



## ***Present and future of the audiovisual industry in the canary islands***

Presente y futuro de la industria audiovisual

en las Islas Canarias

Presente e futuro da indústria audiovisual nas Ilhas  
Canárias

Images et représentations à travers les routes de  
montagne

Présent et avenir de l'industrie audiovisuelle dans les  
îles Canaries

Настоящее и будущее аудиовизуальной

**Domingo Sola Antequera**

Universidad de La Laguna  
Dpto. Hª del Arte y Filosofía  
[dsola@ull.edu.es](mailto:dsola@ull.edu.es)  
Canarias - España

**Raquel Sola Real**

Universidad de La Laguna  
[rsolareal@gmail.com](mailto:rsolareal@gmail.com)  
Canarias - España

**Abstract:**

*Since the turn of the millennium, audio-visual productions in the Canary Islands have multiplied, especially the foreign ones, because of the tax benefits provided by its Economic and Fiscal System, the ZEC zone and the Canary Islands Investment Reserve —RIC—. To which we should add the labour of the various film commissions settled in the Archipelago and the new phenomenon of “movie tourism”. Taking this into account, this paper tries to reflect on this subject and on the alliances to create synergies between the tourist and the film industries as a source of wealth for this Spanish territory.*

**Keywords:**

*Canary Islands cinema, tourism, film industry, film commissions.*

**Resumen:**

En lo que va de siglo las producciones en las Islas Canarias se han multiplicado debido a las ventajas fiscales que ofrecen el Régimen Económico y Fiscal de Canarias, la denominada zona ZEC y la Reserva de Inversiones Canarias —RIC— para el rodaje de productos audiovisuales. A lo que habría que sumarle el trabajo de las diferentes film commissions y el neofenómeno del “movie tourism”. Este texto reflexiona sobre el origen de estos proyectos, sobre la relación entre el sector turístico y el cinematográfico en las Islas y sobre las perspectivas de presente y futuro.

**Palabras clave:**

cine en Canarias, turismo, industria audiovisual, film commissions.

**Resumo:**

*No que vai do século as produções nas Ilhas Canárias tem se multiplicado devido às vantagens fiscais que oferecem o Regime Econômico e Fiscal das Canárias, a denominada zona ZEC e a Reserva de Investimentos Canárias – RIC – para a filmagem de produtos audiovisuais. Ao que teria de se adicionar o trabalho das diferentes filmcommissions e o fenômeno emergente do “movietourims”. Este texto reflete sobre a origem destes projetos, sobre a relação entre o setor turístico e o cinematográfico nas Ilhas Canárias e sobre as perspectivas de presente e futuro.*

**Palavras chaves:**

*Cinema nas Canárias, Turismo, Indústria audiovisual, Film commissions.*

**Résumé:**

*Au cours du siècle, les productions dans les îles Canaries ont été multipliées en raison des avantages fiscaux offerts par le régime économique et fiscal des Canaries, la zone dite ZEC et la réserve d'investissement des Canaries -RIC- pour le tournage de produits.*

**Mots clés:**

*Cinéma dans les îles Canaries, Tourisme, Industrie audiovisuelle, Commissions cinématographiques.*

**Резюме:**

*В этом столетии производство на Канарских островах значительно возросло благодаря налоговым льготам, предоставляемым экономическим и фискальным режимом Канарских островов, так называемой зоной ЭФРКО и Инвестиционным резервом Канарских островов (RIC) (ИРКО) для съемок аудиовизуальной продукции. К этому следует добавить работу различных кинокомиссий и новое явление «кинотуризма». В статье рассматриваются истоки этих проектов, взаимоотношения между индустрией туризма и киноиндустрией на островах, а также их настоящие и будущие перспективы*

**Слова:**

*Кино на Канарских островах, Туризм, Аудиовизуальная индустрия, Кинокомиссии*

Regional, national and supranational institutions must play a leading promotional role, as this type of activity can be a driver of growth for the region's economy and an increase in social and economic well-being for its citizens (J. Frías Mendi et al).

The last decade was quite agitated for the audio-visual sector in the islands. First, due to the geometric progression of foreign shootings that used locations as film sets. Secondly, for the constant complaints by local companies that are being prejudice by the system of tax advantages in the Archipelago as it has not beneficiated them, but at best put their technicians and logistics at the service of those who came from outside. In order to understand what has happened and ponder over all it, we must go back a couple of decades. Let's briefly review history<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> This research resumes the one carried out by the same authors in «Vientos de cambio...» to bring the data and the new state of the issues to the present of our given subject of study.

## 1. INTRO: SOME DATA

From the 90s of the last century, different regional governments in the islands have promoted a series of tourism policies based not only on climate and nature - our differential characteristics - but also enhanced an image of tranquillity and openness, where everyone is welcome regardless of their origin or condition.

«Due to the fact that there are a great variety of different tourists, the motivation of each one of them is also different and it is tied to psychological factors and/or social forces. It is also clear, as asserted in the book, that in many cases people are not willing to reveal the reason for their travel, or sometimes they are not even sure they know it and therefore they are unable to express it.

Nevertheless, there is one motivation that stands out among the different ones revealed by a wide range of authors. As Richard Sharpley and David J. Telfer gathered in the book *Tourist and Development: Concept and Issues* (2002), several authors (van Rekom, Krippendorf) claim that one of the main reasons to travel is to escape from reality, to elude day-to-day problems and to feel and experience something special.

After knowing this fact, it comes as no surprise that certain types of tourism are becoming more and more relevant in the last few years: such is the case

of slow tourism, dark tourism or film-induced tourism, the latter being the subject of our study».<sup>2</sup>

Campaigns were launched by the Islands' councils, being the first of them *Te gusta Tenerife!*, highlighting almost every possible stereotype related to the Canaries nature and its people, promoting the singularity and excellence of our media and infrastructures, all under the tourist projection and an identity denotation.

Moreover, the Ministry of Presidency and Tourism took charge of the islands' promotion as a tourist destination by trying to create an image. In other words, create a brand. For its sake, two advertising campaign were designed, one of them on the Red Square of Moscow and the other on the Chinese wall under the motto «*Canarias, warm nature*». The idea, originally from Miguel Zerolo, tried to place the Canaries in a globalized market conducive to give it a worldwide diffusion, generating this way, benefits as well as recognition.

At the same time, the work began by a positioning strategy of the said brand - a sort of product placement - in films such as *Don Juan de Marco* (Jeremy Leven, 1994), *Heat* (Michael Mann, 1995) and *Up, Close and Personal* (John Avnet, 1996), which would try

---

<sup>2</sup> Raquel Sola Real y Claudia Medina Herrera. «The influence of Cinema and Television on Tourism Promotion», *Latente. Revista de Historia y Estética del Audiovisual*, 16 (2018): 10.

to increase the interest in the destination using cinema instead of billboards<sup>3</sup>.

Using audio-visuals as a tourism promotion technic became an element that would definitely make both industries go hand in hand. Hence, in 1999, the new advisor, Manuel Becerra, with the collaboration of Russian astronaut Sergéi Avdéyev, launched *El paraíso está aquí, no allí arriba* (Paradise is here, not up there) bearing in mind the idea of attracting different capital assets to the Canaries in order to build the «Cosmonauts world rehabilitation centre». In this case, the advertisement, played by networks around half the world, showed the empty MIR station while Avdéyev said: «Do not look for me in the sky. After going around Earth more than twelve times, I have found the perfect place for my vacation, the Canary Islands»<sup>4</sup>.

The change of decade along with a global diffusion, impact, and loyalty towards the destination became elements of a positive synergy that would help diversify the offer by entering very specific market niches that they had been neglecting or simply ignoring: gay friendly, luxury, sport and recently, the so-called film induced tourism.

Based on this, before showing the uniqueness of the landscape and its value, it would be an interesting idea to direct campaigns

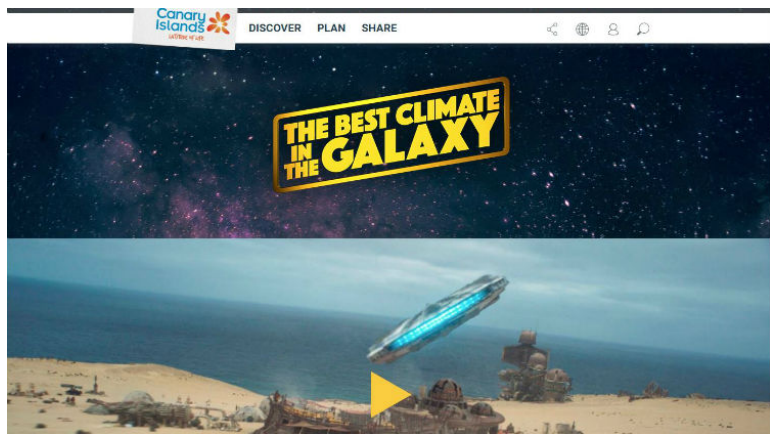
---

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Morgan y Annette Pritchard. *Tourism, Promotion and Power: Creating Image, Creating Identities*, (Hoboken NY; John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 78.

<sup>4</sup> F. Peregil. «El paraíso está aquí, no allí arriba», *El País*, 13 de mayo de 2011.

in a way where discovering the manifoldness of spaces and attractions that «include new experiences and demonstrate the social complexity of the destination and the connection with a constantly changing market, flexible, open but interdependent» was the primary goal<sup>5</sup>.

Finally, after the filming of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (Ron Howard, 2018) in Fuerteventura, the Canary Islands Government launched a new promotional campaign in the most important countries of Western Europe entitled «The best climate in the galaxy.com», taking advantage of the important tourist promotion that had been brought about by the filming of Ron Howard's film on the island.



*Imagen 1. Tourism promotional image by the Government of the Canary Islands*

<sup>5</sup> Domingo Sola Antequera. *Como el ojo en el corazón del poeta. El fenómeno cinematográfico en Canarias en el último cuarto del siglo XX (1975-1998)*, Tesis doctoral (inérita), (Universidad de La Laguna, 2015), 587.



## 2. FILM COMMISSION AND TAX DEDUCTIONS

Given this context and the complementary relationship between tourism and the audio-visual industry, the emergence of Film Commissions and, consequently, Film-induced tourism, becomes logical. In this case, the operability of the web pages is very important and its mission is to become «a tool for territorial economic development of the audio-visual industry»<sup>6</sup> and all those sectors that may be economically linked to this.

Let's go back to the beginning. The idea, thought over and over on so many occasions during the last century, would begin to come together at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1991, SATURNO was established and regulated by the Ministry of Tourism across the various governments in the Canary Islands as a private corporation aimed at promoting tourism, nature, and leisure. This initiative was made possible through the efforts of Miguel Zerolo and Lucas Fernández. A year later, in 1992, José María Otero, president of ProCine, would make a proposal to create an interdepartmental organization during the celebration of the *Festival Internacional de Cine Ecológico y de la Naturaleza de Canarias*. Among their goals would be the creation of an Audio-visual promotion office.

This office would begin to really function from 1994 onwards with the name of *Canarivisión* under the supervision of Teresa

---

<sup>6</sup> Diana Ramahi. «Nuevas estrategias comunicativas de ámbito local. El caso de las *film commissions* u oficinas de atracción de rodajes», en *La Publicidad de las instituciones locales*, (Castellón: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad Jaume I, 2011), 228.

Sandoval. The agency, at the time pioneer at the state level, would change its name after the appearance of similar ones and renamed itself as The Canary Islands Film Commission.

Following the change of the decade, in 2000, SPET - foreign promotion society of Tenerife, later known as SPET Turismo de Tenerife SA- created Tenerife's own Film Commission, followed by Gran Canaria's. From that moment on, the first one became meaningless and subsequently disappeared while the remaining commissions became part of the Spain Film Commission and the European Film Commission.

It is obvious to assume that every single one of them were responsible for the promotion, both nationally and internationally of the islands as film sets. All while preparing themselves to provide and facilitate everything necessary to make the work easier to foreign producers: filming permits, locations, transport or technicians. Behind it, we found the Advisory Committee of Cinema and Audio-visual as well as the Ministry of Industry. Together launched *Around the World in Seven Islands*, a project aiming to reach the most important companies in the sector, both in Europe and the United States. This provoked the interest of Canarian producers to position and unite themselves over the possibilities of expansion while certifying the willingness on behalf of the government to articulate policies to boost the sector without forgetting to pair up with the tourism promotion.

Teresa Sandoval was in charge of the already mentioned Film Commission until 1997 when Gerardo Carrerras replaced her.

Those were some really profitable years where she was able to plan all the necessary propaganda strategies, along with guiding the sector companies and professionals in the islands. In order to achieve it, she coordinated with SATURNO and the Ministry of Tourism in an attempt to chase for investors interested in the creation of a possible «city of cinema» in the Archipelago, which unfortunately could never be carried out. Contrary, it was positioned in the international audio-visual market thanks to its incorporation in directories, specialized reviews (Variety, Kempa...) and the attendance to festivals inside our country (San Sebastián), around Europe (Cannes and Berlin), and the United States (Los Angeles, MIF, MITCOM). However, the results during the first years were diminished. These bodies try to capitalize on the territory image promotion, thanks to the ability of audio-visual products to function as a tourist attraction factor and the cooperation between the different development agencies of the destination. It is also interesting that, apart from the filming and the visits of the actors to the Islands, the locations act as a commercial brand, thus becoming a kind of brand placement<sup>7</sup>.

In 2005, said agency disappeared after the resignation of Gerardo Carreras. The appearance of the Tenerife Film Commission propitiated its end back in 2000. They did the exact same job but circumscribed, as is logical, to the scope of the island itself. First directed by Ana Lima, a year later by Patricia González Cámpora and since 2005 by Concha Díaz, as the previous one would be dedicated to managing the Canary Islands Audio-visual plan. Its operation system has been quite similar to the Canary Islands,

---

<sup>7</sup> Isabel Sarabia Andúgar y Josefina Sánchez Martínez. «Film Commission y Film Office como agentes consolidados de la industria en el marco del desarrollo del Hub Audiovisual en España (2022)», *ZER. Revista de estudios de comunicación*, (2018): 307.

especially by focusing on preparing all the documentation for the shootings in conjunction with expediting and obtaining any required permit.

In the time period which goes from filming *Clash of Titans* (Luois Leterrier, 2010) to the most recent *Fast and Furious 6* (Justin Lin, 2013) or *Jason Bourne* (Paul Greengrass, 2016), it is blatant that the office has managed to attract numerous international shootings to the island, as well as important investments and a significant diffusion of its varied landscapes. As a consequence, the TFC (Tenerife Film Commission) has proposed to launch a Fam trip project, which basically consists of preparing trips to Tenerife for producers and foreign companies -mainly British and Germans- in order to know the most demanded locations (Las Cañadas del Teide, Anaga, Los Gigantes or El Médano). Moreover, by doing this, planning of future shootings is facilitated, getting to know the ZEC Zone (Canary Islands Special Zone) and the Reserve for Investments in the Canaries (RIC)<sup>8</sup>.

Shorty, after the creation of the TFC, they participated in the *Objetivo Canarias* project, where Proexca, the Government of the Canary Islands, responsible for the ZEC Zone, and the *Gran Canaria Film Commission*, which was born soon after Tenerife's,

---

<sup>8</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Sandoval Martínez. «Promoción turística a través del sector audiovisual: El caso de Canarias», en *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 9 (1998). M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Sandoval Martínez. «Historias de las Film Commissions y del Movie Tourism en las Islas Canarias», en *El cine en Canarias (Una revisión crítica)*, ed. Aurelio Carnero Hernández, A. y José A. Pérez Alcalde (Madrid: Festival Internacional de Cine de Gran Canaria, T&B Editores, 2011), 220.

boosted by the Patronato de Turismo (Tourist Board) of its *Cabildo Insular* (Island Council).

In order to be able to understand the impact of these organizations, it would be enough to say that in 2015, shootings made only in Tenerife left 19 million euros, eleven million more than in 2014 and that figure has been ballooning ever since. For the Minister of Tourism these numbers do not have anything to do with shootings by Mateo Gil or Paul Greengrass but with «a defined strategy, the seeds of a powerful and recognized local audio-visual industry»<sup>9</sup>.

After the appearance of these organizations in the main islands, the rest have been emerging. Starting with La Palma Film Commission under the SODEPAL SAU -Development and Promotion Society of the island of La Palma - which has dedicated itself to advising about locations, filming permits, inform about tax benefits and companies already in the sector in the islands, just like the previous ones. In addition, issues a guide on the impact filming has both socially and economically.

The *Gomera Film Commission*, on the other hand, as it is indicated in their website has its main interest in becoming a place of attraction for both national and foreign projects without paying special attention to the film genre. To do so, they tried to turn the island into a natural scenario suitable for outdoors

---

<sup>9</sup> «Los rodajes dejan 19 millones de euros en la Isla en 2015», *Diario de Avisos*, 31 de marzo de 2016.

shootings, projecting the image internationally. Obviously, like in the case of the previous two, its mission is to facilitate all resources, permits, as well as to make known local professionals and companies in the sector.



Imagen 2. “Hierro”: TV series poster

Imagen 3. “Solo. A Star Wars Story”: Movie poster

Fuerteventura and El Hierro were the last islands to create this organization. The first one independently and the second linked to the island of Tenerife. All this was made possible thanks to *Nueva Canarias*, which proposed its creation after the success of shootings such as *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (Ridley Scott, 2014). In addition to promoting this way their natural sites and thus obtain benefits derived from it. From today’s perspective, we can say

without a doubt that it was a wise decision since it has brought shootings such as *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (Ron Howard, 2018) in Fuerteventura or the Spanish series *Hierro* (Pepe Coira, 2019) in the island with the same name. This has an interesting effect, especially since the filming of the Movistar, Portocabo, and Atlantique Productions cited series. Not only has it been a showcase for the island, but it also shows its potential for the audio-visual industry and measures the economic impact of filming on this small territory.

In all cases, although cinema and audio-visual are, generally speaking, the protagonists, selling the islands as a tourist destination that would enhance the economic impact of the Archipelago is the main concern. Alejandro Jorge, councillor of the Cabildo assured that «with the creation of such an entity the economic income would multiply»<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> «NC propone impulsar la Film Commission en Fuerteventura desde El Cabildo», *La Provincia*, 27 de agosto de 2015.



*Imagen 4. "Exodus. Gods and Kings": Promotional movie poster*

In the Spanish territory there are different types of film commissions or film offices and it all depends on the way they are managed. In the case of the Canary Islands, the offices are managed under a coordinated approach. This means that they act as intermediaries between the interested audio-visual producers and the region and its resources, but they also have their own entities that have jurisdiction in this matter and are related to other island public administrations.

The location with the highest demand in the Islands has been the Timanfaya National Park, at least until recent times. It was



undoubtedly key for SPEL -Sociedad de Promoción Exterior de Lanzarote (Lanzarote's Foreign Promotion Society)- to manage the creation of their Film Commission, which provides all the necessary information just like those already mentioned. In addition, it is responsible for promoting agreements and actions aimed at consolidating and facilitating these shootings and serving as a link between public and private administrations with the audio-visual industry.

Even on its website you are given information about the entry of audio-visual material in the Archipelago, about the so-called ATA card or notebook, quite a specific issue of interest to the producers. This document is necessary when it comes to temporary imports, which allows the transfers to be made in a simpler and cheaper way. The ATA card is dispatched to the Chamber of Commerce in the country of origin. Any producer that may need to export their equipment must present a list of the materials they are going to transfer and the approximated value. The Chamber requires a percentage on the declared value to be made as a deposit by cash or bank guarantee.

The key to understanding the rise of shootings in our territory is not only found in everything we have described above but especially in the tax incentives offered by the Canary Islands Government to promote economic and social development. This has a special application in the specific field of cinematographic and audio-visual production in general.

The new Economic and Fiscal regime of the Canary Islands, popularly known as REF, was approved at the beginning of

January 2015. This system boosted the deductions existing in the Corporate Tax Law regarding cinematographic productions - although this type of incentives had been applied since 2007-2008-. By doing it this way, a perfect love triangle for the sector is created:

- a) Natural landscapes and exceptional weather conditions,
- b) An Audio-visual sector well equipped technically and professionally,
- c) Advantageous taxation.

Coming back to the REF and as reported on the pages in the TFC, in Spain «the incentives for Spanish productions goes from a 18-20% deduction for an investment with a 3 million euros refund to a 38-40% deduction and a limit of 5.4 million euros refund». Meanwhile, incentives for foreign productions were set at a 15% deduction and a limit of 2.5 million euros refund. However, in the Canary Islands, tax deductions for international productions rose 35% with a limit of 4.5 million refunds.

To better understand the tax incentives of the Canary Islands, let's take a look at the following information:

At a very generous 50%, The Canary Islands offer the international film producer one of the highest tax incentives in the world, making the islands an even more attractive location for your next movie.

### **Basic requirements:**

- Minimum one million euros spent in the Canary Islands.
- Minimum production budget of 2 million euros.
- Contracting a film producer registered with the Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts, (ICCA), who has his/her tax residence in the Canary Islands.
- For Animation and Postproduction the minimum spent in the Canaries is 200.000€

This scheme is open to foreign productions and includes feature films, documentaries, drama series and animation films.

To take advantage of the tax breaks in the Canary Islands, you would need to employ the services of a Spanish production company, with tax domicile in the Canary Islands and registered with the Instituto de la cinematografía y de las artes audiovisuales (ICAA). Film Canary Islands S.L. meets all these prerequisites, and has more than 10 years production experience in the Canary Islands.

The minimum amount that a producer must invest is set at 1 million euros, and the maximum amount of tax that can be returned is capped at 10 million euros, giving a maximum base limit of 22,111,111.11 euros.

### **Eligible expenditure is considered to be:**

\* Expenses in the Canary Islands directly related to the production.

\* Expenditure on creative staff provided that their tax residence is in Spain or in a European Economic Area Member State (capped at 100,000€ per person).

\* Expenditure on technical industries and other suppliers.

The final amount of tax, (50% on first million, 45% subsequent, of eligible expenditure) is deducted from the corporate income tax of the appointed local production company at the end of the tax period in which the production service is completed.

Once the scheme has been approved for production, the letters of guarantee should be enough to raise capital in advance from a financial institution, if needed.<sup>11</sup>

As indicated, in order to establish a basis to calculate the tax incentive, data from the production execution derived from the creative staff should be included as long as they have their residence within the European Economic Area. Moreover, the exact same thing happens with those emanating from the use of technical equipment provided by the different companies based between the Islands since to obtain the tax advantaged it would be necessary to prove the hiring of at least one local company related to the sector.

---

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.filmcanaryislands.com/images/FCI\\_TaxBreak.pdf](https://www.filmcanaryislands.com/images/FCI_TaxBreak.pdf).

As it was published in different media, many professionals have considered these deductions as a true investment magnet. In the words of Emma Lustres: «There are the results. There has been a huge magnifying effect of national and international shootings and logically it has been thanks to the different situation they have compared to la peninsula. The Canary Islands are the perfect example of what an attractive deduction can do» (RUIZ, 2014).

Furthermore, there are another series of tax advantages specific to the ZEC, which allows producers to pay only 4% on corporate tax -normally it goes from 25 to 30%- or have exemptions in the IGIC (General Indirect Canary Tax). Besides, they could qualify for the RIC (Canary Investment Reserve) through the “Canary construction seal” -granted by the regional government itself- which would make it possible to reduce the tax base on corporate tax from companies based in the islands «up to 90% profit not distributed through the provision of a RIC».



*Imagen 5. Canary Islands Film logotyp*

In fact, some consultancies have specialized in this type of product, as is the case of Assap Fiscal and Legal Services, which put companies and film producers in contact to invest in the Archipelago, offering them the most recommended system, the creation of and AIE -a Group of economic interest- that would obtain the mentioned 38% deduction according to the REF. In the words of José Ramón Barrera, partner of Assap “members would be all the investors and film production companies and the AIE would be property rights owner of any film for a minimum of three years assuming any risks of production. When it is constituted, money is given or reduced and when it is liquidated, AIEs do not have to pay IGIC, nor the IAE (Spanish tax on economic activities)”. Applying deductions to the full production cost while «subsidy funds or costs for advertising, marketing and distribution are not included»<sup>12</sup>.

That is why producers like Tornasol Films went to the press in 2014 to announce that they were studying how to settle in the Islands. Gerardo Herrero himself, founding member, declared, «if we do our production here -they had shot three until 2014- we would be working primarily in the Canary Islands. Therefore, it would make sense to move or at least have a very important base in Tenerife»<sup>13</sup>.

The administration of the ZEC area is carried out through a consortium between the Ministry of Finance and the

---

<sup>12</sup> M. Fresno. «Una fiscalidad de película. Canarias se convierte en un paraíso para rodajes por su exención del 38%», *Diario de Avisos*, 30 de marzo de 2014.

<sup>13</sup> V. Galán «Una de las mayores productoras de España estudia mudarse a Tenerife», *La Opinión de Tenerife*, 27 de junio de 2014.

Government of the Canary Islands, which creates a legal and institutional structure for cooperation between the national and regional institutions. In Decree 18/2009, of February 10th, which creates the Register of Audio-visual Companies and Works of the Canary Islands, the procedure for obtaining the «Certificate of Canary Audio-visual Work» is regulated, for the first time, with respect to other cinematographic works produced in the Archipelago. This Decree allows, as long as they meet certain requirements, that an audio-visual production can be classified as Canarian, having access to the increased percentages of deduction provided for in the Canarian regulations for this type of investment.



*Imagen 6. Tenerife Film Commission: promotional image*

Lately, there is a tendency to make better use of existing tax incentives by promoting investment through AIEs (Economic Interest Grouping) and ECRs (Venture Capital Entities), for which the support of the Administration is offered. The General Directorate of Taxes' favourable position towards this type of investment alternative is part of the line of support set out in the last Film Law<sup>14</sup>.

Making the long story short, the role of Film Commissions and Tourist Offices is essential to this end, because «they actively promote destinations to attract filming and provide logistical support and incentives. Their efforts translate into tourist and economic benefits, as can be seen in the figures that the different foreign shootings have left in the Islands»<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, we cannot forget that in 2021 the government launched the «Spain, Europe's Audio-visual Hub» plan with the intention of developing and revitalising the sector by creating a specific programme of collaboration with the Film Commissions and another for attracting filming and foreign investment. The Spain Film Commission is the State's entity for revitalising the audio-visual sector.

---

<sup>14</sup> Víctor Viana y David Pérez-Bustamante. «Inversiones cinematográficas. Oportunidades para el capital de riesgo», *RECARI*, 3 (2009).

<sup>15</sup> Irene del Carmen Marcos Arteaga. «Unas islas de película del siglo XXI. Canarias como plató cinematográfico», *Latente, Revista de Historia y Estética del Audiovisual*, 13 (2015): 155.



### 3. CINEMA AND TOURISM

Obviously, this phenomenon indicates the importance that the audio-visual industry has for the islands economy, especially the filming from foreign production companies and, as a result, the impact of the destination promotion in a new touristic model that seems definitely related to the motion picture world.

This is how, a short while ago it began to spread, perhaps thanks to Peter Jackson's trilogies about Tolkien's novels shot in New Zealand -*The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*- the so called film tourism, movie tourism or the preferred term, film induced tourism, and with it, the new type of traveller, the *Jet Setters*, willing to leave more money in the chosen destination in exchange for satisfying their cinephile desires through the creation of specialize itineraries related to films, both classical and popular shot there.

In other territories, this model has been operating in a peculiar symbiosis for quite some time. At first glance, tourism and the film industry don't have much in common. However, both industries can profit from each other immensely, in particular when it comes to the development and promotion of products. In fact, it is usually noted that the first film that was able to achieve this synergy with its shooting location was *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Frank Lloyd, 1935), making Tahiti one of the main tourist destinations at the moment.

This type of tourism comes in different forms. For some travellers it is the sole purpose of their trips, while in other cases it needs the development of local agents to create tours visiting specific filming locations or sets. We should not forget that it is not the same to speak about territories that were already well known before any filming (case of the Canary Islands) than to do so of those that are being discovered worldwide through the big screen.

In this way, the Islands have become a «film friendly» destination as they host shootings thanks to tax incentives, daylight hours, amazing and varied landscapes and the infrastructure of the film sector. So much so that a recent study indicates that the Canary Islands have a developed audio-visual industry prepared for the production of any type of filming material.

«Los servicios que se ofrecen incluyen productoras, apoyo y gestión en la producción, alquiler de equipos, servicios especializados, como por ejemplo seguridad, catering, asesores legales, actores y figuración internacional, platós de televisión, efectos visuales (VFX) y postproducción, bandas sonoras y compositores, festivales y mercados específicos, además un Cluster Audiovisual»<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup> Jon Frías Mendi et al. «Canarias como escenario de cine: Nuevos caminos para el turismo y sus implicaciones económicas», *Communication Papers. Media, Literature & Gender Studies*, vol. 9, 19 (2020): 45.

Therefore, a destination that does not only lives on sun, beaches and good hotels demands something else. In other words, it is no longer a «static structure -whatever constitutes it naturally and artificially (infrastructures)- but also a dynamic one -those social relations and differentiating actions that is capable of provoking- thus it has the possibility of reinventing itself and offering new alternatives like the one we are talking about» (Sola Antequera 2015, 598). The same idea maintains Konstantin Stanishevski, who argues that cinema plays a fundamental role in creating the image of a territory as a possible tourist destination because «its messages are not perceived as advertising, since the audience mind is open both in its subconscious and conscious dimension (the difference of a perceived message as an advertising), hence its persuasive effects become greater». It is in this sense that the mind of a tourist «responds to a constructive/ destructive process (...) that can be planned, organized, evaluated and controlled to a greater or lesser extent»<sup>17</sup>.

Therefore, in the Canary Islands we use the audio-visual industry to consolidate the international image of the Archipelago as a possible tourist and film destination, which builds up both and generates economic benefits for the Canary «haciendas», for which they must establish strategic development plans. In this sense, the reflexions collected by Stefan Roesch in his work «The Experiences of Film Location Tourists», belonging to the series «Aspects of Tourism», where he analyses experiences of this type of tourism from different disciplines: Psychology, Sociology or Geography for example, while going into depth to analyse the

---

<sup>17</sup> Konstantin Stanishevski. «La comunicación de los destinos turísticos», en *Cine, imaginario y turismo: estrategias de seducción*, ed. A. Rey Reguillo (Valencia: Prosopopeya. Tirant Lo Blanc, 2020), 261-264.

impact of *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003) and the full *Star Wars* saga in its filming locations. To develop his study, he divided the book into two main parts. The first one is dedicated to film induced tourism, delving into what it is and what entails about the marketing of destinations through cinema and about filming locations as possible attracting tourist territories and the elements that characterize them. The second part however, is dedicated to this type of experiences and the reactions to them. The author begins his reflexion with the following words:

«Over the last 10 years, film tourism has come increasingly to the fore, both in academia and in the tourism industry. The Lord of the Rings has made a significant contribution to this development. Nevertheless, many aspects of this tourism niche had only been examined anecdotally, in particular aspects concerned with the actual location encounter. There is ample evidence that watching films can create strong emotional connections to the placed represented on the silver screens (...). To accompany film location tourists on some of their journeys (makes you understand) the impact films can have on our lives»<sup>18</sup>.

In recent years there has been a significant growth in the number of filmings, which has been reflected in an

---

<sup>18</sup> Stefan Roesch. *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists. (Aspects of Tourism)*, (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009).

intensification in investments in the Canarian economy, even higher than the average accumulated increase of the island economy.

In the Canary Islands are currently operating two routes with these characteristics in the island of Tenerife for fans of two very different films: *Clash of the Titans* (Louis leterrier, 2010) and *Una Hora Más en Canarias* (*One Hour More in the Canary Islands*, David Serrano, 2010). The letter is presented with the following words: «Through the locations shown in the film you can meet and enjoy the north of the island, as did the main characters. The north of Tenerife is a place where time stands still; it has cities full of life, traditions, monumental villages, pleasant and romantic walks and a unique gastronomy».<sup>19</sup> As for the second, more concrete data is given. «Route TF-436 will take you to Masca, one of the best-preserved rural houses on the entire island. From this point you can see the imposing Masca ravine, whose mouth was used to recreate the city of Argos».<sup>20</sup>

In different circumstances, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, some routes have been created around the places where iconic films of the last century were shot, such as the well-known *Moby Dick* (John Huston, 1956) or the first Canarian feature film cinematize

---

<sup>19</sup> (<http://www.webtenerife.com/que-hacer/rutas/tematicas/ruta-una-hora-mas-canarias.htm>.)

<sup>20</sup> (<http://www.webtenerife.com/es/quehacer/rutas/tematicas/documents/folleto%20ruta%20furia%20de%20titanes.pdf>).

in the island, *La hija del Mestre* (Francisco González y Carlos Luis Monzón, 1928).

A Travelsat Competitive Index study by the consultancy firm Tourism Competitive Intelligence shows that since the early years of the last decade, almost 40 million international tourists have been generated by the appeal of the film industry and the newborn film tourism.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. THE AUDIOVISUAL CLUSTER

And just like that we arrive at the last decade of the audio-visual sector in the Islands with the creation of the Canary Islands Audio-visual Cluster (CLAC). It acts as an intermediary between professionals in the sector and the industrial synergies that are being generated, which felt somehow excluded without the ability to decide. Different institutions have supported this organization: the Film Commissions on both Tenerife and Gran Canaria, Canarias Cultura en Red, Ideco, TFInnova, RTVE in the Archipelago and by the International Film Festival of Gran Canaria. Everything indicated the importance of its work and the dissemination of the activities.

A Decalogue of actions that the Cluster is carrying out is explained in detail on their own website, along with the creation of an international Venture Capital fund to invest in the Canary audio-visual sector, marketing projects outside the Spanish

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.eleconomista.es> (2019).

territory and the coordination of investments and specialized training programs directed to professionals in the islands. Obviously, every bit of this has been launched with the idea of making the Canary Islands an awfully attractive place for hosting audio-visual productions.

In the same place, advantages of working are indicated in case any professionals or companies want to be included in their directory. Among the most important ones are<sup>22</sup>:

- a) Collectively provide the resources to compete and be a leader in a productive sector.
- b) Acquire a key position that would facilitate growth.
- c) Add resources around common interests to access more and better growth tools.
- d) It is allowed to track the evolution of the sector through all the affiliates.
- e) Create alliances to act more productively when it comes to supply and sales.
- f) Create synergies between them and related companies that would amplify and diversify the business.
- g) Become visible and acquire power in front of organizations and institutions.
- h) Be able to create a brand with quality.

---

<sup>22</sup>

([http://www.webclac.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27&itemid=94](http://www.webclac.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&itemid=94).)

If we rely on the good intentions and disposition of the Cluster, it seems that the perspectives of the sector have been consolidated. This occurred thanks, to a large extent, to the work of public organizations and companies of the environment, as evidenced by the numerous shootings made in our territory during the last years.

Any analysis of the situation would seem flattering if we only took into consideration the data we have been offering. However, since mid-2015, voices contrary to this alleged boom would begin to emerge as Luis Renart and Lamberti Guerra indicated, -CLAC responsible and the Union of Actors of the Canary Islands president, respectively- the increase in shooting has not gone in parallel with a real development of this industry in the Archipelago. Reasons were absolutely clear, on the one hand, Canarian films did not have access to tax incentives. Producers based in the Archipelago made only about 5% of films that did obtain it. On the other hand, due to what we mentioned above, the Canary Islands business network is not reinforced, leaving as the sole solution to get out of this impasse would be to offer help in production, challenging the model of the latter offered in 2011<sup>23</sup>.

Picking up the baton, Carlos Alonso, president of the *Cabildo* (Municipal Council) until 2019, proposed the creation of a 300000 euros aid line in favour of audio-visual projects carried out in the

---

<sup>23</sup> S. Lojendio. «Paraíso fiscal del cine sin protagonismo local», *El Día*, 11 de agosto de 2015.



islands and, at the same time, to try to strengthen local industry by offering to study «the constitution of a venture capital fund that allows investors to benefit from tax advantages generated by local production».<sup>24</sup>

Although, due to landscape damage caused by some shootings - especially *Oro* (Agustín Díaz Yanes 2017), a film that turns Anaga Rural Park into the Amazonian forest- an eco-tax has been proposed in order to favour the maintenance of protected areas, an issue that still today have not been carried out, possibly to avoid economic detrimental<sup>25</sup>.

In addition, the Atlantic Film Accelerator is recently born, a pioneering laboratory aimed at optimizing the slates of emerging producers. Its objective is to promote its consolidation and expansion at a time of great changes in the audiovisual industry. With the exponential growth of platforms and the economic changes caused by the pandemic, which have led to structural reforms in the global market and in the traditional business model, the Accelerator becomes a basic ally to achieve optimal success of films in the different exploitation windows. The Atlantic Film Accelerator is an activity subsidized by the Ministry of Culture and Sport, which has had the collaboration of PROEXCA, Tenerife Film Commission, Puerto de la Cruz City

---

<sup>24</sup> «Los rodajes dejan 19 millones de euros en la Isla en 2015», *Diario de Avisos*, 31 de marzo de 2016.

<sup>25</sup> J. Moreno. «Proponen implantar una ecotasa para rodajes en zonas protegidas», *Diario de Avisos*, 24 de mayo de 2016.

Council, MiradasDoc Festival, MEDIA España Office and REDCAU (Spanish Network of Audiovisual Clusters).<sup>26</sup>



*Imagen 7. CLAC logotype*

*Imagen 8. Aceleradora de Cine del Atlántico: promotional poster*

---

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.cameraandlightmag.com/noticias/nace-la-aceleradora-de-cine-del-atlantico-un-laboratorio-pionero-destinado-a-optimizar-los-slate-de-productores-emergentes/>

## 5. IN CONCLUSION

All in all, we found it difficult to have some perspective when it comes to analysing something that is happening today or that has not yet come true. Truth is that in this day and age, it is much more advantageous to shoot in the Islands than to do so in the Mainland, just for the reason we mentioned a moment ago. But it is not entirely an economic issue although it is the main motivation. Many film commissions of the Archipelago strive to remember that not only tax incentives are offered but also a diversified landscape and a number of daylight hours allowing to optimize outdoor shootings. Especially in Tenerife, Ricardo Martínez Cedrés<sup>27</sup>, TFC technical director, recalls that the island has 112000 km<sup>2</sup> in 48% of protected natural space, as well as different types of natural sets found in a short distance: forest, mountains, coast, almost deserted areas, or colonial village, to name just but a few. Moreover, hotel infrastructure adapts to any requirement of complex cinema equipment, which is completed with an increasingly better and more copious technological availability and professionals based in the Islands.

We would like to underline once again that this whole movement should have a specular reflection in the industry that sustains the Archipelago, the touristic one. Perhaps, it would be convenient for the cultural and economic nature within the process to go hand in hand, being the regional executive a must supporter with all kinds of policies to companies in the sector for this industrial

---

<sup>27</sup> V. Galán. «Canarias, un paraíso 'de cine'», *La Opinión de Tenerife*, 27 de junio de 2014.

project to become a reality on an on-going basis, to identify the Islands with the cinematographic universe, both for producers and for spectators in half the world.

All things considered, we want to give some significant recent data. With a total of 154 film and series shoots, and an income of more than 218 million euros in 2024, the Canary Islands are consolidating their position as a preferred location for audio-visual productions at international, national and local levels. The balance of the sector carried out by the Culture area of the autonomous Government, through Canary Islands Film, shows very positive results, which, in just one year, has been able to generate more than 14,000 direct jobs on the islands. These data have been presented by the general director of Cultural Innovation and Creative Industries of the Government of the Canary Islands, Cristóbal de la Rosa, and the coordinator of Canary Islands Film, Natacha Mora. According to them, these figures are higher than those recorded in the previous year, especially in terms of the economic investment left in the islands by these productions, with a growth of 50%, and in the number of jobs (40% more), distributed across the different islands.

«Cristóbal de la Rosa pointed out that these figures reflect that «it has been a very good year for the Canary Islands audio-visual sector and that, therefore, we must continue to collaborate with a sector that is showing great potential when it comes to generating cultural industry and cultural content, but also employment and diversification of the Canary Islands economy». A team effort in which the island councils also participate, through their Film

Commissions, PROEXCA, the ZEC and the local private sector, grouped under the umbrella brand Canary Islands Film».<sup>28</sup>

With these data in hand, one can be pretty sure that the audiovisual panorama in the Islands seems to be really promising.

## RESOURCES

. «Canarias se consolida como lugar de cine con 154 rodajes y más de 218 millones de ingresos directos», *Gobierno de Canarias: Portal de noticias*, 24 de febrero de 2025.

. Fresno, M. «Una fiscalidad de película. Canarias se convierte en un paraíso para rodajes por su exención del 38%», *Diario de Avisos*, 30 de junio de 2014.

. Frías Mendi, Jon; Carrasco Molina, Enrique; Sánchez de Armas, Mercedes y Ermish, Karl-Heinz. «Canarias como escenario de cine: Nuevos caminos para el turismo y sus implicaciones económicas», *Communication Papers. Media, Literature & Gender Studies*, vol. 9 (2020), 19.

. Galán, V. «Una de las mayores productoras de España estudia mudarse a Tenerife», *La Opinión de Tenerife*, 27 de junio de 2014.

---

<sup>28</sup> (<https://www3.gobiernodecanarias.org/noticias/>). «Canarias se consolida como lugar de cine con 154 rodajes y más de 218 millones de ingresos directos», *Gobierno de Canarias: Portal de noticias*, (24/2/2025).

. Galán, V. «Canarias, un paraíso ‘de cine’», *La Opinión de Tenerife*, 27 de junio de 2014b.

. Lojendio, S. «Paraíso fiscal del cine sin protagonismo local», *El Día*, 11 de agosto de 2015.

. «Los rodajes dejan 19 millones de euros en la Isla en 2015», *Diario de Avisos*, 31 de marzo de 2016.

. Marcos Arteaga, Irene. «Unas islas de película del siglo XXI. Canarias como plató cinematográfico», *Latente, Revista de Historia y Estética del Audiovisual*, 13 (2015).

. Morgan, Nigel y Pritchard, Annette: *Tourism, Promotion and Power: Creating Image, Creating Identities*. Hoboken NY: John Willey & Sons, 1998.

. Moreno, J. «Proponen implantar una ecotasa para rodajes en zonas protegidas», *Diario de Avisos*, 24 de mayo de 2016.

. «NC propone impulsar la Film Commission en Fuerteventura desde El Cabildo», *La Provincia*, 27 de agosto de 2015.

. Pérez Guerra, Edilia. *La industria cinematográfica como herramienta de promoción aplicada al turismo. El caso de Canarias*. Tesis Doctoral. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2018.

. Peregil, F. «El paraíso está aquí, no allí arriba», *El País*, 13 de mayo de 2001.

. Ramahi, Diana. «Nuevas estrategias comunicativas de ámbito local. El caso de las *film commissions* u oficinas de atracción de rodajes», *La Publicidad de las*

*instituciones locales*. Castellón: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad Jaume I, 2011.

. Roesch, Stefan. *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists. (Aspects of Tourism)*, Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009.

. Ruiz, M. «Canarias, una solución de cine ante la reforma fiscal de Montoro», *Zoom News*, 27 de junio de 2014. <http://www.zoomnews.es/341667/estilo-vida/cine/canarias-solucion-cine-reforma-fiscal-montoro>.

. Sandoval Martín, M<sup>a</sup> Teresa. «Promoción turística a través del sector audiovisual: El caso de Canarias», *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 9 (1998, septiembre).

. Sandoval Martín, M<sup>a</sup> Teresa. «Historias de las Film Commissions y del Movie Tourism en las Islas Canarias», en Carnero Hernández, A. y Pérez Alcalde, J.A. (edit.): *El cine en Canarias (Una revisión crítica)*. Madrid: Festival Internacional de Cine de Gran Canaria, T&B Editores, 2011

. Sarabia Andúgar, Isabel y Sánchez Martínez, Josefina. «Film Commission y Film Office como agentes consolidados de la industria en el marco del desarrollo del Hub Audiovisual en España», *ZER. Revista de estudios de comunicación*, (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1387/zer.23532>

. Sola Antequera, Domingo. *Como el ojo en el corazón del poeta. El fenómeno cinematográfico en Canarias en el último cuarto del siglo XX (1975-1998)*. Tesis doctoral (inérita), Universidad de La Laguna, 2015

. Sola Antequera, D. «Vientos de cambio. Nuevos aires para la producción audiovisual en Canarias», *Latente. Revista de Historia y Estética del Audiovisual*, 14 (2016).

. Sola Real, Raquel y Medina Herrera, Claudia. «The influence of Cinema and Television on Tourism Promotion», *Latente. Revista de Historia y Estética del Audiovisual*, 16 (2018). <http://doi.org/10.25145/j.latente.2018.16.001>

. Stanishevski, Konstantin. «La comunicación de los destinos turísticos». En Rey-Reguillo. A. del (ed.): *Cine, imaginario y turismo: estrategias de seducción*. Valencia: Prosopopeya. Tirant Lo Blanc, 2007.

. Viana, Víctor y Pérez-Bustamante, David. «Inversiones cinematográficas. Oportunidades para el capital de riesgo», *RECARI*, 3 (2009 julio-septiembre).

. VV.AA. *Conversaciones sobre Producción Audiovisual*. Conclusiones. Puerto de la Cruz: XI Festival Internacional de Cine Ecológico y de la Naturaleza de Canarias, 1992.