

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND THE SPATIAL ARTICULATION OF POWER: FROM THE CATHEDRAL TO THE *CIDADE DA CULTURA*

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ABSTRACT: To examine the notion of «Glocal Galicia» this essay focuses on the series of architectural, political, and economic enterprises carried out to transform the remote site known as *Campus Stellae* first into a sacred pan-European journey's end in the Middle Ages—via the *Camiño de Santiago* (Way of St. James)—and then into a 21st century global destination that works within Disneyfication processes. Particular attention is paid to two distinct productions of material space—the securing in the 12th century of metropolitan status for Santiago de Compostela, and the inauguration on January 2011 of the incomplete *Cidade da Cultura de Galicia* (City of Culture of Galicia). In both instances, each architectural endeavor sought to supersede its locality while exposing the manners in which space, place, and capital are intertwined.

KEYWORDS: *Camiño de Santiago* (Way of Saint James); cathedral; branding; material space; global destination; Disneyfication; *Cidade da Cultura* (City of Culture).

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA E A ARTICULACIÓN ESPACIAL DO PODER: DA CATEDRAL Á *CIDADE DA CULTURA*

RESUMO: Para examinar a noción de «Galicia glocal» este ensaio céntrase na serie de empresas arquitectónicas, políticas e económicas que se realizan para transformar o remoto sitio coñecido como *Campus Stellae* nun destino sagrado paneuropeo na Idade Media —a través do Camiño de Santiago— e despois nun destino global no século XXI que opera dentro de procesos de Disneyficación. Dáse atención especial a dúas producións distintas do espazo material: a obtención no século XII do estatuto metropolitano para Santiago de Compostela; e a inauguración en xaneiro de 2011 da incompleta *Cidade da Cultura de Galicia*. En ambos os casos, cada esforzo arquitectónico buscaba superar a súa localidade mostrando no proceso os modos nos que o espazo, o lugar e o capital están entrelazados.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Camiño de Santiago; Catedral; branding; espazo material; destino global; Disneyficación; *Cidade da Cultura de Galicia*.

In his insightful *Peripheral Visions/Global Sounds from Galicia to the World*, José Colmeiro, following García Canclini's adoption of the neologism, argues for a «glocal» approach to contemporary Galician cultural production (2017: 21, 26). One way of discussing the notion of «Glocal Galicia,» as we have been invited to do in this special issue, requires us to pay attention to cultural engagements with space; specifically to the series of political, economic and artistic enterprises carried out since the Middle Ages to transform, through the *inventio* of the discovery of the remains of the Apostle Santiago el Mayor (James the Great) in the 9th century, what was once a remote local site, at the end of the known world (*finis terrae*), first into a sacred place, and pivotal European destination, via the mass traveling of the *Camiño de Santiago's* pilgrim routes. Through further transformations intertwining capital, social relations, and experiences, the Way and the Cathedral have also now become global destinations adhered to Disneyfication processes. In the 21st century Santiago de Compostela is offered to the traveler/pilgrim/tourist as a commodity with, one could argue, two main monumental locations to visit while in the city: the Cathedral and the *Cidade da Cultura*.

Two massive architectural presences currently dominate Santiago de Compostela's cityscape. The first is the millenary and famed Cathedral—an emblem of Romanesque architecture with Gothic and Baroque additions, known the world over as the culmination of any pilgrimage route of the *Camiño*. In 1985 the Cathedral was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO as part of Old Town Santiago while the Way was certified as a «Cultural Route of the Council of Europe» in 1987. Since then it has been promoted as «[...] one particular manifestation of the idea of a culturally united Europe» through the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, the flagship of the European Cultural Routes Project and the European Institute of Cultural Routes (Grabow 2010: 91; Council of Europe). In 1993, the road network of the Way of St James was recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO with the official denomination of the «Route of Santiago de Compostela».

The second monumental space, the unfinished *Cidade da Cultura*, is the complex built on Mount Gaiás, designed by Peter Eisenman (1932), that was to stand tall to the 800 plus years-old neighboring Cathedral but that has come to embody what many consider a pharaonic «semi-vacant cultural repository that has consumed public investment while the vast majority of Galician architectural and archeological heritage projects have gone to rack and ruin» (Ayán Vila 2014: 130; see also Ayán Vila and Gago Mariño, 2012). Both archi-

tectural enterprises attest to the fact that the production of material space is not just a process with a specific end product, but a practice that recognizes social relations associated with everyday living and movements of capital (Harvey 1989; Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre's multidimensional conceptualization of material space needs to be understood as simultaneously perceived, conceived, and lived (1991).

To assess how Santiago de Compostela's spatialized social reality appears to operate within «glocal» paradigms, we begin in the 12st century, with the securing of metropolitan status for Santiago de Compostela—the masterful work of Diego Gelmírez (1069-1149)—to then turn our attention to the late 20st century during Manuel Fraga's tenure as President of the Xunta de Galicia (1990-2005). First, we attend to the massive popularity of the Way within Disneyfication processes after Fraga's instrumental role in the rebranding of the *Camiño* following UNESCO's 1993 recognition of the road network as a World Heritage Site. Then we focus on Fraga's spatial articulation of power with the commissioning of the *Cidade da Cultura* in 1999. As is well known, architect Peter Eisenmann was assigned to build the *Cidade* after a high-profile international competition. In 2001 the first stone was placed in mount Gaiás, situated two kilometers away from the core of the old city and the Cathedral. It is not irrelevant to Fraga Iribarne's obsession with building the *Cidade*, that, as early as 1964, he sought to transform the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela «into a modern tourist phenomenon» as per the *comunicado* released on July 24, 1964 by his Ministry, during his tenure as Franco's Minister of Information and Tourism (1962-1969). A significant year in Fraga's branding career, 1964 is also when he launched the successful «Spain is Different» marketing campaign (Liñeira 2014: 64; Crumbaugh 2009). In tune with the strategy of «branding»—as in the Marca España branding effort—Fraga Iribarne's investment in the *Cidade da Cultura*, and the erection of a second «Cathedral» in Santiago de Compostela, as per the discursive religious connotations used in diverse media formats, may be explained by his understanding that while marketing campaigns are tactical, a brand—a *marca*—is bigger and more effective than any particular marketing effort. Fraga's single-mindedness with the *Cidade* is inseparable from his efforts in the rebranding of the Way of St James and obtaining the 1993 UNESCO denomination. Both enterprises need to be understood as interlinked institutional projects fulfilling Manuel Fraga's long held desire to convert the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela into what has now become a global «tourist phenomenon».

And what better way to catapult the Way and the city «brands» than to provide a new monumental spatial configuration, a new *Cidade*, to the thousands upon thousands of international visitors? The imposing complex consisting of a total of six buildings in the original design, was to compete for the attention of all those visitors to the Cathedral, establishing, once and for all, Santiago as a postmodern, global metropolis. The massive *Cidade* was to occupy an area of 60,000 square meters holding a *Hemeroteca*, the Library of Galicia, a Music and Theater Center, a New Technologies Building, a Central Services Center, and the Museum of the History of Galicia. It was budgeted at a cost of 108 million euros, less than the Bilbao Guggenheim's final cost of 217 million, and this is pertinent since Fraga Iribarne had that particular architectural accomplishment in mind when creating the *Cidade de Cultura* commission. And, last but not least, construction was to be completed in three years (Peregil 2011). Ten years later, after having generated endless controversies, the incomplete cultural complex was inaugurated on January 2011, occupying 148,000 square meters of the Gaiás's foothills, at a tally of 400 million euros. The economic crisis, along with incessant protests by Galicians from all walks of life, forced the Xunta de Galicia to halt construction in March 2013. On February 2014, as announced by President Alberto Núñez Feijóo, and by mutual agreement with the companies that were to complete the remaining buildings, all outstanding contracts were void.

The *Cidade* places Santiago de Compostela at the heart of the «glocal» paradigm since, as quoted by Francisco Peregil in his «Monumento a la incoherencia», Xesús Pérez Varela, Fraga's Minister of Culture, still defended the project in 2011 by stating that «era una buena idea para poner a Galicia en el mapa de Europa y la modernidad. Galicia siempre ha tenido el reto de que había que traer a la gente, *nadie pasa por aquí*» (2011, emphasis mine). The surprising comments fail to recognize that, thanks to the Way and the intricate network of pilgrimage routes leading to the Cathedral, Santiago the Compostela was already «[...] historically and metaphorically, the backbone of a sort of European cultural nervous system during the Middle Ages» (Colmeiro 2017: 75). In fact, as already mentioned, the routes to the Cathedral and the city itself were being heavily promoted as a pan-European cultural heritage site through the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, the European Cultural Routes Project, and the European Institute of Cultural Routes since the late 20th century. Other events to further promote the brand include the cyclical *Xacobeo* celebrations, effectively marketed by the Xunta de Galicia and a

Church-State partnership, providing a global image in tune with «[t]he official *fraguista* representation of Galician culture [...] as a collection of old towns and buildings» and where Saint James Way «became a landmark of all things Galician» (Reimóndez 2011:194).

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND THE CATHEDRAL: FROM INVENTIO TO DISNEYFICATION

Let's return to the Middle Ages, to how Gelmírez's rise first to cathedral administrator of Santiago de Compostela (1093-1094; 1096-1100), then to bishop in 1100, and finally archbishop in 1120, rested heavily on the successful staging of the cult of Saint James through the spatial articulation of power by making arrival to the shrine *the* pilgrimage destination of Northwestern Europe. After all, «Santiago was the third Holy City of Christendom after Rome and Jerusalem» (Lois González 2013: 10), not an irrelevant matter to medieval men and women seeking the forgiveness of sins, redemption and, ultimately, salvation. This worldview resulted in the popularity of the Way, which impacted urban design by the delineation of what was to become «one of the first coherent urban systems in Christian Europe» (Lois González 2013: 11).

The *Camino's* present-day popularity has prompted scholars in diverse fields of study—from religious, cultural and urban studies to tourism, hospitality, marketing, and management—to provide varied explanations and assessments for the mass of travelers, pilgrims, tourists engaged in the Way and having Santiago de Compostela and the Cathedral as a final destination (see, among others, Lois González and Somoza-Medina 2003; Huh, Uysal, and McCleary 2006; Santos Solla and Lois González 2011; Castro Fernández, Lois González, and Lopez 2016, see figure 1). Among his detailed evaluation of the reasons for the Way's contemporary revival, Rubén C. Lois González indicates that the renewed and continued successful existence of the Camino is the direct «consequence of the creation of a *new product in line with the new motives for contemporary tourism*» (2013: 15, emphasis mine). By so clearly identifying the Way and Santiago de Compostela as commodities to be marketed, we are thus invited to consider Disneyfication processes when discussing the Way's and Santiago's massive appeal. Indeed, as Colmeiro indicates, present-day visitors «can witness how the not-so-long-ago remote provincial city has become a *veritable theme park of Galician heritage, medievalism, and the cult of St. James for*



FIGURE 1. Image of the ongoing restoration of the Portal of Glory, Santiago de Compostela Cathedral by José Colmeiro, with permission.

global consumption» (2017: 74, emphasis mine).

It is within the understanding of Santiago de Compostela as «a veritable theme park», and within the ethos of consumerism fomented by neoliberal global capitalism that we can speak of Disneyfication. And it is during the 1990s that the term «Disneyization» was first proposed by Sociologist Alan Bryman in his groundbreaking article «The Disneyization of Society», where he defined the process by «which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world» (1999: 26). The comprehensive process implies the «Disneyfication» of culture, a term that best summarizes, according to Morris Holbrook, the «art of providing fantasy—enriched, sentimentally-compelling, fun-packed entertainment for their children-of-all-ages mass audiences» (Holbrook 2001: 142, see also Matusitz and Palermo 2014).

The memorable experience being marketed when promoting the Way and the city, functions within the so-called «experience economy» by which the fulfillment of the needs of visitors-consumers leads to the offering of diverse types of consumption that make consumers desire to stay longer.

THE *CIDADE* AND THE GLOBE

To offer these visitors-consumers a 21st century space to experience Galician heritage as a «theme park», Manuel Fraga's spatial articulation of power—as enacted by Eisenman in the *Cidade da Cultura* with its curved silhouette inspired by the *vieira* shell, a symbol loaded with meanings associated with the *Camiño*—rested on the architectural complex being conceived as a glocal en-



FIGURE 2. The *Cidade da Cultura* image by José Colmeiro, with permission.

terprise. Indeed, how the *Cidade* was to catapult local Galicia to the globe was emphasized by Eisenman once and again, as per the interview conducted by Anatxu Zabalbeascoa for *El País* on 11 September 2010 during one of his many visits to supervise the project. Eisenman, avoiding answering any questions regarding the controversial nature of the undertaking, in particular the endless and soaring expenditure by the Galician government on a construction that was to serve as a testament to his architectural vision, stated: «[n]o creo que este edificio sea sobre el futuro de la arquitectura. Creo que es sobre el futuro de Galicia. Ese es su enorme valor. *También cambiará la relación de Galicia con el mundo y la relación de España con el mundo contemporáneo*» (Zabalbeascoa 2010, emphasis mine, see figure 2).

Against these hyperbolic assessments, that mirror those of the Partido Popular's governments, are the voices of all of those who opposed the project for its being a «Monumento a la incoherencia», as per Francisco Peregil's article in *El País* (November 12, 2011). When Peregil discussed the project with Galician architect Pedro de Llano, one of its most vocal detractors, de Llano offered an insight into the distance between an imagined venture and the actual one: «[e]l modelo era una maravilla [...] pero funcionaba solo como escultura, a esa escala, en cuanto estudié los planos y el programa de construcción me di cuenta de que aquello no tenía sentido» (Peregil 2011, see figure 2). Pedro de Llano further stresses the absurdity of the project by focusing on the design of a proposed Teatro de la Ópera—the never built Music and Theater Center—with the farcical proposal to set up three operas on a single day, adding with much Galician *retranca*, «como si fuera el Lincoln Center» (Peregil).

To categorically establish the endeavor's ludicrous excess, de Llano concluded by pointing out the obvious: «En Nueva York puedes mantener una temporada de ópera durante todo el año. Pero, en el resto de Europa, en Milán, Venecia, por ejemplo, no se puede. Y nosotros aquí, con poco más de 90.000 habitantes, podíamos permitirnos un teatro así» (Peregil 2011).

Despite all the many valid criticisms, Peter Eisenman, interviewed once again by Anatxu Zabalbeascoa for *El País* in April 2011, three months after the inauguration of the *Cidade*, remained as defiant as ever in the defense of his vision and creation. For one, the famed architect returned to the Partido Popular's government's narrative of Galicia being Spain's boondocks—«Es importante que Galicia sienta que es algo más que el cabo Finisterre de España»—to immediately underscore the sense of pride felt by the public when visiting the recently inaugurated Mount Gaiás' complex: «y cuando leo los comentarios de las 35.000 personas que lo han visitado en las tres semanas posteriores a la inauguración, diciendo que el lugar es majestuoso, *siento que se enorgullecen, y eso era parte de lo que se buscó cuando convocaron el concurso*» (Zabalbeascoa 2011, my emphasis). Ultimately, the 2011 interview underscored that the design and construction of the *Cidade de Cultura* was all about the spatial articulation of power—«creyeron que hacían algo grande. Y yo lo sigo creyendo» (Zabalbeascoa 2011)—within a neoliberal concept of urbanism that in practice entailed a new form of state intervention with a bigger entrepreneurial capability. And since urban development projects in the 21st century are inextricably intertwined with the process of reproduction and mutation of neoliberalism, the *Cidade's* complicated and controversial history, as discussed above, clearly attests to the myriad ways in which neoliberalism shapes the concept of the urban.

THE *CIDADE DA CULTURA* AS A «FACTORY OF PROJECTS»

In moving forward since the inauguration of the four spatial configurations that currently constitute the *Cidade da Cultura*, the complex is described in its webpage as a «new “inclusive and plural city” [that] wants to become a “factoría de proxectos” to stimulate the fabric of Galician cultural industries» as well as to serve as «a point for the exchange of ideas and experiences, connecting Galicia to national and international networks of knowledge and creativity» («Cidade da Cultura de Galicia» 2018). In furthering inclusivity and the opening up

of Galicia's cultural heritage to plurality, the agencies in charge appear to have paid attention to those asking for a space that goes «[...] beyond clichés and that give[s] a voice to different sectors» (Reimóndez 2011: 200), as well as to those asking for the support of alternative artistic practices that actively contribute to the «creation and the dissemination of a Galician cultural nation that equally embraces the familiar and the unfamiliar» (Bermúdez 2012: 122, see also Bermúdez 2011: 292-295 and 299-302). In this vein, the *Cidade's* Foundation is open to the submission of new artistic proposals by individuals or groups, though all submissions «must be designed specifically for Gaiás spaces, both in their form and content» (Envío de proxectos 2018). In this context, particularly illustrative is the commissioned giant book sculpture entitled «Singularidade» by Alicia Martín, now permanently located at the entrance of the Archive of Galicia in the *Cidade da Cultura*, which has become an open space for dialogue with the surroundings and a channel for intervention and contestation by visitors (see cover illustration and Colmeiro's introduction on this issue).

In the end, the time has come to understand Santiago de Compostela's present-day cityscape within the symbolic dialogue now established between the two monumental architectonic presences towering over the city. Each one, the Cathedral and the *Cidade da Cultura*, a testament to the spatial articulation of power and to the dynamics linking space, place, and capital with new spatial experiences, including new experiences with previously familiar places. And as Galicians continue to negotiate both the significance and the purpose of the *Cidade*, local Santiago de Compostela cements its place on the globalized stage of stellar cultural spaces.

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