



## COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE AWARD EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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**The sustainable revitalisation of the protected landscape of Geria, Consortium for the defense and promotion of the landscape of Geria, Spain**

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#### **SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE PROTECTED LANDSCAPE OF LA GERIA, LANZAROTE**

La Geria is an exceptional, agricultural volcanic area known for its landscape and heritage values. The intervention of human and economics during the XX Century has affected agriculture in Lanzarote in a negative way. To change this tendency public and private agents gave all their effort to create a new market framework to encourage expansion based on traditional and economical factors.

La Geria is an exceptional volcanic agricultural area formed by landscaping and traditional farming methods. Due to the combination of human intervention and environmental unsustainability, this zone

entered decline at the end of the XX century. In order to stop this tendency, public institutions and private companies have made an effort to create new working practices and start up initiatives to promote the regional history and economy. Promotion of local traditions, gastronomical events, active tourism, preserving the landscape and conservation of this agricultural system which is unique in the world.

### **Central aims of the Project**

- ✓ To activate the protected the landscape of La Geria.
- ✓ To develop economic plans for the preservation of the original cultivation methods and the natural ecosystem.
- ✓ To preserve traditional methods of vine cultivation whilst promoting active tourism.
- ✓ To start up new administrative guidelines that create a clear and precise guide for the introduction of an efficient system which allows joint discussion and decisions between public authorities, business sectors, associations and civil representants.
- ✓ To create a pilot experience of ecological agricultural exploitation and offering this unique local culture within a prime touristic destination. The image of Lanzarote will be improved and it will raise the awareness of the 2 million of tourist who visit the island each year.
- ✓ The local inhabitants awareness, starting with the residents of La Geria, so they feel proud of living and working in a unique area where gastronomical products of great value are cultivated, full of historical significance in regard to the economical potential of Lanzarote.

### **Outcomes**

#### **1.- Change of economic tendency, raising the value of the La Geria:**

The statistics of Regulating Council DO Lanzarote show that the price of the volcanic grape “Malvasía”, the main variety of the zone, has increased from 1.15 € in 2009 to 1.60 € in 2012 and that the wine export has risen from 30% in 2009 to 50% in 2012. The economic business plan has allowed the increase of the viticultural production, the regeneration of the produce supply derived from the landscape from La Geria and the growth of the sustainable tourist activities.

These actions have created new jobs, improved the tourist perception of Lanzarote, and developed the economic diversification and promotion of local products of the island. This has been able to stop the decline of the agricultural community by the revitalization and revaluation of La Geria and its surrounding area.

#### **2.- Co-operative management of La Geria:**

Regional and local administrations have started up plans and joint programs of performances in whose design the tourist representatives have participated to the viticultural sectors which until recently have not been included in the promotion of La Geria. In addition the participation of associations and social groups that meet periodically are included.

#### **3.- Growth of the enogastronomic tourism** related to the rehabilitation and evaluation of the landscape:

The number of visitors and leisure activities has increased in La Geria (restoration, museums, footpaths, cultural and sport activities), without overloading the region and supporting the benefits derived from the tourism are vindicated in maintaining or recovering the natural, agricultural and cultural elements of this landscape.

#### **4.- Creation of an active (life) model of sustainability for local population and visitors:**

The local society has begun to rediscover the value of its gastronomy and grape growing, applying itself massively to the organized activities in La Geria and to the events which promote the area. Through regular and concrete actions a greater knowledge of the value of maintaining agricultural areas, the culture, the tourism and the natural heritage of Lanzarote has been obtained. Thus La Geria becomes an example of sustainable tourism for the 2 million visitors that comes every year.

## **Sustainable territorial development**

Lanzarote has an important part to play in sustainable territorial development and is internationally recognized in the implementation of policies of sustainable development and La Geria has been one of the positive contributors since it contributed to the allocation of Lanzarote, in 1993, as a Biospheric Reserve. This award of UNESCO reinforced the policies of an island that already in 1995 the World-wide Congress of Sustainable Tourism organized and that has continued working in new conservational measures, especially as far as the territorial arrangement.

The objective of this project is to use the cultural and natural heritage of La Geria to generate wealth through its preservation and conservation, in such a way that the obtained resources are reinvested in the improvement of the elements that constitute this Protected Landscape.

This strategy and style of management allow direct and independent policies towards the conservation and evolution of the aesthetic values of the landscape of La Geria and its ecosystem, leaning towards the method of traditional agricultural operation, fundamental element of the protection of the landscape, and in policies of sustainable mobility and conservation of the territory. All this has contributed to a situation that at the moment the abandonment of property has stopped, and rehabilitation of zones in disuse has been obtained. The possibility of having new property with heritage elements allows an increase of the supply of leisure and the viticultural production; a path that shows the best result of possible sustainability.

From a social point of view, the territory includes 7 population centers, 6 municipalities and various touristic and enogastronomic companies that have reinforced this social awareness towards understanding the value of this territory. It has managed to make passive policies become concrete actions, like the campaigns based on the attributes of authenticity and originality of the project. This exposition has contributed to the differentiation of Lanzarote as a tourist destination and as a modern primary economy, obtaining the creation of new companies, jobs and a greater understanding from the resident population.

## **Exemplary value**

The regulations for protection of the territory that exist in Spain, and especially, in the Canary Islands are many, but few raise a management system that gives the possibility to develop and to maintain those areas that have been legislated. La Geria wants to be an example of sustainable territorial development which contributes to the generation of wealth and total social integration.

The creation and development of this project is made with the vision of those who live and work in the region, working to preserve the values of its natural heritage, culture and geography; whilst observing, among other things, that this gives more back to the area than any other personal action. By understanding and maintaining this “positive reaction” that has occurred in La Geria we will have a tested example of the policies and actions that must be developed to make a workable model of management applicable to any region or landscape that has to be maintained or regenerated.

The mechanisms that brought into this project public and private contributions has been one of the most important profits of the development plan. So far at the present time models of participation and meeting have been consolidated. This is an important aspect that will be carried forward to any future developments.

The involvement of the region with the tourist activity of an ordered and sustainable form is the axis on which each plan is sustained, and is a clear example of the way that must be followed in our territory so that “an invasive” industry, as tourism is usually considered, happens to be an activity that helps, collaborates and is the motor of the revitalization of the landscape.

It is also important the strategy that from the beginning each project set out to approach the solution of La Geria through analysis and integration of all the themes that affect the landscape: culture, environment, tourism, mobility, agriculture and ethnology.

And if we consider that Lanzarote is visited by more than two million tourists annually, and that more of 95% come from Europe, is doubtless that the results which are expressed here should be considered as a pilot experience of landscaping conservation that gives a good foundation to projects in other countries of our community, being that the mass of European visitors will be one of the vehicles of direct transmission.

### **Public participation**

The projects carried out until now in La Geria were counted with the citizen participation in all their stages, beginning by the same gestation of the legislative frame. The five affected city councils organized a system of planning and organisation including public planning meetings and periods of public exhibition. This allowed for consultations and contributions of all types. In addition to the inclusion of the public and the local/regional councils, the plans also included contributions from associations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Regular Advisor DO of the wine of Lanzarote, the tourist employer's associations and other groups. These consultations also included interviews with more than 150 people involved historically and personally in the cultures of La Geria.

La Geria is also related with the long tradition of environmental conservation in Lanzarote, already recognized in their appointment as a Biospheric Reserve and more recently, with the proposal of multinational TUI Travel so that Lanzarote was including in the experience pilot sustainable Destiny of the World, an initiative of Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), an organization assigned to United Nations that heads each project and that has chosen five other places that have known to value and to take advantage of the positive impact that tourism generates. Previously to its election, Lanzarote was evaluated by an external consultant contracted by GSTC. Lanzarote also was one of the founder partners of the national program of gastronomic tourism "Taste Spain" ("Saborea España"). In addition to these two precise landmarks, tens of actions have been carried out in the last decades, always under an integrating approach that contemplates the island like an insular ecosystem in which any intervention affects the whole.

### **Awareness raising**

On an island with a number of visitors annually superior to 2 million European tourists and with a population mainly related to the tourist sector, the nature (climate, geology, biodiversity...) it is conceived as a key factor in the social and economic development. The landscape, and especially the volcanic one, is one of the greater signs of identity of Lanzarote. If the "Lanzaroteño" is already highly sensitized on this subject, the region of La Geria adds up to the historical values that still tie it more with the cultural identity of the islander. On this basis, the project that we presented has started up actions to improve the knowledge of the territory in all its facets: gastronomy, nature, archaeology, fauna, ethnology, economy, tourism and tradition...