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THE ARCHITECTURE OF POWER. THE ISLAND INSTITUTIONS AND AUTONOMOUS BODIES. ANALYSIS OF THE CASES: GRAN CANARIA, TENERIFE AND MADEIRA

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Abstract: The architecture of power is a milestone for the cities, being most times a reference in the urban landscape. This research work is titled: “the Architecture of Power. The Island Institutions and Autonomous Bodies. Analysis of the Cases: Gran Canaria, Tenerife and Madeira”.

Its main objective is studying and analysing in a comparative manner the architectural works. As primary objective, it intends to interpret and study the similarities of the architectural works built in the Canary Islands and Madeira to house the presidential and administration offices of the local and regional authorities. The expression of power through their buildings is clear. The architectural language used, the use of visual references such as coats of arms or emblems and the establishment of a clock tower that marks the life of the city and serves as a reference, tell us the interest of these bodies in lasting through history with these works.

Keywords: International, Congress, Architecture, Research, Doctoral Program in Architecture

1. Introduction

This research project, named “The Architecture of Power, the Island Institutions and Autonomous Bodies. Analysis of the Cases: Gran Canaria, Tenerife and Madeira”, has a strong Atlantic character, since it covers two Macaronesian archipelagos as object of study. In this regard, the Canary Islands and Madeira have had a similar historical and cultural path and there are connecting links between both archipelagos as reflected in the architectural forms, linguistic and cultural references.

Both the Canary Islands and Madeira, being autonomous regions of European countries, have their own power institutions at both insular and regional level. These institutions need a physical entity to develop their activities in the political, administrative and institutional areas and it will be these edifications or constructions the ones that will be analysed and studied comparatively between both Atlantic archipelagos.

The Canary Islands, unlike Madeira, are an archipelago with a higher number of islands that has two capital islands (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife). Both share the capital status of the autonomous region. In Madeira, all the official power bodies are located on the main island, in its island capital city. For that reason, in the Canary Islands the insular power is divided, as each island has its own Island Council. The Government of the Canary Islands, however, is located on the capital islands, which are Gran Canaria and Tenerife and their respective capital cities.

As differentiating feature between both archipelagos, we can say that the Canary Islands have a unified Parliament in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Madeira possesses a Legislative Assembly based in Funchal.

2. Evolution of architecture, Canary Islands and Madeira

The case of the Canary Islands is special due to its fragmented territory and the competition between the capital islands to hold the power. It took until 1912, when the Councils Act (Ley de Cabildos) was enacted and insular power gained importance against regional power. The new Island Councils arising in 1912 as island control bodies did not have central offices and were established in their islands' historical buildings. For example, the Island Council of Gran Canaria [Fig. 1] did not have its own central office until the 1930's, when the design of the actual Casa

Palacio, located on Bravo Murillo street in the capital city, was commissioned to the architect Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre. The first locations were some offices handed over by the Town Hall of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in the Casas Consistoriales (city hall). Something similar happened in Santa Cruz de Tenerife when the Island Council [Fig. 2] commission the project of its Casa Palacio to the architect Enrique Marrero Regalado, who design the current Council's seat located in La Plaza de España of the capital city. It is noteworthy in the design and planimetry of the Gran Canaria council building the participation of the architect Richard Oppel and then the architect Laforet, who finished the project created in the 1930's.



Fig. 1. Island Council of Gran Canaria



Fig. 2. Island Council of Tenerife

Both Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre and Enrique Marrero Regalado were architects from the Canary Islands who studied both on the mainland and abroad. On the one hand, Miguel Martín chose rationalist architecture while Enrique Marrero opted for a classicist style, in accordance with the fascist aesthetic. Both architects were recognised and renown in and outside the archipelago. This new council architecture will be characterised by large modern buildings that want to show the solid insular power, particularly of the capital islands.

Regarding the regional power in the Canary Islands, it was not until 1978 with the proclamation of the Spanish Constitution when the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands was established with the Government of the Canary Islands at the head. About the Government of the Canary Islands, as it does not have a single central office, but it is shared between the two provincial capitals, they commissioned Luis Alemany Orellá for the presidential office of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and for the one in Tenerife, the Estudio AMP's architects, made up of Felipe Artengo, José María Rodríguez Pastrana and Fernando Menis.

The newly inaugurated Government of the Canary Islands in a democratic Spain needed insular central offices and the necessary facilities to be able to carry out their work for all citizens on the islands. To this effect, it is resorted to the construction of new buildings that hold the different Departments (Conserjerías), opting for the avant-garde architecture of the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. This is the case of the Government of the Canary Islands' multipurpose building II designed in 1990 by María Luisa González in the city of Las Palmas of Gran Canaria.

The presidential office in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, designed by the architectural firm mentioned before, perfectly combines the traditional architecture of the Canary Islands with the avant-garde architecture. Inside the structure, it is kept the traditional island courtyard of the already disappeared Casa Hamilton, which adapts in perfect harmony within the modern building where it is located. It is framed by a structure of large volumes of stone. A great central courtyard as crater articulate the structure while it adds natural luminosity and ventilation to every floor. On the upper floors, it has garden areas that bring the nature and landscaping to the city. The presidential apartment is likewise on the upper floor.

The Parliament of the Canary Islands [Fig. 3] has as official central office the old neoclassic style building of the Sociedad Musical of Santa Cecilia, in the capital city of Tenerife. The building was designed by the architect Manuel de Oraá in 1883. The Government acquired this site in 1982. Its façade imitates a classic hexastyle temple with Tuscan columns finished off with a triangular pediment and it also has frieze and metope. The building was expanded with a modern structure at the back. In its main room stands out the mural paintings of the founding of the city of Santa Cruz by the Governor Alonso Fernández de Lugo, made in 1906 by the artist Manuel González Méndez. On the outside stands out the huge sculpture of Martín Chirino.

O *Arquipélago da Madeira* or Madeira Archipelago constitutes the Autonomous Region of Madeira or *Região Autónoma da Madeira* since 1976. These islands have two power bodies, on the one hand, the *Governo Regional* and on the other hand, the *Asssembleia Legislativa da Madeira*. The official residence of the *Presidente do Governo da Madeira* is in *Quinta das Angústias o Vigia*, in an area called *A Pontinha*, in its capital city, Funchal. The manor house and its remaining chapel date from the 17th century. It underwent numerous renovations throughout history. The choice of this country house as presidential office may be because that country house is a cornerstone of the history of Madeira's capital city.



Fig. 3. Parliament of the Canary Islands

Another emblematic building is the *Antiga Misericórdia do Funchal o Palácio da Junta Geral* [Fig. 4], also located in Funchal. The Junta Geral establishes its central office in this building approximately in the 1920's. This awarding was possible thanks to a law enacted in 1910 by the Portuguese Republic of separation of Church and State. This law enabled the civil government to appropriate religious buildings that were not a place of worship. A space belonging to the Regional Government and where some Island Government's secretariats are located. The building dates from the middle of the 15th century, with its origins in the medieval assistance guilds. Its main function was of healthcare, dependent on the Church and it was established on the island after its colonisation by order of the King Don Manuel I. It is kept in optimal condition, with the remaining original structure. On the *façade* stands out its central portico with a broken triangular pediment crowned with a coat of arms. It has four floors and sash large windows framed in stone. The windows show balconies adjoining the wall itself. The main body is finished off with a hewn stone wide cornice that leads to another body as attic, with windows topped off with a circular pediment. It has a hipped roof with tiles.

The Legislative Assembly of Madeira or *Asssembleia Legislativa* [Fig. 5] *da Madeira* is located on the area called *Alfândega*¹ do Funchal, close to Funchal's Cathedral. It consists of two structures, one of old construction belonging to the former *Reduto de San António da Alfândega*. This old building has two porticos, one of them located in a small annex building, made of hewn stone. It possesses three floors with windows framed in stone and balconies with forge. On the inside, the traditional style landscaped central courtyard is an outstanding feature. The second structure of new construction is characterised by its circular shape winded up with a great dome. The building material used are steel, concrete and stone. In this new avant-garde-style edification is where the meetings of the regional parliament members take place. On the inside, stands out the wood cladding and the glass dome. The building's renovation and the new building annex construction was carried out by the architect Raúl Chorão Ramalho in the 1980's.

The architecture of power is part of cities' physiognomy and it is also a distinguishing feature. Both in the Canary Islands and Madeira they have combined the use of buildings with history and the creation of new central offices that provides an air of modernity and avant-garde to the insular cities.

¹ The Portuguese word *Alfândega* means customs.



Fig. 4. The Antiga Misericórdia do Funchal



Fig. 5. The Legislative Assembly of Madeira

3. Background information and current state of the subject

The subject of research is “The Architecture of Power in the Autonomous and Local Bodies. Analysis of the Cases: Gran Canaria, Tenerife and Madeira” and it has not been treated until now as set out in this case. However, it has been done individually, in monographs and articles separately of the Island Councils’ Casas Palacios of the different islands, its most prestigious architects and the architectural trends used, among other aspects.

In the Canary Islands, having access to books or abundant information of Madeira is complicated, for that reason, it will be necessary to wait until the stay on the island to complete and contrast the information obtained. Information has been retrieved from the Governo da Madeira’s webpage. From the publication *História da Madeira, Povoamento e Produção Açucarera*, information has been retrieved about the *Misericórdia do Funchal*. This building dates from the middle of 15th century, when the island is colonised, depending on the Portuguese medieval assistance guilds.

About Gran Canaria and Tenerife Island Councils and their architects, there are monographs and articles which focus on their history and their architectural heritage. The information obtained from the varied bibliography consulted will be analysed.

Gran Canaria Island Council has published numerous monographs regarding its history as institution, its architectural heritage and the architectural style of the building and its correlation with the city. This is the case of the book titled *The Island Council and the rationalist city (El Cabildo Insular y la ciudad racionalista)*. This publication coincides with the exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the construction work of the current central office, edited in 1987 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Another reference publication is the monograph titled *History of Gran Canaria Island Council (Historia del Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria) (1913-1936)*, written by Manuel Ramírez Muñoz. This is a comprehensive work about the history and founding of the Island Council and the current Casa Palacio.

The Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council, a building with two hearts (La Casa Palacio del Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, un edificio con dos corazones) is the title of another key work for the study of this institution. This work describes a historic semblance from its early stages until the remodelling and opening of the Casa Palacio’s building work in 2005.

The work *Marrero Regalado (1897-1956), architecture as scenography (Marrero Regalado (1897-1956), la arquitectura como escenografía)* is a key element for the study of the Casa Palacio of Tenerife Island Council and of its architect. It provides an overview of the architect’s most important works and studies both in Europe and in the mainland, to focus then on Tenerife. One of his most relevant works is Casa Palacio.

Another work of great interest to know the physiognomy of Tenerife’s capital city is *the Official Architecture of the 20th Century in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (La arquitectura oficial del siglo XX en Santa Cruz de Tenerife)*. This work outlines the official architecture of the city in the 20th century with a special mention to the different projects developed by Enrique Marrero Regalado, including the Casa Palacio.

The rationalism in the Canary Islands (El Racionalismo en Canarias), written by Maisa Navarro Segura, shows how this architectural trend settled in the archipelago. It is obviously mentioned the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council as key work of such trend.

For the study of the presidential offices of Canary Islands' Government I have only found works of the one in Tenerife's capital city, these include the following.

The book titled *Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, Works and Projects in the Canary Islands (Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, obras y proyectos en Canarias)* contains the works carried out by these three architects who constituted the Estudio AMP. They developed the design and building works of the presidential office of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. In the book, we can see numerous plans, photographs and sketches of the central office made by the architects and another works of them.

Another important work is *Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, Shape + Matter (Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, Forma + Materia)*, where the numerous works made by these architects are shown and they make a reference to the Presidential Office of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, showing plans and photographs.

The work titled *Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, Presidential Office of the Government of the Canary Islands (Artengo, Menis, Pastrana, Sede de la Presidencia del Gobierno de Canarias)* only refers to the Presidential Office, showing plans, sketches and detailed descriptions of the inside and outside of the building.

The use of wood in the Presidential Office of Santa Cruz de Tenerife is a section of the publication titled *Woodwork AMP Architects (Carpinterías AMP arquitectos)*. There, they describe the use of wood in the building works designed by this architectural office, mentioning the Presidential Office.

Contemporary Architecture Guide of Tenerife 1962-1998 (Guía de arquitectura contemporánea de Tenerife 1962-1998) is another of the works consulted, where I could obtain information about the Presidential Office of Tenerife's capital city and about the multipurpose building II of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, located on José Manuel Guimerá street, number 8. The project was ordered by the Government of the Canary Islands in 1989 and its completion in 1993, designed by the architects María Isabel Correa Brito and Diego Estévez Pérez.

One of the books that takes an in-depth look at the contemporary style buildings of the Canary Islands and that mentions the studied structures is titled *The Canary Islands: Architectures from the 21st Century (Canarias: arquitecturas desde el siglo XXI)*. There they mention and provide photographs of Gran Canaria Island Council, its rationalist character, its architect and they mention a bit about its remodelling. A reference is also made to the multipurpose building II, ordered by the Government of the Canary Islands in Tenerife's capital city. Furthermore, it includes a brief mention to the Presidential Office of Tenerife.

In the publication titled *Contemporary Architectures, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 1960-2000 (Arquitecturas contemporáneas, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 1960-2000)*, we can find descriptions, plans and photographs of the architectural development of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the transformation in its buildings from 1960 until 2000. This work is important, since there is a brief mention to the multipurpose building II made by María Luisa González, beginning its building work in 1990.

Introduction to art in the Canary Islands, architecture, vol. 1 (Introducción al arte en Canarias, Arquitectura, v.1). A reference is made to the subjects treated in different chapters. The chapter titled *Eclecticism and Rationalism (Eclecticimos y Racionalismos)*, written by Manuel Martín Hernández, mentions the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council as clear example of the Rationalist tendency in the Canary Islands and one of its greatest exponents, like Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre. Apart from mentioning the architect Richard Opiel, who took part in the Project.

The publication *25 historic buildings, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (25 edificios históricos, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria)* includes in one of its sections a special mention to the building of the Island Council of Gran Canaria, where different planimetry and photographs are enclosed.

The Rationalist Architecture in the Canary Islands 1921-1939 (La arquitectura racionalista en Canarias 1921-1939) is one of the key works for the study of the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council, where they mention the architects Richard Opiel and Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, City and Architecture (1870-1930) (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, ciudad y arquitectura) briefly mentions the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council.

Architectural Heritage Guide of Gran Canaria (La Guía del Patrimonio arquitectónico de Gran Canaria) mentions and describes the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council.

The article titled *Ecliptic Reason of the Modern Architecture in The Canary Islands, the Case of Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre (Razón eclíptica de la arquitectura moderna en Canarias,*

caso de Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre), written by Manuel J. Martín Hernández and published in the Canary Islands and American History Talks of the Casa Colón.

The record of Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria's University Library² offers us sketches, plans and drawings about the Casa Palacio of Gran Canaria Island Council.

We can count with the help of web resources such as Patrinet³, dependent on Gran Canaria Island Council, where it is possible to consult a movable and immovable property inventory from the Canary Islands and Madeira.

In addition to the webpage mentioned before, the following should be noted, *Sistema de Informação para o património arquitectónico*⁴, also known in Spanish as Monumentos Portugal.

My research project will include the study of power architecture in the Canary Islands and Madeira, both in the insular and regional bodies. The detailed study of all the Casas Palacios of the seven Island Councils, the Government of the Canary Islands' presidential offices, both in Tenerife and Gran Canaria, and the central offices of the different departments and buildings destined by this body to administrative functions.

In addition to making a comparison with the archipelago of Madeira and its power institutions, such as the Regional Government with the Island Councils of the Canary Islands and the Legislative Assembly with the Parliament of the Canary Islands.

4. Proposed Objectives and working hypothesis

The working hypothesis is the following. The relation between power and architecture when it comes to design projects and edifications as an image of consolidated power and political status by the Island Councils, particularly in the capital islands.

There is a correlation between the insular power and the projection of its seats of government. The larger islands have a magnificence architecture in line with their rank as provincial capitals.

The strong competition between the capitals of the Canary Islands versus the Portuguese unity. The reuse of historic buildings to house the new administrative and power functions in Madeira as a symbol of union between the history of its capital city with the local and autonomous power, as opposed to the cases of the Canary Islands, where an ex novo architecture is used, in most cases studied.

The objectives of the study are varied regarding this subject, since there is still no work that includes in a comprehensive and comparative manner the architectural power structures in the insular and autonomous institutions of the said Canary Islands and Madeira.

The proposed objectives are the following:

- Identifying and listing the architectural heritage of the different insular and regional power bodies in the cases analysed.
- Analysing and studying the archives of Gran Canaria and Tenerife Island Councils, the Government of the Canary Islands and the Governo da Madeira.
- Comparing in detail the power institutions and their architectural heritage.
- Studying the influence of such constructions on the physiognomy of the cities where they are located and if they become symbols of the city.
- Becoming aware of the impact of remodelling structures with hindsight and if they have brought about a change or not in the original project.

² Record of Miguel Martín Fernández de la Torre, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, University Library; <http://mdc.ulpgc.es/cdm/landingpage/collection/ammft>, [consulted 01/04/2015].

³<http://www.patrinet.net/CHMS/CHMS/Main.php?do=PageAction&method=showPage&page=InicioPage> [consulted 05/04/2015]

⁴ http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/Default.aspx, [consulted 10/09/2016]

5. Methodology

The methodology that it is going to be used will be a combination of primary and secondary sources consultation.

Regarding the fieldwork, the archives of the capital Councils will be examined in order to obtain information about projects, chronology and planimetry of buildings. Apart from visiting and studying the Government of the Canary Islands' and Governo da Madeira's archives.

The islands newspaper archives study and analysis from the 20th century onwards. The press provides significant data about the debates, proposals and alternatives that were put forward to the proposed projects, the journalistic opinion and interviews. Also, the consultation of magazine and periodical articles.

The consultation of photo and video archives allows us to reconstruct the architectural heritage that has been lost, but it also gives us the possibility of contrasting old and modern images and observing the development of the buildings.

- FEDAC photo archive.

Bibliographic compilation both in paper and digital format.

- University Library of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.
- University Library of the University of La Laguna.
- Library of the Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno (CAAM).
- Library da Universidade da Madeira.
- Library of the Centro de Estudos de História Atlânticos.

Interviews will be held with the following personalities:

- Jerónimo Saavedra Acevedo (current Diputado del Común and President of the Government of the Canary Islands during two non-consecutive candidatures).
- Luis Alemany Orellá (architect who designed the presidential office of the Government of the Canary Islands in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria).
- Interviews to former presidents of Gran Canaria and Tenerife Island Councils.
- Interviews to contemporary architects from the Canary Islands and Madeira.

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