

Life Lanzarote en la Biosfera 2 (2001-2004)
Exploración de nuevas líneas de actuación, financiación y fiscalidad para la Reserva de Biosfera



**POSSIBILITY OF MANAGING TOURIST FLOWS THROUGH PORTS AND AIRPORTS
ACCORDING TO SUSTAINABLE CRITERIA: THE CASE OF LANZAROTE AIRPORT**

The Island Government could propose a framework agreement to orient airport management towards sustainable development and the island's carrying capacity

In the territorial and development model that is being defined in Spain there are sufficient legal grounds to argue that the Island Government is not alien to the operation of the airport, and that the Spanish legal system grants it powers to assist in the definition of the airport's management so that its voice may be heard in defence of the interests that it is obliged to defend.

It cannot be ignored that both environmental sustainability and island status are acquiring increasing legal importance, and that today's laws offer the public administrations better tools to cooperate in matters as fundamental as the sustainable management of tourist flows through island ports and airports, facilitating the good governance of these limited and territories.

1. Introduction.

Island status gives rise to differential aspects in territorial planning which do not appear in other regions. One of the most important is the question of air and sea communications with the exterior, which are essential to allow arrivals and departures in appropriate conditions. Inappropriately managed they can create bottlenecks that impede island development or can channel excessive human pressure for territorial equilibrium. Duly controlled they represent key management instruments on the road to sustainable development.

In the field of programming principles, the First European Conference on Sustainable Island Development in Europe, which took place in Menorca in 1997, proposed as a fundamental guideline that the management of airport infrastructures and the corresponding tourist flows should take into consideration the reception capacity of each island environment.

This does not refer to the construction and extension of airports, or the question of which administration is competent to decide where the general airport system is to be implemented in the territory and how this should be done. It relates, above all, to the consideration of what limits the development model adopted on an island imposes on the operation of its airports by the competent administration, and how administrations with concurrent competencies can influence and collaborate.

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The questions that are derived from the principles established on Menorca and which need to be answered are: Should the way the airport is operated and its growth planned respond mainly to the pressures of tourist development demands, or should it be a means to configure the territorial planning model and an important way of avoiding undesired growth and the exceeding of the island's carrying capacity? Are there alternatives to saturation and inefficient service as limiting factors?

The answer to these questions is of extraordinary importance for an island like Lanzarote, which, with a territory of 848 km², a resident population of one hundred and twelve thousand inhabitants, and which receives one million eight hundred and fifty thousand tourists each year, has overwhelmed the reception capacity of an island ecosystem that is extremely fragile due to its volcanic origin and desert environment.

Besides, now is a particularly good time to answer these questions in view of the course of events at the different institutional levels. The recent meeting of the Council of the European Union in Thessaloniki gave a legal standing to the political and programming principle of the sustainability of development, and the year 2003 has also been very prolific in Spain in terms of highly important legislative initiatives by the central administration and in the autonomous region of the Canary Islands in matters related with general, territorial and tourist development and with port and airport management.

2. Object of the report.

The object of this study is to analyse how the matters raised on Menorca are considered in the Spanish legal system, including recently approved legislation and that in preparation up to summer 2003, and to examine what possibilities exist for managing with sustainable criteria the flows of tourists accessing an island via its ports and airports.

The report does not therefore seek to assess how certain territorial administrations can claim their competencies from others, or how far they can go in doing this, but rather to analyse the means that exist to obtain the necessary cooperation between the public administrations that are attributed competencies which affect the sustainability of development and the quality of life of the island's residents. All of this takes place in a framework of competencies where the limits are diffuse but the general principles are in practice unanimously accepted by multilateral organisations, the European Union and the different levels of the territorial administrations, being oriented towards interadministrative cooperation which must achieve the compatibility of objectives which, like the viability and improved quality of services and the sustainability of tourist and island development, can only be considered complementary and concurrent from the point of view of the common good.

On the other hand it cannot be ignored that island status is acquiring increasing legal importance, and for this reason the question of the means that the law affords to the public

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administrations so that they can cooperate in matters as fundamental as the sustainable management of tourist flows through island ports and airports is of great importance for the good governance of these territories.

3. Methodology.

The methodology used is as follows:

First of all a study is made of the grounds upon which the report is based, considering objective data on Lanzarote's ports and airport and analysing how the concept of sustainable development has been defined in the international arena and in Spain, especially in the Canary Islands, making a special study of the concept of carrying capacity upon which the concept of sustainable tourism is founded.

Secondly, an analysis is made of the distribution of competencies among the territorial administrations with regard to ports and airports, territorial planning, urban planning, tourism and the environment.

Thirdly, the general considerations resulting from the two preceding points are applied to the case of Lanzarote airport.

Fourthly, an attempt is made to define formulas for cooperation between the Spanish Administration, the Regional Government of the Canary Islands and Lanzarote Island Government in relation with the management of airport capacity on the island.

Finally, conclusions of an eminently practical nature are proposed.

4. Lanzarote airport, basic data.

Lanzarote airport (category 1) operates a considerable passenger traffic, both at Canary Islands level and in national terms. According to the Spanish Airports and Air Traffic Authority (AENA), in 2002 it was the third busiest airport in the Canary Islands with regard to passenger traffic

, handling more than five million passengers, and occupied eighth place in the national ranking.

Most of the airport's traffic, around 70% of the total number of passengers, is with European Union countries. The United Kingdom and Germany account for more than 75% of international traffic, split almost equally between scheduled and charter flights.

Domestic traffic, which represents close to 30% of the total, is heavily concentrated on three destinations: Gran Canaria, Madrid-Barajas and Tenerife North.

At present, although the airport is operative from 07:00 hours to 24:00 hours, with a runway of 2,400 m in length and 45 m in width and an orientation that coincides almost

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100 percent of the time with the prevailing wind direction, tourist traffic is restricted to a number of hours on two or three days of the week in order to suit the logistical convenience of tour operators. This means that tourist flows could be significantly multiplied without the need to extend the airport's installations, but simply by extending the slots that are allocated, increasing the number of hours and days of operation. Airport traffic management is thus a key factor, along with the Island Government's initiative to contain the amount of accommodation on offer, to avoid excessive tourist pressures on the island. Despite the strong measures adopted in relation with territorial planning on the island (deprogramming of some two hundred thousand tourist beds and implementation of moratoriums), AENA reports that Lanzarote airport has experienced considerable growth in the last five years in terms of aircraft and passenger traffic, and in 2001 broke its own historic record of aircraft operating on a single day on three occasions.

The question that this report poses is whether the airport should be a passive element in the pressures that are exerted on the territory or whether on an island like Lanzarote it can be a relevant factor in helping to achieve the targets of the development model adopted by the competent administration, and whether this is possible within the Spanish legal system.

5. Main conclusions.

As a general conclusion of the study it can be stated that in the territorial and development model that is being defined in Spain there are sufficient legal grounds to argue that Lanzarote Island Government is not alien to the operation of the airport, and that the Spanish legal system grants it powers to assist in the definition of the airport's management so that its voice may be heard in defence of the interests that it is obliged to defend and of public interest in general.

This general conclusion is based on the following premises contemplated in the report:

Sustainability is a principle whose character was initially of a political and programming nature but which now has juridical relevance and has been set out in legal instruments.

Demand management in airports with relevant levels of tourist traffic, especially on islands, is an increasingly important factor in the definition of territorial planning models and is directly related with the concept of the carrying capacity of island systems.

The European Union has set out regulations governing slot distribution in the airports that the Member States classify as coordinated. The onus has hitherto been on self-regulation, which has been carried out by airline companies in the framework of the IATA. These regulations are now under review in the European Union. Some Community institutions argue that environmental factors need to be taken into account when determining the criteria for slot distribution.

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In Spain, competency for demand management in commercial airports lies with the central administration, and is exercised in a unified way for all the national territory by AENA.

Lanzarote airport has been classified as a fully coordinated airport, where, in order to land or take off, airlines and other aircraft operators must have slots assigned by a coordinator.

Territorial planning competencies are attributed, in general, to the autonomous regional governments, with the participation of the island governments.

In relationships between sectoral competencies, including airport demand management, and territorial planning competencies, the principles of collaboration and cooperation between the different public administrations must take precedence.

Lanzarote island government is competent to initiate processes of collaboration and cooperation with the General State Administration, with the aim of adapting airport demand management to the island's territorial development model and so that its island status be taken into account in slot management.

In the corresponding international organisations and in the European Union, formulas are being studied to improve the relationship between airport infrastructure management and local and regional interests.

In Spain an adequate level of techniques and mechanisms has been reached for coordination and collaboration between administrations, so that if the Island Government considers it appropriate it may initiate a procedure of collaboration and cooperation. This situation has already occurred in the past, and the Island Government has cooperated satisfactorily in the implementation and successive extensions of the airport. Such cooperation must be adapted to current circumstances and to the regulations recently set out regarding the sustainability of general and tourist development in the Canary Islands autonomous region and in the island's own policies.