An Implicit Plan
Landscape, Art and Lanzarote’s
Tourism Development (1960-1974)

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Abstract
Despite the inexistence of a formal plan, a series of underlying factors generated a project that hoped to
hybridize tourism and landscape by safeguarding and protecting Lanzarote’s environment as well as adapting the
region to this economic activity. So as to remain faithful to the Island’s nature, solutions were not adopted as isolated fragments but as part of a
comprehensive system. This resulted in an outstanding model of human interaction with the environment while
creating a different and competitive image within the tourism market.

Key words:
Territory, landscape, tourism, art.

Introduction
The Canary Islands have been greatly affected by tourism; however, Lanzarote is possibly the region that dealt
most differently with the industry. At the end of the 19th century the Islands became a tourist destination for
those seeking to relax and rest. However, it was only in the mid-20th century, after the Spanish Civil War and
the Second World War, that suitable conditions enabled tourism, as we know it today, to establish itself. During
that phase, social achievements, better revenues, along with policies adopted by a number of European countries
made travelling accessible to a wider social spectrum. Like in many other regions of Spain, the islands chose to
develop the coastline. While tourists were attracted to Gran Canaria and Tenerife from the beginning, the visitors
that Lanzarote received were those that came for scientific purposes. Back then, this most eastern Canary Island
was an inhospitable region lacking natural resources such as water, which made life there difficult. However,
as inhabitants and visitors were showing a growing interest towards the island’s aesthetic qualities, there was a
general feeling that tourism could generate wealth and overcome poverty. This was an incentive to develop this
industry on the island. At this point in time, with Lanzarote’s lack of infrastructure and urban development, a
group of people lead by César Manrique, a local and internationally recognised artist, and José Ramírez, president
of “el Cabildo” had a vision to create an unusual setting for tourism based on the island’s landscape.

In Lanzarote, tourism was established in 1970, the year in which its airport opened its doors to international
charter flights. By then the island was also equipped with all the necessary infrastructures. It can be said that
Lanzarote anticipated “the tourist rush” that occurred in other destinations by creating an unusual setting for
tourism through the regional plan that is presented below.
The origins and design of the tourism plan...

From the fifties onwards, there was a growing interest for Lanzarote’s tourism industry. At that time the island presented certain conditions to establish the activity. Tourism promoters were attracted by its natural beauty, the land’s low cost and the poor agricultural value. However, the lack of natural resources such as water and poor infrastructures warded off any potential private investors. It was only a decade later that el Cabildo rightly decided to carry out the necessary work to make it become its main promoter. The basis for tourism development dates back to the sixties. This new model which didn’t appear in any formal document, hoped to create a form of development that would be compatible with the island’s scale and landscape. As a result, it wished to avoid repeating the experiences of other islands such as Gran Canaria where urban tourism was eradicating local identity. 

Even though much time has passed, the Island’s good reputation still stems from that period. The tourism project managed by César Manrique and José Ramírez, evolved around three major interrelated components. There was the desire to develop a model to work in harmony with the environment that would generate a unique “tourist brand” within the Canary Islands. Apart from providing “sea and sun” the tourism industry would also offer a different outlook to some particular scenic areas based on their history and aesthetic qualities. Lanzarote would use the tourism project around those landmarks and冯 transforming the island’s heritage and preserving its identity. This new perspective based on nature and art was brought to life by el Cabildo and the island’s community. Subsequently, tourism development could not exist on its own but become a part of a comprehensive plan which was made up of a number of interrelated elements.

The landscape

Tourists were attracted to all the Canary Islands for their landscape and climate but from a scenic point of view, Lanzarote is the most usual case within the archipelago. The landscape represented the basis of the regional project and therefore, understanding its configuration will provide a better insight of the tourism development on the island.

Lanzarote is located furthest east of the islands, in the Atlantic Ocean near the African coastline. Both Lanzarote and its neighbor Fuerteventura differ from the rest of the islands because of their many beaches and very dry and sunlight, these landscapes looks like a rocky surface lined with more than two hundred volcanoes. There are enormous extensions of fossilized lava, hundreds of holes and stone walls and its terrain is covered with the same coat of ashes and volcanic dross that was expelled only a few centuries earlier. The present landscape’s morphography is contrasted in the north and the south respectively and this is due to the mountain ranges of Famara and Ajaches. Both are the result of the most ancient volcanic episodes. Their peaks offer the island’s most dazzling views such as a perspective of the “River” (“el Rio”) and the archipelago Chinijo that can be seen from the top of Famara in the north.

Today, these first volcanic formations tower over and offer a view of a region that was affected by the most recent bouts of eruptive activity between 1730 and 1736 and later in 1824 and as a result saw its landscape evolve into a smoother volcanic landscape. The first and most noticeable is the Timanfaya national park, which is a protected natural area that has been reproduced in the rest of the islands by using the “enarenado” technique. That way, the farmers were able to convert apparently exhausted land into cultivable soil. They geometrized the surfaces with stone walls which protected the crops from the wind and added volcanic ashes where needed. This created a kind of “black mosaic”, offering an unprecedented agricultural setting.

The landscape was not only influenced by the island’s distinctive geophysics but also by its architectural heritage. Traditional housing proved how architecture could respect and blend with its environment. The island’s surface is characterized by a marked contrast as in Yaiza, Haría or Nazaret. These humble “callejones” standing alone or partly, all share the same austere and autonomous origins mostly related to some form of agricultural activity. The predilection of lime in the area and the harsh climatic conditions shaped the vernacular model of buildings. These white structures contrast with the island’s black scenery and break up the marked horizontality of its geometry. The shape of housing is also characterized by the need to seek protection from the wind. Most houses form a U or L shape and their smooth walls and roofs facilitate the movement of water. This arrangement makes it easier to collect and to retrieve water from the rainwater tanks. Nowadays, this is still an essential feature to the absence of rain and the shortage of water on the island. The housing arrangement follows a basic but comprehensive program which can deal with the possible additions of new rooms. This arrangement makes it easier to collect and to retrieve water from the rainwater tanks. Nowadays, this is still an essential feature to the absence of rain and the shortage of water on the island. The housing arrangement follows a basic but comprehensive program which can deal with the possible additions of new rooms. This arrangement makes it easier to collect and to retrieve water from the rainwater tanks. Nowadays, this is still an essential feature to the absence of rain and the shortage of water on the island. The housing arrangement follows a basic but comprehensive program which can deal with the possible additions of new rooms. This arrangement makes it easier to collect and to retrieve water from the rainwater tanks. 

Environmental factors also added to the telluric nature of the landscape. Apart from the brackish water extracted from the Famara tunnels, the Island lacks superficial and subterranean water. One immediately notices its arid, semi-desertian character due to its scarce rain and bright surf. It is要考虑的地形部分由海水的影响。地形的形状和土层的稳定性使风力涡轮机的建造有困难。他们也必须考虑对岛上的树木和其它小型生长体的下降。从尔的燃木熊到Palm tree, the island’s main vegetation includes gorses, euphorbias, and various succulents and shrubs.

The different activities that the inhabitants undertook in order to survive the harsh environmental factors unconsciously shaped the unusual landscape that is seen today. Working with nature, farmers devised a system by which they dug holes in those areas covered with volcanic ashes until reaching the fertile and arable substratum. Once the crops, mainly vines and fig trees, had been planted they were covered with “picón” and are protected from the wind by stone walls. The “picón” or “lapill” absorbs the humidity and also provides a thermal cushion that is kept moist by the sun. This is the most located very close to Timanfaya, the area that is the most important indicator of this architectural agriculture which has covered the entire surface with hundreds of holes. The system was reproduced in the rest of the islands by using the “enarenado” technique. That way, the farmers were able to convert apparently exhausted land into cultivable soil. They geometrized the surfaces with stone walls which protected the crops from the wind and added volcanic ashes where needed. This created a kind of “black mosaic”, offering an unprecedented agricultural setting.

The “lapill” is a variant of this technique. The sand is blown from coast to coast by trade winds which draws an invisible line dividing the island into two. So, from the Famara cave to the Tías coastline, the particularly arid landscape was able to be cultivated like the rest of the Island by adapting the arano technique with the use of sand (lapill) instead of lapill.

The volcanic surface of the Island’s landscape differs between these two areas. On the one hand, there is “Los Valles”, a region located in the Famara mountain range which is characterized by green palm trees and plantations. On the other hand, the Guatiza center is a testimonial of the economic boom that occurred until the 19th century due to the cultivation of “chumberas” (a specific variety of pear trees) which attracted the cochineal insect from which farmers were able to extract colorful dyes.

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Drawing up the territorial plan

After having been Mayor of Arrecife, José Ramírez Cerdá became president of el Cabildo in 1960. He was a friend of César Manrique who shared his ideas on tourism and with whom he had often worked during his office at the City Council. Both believed firmly that the tourism industry would be capable of eliminating the island from poverty. There was no proper plan that would provide a structure to receive the subsequent arrival of tourism. Yet, they had a clear picture of an island based on its natural resources and of the image that they wanted to project. The need to provide the population basic resources also contributed to creating traditional technologies which worked with the island’s natural surroundings. The mills used to grind cereals or presses to produce wine are examples of such architecture. The fishing industry also generated various salt ponds along the coastline. Mills, ovens, irrigation systems etc which have been rendered obsolete by time and new technologies all produced highly-valued pieces of architecture.

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The tourism development would not have successfully occurred on such a large scale without el Cabildo which provided all the necessary infrastructures.

Regional priorities

The model that was adopted aspired above all to avoid what had occurred in other parts of the Canary Islands where urbanism had spoiled the territory by losing its local identity. Lanzarote offered a series of natural and traditional landmarks and a landscape whose natural and anthropic beauty could easily be admired by visitors and tourists due to its preservation due to its extreme fragility. Like in the case of an ecosystem whose parts are closely related, the idea was to take the whole terrain into account for its regional development.

The second step aimed to structure, highlight and protect this heritage which was seen as the real key towards development. A series of measures were adopted in order to correctly deal with the landscape while preserving it. This would help to minimize the possible side effects that tourism could generate. Among these measures, it was essential to minimally adapt those natural areas which were distinctively attractive and to erect, in the most particular places, comfortable and elaborated facilities which would become architectural references on the island. As a principle all measures seek to respect the environment and enable the public to appreciate the natural landscape upon which they have been built. The landmarks or tourist centers, designed as landscape management units, acted as “regional milestons” and outlined a symbolic itinerary. With that objective in mind a road network was created. Today, it still crosses the entire landscape offering different routes from which one can obtain an overview of the Island and its people.

Another way of safeguarding the heritage is to restore and preserve traditional architecture. Unlike other destinations which suffered the introduction of a type of architecture that did not respect the environment and the local traditions, Lanzarote chose to promote and preserve its vernacular architecture which was perfectly adapted to the climate and the landscape.

The proposal designed in Lanzarote, with the local authorities, approval and support would put an end to the existing economic attractions in favor of a new plan that would hybridize tourism and heritage into one process. This would generate great revenues that would be reinvested into society. Attracting high quality tourism, investing in good infrastructures and promoting the island’s unusual landscape would generate a competitive and unique tourism product. These infrastructures would enable a new model of environmental development which permeated the community.

Tourism expanded mainly due to the special attention given to the Island’s image. César Manrique's artistic work was a great contribution to that effect. Lanzarote represented the foundation of his work and he was able to incorporate his art into the landscape while following his individual idea of tourism. The Island’s special image is closely owed to his artistic style. His concern for the environment played a major role in his work and his interest for tourism development generated a type of friendly art or relaxed style that would connect visitors with nature. Among the ideas he had regarding Lanzarote, his comprehensive vision of nature was to be the main driving force behind his life and his art. On the subject of safeguarding the landscape and the relationship between local tradition and modern architecture, he would defend vernacular architecture as being the standard for future tourist buildings. His extrovert and lively personality is reflected in his work and his great ecological commitment also prevails over the political commitment of other artist of his time. His regional plan, both on an individual and on a global level, is a clear and constant example of environmental respect which could inspire society. Lastly his “absolute” vocation for art is evident on the Island where even the last detail holds his touch.

Tourism development

In order to defend the idea of the island as a comprehensive base for tourism, one needs to stress that private urban development and tourism highly depend on each other. While the territory was being shaped for tourism, housing expansion took place in the Capital, Arrecife and then transferred to other areas such as Puerto del Carmen or Timanfaya. The determination to create a different image based on the Island’s natural and cultural heritage, an urban depth of the island’s aesthetics and the historical buildings in the different urban centers. They also established a distribution scheme of water that came out of the Famara tunnels. The air transport system was another major task that the authorities took upon themselves to fulfill. Sensing the importance of this mode of transport and faced with the private investor’s lack of interest, el Cabildo initially repaired the runway and urged the relevant State authorities to allow them to build an airport which would welcome international charter flights.
In addition to the above mentioned Plan de Estabilidad, other reforms contributed to tourism expansion. It was the case of the 1968 Strauss Law, introduced by the German government, which would boost its economy and reach a high rate return by investing in places like the Canary Islands where profits were guaranteed. As a result, apart from the hotels, which were the preferred source of accommodation, many apartment and bungalow complexes started to appear. They were much more cost-effective despite the fact that they could easily become obsolete. The favorable conditions that private capital encountered, initiated from 1970 onwards the construction of a large number of medium sized tourism complexes. Legislation was the only way to adapt these establishments to the tourism Project. First of all by controlling the plot ratio and the size of the buildings – according to the lowest parameters existing in the province of Las Palmas – and by adopting aesthetic measures to blend the new complexes with the existing traditional architecture. Until 1973 a large amount of partial plans were presented in the municipalities of Tias and Teguise. In Tias most of these plans would be carried out. By contrast, In Teguise, aside from a few cases like the Island Homes plan or the Costa Teguise Partial plan, most planning permissions would never materialize, resulting only to be mere speculation ventures. As far as this study goes, the most important projects were executed en Arrecife, Famara, Puerto del Carmen and Costa Teguise.

A few final observations

Lanzarote is an example of how sometimes one cannot rely on written or graphic documents to prove a point. On the contrary one must investigate the issue as a real phenomenon. The absence of a “physical” project allows us to make an objective interpretation on how the island’s geography reveals the existence of an implicit regional plan. Throughout time, one is able to appreciate the underlying elements that materialized it. In the same way, the landscape development, the importance given to regional elements or the unusual image that was created, gives us a rough idea of the nature of the plan and opens up a new debate based on the criticism and theories that it generates. Not only does it highlights the intellectual sharpness and the avant-gardism of a plan that knew how to develop tourism from a regional and cultural perspective but it also offers the keys to its re-formulation. In short, by including tourism in their plan, Manrique and his team passed on a new vision that was appropriate at the time and now represents one of the many possibilities that the landscape can offer. A re-shaping of the environment according to the new challenges brought by tourism could add on a “new” perspective. Indeed, a last glance would enable us to deepen our knowledge of touristic terrains relying on the implicit opportunities that the landscape’s underlying elements offer us.

References


Regional Administration Agencies existing only in the Canary.


A group of islands in the North East of Lanzarote formed by La Graciosa, Montaña Clara and Alegranza, and the Roque del Este and Roque del Oeste isles.

Foresight as an Innovative Tool for Designing Tourist Destinations

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Abstract

Foresight is a relatively new field of study which initially arose to make provisions for the future in science and technology, but nowadays it is increasingly being used in territorial issues. Although the use of foresight tools in the tourism realm has been limited, there is a growing need to manage the increasing uncertainty that surrounds tourism development. Based on these premises, this paper tries to prove the capability of foresight tools to anticipate the impacts of complex global challenges on the tourism field. This assumption is tested through a future vision exercise which explores the evolution of tourism demand segments and its implications in planning tourism destinations. Two major demand segments are visualised for the year 2020 horizon: “Niche and Innovative Demand” and “Massive and Predictable Demand”. For both segments, the tourism consumption chain value is displayed and spatial design guidelines are recommended for sun and beach destinations.

Scarcely presence of future studies in tourism physical planning

Although predicting the future has been a long-standing quest for Humanity, future studies, as a recognized field of scientific knowledge, have a mere half-century of existence. Since ancient times, man has been uneasy when facing uncertainty and has tried by different means to anticipate its future, by either prophesies enacted by priests or by rational thinking exercised by scientists. It was not until the 50’s and 60’s of the Twentieth Century that a formal body of knowledge began to be assembled under the tag of future studies, providing a new set of tools to researchers.

In general terms, the field of future studies encompasses two broad families of methods and techniques (Fernández Güell, 2006). On the one hand, quantitative tools make intense use of mathematical and statistical methods to predict the future. This sort of methods may use simple tools, such as trend extrapolation, or very sophisticated ones, such as computer simulation models. Quantitative methods are particularly effective when the continuity of past-present-future phenomena is assumed.

On the other hand, qualitative tools are mainly based upon opinions, intuitions and conjectures of experts, who have reliable and privileged information about the analysed topic. The most frequently employed methods within this category are the Delphi method, scenario design and trend analysis. Qualitative methods are particularly recommended when long-range structural changes are to be predicted and these changes are hard to capture by simple statistics.

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