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# **ARTICLES**

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# FUERTEVENTURA'S URBAN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT: THE SEARCH OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VERSUS TO THE CONSTRUCTIVE MASSIVE GROWTH

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The aim of this paper is to study the evolution of tourist development on the island of Fuerteventura, with particular emphasis on spatial and economic configuration of the tourist product and in the course of this activity on the island; in other words the different phases that passed this economic activity in this area of the Eastern Canary Islands.

Tourism is the main source of economic wealth today on the island, although this has not always been so, because until the seventies of the twentieth century the activities of the primary sector (agriculture, livestock and fisheries) were the mainstays of the insular economic structure.

Tourism, both tourist arrivals and overnight stays as constructive real estate business, originates from the island around seventy percent of gross domestic product and employs more than sixty percent of the active population. It is the main activity, by far, of the island and the whole archipelago. It occupies much of the eastern coast of Fuerteventura, especially in the municipalities of La Oliva, Pájara and Antigua, however it is poorly developed along the west coast and inland. It has been developed mainly in the form of the sun and beach tourism, whereas the rest of the tourism (rural, congresses, sports ...) have little economic and spatial impact to the present.

Tourism development has gone through three distinct stages: the first covers the period prior to the seventies, it is the pretouristic or protouristic phase in which there is little infrastructure to stay, and few tourist arrivals, rather they were travellers. These visitors looked on the island a mild climate, the original landscape, especially the geological composition and geomorphologic structures. Finally these travellers were mostly traders who

flocked to the archipelago in transit journey to South Africa, which became his visits often, in a more or less extended holiday that allowed them to meet the unique island and even do some business with local products, in the case of the island of Fuerteventura in particular was done with lime, salt, barilla and cochineal.

The second phase covers the decade of the seventies and eighties of the XX century. During this period two of the main tourist resorts on the island are brewing, this is Corralejo, in the town of La Oliva, and Costa Calma, in the leeward beaches of Jandía massif in Pájara. The occupied area by tourist developments have amounted to 576 amounts., meagre amount when compared with the 9641 approved for residential villages and therefore growth remains within parameters that do not exceed the capacity of burden of these areas; thus also for this phase we can talk about sustainable development in the sector. The same happened in other areas of the Canary Islands with developments in the tourism sector with similar characteristics, although in other islands such as Gran Canaria and Tenerife, the phenomenon of mass tourism starts from the decade of the seventies of the XX century. On the other side, La Gomera, El Hierro and La Palma begin their tourist journey with a clear delay compared to the Eastern Canary Islands.

The third stage starts from the nineties of the XX century, especially after leading the current, the island is now experiencing a remarkable growth in the housing and partial plans, in the period prior to the Moratorium Tourist (before 2000) 1, and after the approval of this law. The number of hotel rooms and extra has increased tenfold in this period, especially the apartments have grown in front of hotels, this is because the plans approved but not built or executed, before the moratorium now begin to perform, and that municipalities cannot stop the process because of high compensation would be paid to the landowners. This has meant that the moratorium has little effect because, as we demonstrated below there are a number of loopholes to avoid the application of it, and what is most important, it is not retroactive, therefore partial and approved plans and without execution, which were many, it must compensate the owner or allow him to build, because there is not enough capital to meet the developers and approved plans.

The current administration, both autonomous and insular, tries to stop this process with the guidelines of tourism law (Law 19/2003) on the one hand, and with the approval of PIOF (management plan of Fuerteventura island) on the other, but both arrive too late, because what is really important is what has been built on the island in the last twenty years. This phenomenon also has similar characteristics in the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife, but not in others such as El Hierro, La Palma and La Gomera.

The study focuses on the municipalities of Pájara, La Oliva, Antigua and Puerto del Rosario primarily, it also offers information about Tuineje and Betancuria, although the importance of the latter is lower by having limited supply of tourist accommodation. In addition to assessing urban-tourism growth through the different partial plans have been approved on the island since early seventies, we also deal with the speculative processes that have occurred with changes in land use to increase the value, and the developments that were promoted and were not built to speculate and increase capital gains and the ultimate benefits of real estate transactions, constituting them a lucrative business, sometimes even higher than the farm tourist hotel accommodation and other infrastructure.

The main hypothesis of this article argues that the real estate business itself is inseparable from tourism, go hand in hand because you do not understand one without the other. In other words, before the tourist exploitation of a place that is welcoming customers to occupy the places of hotels, bungalows and apartments, or through tour operators or directly, and there have been a series of previous actions to condition the core tourism, this is often only performed in the partial plan, but then it takes place, this is the development of road infrastructure, tourist accommodation, leisure services, dining, shopping, .. . to speculate on the ground; also the territory where it sits this activity is reclassified, changing their use and value, and passing through several owners and property developers. Ultimately, the exploitation of tourism is just one more piece of a large business network, starting with the change of use of the pristine nature (a beach, a coastal area,...) to make space city with all the new features and services that this entails, in this passage it is a significant change in land value and capital gains and have generated multiple benefits for landowners and speculators agents.

In short, development and tourism model in Fuerteventura does not differ greatly from the one that presents the other two eastern islands of the archipelago as we have seen in this study.

La tourism Moratorium is the tourism directives law (Law 19/2003) whose initial philosophy was to stop the vortex constructive archipelago erupted in the late twentieth century, but which nevertheless did not achieve its primary objective for the great number of partial plans and places that were approved prior to the drafting of this law and now run it impossible to build new places, because the rule is not retroactive.

