

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

Antonio Zamora Cabrera

Polytechnic University of Catalonia, Faculty of Architecture, Barcelona, Spain
E-mail: azcab@hotmail.com

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 suitable 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 fully invest in tourism and became its main promoter. The basis for tourism development was generated during 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 a desire to create a well-balanced 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 carry out its tourism project around those landmarks and areas safeguarding 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 became 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 unusual 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 smooth landscape. However, from the sky Lanzarote 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 pronounced horizontality of its orography is contrasted in the north and the south respectively by 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 succession of volcanoes. The most representative is the Timanfaya national Park, otherwise referred to as the mountains of fire. The so called "days of fire", marked the beginning of a new stage in which not only the island's surface changed significantly but which also worsened the harsh living conditions in Lanzarote. The lava occupied one quarter of the island (174 km²) and today 54 Km² are protected in the Timanfaya National Park. As well as volcanoes such as in Timanfaya, there are other interesting natural formations such as the "Hervideros", a part of the coastline where solidified magma meets the sea and one of the few existing hydrovolcanism cases, known as "el charco de los Clicos".

The natural park Malpaís de La Corona, in the far north of the Island, is another outstanding formation in the volcanic landscape. Although it shares the same origin as the Mountains of Fire, the huge temporal difference and the route that the lava followed from the volcano gave this area an extremely different characteristic. Located in the Famara mountain range, the Corona Volcano expelled its load towards the east displacing the former coastline by 3 km into the sea. The first phase of the eruptions created the unique rough surface while during the last stages the volcano produced a stream of lava that was long enough to form an "incandescent river" reaching the sea. During the process, the upper layers which were in direct contact with the atmosphere, solidified while below the lava continued to flow. When the activity stopped, the magma's temperature fell and petrified producing a very long and uneven volcanic tunnel which started from the volcano and finished on the island's east coast. Due to a structural weakness or a gas accumulation, a part of the tube was made visible by a partial surface landslide which produced the cavities that are referred to as "jameos". The most famous of all, the "Jameo del Agua" is part of this grotto that leads to the sea. A little further inland from the latter is a cave called "La Cueva de los Verdes" It is part of the same volcanic tunnel and is the most valuable from a scientific and touristic point of view.

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-desert climate due to its scarce rain and bright sunshine. It is rendered milder partly by the sea and the wind's influence. The strength and the persistence of the trade winds help to mitigate high temperatures. They are also responsible for the scarce vegetation on the island as they impair the growth of tall species. Aside from the Canary 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 "lapilli" absorbs the humidity and also provides a thermal cushion that protects the crops from the sun. The Geria area located very close to Timanfaya is the most representative indicator of this agricultural architecture 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 "Jable" 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 cove to the Tias coastline, the particularly arid landscape was able to be cultivated like the rest of the Island by adapting the arenado technique with the use of sand (Jable) instead of lapilli.

The uniformity 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, there is the Guatiza center, 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.

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 dotted with villages and buildings such as in Yaiza, Haría or Nazaret. These humble "white parallelepipeds", standing alone or together, all share the same austere and autonomous origins mostly related to some form of agricultural activity. The predominance 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 facility due 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 explains the voluminous appearance of this visible architecture. The only details that seem to differentiate these humble houses from one another are the decorations of the doors, windows and chimneys (in reds, greens blues or varnished wood) as well as the various existing roof, wall and chimney typologies. The architectural humbleness is also seen in its military and religious buildings. The Island has six modest fortified towers and its chapels like the houses are voluminous with pure forms and white walls.

The need to give 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 agricultural 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 techniques all produced highly-valued pieces of architecture.

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 with 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 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 needed to be preserved 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 more paradigmatic places, comfortable and elaborate 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 milestones" 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 system 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 image within the tourism market. The proposal's success had an impact on society, not only on an economic level but also as an example of human behavior and its interactions with the environment. It generated a new model of environmental development which permeated the community.

Projecting aesthetic qualities

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 partly 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 culture, 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.

Regional development

The local government played an important role in the conceptualization of the Project. It did so firstly by taking on entire "responsibility" for a territory loaded with signs and contents and secondly, by recognizing, incorporating and protecting those areas that generated identity on the island. However, its role would not be limited to this task only. Faced with the emerging belief that tourism had much to offer and the lack of private investment, el Cabildo played a financial role in tourism development. It provided the main infrastructures, focusing on building tourist facilities, roads or developing air transport and attracting private investment to other structures such as water supply. On a legislative level it also proposed different regulations regarding the landscape and its use for tourism. As well as protecting the natural environment it realized the need of charging a fee to visitors. Meanwhile, it classified a lot of land for tourism purposes despite the lack of adequate facilities for the activity to take place. The scale and the aesthetics of the buildings would also be regulated. This revealed that attracting high quality

tourism was a priority given the carrying capacity of the island. With the public authorities' approval, all the above measures would enable a new economic model to develop; a sustainable model with both landscape and tourism generating income.

In Lanzarote, the landscape was the project's main field of action. On a general level, certain areas became fields of interest with limited access. The so called parks soon met the criteria for preservation. The first one to be considered was Malpaís de la Corona Park with the "cueva de los verdes" and the "Jameos del agua" as its main attractions. The second one encompassed the Timanfaya area and the mountains of fire. The Geria area on the other hand was not recognized as a park but as a terrain that should be preserved and included in the project. A series of buildings today referred to as centers for art, culture and territory (CACT), were erected in some of the areas that generated interest and soon became territorial landmarks. These structures interfered in the landscape as elements that could be seen and could offer a distinct viewpoint. They became a physical part of the terrain and played a major role through their functions and the routes that they established. In short, they brought an "artificial" touch to the landscape for tourism purposes and added historical value to it. These different groups of landmarks and areas form part of a system that is interlinked by the fundamentally important road network. El Cabildo carried out extensive work in this field by using the existent lanes to create a network of roads and scenic paths throughout the island. These networks would give priority to certain routes which would include other attractions such as the Tegui Villa; an agricultural landscape like the Valleys in Haria; the interesting "enarenados" or the coastline where tourism would establish itself.

The work that took place on the remaining infrastructures was vital. Due to the lack of water, the government encouraged private investment through a number of tax benefits which led to the installation of the first dual water purification system in Europe. As a response to the distribution scheme that el Cabildo had followed in an attempt to restore balance on the island, the private sector sought to maximize its benefits by offering to bring water to the areas where tourism was most likely to expand. This was of course a necessary step towards reaching the quality and standards required by tourism. In addition, regional authorities invested in wells and rainwater tanks in all of the Island's different urban centers. They also established a distribution network for the low volume 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.

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 Famara. The determination to create a different image based on the Island's natural and cultural heritage would generate an urban development in accordance with the plan's aesthetic and artistic specifications. In many instances supervised by Manrique himself, the main housing projects undertaken by the private sector for tourism would be seen as benchmarks. They took into consideration the environment and aesthetics to build high quality infrastructures that could receive the exclusive class of tourism that the plan was hoping to attract.

In the fifties, Franco's regime was leaning towards a more open foreign policy, a process that would culminate in 1959 with a series of economic measures destined to stabilize and liberalize the Spanish economy (Plan de Estabilización Nacional). From the tourism point of view, these measures helped noticeably to increase foreign investments in Spain. However, as other Spanish coastal destinations would begin to feel the benefits of tourism, Lanzarote, which lacked infrastructures, wasn't able to offer the same guarantees to investors. In this initial stage, tourism was limited to Arrecife since the rest of the island was cut off by poor terrestrial and air transport infrastructures. It was only in the sixties that measures were taken to alleviate the infrastructural problems and attract investors. El Cabildo's work acquired notoriety not only for its infrastructural and landscape development achievements but also through the regulations that it established. It started off by setting a limit to the buildings' dimensions as well as handing out a series of guidelines concerning aesthetics. Along these lines, a considerable amount of land was classified for future tourist establishments which was not a very feasible plan but converted the island into a desirable product for the foreign tourism industry. At this point, a process of colonization began, opening the way to remoter areas that stood further away from the capital such as "Puerto del Carmen". As it is mentioned by Alejandro González and Jose Hernández, the Island's new characteristics were to have a conveniently placed airport, a mild climate, attractive beaches and competitive land prices amongst others. In 1965 with the "Playa Blanca" partial plan's implementation and the opening of Los Fariones Hotel in Puerto del Carmen, the tourism development process had officially begun.

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 profit was 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 Tegui. In Tias most of these plans would be carried out. By contrast, In Tegui, aside from a few cases like the Island Homes plan or the Costa Tegui 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 in Arrecife, Famara, Puerta del Carmen and Costa Tegui.

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 highlight 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.

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Foresight as an Innovative Tool for Designing Tourist Destinations

José Miguel Fernández Güell

Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Departamento de Urbanística y Ordenación del Territorio, Avenida Juan de Herrera 4, 28040 Madrid, Spain
E-mail: josemiguel.fernandez@upm.es

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.

Key words:

Future Studies, Foresight, Tourism Demand, Destination Design, Uncertainty.

Scarce 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 prophecies 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.