

## **TOURISM AND URBAN POLICIES AROUND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE REGION OF THE PUEBLOS BLANCOS OF CADIZ: ANALYSIS OF THE CASES OF OLVERA AND ZAHARA DE LA SIERRA**

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When Spain first became part of the European Union it began to enact the development of rural and urban areas with the aim of reducing the imbalances between them across initiatives and community programs like LEADER, PRODER and URBAN. In this way, in many rural regions, policies that focused on economic diversification began to be implemented in communities whose principal industry was agriculture. The crisis in this industry along with the changing world economic situation and a shift in environmental and cultural thinking began a process of reassessment of cultural heritage assets for economic exploitation.

Then public administrations began to invest large sums of money to add value to the cultural heritage of these regions betting firmly on tourism, a sector that is capable of commercialising culture and transforming the assets of the past into a product which can lead to the development of the region. Thus a study of the local tourist system helps us to understand the initiatives carried out in this direction, the protagonists involved and their relationship, as well as the links between tourism, heritage and town planning. They are three very different sectors due to their principles, values and purposes which are related to local tourism management. However one of the big problems that is derived from urban, heritage, and tourism policies in town centres of specific monumental relevance is their 'museumification' where the historical centres are adapted to please tourists and on many occasions are relegated out of the realms of local citizens.

The abusive use of cars, complicated urban physiognomy or the implementation of urban policies of expansion has led to the abandonment of historical landmarks in recent decades. These causes have been a focus on the growing touristic specialisation in some reduced nuclei of the population and have directed economic development to a sector that was rising, that of tourism. Therefore the present study proposes to confirm or deny the hypothesis that tourism policies along with urban and cultural heritage policies, can be one of the causes of the loss of social value in the historical centres of the villages of the Sierra de Cádiz acting as a break on development if it doesn't constitute heritage elements within the social dynamics of these areas.

Therefore there are four main objectives related to the identification of processes that have influenced the current situation of tourism and heritage of the region; the protagonists in these, the analysis of the policies that have led to the progressive depopulation of the historic centres of the two municipalities studied, measures for the management of the cultural heritage of the area and the tourism linking them.

The methodology that has guided the work is based on the study through case studies, allowing the combination of quantitative and qualitative procedures and analysing the comparison to determine the results. These cases will be those of Olvera and Zahara de la Sierra for which a methodology has been developed structured into four sections that deal with a primary documental and bibliographical study of the reality of both locations, a process of fieldwork interviews with officers involved in tourism and heritage management, an analysis of discourses and relationships between stakeholders and the final drafting of conclusions and problems identified.

The first part of this methodology gathered data on the situation of this region of 194 900 hectares, located in the North of the province of Cádiz, whose 19 municipalities are those which have the lowest hotel capacity in the province. Only 7.16% of the provincial hotel seats are located in the region of the sierra which occupies an area greater than a quarter of the province. This capacity is very low compared to other Spanish rural areas of similar geographical features. The indices of overnight stays along with capacity reveal the existence of an integrated tourist business adjusted to demand.

Both towns have a very similar terrain but with a series of significant historical, demographical and socio-economical differences have developed very different local tourism systems. An historical tour of the touristic heritage and urban policies of both locations helps to understand the current reality of both places and the influence of cultural heritage on the local economy. A subsequent analysis of the declarations by the main protagonists involved in the phenomenon is essential to understand the logic that has dominated touristic and heritage management in recent decades.

The case of Olvera where the population is nearly five times greater, is characterized by the very large urban growth over recent years, doubling the area that existed in 1950. Public services have mostly moved to the new area and the Historical Centre which was recognised in 1983 has been relegated to a lifeless area where the most important assets remain isolated from the local social life at the expense of its exploitation by tourists. It has been repeatedly alleged that the loss of the vernacular cultural heritage in favour of more modern architecture has led to the cultural identity that it has, being ignored. Paradoxically this process of urban growth has been parallel to a constant loss of population in the municipality in the last half century.

For its part, Zahara de la Sierra has followed a very similar process, with a transfer of services to areas away from the historical centre, a spatial fragmentation that has relegated the monuments to areas that are hardly used, the classification of its most relevant heritage monuments and the inclusion of the municipality in the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park. The construction of the reservoir on the river Guadalete entailed the loss of two bridges, one of which dated from Roman times. However, measures imposed by the town to preserve its historical heritage, following the example of other neighbouring municipalities, have strengthened the image of the town as a unique rural destination.

The choice of the 26 representatives interviewed between both municipalities was decided on the basis of three different categories: political leaders, political opponents and non-political agents which included protagonists with a direct relationship to the town's heritage and tourism, pastors, entrepreneurs, presidents of associations etc. The study was based on the theory that it is politics that ultimately defines heritage and contributes to the construction of the social identity of a society.

In Olvera these representatives emphasised the idea that it was not until the 1990's that cultural heritage and tourism began to be considered relevant to the town. After the era of dictatorship and transition to democracy it was the industrial boom that was the leading objective in municipal policies. The society was enriched, dwellings were redesigned and the town grew. The perception that the different representatives had of the local cultural heritage was very divergent but with a prominent role for its existing monuments. However the imperative needs of the inhabitants of Zahara saw the establishment of a new economic model which was implemented in the 80's; the respect for the general aesthetics of the town, the respect of the collective identity, the maintenance of their traditions, etc. were basic premises in the development of the local society. Olvera had developed an industrial structure that had allowed the economic development that was needed in those decades, with the construction of industrial areas and the transformation of some areas to make them more suited to these new activities. The village of Zahara, surrounded by a mountain landscape with difficult access, followed the example of nearby towns in which rural tourism had been used to generate wealth.

In the entire region of the Pueblos Blancos of the Sierra de Cádiz, processes that have been developed around tourism and cultural heritage have been very different but all have led to a relocation of services in areas away from the historical centres and the consequent transfer of the population towards these peripheral zones. Heritage areas have been marginalised often due to difficult terrain in municipalities such as Arcos de la Frontera, Benaocaz, Bornos, Espera, Grazalema, Olvera, Setenil de las Bodegas, Torre Alhaquime, Ubrique, Villaluenga de el Rosario y Zahara de la Sierra, situated for centuries in a defensive position on cliffs and rocks at the foot of a castle. Their attractiveness to tourists has meant that the areas closest to these assets have specialised in serving foreign visitors while the town planning policies for recreation favoured new construction before rehabilitation.

Participation by citizens is essential to promote a comprehensive protection of their cultural heritage along with the correlation between heritage, touristic and urban policies. Thus in the long term there are tangible differences between those locations which have opted to protect their cultural assets and their approach to their citizens often through touristic activity favouring both economic and social benefits and those others which have promoted the development of other types of activity despite the consequences to the loss of heritage that this could yield.

Thus different models implemented in terms of touristic, urban and economic policies in rural municipalities of the interior of high value assets and attractive tourist regions can cause a significant loss of the social value of the historic centres if there is no reciprocal support for the citizens within them. In the Sierra de Cádiz, Olvera and Zahara have experienced a different evolution in recent decades with important elements in common but with significant differences in the present.

