LOCALIZED COMMONS IN COMPETING GLOBAL CITIES: THINKING OVER SPECTACULARIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

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thinking over spectacularization of contemporary architecture and the urban landscape

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Outline

1 Competing global cities

2 Spectacularization of contemporary architecture

3 Metaphors and narratives

4 Three cases of city/collectors

5 Conclusion from architectural collections to urban landscapes
1 Competing global cities

Contemporary cities have new roles in advanced production and services in post-industrial markets.

Cities compete in attracting footloose investments, in localizing firms and corporations, in bidding for hosting international events, in attracting touristic flows or in retaining population and human capital.

The creation of wealth is more and more based on immaterial factors, such as innovation, creativity and culture.
1 Competing global cities

Urban decision-makers perceive architectural aesthetic as a mean for urban marketing, place branding and to gain visibility on the media.

Signature architectural artifacts are often represented as development triggers.

Piece by piece, more or less explicitly, contemporary cities compete in collecting pieces of architecture and they adopt specific rationales in doing so.
“I always thought the building was a sculpture. I prefer it empty”. Alain Wertheimer [owner of Chanel]
2 The spectacularization of architecture

Blurring boundaries between contemporary architecture and art:

-Aestheticization,
-Mediatization,
-Decontextualization of contemporary architecture
3 Metaphors and narratives

Architecture and artistic aura

- Entrepreneurial cities

- Bilbao effect
4 Three city/collectors

- Abu Dhabi, Oligarchic city: few public actors make decisions, only partially shared by the collectivity

- Paris, Elitist city: the techno-political elite’s choices interprets the interests and values of given groups to represent them. Architecture and symbolic urban policies

- New York City, Plural city: multiple actors autonomously decide how to use architecture
4 Three city/collectors

Despite different urban cultures, decision making models, planning systems, the architectural aesthetics is similar

Similar narratives legitimizing increases in real estate development, often neglecting collective impacts

Same metaphors:
Contemporary architecture as art, cities as collectors

Strong symbolic dimension in urban policy favoring the promoters of the projects
5 Conclusions
Generally architectural choices are not made on the basis of global economic competitiveness evaluations, but justified through the Bilbao effect narrative.

The collection of spectacular pieces of architecture does not correspond to the creation of common goods that are essential to local development.

**Urban landscape** as a competitive factor.

Individual interests can be addressed also through contemporary architecture conceived as coherent element in the landscape.
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Thanx

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