

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE PLANS OF MODERNIZATION, IMPROVEMENT, AND INCREASE OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF FIRST GENERATION OF CANARY ISLANDS: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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1. INTRODUCTION

The maturity of a tourist area is a decisive, critical, and uncertain moment when some symptoms of exhaustion appear, so that, following the sequential process of generation-degeneration-regeneration, this maturity can become the preamble to a stage of decline. For this reason, different instances, public and private, recognize the need to undertake this stage through a set of measures aimed at renovation, with the aim of improving the competitive position of the tourist area and adapting the offer to the new demands.

In the case of the Canary Islands, the renovation of tourist areas would be integrated into the autonomous tourism policy at the beginning of the 21st century, within a model of public intervention that has tried to condition the functioning of the tourism market in the islands. Since the “tourist moratorium”, measures have been articulated aimed at modulating the growth of the accommodation offer, its conditioning on building criteria, category and complementary offer, the renovation of tourist areas, the diversification of products, among other aspects. that have guided the tourist development of the last twenty years. The singularity and urgency of interventions on public and private space would initially be weighed down by the conditions and times established by the current regulatory framework, together with the slow adaptation of the instruments of territorial and urban planning, increasing the risk of non-application of measures key to the recovery of tourist areas and the non-viability of urban operations for urban renovation and building rehabilitation. This would lead to a series of legal reforms, together with the incorporation of new instruments designed to facilitate their implementation.

In this context, the legislation implemented the “specific plans or programs for modernization, improvement, and increased competitiveness” (hereinafter PMM). However, its regulation would suffer from specificity regarding its competences, contents and situation

within the Canary Islands Planning System, an issue that conditioned the first generation PMMs, approved between 2011 and 2014, which would lead to the approval, a posteriori, of new rules that would try to resolve these uncertainties. Subsequent legislative reforms would provide content and key competencies. The PMMs are proposed as a hybrid between a strategic plan and an urban planning instrument, urging their regulation to the realization of a tourism model for the sphere of action on which it intervenes. On this basis, a diagnosis is made that specifies a set of strategic lines, which should lead to different operations that define actions on aspects as diverse as promotion, marketing, tourist products or infrastructures, among other aspects. However, the strategic nature of the instrument has been reduced in favour of the enormous capacity it has acquired to organize the space, with competence to impose its structural and detailed planning on the rest of the territorial and urban planning instruments, even in the case of historical sets. In this way, actions focused on urban operations would become a fundamental pillar for the viability of urban renovation and building rehabilitation projects, putting at risk the development of comprehensive actions on their scope of action.

2. OBJETIVES

This work revolves around three objectives: 1) Expose the general characteristics of the PMM in terms of the territorial areas of action, the renovation and tourist modernization measures that they can cover, their urban determinations, as well as the approval process, urban management and execution; 2) Carry out a classification of the PMMs based on the time of preparation and approval, considering the current regulatory framework at all times; and 3) Demonstrate the weight of physical renovation, urban renovation and building rehabilitation, compared to non-urban operations in the first generation PMM.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research process has been specified in two main stages, one of documentary analysis and the other of interviews with key actors. In the documentary stage, the different volumes of the PMM were analysed, especially the memory, the files of actions and the regulations, as well as legal documents, especially those of a legislative and judicial nature, and scientific works related to the object of investigation. In the second stage, interviews were conducted with key actors who were part of the work teams that prepared the PMM, to verify and expand information. Regarding the research technique, content analysis has been implemented, a form of documentary analysis that is situated in the field of descriptive research that aims, especially, to discover the basic components of a specific study phenomenon.

4. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The PMMs have become, at least in theory, in fundamental instruments of the autonomous tourist policy, with a high potential for the integral renovation of the tourist areas of the Canary Islands. These have constituted an important change in the instrumentation of

public intervention in tourist areas, covering the renovation of these and speeding up their execution, since their processing shortens deadlines and accelerates processes through an abbreviated single-phase system and its urban determinations become effective as soon as the instrument is published in the *Boletín Oficial de Canarias*, without the need for the affected instruments to process a modification or revision that incorporates said determinations.

The analysis of the first generation PMMs has made it possible to identify that, although these were originally considered as a hybrid between a strategic plan and an urban planning instrument, the reality has been that the strategic part (definition of the tourism development model) it is reflected in the documents, but abandoned in the operation due to the enormous capacity it has acquired to organize the space and to search for the viability of urban projects, which has focused the renovation actions on the physical intervention on the urbanization and the building. The urban planning operation has been of such importance in the first generation PMMs that all the actions contemplated in these were projects for the replacement, rehabilitation or reform of private space (facilities and infrastructures, and accommodation establishments), or for the renovation of public space (streets, walks, gardens, facilities, etc.), there being no action aimed at improving promotion, marketing or any other non-urban operation. Therefore, it can be affirmed that in the first generation PMM there is an undeniable weight of urban planning, leaving operations on other key aspects of comprehensive strategic planning in the background, which has meant that these plans are facilitators of the whole of work projects, both public and private, in the tourist areas analysed.

On the other hand, the analysis of the first generation PMMs has also made it possible to determine that they have been used to unblock some actions and provide coverage for others that were incompatible with current urban planning. Regarding the first, for example, it has made it possible to make viable tourist rehabilitation interventions that are located on space assigned a residential use, together with other commercial rehabilitation interventions that collide with the maximum percentage allowed by current planning for commercial use. Regarding the second, the PMMs have served to make renovation viable in those tourist areas with urban planning not adapted to current legislation, establishing detailed management for the entire scope of action and materializing through the qualification of the space and the establishment of a regulation of uses, thus legitimizing the corresponding acts of execution and use of the space. In this sense, it can be considered that the lack of adaptation of urban planning instruments justified the application of urban planning operations to replace them, with the aim of making viable interventions on public and private space. Regarding this, the first generation PMMs were proposed as a response to the slowness, even paralysis, in the development or adaptation of the planning instruments necessary to cover urban renovation operations and, above all, building rehabilitation. Therefore, precisely this fact has conditioned that, although with the potential for an integral intervention, they have been influenced by the need to make viable interventions on building and urbanization that, at least in the so-called first generation, has conditioned their content and scope.

Regarding the implications of the study, the scope of the three proposed objectives allows us to point out three questions of interest: 1) The general characteristics of the PMM have been exposed, in an exhaustive and detailed way, considering the territorial

areas of action, the measures of renovation and tourist modernization that they may cover, their urban determinations, as well as the process of approval, management and urban execution. Previously, other studies had analysed the general characteristics of PMMs, but mainly focused on highlighting their strengths and weaknesses; 2) A classification of the PMM has been established, in three generations, depending on the moment of elaboration and approval of these, and considering the current regulatory framework at all times, an issue that had not been proposed so far and that represents a novel contribution for the existing literature; and 3) The importance of physical renovation, urban renovation and building rehabilitation, compared to non-urban operations, has been highlighted. Although this fact had been raised previously, up to now a complete inventory of all the actions included in the PMM had not been published in which the weight of the urban planning versus the strategic is clear.

The work has been proposed as a first useful descriptive analytical approach for future research in this line. In this sense, content analysis has made it possible to establish the basic components that characterize first-generation PMMs, which represents an advance that allows the preparation of subsequent related research. In this regard, it is expected to respond to some of the limitations that have been detected in this work, such as, for example, determining the relationship of the renovation actions contained in the PMM with those proposed by the different public administrations (municipal, island and regional) or establish what are the main management problems. Finally, a little over a decade after the implementation of the instrument, it is considered pertinent to carry out an analysis of the enforceability of the actions contained in the PMM of the Canary Islands, an issue that has not yet been resolved. This is considered key to be able to assess the instrument, as well as the successes and errors of the renovation policies, it is possible rethinking and improvement.