.

Figure 4. Growth in spaces adjacent to the parador of Córdoba



Source: Own elaboration from García & Solís, S.L., and Google Maps.

The new developments have included engineering works, such as the coastal projects to extend marinas with attached leisure areas of Marina Benicarló and Marina Nou Fontana (Jávea), which changed the canal of the same name. The new high-speed railway line from Antequera to Málaga, despite being underground, has had a greater impact, since it involved the construction of the second station for high-speed trains in that municipality, close to the parador (Vadillo, 2015). The chain of changes presented so far would be incomplete if we did not insist on the role played by the diffuse location of the tertiary activities. Clinics, schools and hotels are the complementary and alternative mandate in the garden city of Córdoba. They share space with the medium sized commerce which, of itself or associated through franchises, also increases the value of the area in Benicarló, though not so much as the shopping mall of La Verónica in Antequera. The power of the commercial and tourist uses even leads to the front

line of the beach being given over to tertiary activities, by means of a continuous, single-storey pavilion in the Arenal of Jávea.

### 3. THE PROBLEMS PERTINENT TO THE OUTSKIRTS

The comparison between the ten paradors in the outskirts (11.9% of the total) and the rest allows us, first of all, to underline the invariability of some types of support: up high like a lookout (Segovia, Teruel), on a hillside (Santa Cruz de la Palma), looking for a view or closeness to the sea (La Gomera, Málaga Golf), on the riverbank (Tordesillas, Tui), or at the river mouth (Ayamonte). If their *raison d'être* were to serve the motorists, then they could ignore the environment and look for proximity to the large highways (Manzanares) or junctions between communication routes (Albacete). However, it would be wrong to deduce, from their location on the outskirts, similar geographical conditions. The extra-urban character of the paradors of Albacete is not the same as being on the limits of urban La Mancha (Manzanares), or participating in the axial growth of the highways (Tordesillas). Neither does being located between the capital and the suburbs (Segovia, Santa Cruz de la Palma) have the same repercussions as insertion in the metropolitan area of the Costa del Sol.

The common denominator is the discontinuous or scattered occupation, the variety and segregation of uses. Except for Canarias and Ayamonte, the articulation is via national roads and dual carriageways which, when they form knots, consume large areas of land (roundabouts, four-leaf clover type junctions) and cut the land into segments. This is perhaps why accessibility does not determine the appearance of hotels around the paradors, except in 20% of cases. On the other hand, roads result in a high demand for land from industries arranged in corridors or grouped together in industrial estates (La Paz in Teruel, la Vega in Tordesillas). Within this field, industrial production per se is losing dominance in favour of commerce and services. The spectrum of the non-residential functions has been widening, in a more ordered or improvised way: from the recreational uses related with the riverbanks (camping, canoeing) to the facilities and installations that qualify the surroundings, such as the Manzanares tennis club. Its effect is not comparable with that of the large retail hypermarkets, IKEA and the Plaza Mayor shopping mall which reproduce Andalusian urban landscapes next to the Málaga Golf paradors.

Applied to spaces of this nature, the diffuse city concept also rests on the horizontal expansion of the habitat, which essentially follows

two models. On the one hand, the housing estates of detached and terraced houses (Tordesillas, la Gomera), including one which is the town's largest settlement (Manzanares). In Ayamonte, the partial plan, called Mirador del Guadiana (more than 350 houses in the initial nucleus), at the foot of the hotel, spread out in three rows of houses on different levels, forming a *crescent*, with a great impact on the landscape as seen from the river. More disperse growth models based on rural villages and roads appear in the municipality of Breña Baja, functioning as an overspill for Santa Cruz de la Palma; while in Tui they appear in a more disorganised way with worse results.

Behind the parador of Segovia, low density housing estates have also begun to appear, belonging to the municipality of La Lastrilla. This is a good example of a rearguard municipality, with large land reserves to relieve the pressure of overspill. In this case it was intense, but not enough to occupy all the urban land, of which a part remains with only elementary streets laid out. However, it is not all growth, as on the other hand, in the humble suburb of San Lorenzo, with steeply sloping streets, the old self-built houses are gradually being abandoned and replaced individually by buildings of a superior category; the result is quite similar to a housing estate of detached houses.

#### 4. THE PARADOR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CITY PLANNING

Eight paradores in the network have a privileged geographical environment due to the natural surroundings (mountains, woods, rivers) and a rural base, with the added attraction of being able to enjoy historic buildings in six of them. Using the national highway as their backbone, that of Argomániz is linked to that of Vitoria (Álava), that of Limpias is orbital to Laredo (Cantabria) and that of Corias, is next to the town of Cangas del Narcea (Asturias). This results in housing estates almost completely surrounding the parador of Vitoria and, in Limpias, forming a secondary nucleus (El Camino) of more than sixty units. On the other hand, the town acting as the head can show signs of decadence, such as the abandoned houses in Corias, which can easily be related to the decline in the mining valley of the River Narcea.

Within or next to the nucleus are Artiés, that of Limpias itself and Villanueva de Cangas, Vielha above, Verín and Cervera separately. When they are tourist destinations, in the valley of Arán in the Pyrenees or on the doorstep of the Picos de Europa, they achieve a better balance between the rehabilitation of traditional houses and

the new harmonised architecture. The exception is Vielha, whose urban character opened it up to apartment blocks which, integrated with or contrasting with the original nucleus, reach the height of seven floors. The use of intense colours in the architecture and urban fittings (Cangas), such as vintage streetlamps, also used in Limpias, produce an artificial effect resembling a village for summer tourists. The social orientation of this type of village can become an obstacle in the purchase and sale of houses, particularly in Vielha, which has a relatively high index of non-occupation. On December 7<sup>th</sup> 2016, the real estate website idealista.com offered 162 houses and flats there.

In the context of the National Park of Fuentes Carrionas, the influx and therefore the mark left by tourism are appreciable in Cervera de Pisuerga, whose old quarter is home to numerous enterprises dedicated to this branch of tourism, but which do not disrupt the whole. In addition, the parador is over a kilometre and a half away from the major local town, which has a group of detached houses at its entrance. That of Ruesga is closer, and is a good representation of the situation of villages whose holiday homes have, little by little, been rehabilitated as occasional homes for those villagers who have emigrated to the cities or for strangers; they are thus saved from ruin but are still disconnected from their origin. Also far away and at a different height than the town of Verín, the double establishment of the province of Orense is separated from the town by fields and scattered houses, on the general highway and country roads. The territory there is a disorganised composition of vernacular construction and rehabilitated buildings. Finally, there are another four paradores, in the mountains (Cruz de Tejada, Fuente Dé) or on the beaches (Aiguablava, El Saler), outside the towns. They are integrated in basic groups of hotel businesses, dedicated to accommodation (Fuente Dé, El Saler) or catering, in the cove of Aiguablava. They are mono-specific, except for Cruz de Tejada, which also has some commercial activity without reaching the status of a habitat.

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