

Aranjuez 3.0: ¿Paraíso Pronto?

“Aranjuez es el jardín del universo. Tiene tanta luz en sus huertos que habría que escribir cartas al Paraíso. Créame, Aranjuez es el Paraíso”

Juan Carlos Jiménez Vázquez, profesor, artes finas, univ. Popular, Aranjuez en El sombrero de Gary Cooper o Marzo Muere (Estampa en bronce de Azorín)

Foreign ideas

For me, a Briton who has spent my (post Margret Thatcher) working lifetime obtaining only precarious, short-term work contracts in many different foreign countries across mainland Europe, Aranjuez IS paradise! Thanks in some great measure to the Spanish public services I am now retired with excellent health, with some social security arisin a pair of modest state pension and good health .

Domestic difficulties

For many others it is not so – how then could I repay such a vast debt? Perhaps by sharing my experience to help those 5000 unemployed Ribeñeros, to say nothing of those with some work but little income? Or by bringing ideas garnered from distant cities? Or both?

A walkable city

My first suggestion would be to stop employing national contractors with heavy machinery to 'improve' our city roads for motorists, but instead employ local people to simply level pavements for people with 'pedal-power' - pedestrians, bicyclists and users of personal electric carriages such as wheelchairs and segways.

Exploiting the periphery

Actually Aranjuez has a wealth of unused but quite beautiful tracks and lanes around doce calles (los huertos picotajo, el trazado geometrico el azud et al) which need little more than some decent signs to tempt tourists to explore the royal heritage beyond the palace and gardens, to stay in town a little longer, to spend a little more money and have a lot more fun. Maintaining signs and tracks is not expensive rocket science, but it would need many dedicated folk to adopt routes and care for their assets such as attractiveness, safety and convenience.

Cycle tracks, wander-routes

Along these almost abandoned routes, once there were 'gangos' – a local tradition similar to beach chiringuitos or German biergarten, which provided modest refreshments, some light entertainment and, crucially, facilities for visitors to enjoy their own picnic foods. They have mostly destroyed themselves by trying to become restaurants, competing with, rather than complementing the excellent urban catering facilities.

Gangos

Since Gangos are not near residential areas, they generally just need a make-over and a minor change in local legislation to enable them to provide safe sites for barbecues, live music and 'distributed' (multi-point) hire-here & return elsewhere facilities for cooking equipment, bicycles, audio-visual guides or whatever our visitors want. Such establishments are also 'labor intensive'

Personal vehicles

To bridge the gap – and actually get visitors over the Puente de Barcas we would need somesort of personal vehicle rental facility – expanding Chiquitren and coches de caballos routes, adding electric bicycles and segways to the existing Aranbike, thusgenerally making everything more 'rentable' by simplifying the tariff system so that any holder of a valid bank-card could gain instant access and directions in their own preferred language without the cumbersome registration currently required.

*I think you will find, when we talk about cities, we are talking about the political institutions in which civilization and culture were born. We are talking about municipalities as **the cradle of democracy**.*

*Benjamin Barber (1939-)[TED Talk Filmed June 2013: Why mayors should rule the world](#)
Political theorist, author of *Jihad versus. McWorld*
(the clash of tribalism and globalism) 1992*

Taxes are the price we pay for civilization

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. USA Supreme Court jurist (1809-1894)

We must first distinguish between real needs that must be met, and artificial wants that must be controlled"

Mahatma Gandhi Indian statesman and philosopher (1896 1948,

Help & monitoring service

Now that GPS tracking units are available from around 100\$, rental assets and tourist movements could easily be monitored to provide general guidance together with personal assistance in locating interesting features and service providers using nothing more complicated than the visitors' own smart-phone loaded with suitable 'apps'. This too would be highly 'employment-friendly'

Integrated accounting

One service that could be crucial might be a sort of 'employment agency' to run all of the various credit-card rental transactions on behalf of employees. Since agents would have portable card-readers which record who sold what and when, they could be, in effect be *autónomos*, paid according to some formula relating to the benefit they provide or the hours they serve 'on site', but with a guaranteed minimum wage, automated social security contribution and reliable tax return facility – to say nothing of a secure private record of local transactions sent by SMS to both the agents and the users own private mobile phones.

Central payment

In fact, the bank-card transaction processing service could be extended to existing PYMEs, providing, in effect payment tracking and an insurance service against fraudulent use (since the users bank-card and ID validity would probably be verified early during their visit)

Rapid transit routes

The final idea, would be to make the personal vehicle rental a virtual 'transport hub' providing easy, quick and cheap (but not free) connection between car-parks, RENFE, AISA as well as to visitor attractions and the casco urbano and the more distant Huertos de Picotajo

Better Finance

There are several sources of revenue – the above mentioned tourism increase will take time to develop. First, the abandoned real estate needs to attract a penalty IBI so that the 'cost of ownership' is exploited, second, the on-street parking needs to be increased so that people prefer to use proper car-parks or public transport

Local industry

Assuming that *aranjez* were to become a 'walkable city' with good public transport and fun personal vehicles, then we would develop some expertise in electric vehicle repair, which could form the basis for manufacturing high-tech products

World trade

Given that transport is dependent on petroleum, which, being a finite resource, implies bulk cargo movement will become uneconomic eventually, it would seem sensible to develop an industry without much transport costs: Electric vehicles! Yes, quite complicated products could be produced using 3D printing – initially for plastic body parts and minor accessories, later for mechanical metal components, and finally for electronic circuits and systems – Paradise? Yes, but entirely possible, even with today's rather primitive 'additive manufacturing' technology

Toda verdad atraviesa tres fases:

1. *Primero es el ridiculizada*
2. *Segundo recibe violenta oposición*
3. *Finalmente es aceptada como algo evidente*

¿Arthur Shopenhauer? (1788-1860)