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# Concealed productions of structural violence: a cultural flagship in post-authoritarian Spain

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## ABSTRACT

This article contributes to examinations of structural violence and flagship architectural projects. Neoliberal urbanism contributes to European urban stakeholders' efforts to increasingly become entrepreneurial forces, generating intense competition investment and tourism. There is a multitude of marketing initiatives, but the inclusion of cultural flagship projects is notably prevalent, particularly after the exemplary success of the Guggenheim Museum that served as a model for the 'Cidade da Cultura' (CdC) cultural museum in the Spanish city, Santiago de Compostela. While the claim to promote culture and tourism is a common assertion, this project is highly political in nature. This article demonstrates that the allure of progress via the production of a 'modern' urban cultural icon obscured the structural violence of the project. Indeed, flagship architectural projects can be employed as a mechanism of exclusion. I argue that the CdC is best understood by attending to how the project concealed the production of political structural violence (i.e., economic and autocratic governance). In this case, public was excluded at the expense of an elite few CdC stakeholders' funding priorities to attempt to forge a project for their own benefit.

## Producciones encubiertas de violencia estructural: Unos proyectos emblemáticos culturales en la España post-autoritaria

### RESUMEN

Este artículo contribuye a las evaluaciones de la violencia estructural y los proyectos arquitectónicos emblemáticos. El urbanismo neoliberal contribuye a los esfuerzos de los actores urbanos europeos para convertirse incrementalmente en fuerzas empresariales, generando una intensa competencia en inversión y turismo. Las iniciativas de marketing son múltiples, pero destaca la inclusión de proyectos culturales emblemáticos, particularmente tras el éxito ejemplar del Museo Guggenheim, que sirvió de modelo al museo cultural 'Cidade da Cultura' (CdC) de la ciudad española, Santiago de Compostela. Si bien la petición de promover la cultura y el turismo es una afirmación común, este proyecto es de naturaleza altamente política. Este artículo demuestra que el atractivo del

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progreso a través de la producción de un ícono cultural urbano ‘moderno’ opacó la violencia estructural del proyecto. De hecho, los proyectos arquitectónicos emblemáticos pueden emplearse como un mecanismo de exclusión. Sostengo que la CdC se entiende mejor prestando atención a cómo el proyecto ocultó la producción de violencia estructural política (es decir, la gobernanza económica y autocrática). En este caso, se excluyó al público a expensas de las prioridades de financiación de una élite de actores interesadas de la CdC para intentar forjar un proyecto para su propio beneficio.

## **Produits dissimulés de la violence structurelle: Un phare culturel dans l’Espagne post-franquiste**

### **RÉSUMÉ**

Cet article contribue à la recherche sur la violence structurelle et les projets architecturaux phares. L’urbanisme néolibéral contribue aux efforts des acteurs urbains européens de devenir de plus en plus des forces d’entreprise, engendrant de manière intense de la compétition, des investissements et du tourisme. Il y a une multitude d’initiatives de marketing, mais l’inclusion de projets culturels phare est notamment répandue, surtout après le succès exemplaire du Musée Guggenheim qui a servi de modèle pour le musée culturel de la « Cité de la culture ». (*Cidade da Cultura*, abrégé en CcC) dans la ville espagnole de Santiago de Compostelle. Tandis que l’on affirme que c’est au nom de la promotion de la culture et du tourisme, la nature de ce projet est éminemment politique. Cet article démontre que l’attrait du progrès par le biais de la réalisation d’un symbole culturel urbain « moderne » masque la violence structurelle du projet. En effet, les projets architecturaux phares peuvent être utilisés comme mécanismes d’exclusion. Je soutiens que l’on comprend mieux la CdC en s’intéressant à la façon dont le projet dissimule la production de violence structurelle (à savoir, la gouvernance économique et autocratique). Dans le cas présent, le grand public a été exclu au détriment des priorités financières de quelques intervenants élités de la CdC qui ont essayé de monter un projet pour leur propre bénéfice.

## **Introduction**

Santiago’s Cidade da Cultura museum campus will be place for drawing together the cultural expression and social interaction of our people with today’s avant-gardes of technology, thought, and creativity. We will show the world a modern and developed Santiago and Galicia to summon the pilgrims of knowledge to our secular monument. (Fraga, 2005, p. 7)

As this invocation suggests, former Galician president, Manuel Fraga, envisioned the Cidade da Cultura (City of Culture) cultural museum campus to be a flagship urban project that would promote a modern and secular image of the ‘religious’ city of Santiago de Compostela<sup>1</sup> (hereafter Santiago). Santiago de Compostela became the capital of the autonomous region of Galicia, Spain, after the state’s transition from the dictatorship under Francisco Franco. For many, this Spanish city is intimately tied to the myth of *Sant’Iago* or Santiago (Saint James the Apostle). According to early medieval

Christian beliefs, Saint James (the city's namesake) is reputed to be Spain's first evangelist and his remains are entombed in the city's cathedral. Beginning in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a complex network of pilgrimage paths destined for Santiago was established, known as the Camino de Santiago (or the Way of St. James), and the city became the third most prominent Roman Catholic pilgrimage site.<sup>2</sup> Many of the Camino paths originate in major European cities and historically provided pilgrims, Christian penitents, and tourists routes for traveling to Santiago.

While Goethe's statement, 'Europe was born on the pilgrim road to Santiago' (qtd. in Frey, 1993), may suggest Santiago de Compostela's historic importance as a key cross-roads in Europe, the city is no longer recognized as a transnationally significant place. Indeed, centuries after the Black Death, the Protestant Reformation, and European political unrest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Camino's popularity waned. Furthermore, a decreasing trend in Catholic pilgrimages throughout western Europe also contributed to the diminishing number of religious visitors to Santiago (Research Center, 2018, 2018). Despite the magnetism that the city possessed for centuries, tourism to Santiago's cathedral dwindled by the 1980s (Registro de la Oficina de Acogida de Peregrinos, 2011). In response, Fraga anticipated the CdC would generate a new form of pilgrimage tourism in Santiago, the production of what he called 'secular pilgrims of culture and technology' (Fraga, 2005, 8).

Inspired by the success of Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum, Fraga announced the development of a massive, six-building Cidade da Cultura (hereafter CdC) cultural museum in Santiago in 1999. Despite its peripheral location, Fraga intended the CdC to become one of the largest urban constructions in Europe and 'outshine' the Guggenheim. His intention divulges how influential some neoliberal narratives pertaining to urban competition have become, as they effectually are increasing intercity rivalry and buttressing city stakeholders' desire to create cultural urban developments that produce 'impact and legacy' (Boland et al., 2020, p. 677). Indeed, flagship urban constructions, particularly those designed by internationally recognized architects, are increasingly employed by city officials who attempt to strategically operate through the creation of these structures to gain international recognition in efforts 're-imagine' place (Cochrane & Ward, 2012; Massey, 2014).

However, after years of ballooning costs and political controversies, the CdC is widely considered a failure. While the claim to promote culture, project a modern image, and increase tourism is a common assertion, this rapidly implemented urban project is highly political in nature. As a security guard at the CdC explained:

What do people here think of the CdC? [Laughing] – It's Fraga's own vanity project. He was very powerful in Galicia. We, the public, do not understand what the CdC was built for, but we do know it costs a *lot* of money - *our* money. Some people say Fraga constructed the CdC like a memorial to himself or a mausoleum, since he was very old when he started the project (personal communication, 29 June 2018).

This article demonstrates that the allure of progress via the production of a 'modern,' and in this case secular, urban cultural icon obscured the structural violence of a project underpinned by what Koch (2015) identified as the 'violence of spectacle.' More specifically, the project was intended to forge a marketable global image of place, while hiding the structural violence that the political elite utilized and exploited. I contend that the CdC, as a flagship architectural project and its stakeholders' narratives of progress and secularization, are best understood by attending to how the project concealed the



production of political structural violence – economic and autocratic governance – at the hands of a strongly authoritarian-style leader. As renown Santiagoan poet, Suso de Toro, expressed his opinion of the CdC during a personal interview:

We, in Santiago, are all living underneath the CdC. It does not represent us, this place, or our culture, or even the religious tradition of the urban core. Instead, it was Fraga's vanity project – paid for by our financial ruin (personal interview, 11 May 2017)

Construction on the CdC began in 1999 under the direction of Galician President Manuel Fraga's conservative PP government (People's Party). In 2005, Fraga's political rivals Socialist-Separatist/nationalist coalition party PSOE/BNG (Socialist Workers' Party/Galician Nationalist Block) won the regional election and inherited control of the CdC. The PSOE/BNG government, which criticised the project, argued they had to continue construction on the CdC due to the 'advanced state' of the project (personal interview with BNG's spokesperson, Fina Casal, 2009).

This government also faced public criticism for their management of the CdC due to the limited public involvement in the project. As the director of the PSOE/BNG's management of the CdC explained in a personal interview, he believed public opinion of the project was low due to 'their inability to participate in any of the decision-making processes for the CdC,' (Broz, personal interview, 10 September 2009). Ultimately, the CdC opened to the public in 2011 at four times the original planned cost (475.9 million Euros), the museum campus only compromised half of the buildings included in the original plans. According to a Santiagoan urban planner, 'the CdC deprived the public of 373 million Euros by 2006 before the PSOE/BNG sought some external private funding. However, they only secured a small percentage of private funds for the whole project' (personal interview, 12 May 2014). In 2013, the CdC board publicly announced it terminated any plans to continue further construction on the project.

Close examination of the CdC project exposes various forms of political hubris and structural violence inherent in this elitist project. More specifically, the crushing economic cost of this publicly funded endeavour hampered other local economic development by extracting funds away from other projects that could have more effective material or social benefits for residents. As Duncan and Duncan argue, flagship architectural projects and other iconic constructed landscapes can be employed 'as a subtle but highly effective mechanism of exclusion' (Duncan & Duncan, 2004, p. 7). In this case, public was excluded at the expense of an elite few CdC stakeholders' funding priorities to attempt to forge a project for their own benefit.

This paper is presented in four main sections. The first comprises an explanation of the research methodology, while the second discusses the theoretical framework of the project. The third section analyses the obscured structural violence of the CdC. The fourth section reflects on research findings and their implications for future research.

## Research methodology

The following analysis is based on a multiyear research project (2005, 2008, 2009, 2015, and 2019) that included in-depth interviews, site observation, archival research, and content analysis of media reports. I personally conducted 80 structured interviews with architects and key politicians (including CdC architects and designers, the mayor of

Santiago, and other political elite) involved in the construction of the CdC. This included architect Peter Eisenman, his director of Public Relations, Sandra Hemingway and several of the CdC on-sight architects. These interviews ranged from 1–2 hours.

I then conducted 230 semi-structured interviews (throughout 2005, 2008, 2009, 2015 and some follow-up interviews in 2019) with the public,<sup>3</sup> political leaders of the regions' three major political parties (i.e., PP, PSOE, BNG), architects, and urban planners in Santiago to compare reception of the CdC over time. The research design for interviews built upon interpretivist epistemology in order to gather a diverse range of responses and subsequently triangulate different reactions and experiences as a result of the CdC's construction (Bryman, 2016). While I utilized a set of research questions, respondents had the freedom to express additional or unsolicited observations and opinions. All interviews, conducted in accordance with my Human Subject Protocol set by the Institutional Review Board for this project, were in Castilian Spanish or Gallego (Galicia's national language), based on the respondent's preference. I transcribed all interviews for this project's content analysis with Atlas TI. I also supplemented information this with a content analysis over 2,000 newspaper reports (published in Spanish and Gallego) pertaining to the CdC architectural project and consequent controversy during its construction process that appeared in the two mostly widely read local newspapers, *La Voz de Galicia* and *El Correo Gallego* using Atlas TI (1999–2018; Charmaz, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

## Structural violence and flagship architecture

Violence is not homogenous concept and various forms of violence manifest differently across space (Dempsey, 2020). Bourgois (2001) describes 'structural violence' via the processes within political-economic organization of society, and its impact on the local and individual. This violence 'derives from the fact that political actors prioritize investing state or regional monies in these elitist productions, rather than in other agendas that could have more diffuse material and social benefits' (Koch, 2015, 678). Tyner and Inwood (2014) call for 'new understandings' of violence to highlight how it is enacted through the economic realities of a society or government, commonly obscured through the production of space. The authors argue that violence is contextualized within the specific geographic conditions gave rise to society. Thus, structural violence occurs when government spending divests its citizens of funds that could be allotted for necessities, and this a form of violence is often an omission concealed within processes of capitalism (Tyner & Inwood, 2014, 778; see also, Counter, 2018).

Tyner and Inwood suggest that violence can be defined as 'any action that affects the material conditions of another' (779). Philo's, (2017) examination of various forms of violence supports this assertion and warns against ranking forms of violence or separating 'direct' and 'structural' forms of violence. This is particularly true as dichotomies between the two are increasingly challenged (e.g., Pain, 2014; Tyner, 2016). Indeed, the public financed over 370 million of the total 475.9 million euros, and the lack of public involvement in the project, represents of form of structural violence against a financially vulnerable public that, according to some local economists, exacerbated societal inequalities (e.g., see, Morris, 2012). However, Manuel Fraga, argued that he envisioned the CdC as a way to stimulate the local and regional Galician economy. Galicia's GDP is well below the

Spanish national average and the region is subsequently a European Union Regional Policy Objective 1 ([European Commission](#)).

Driven by fears of falling further financially behind other Spanish cities and regions, one of the increasingly common strategies undertaken by many urban stakeholders involved in neoliberal 'place wars' (e.g., Peck, 2014) is to engage in 'competitive urbanism' (e.g., Dikeç & Swyngedouw, 2017) via the inclusion of iconic flagship cultural constructions to globally enhance a city's marketability. Indeed, as city elites compete for marketing prominence in a globalizing world (e.g., Peck et al., 2013; Pike et al., 2017), narratives of urban place competitions have conditioned many European city planners and politicians to unconsciously accept neoliberal ideas (for a detailed discussion of theories of neoliberalism, see, Boland et al., 2020; Sager, 2016). Increasingly, many city stakeholders operate on the belief that flagship urban cultural projects will 'enhance the city image while catalysing private sector investment and attracting tourists to their surrounding area' (Grodach, 2008, p. 2).

In this way, flagship urban projects are designed to function as powerful, symbolic, and ideological tools to manipulate how place imagery is portrayed to the public in an attempt to recast a local place identity (e.g., Cresswell, 1996; Sklair & Gherardi, 2012). For example, Pérez Varela, Fraga's Cultural Minister, shared his belief that the museum campus would become both a generator of future revenue and an attestation of Galician aptitude for meeting the challenges of a modern world. When questioned about the CdC construction costs and his response to mounting criticism regarding the CdC,<sup>5</sup> he stated in a personal interview:

It is my belief that the stream of revenue from tourism and marketing of museum campus would far surpass its construction and maintenance costs. Some people are critical of our project because they do not see the vision – the outcome of the project will silence the critics (personal interview with Varela of the PP, June 2009).

He maintained this line of argument during the regional government trial when he claimed:

It will be the most emblematic project, a project that is vital for our community and the city's future economy (1:44:56) ... it is more than one political party's project, as it represents the Galician people (1:45:38), which will put us in, without a doubt, into the international market and make back funds spent to build it. We have obligation to look forward in web-based and audio-visual development. (Pérez Varela testimony, Contas Trial, 1:45:00, 29 October 2007, translation by author)

Thus, investigations of flagship projects can operate as an analytical lens to gain greater understanding of an urban development project within neoliberal urban place competitions (e.g., Robinson, 2016). In an increasingly globalizing world, these iconic monuments are frequently seen as drivers of economic development. However, these projects are also often conceptualized as coded spaces, and instruments replete of social and political power, that reveal processes of change, exploitation, or efforts to shape geographical urban imaginaries and politics of a place (e.g., Caprotti, 2018; Dempsey, 2012, 2016; Grodach, 2010, 2008).

At the same time, these projects can disclose elite stakeholders' power within urban governance underpinned by economic, spatial, and social inequalities that are a result of these forces (e.g., Le Galès, 2016; Macleod & Jones, 2011). As Koch (2015) argues, such

projects have ‘far-reaching social implications ... its “structural violence,” whereby no direct exercise of violence is readily visible, but which results from the injustice of broader social structures.’ Indeed, these sophisticated, systematic efforts expose powerful social relations – especially regarding who has the power to shape the built landscape, in which these constructions and ‘structural violence’ are systemically embedded. In this respect, Fraga’s motivations for constructing the CdC can be seen as an autocratic effort to present Santiago in a secular framework to stimulate new international tourism.

In the case of Spain, the demand for flagship megaprojects arose within the context of hyper-urbanization and megaproject obsession that began in the 2000s during which some labelled an ‘urbanization tsunami’ of new and modern construction in Spain (e.g., Riley, 2005). In an effort to capitalize on this ‘tsunami,’ Santiago’s political elite hoped the CdC would recast Santiago’s urban image from a city that has been internationally recognized as a religious pilgrimage destination for centuries, to a city flourishing with new secular cultural tourism and economic investment. The potential realisation of a successful place marketing plan is especially attractive for peripheral and disadvantaged parts of Europe, such as Galicia, and its capital city, Santiago. While promoting the CdC, Fraga often cited how Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao became the generator of eighty percent of the one million annual visitors who were fuelling a new cultural tourist-boom in the city. He believed this accomplishment should not be ignored and often described the CdC as the ‘Guggenheim Gallego’ (El Correo Gallego, 2002) in strategic attempt to associate the future of the CdC with the success of the Guggenheim.

Cultural flagship projects are often entrusted to top names of celebrity architects (e.g., Dempsey, 2012; Moulaert et al., 2001; Vento, 2015). These international figures can be utilized as emblems for urban projects in order to increase the project’s visibility on a global scale. In fact, the designer of the CdC, American architect Peter Eisenman, was highly ranked in the CdC’s architectural design competition based on his purported ‘international renown star power.’ The perceived ‘celebrity’ of an applicant dominated the CdC design competition’s scaling system, as fulfilment of that criterion represented 50% of the maximum points allotted to each applicants’ design (Boletín Oficial do Parlamento, 2007). Indeed, the CdC stakeholders’ emphasis on selecting a design by a ‘starchitect’ reveals their anticipation to capitalize on name recognition in order to increase the project’s global prestige. More specifically, the design selection committee hoped Eisenman possessed the charisma to modify the city of Santiago’s image as an international religious pilgrimage destination – with an iconic cathedral and other religious facilities in the city – to a modern and secular one.

The intention of utilizing the CdC to ‘reimage’ Santiago, a ‘religious’ city, as a secular city is a noteworthy trope, as Santiago has not witnessed a significant increase in secularisation. In addition, the presence of the Santiago’s cathedral within the well-preserved medieval core of this pilgrimage city helped to establish and support a religious image of the city for both residents and non-residents alike. The city’s medieval granite streets that surround Santiago’s Romanesque and Baroque cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, fostered the city’s image as a pilgrimage site that is ‘frozen in time’ (e.g., Gemie, 2006). Surveys and polls continue to demonstrate the perception of Santiago, and its Cathedral, primarily remains that of a religious pilgrimage destination.

However, whilst the impact and range of religiosity varies across the continent (Voas & Doebler, 2011), due to decline in participation in traditional Christian churches in western

Europe (Pew Research Center, 2018), there were many within Santiago who noted secularisation trends elsewhere. In response, many of the city's stakeholders believed it would be beneficial to promote Santiago as a modern and secular centre of European culture. As Lynch (2016)'s examination of Toronto's urban 'church lofts' reveal, the production of new forms of secularity alongside the creation of new religious landscapes in the city is part of new form urban development schemes. Baker and Beaumont argue that it is within the urban context where 'secularization and secularism has to negotiate and make space for the re-emergence of public expressions of religion and spirituality' (2011, p. 33). While there is evidence to suggest that western Europe is more secular than its global counterparts, this secularization trend is not a monodirectional development. Instead, scholars have noted a new plurality of transformations in the religious urban landscape as part of a 'post-secularizing era' (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Havlíček & Klingorová, 2018).

Santiago, however, represents a distinct urban scenario, one in which its urban stakeholders' attempt to promote a religious pilgrimage city as a secular place solely to boost tourism. Instead of launching an assertive *anti*-religious urban campaign or responding to a significant loss of religious participation by its residents, Santiago political elites forged concerted efforts to modify the religious city's urban image for global marketing purposes. To Fraga, an overtly religious man, Santiago's medieval urban core and religious architecture produced a religious and archaic image of the city, and he wanted to attract a wider range of tourists to Santiago. He comprehended the power of place marketing as he had served as Spain's Minister of Information and Tourism under authoritarian dictator Francisco Franco from 1962 to 1969. As minister, Fraga shaped and packaged a highly selected image of Spanish culture to foment international cultural tourism and stimulate Spain's struggling economy (e.g., Aoyama, 2009).

Claims of economic growth due to authenticity within cultural tourism can be highly problematic (e.g., Santiago as a secular city), especially if the assertion originated from the state or political elites (e.g., Lane & Waitt, 2010; Penrose, 2020). In fact, fear of a government sponsored exertion to forge a secular urban imaginary within this traditionally religious city provoked some members of the public to argue that Fraga's secular promotions of Santiago were 'inauthentic.' Several personal interviews with the public also confirm that many residents consider the CdC an inauthentic elite marketing ploy graphed onto Santiago's urban landscape (e.g., personal interviews #1,3,7, 11–21, 37, 46–49, 2011; 2015; 2019). For example, one interview explained 'the CdC is *not* representative of us, Santiago, or Galicia. It will never become a real symbol of our people and we will not go to that campus to visit it' (member of the public #225, personal interview, November 2019).

Ultimately, the emphasis on the secular sheds light on a unique motivating force for the stakeholders' urban marketing efforts. However, their attempt to broaden the city's global attractiveness via the CdC obscured the social and economic implications of the structural violence of project. Indeed, the money that was prioritized for the project became an excessive financial burden for an economically weak peripheral region. Consequently, an uncritical engagement with the economic exploitation and misuse would obscure the concealed forms of structural violence of this flagship project.

## Concealed structural violence: economic

As Spain's former Minister of Tourism, Fraga was acutely aware of the role that tourism could play in a city's marketing and tourism plans. Indeed, analysis of the selection process for the CdC's architectural design (e.g., Fernández-Galiano, 2005) reveals that its stakeholders, the CdC Foundation,<sup>6</sup> wanted the CdC to specifically alter the image of the city of Santiago. Returning to Boland et al. (2020) examination of neoliberal urbanism and place competition as driving forces that shape urban stakeholders' fetishism of globally attractive cultural initiatives, I maintain that the CdC Foundation tried to justify this publicly funded megaproject solely on the narrative of neoliberal success of flagship urban projects. For example, the Foundation's claim belies their conviction that the CdC would promote Santiago as an attractive place for secular cultural tourism and investment merely through its construction. However, their declaration of a flagship that would reimagine a historical religious pilgrimage city presented a challenge. After a promotional campaign for the Camino in the 1980s and 90s, Santiago was slowly re-emerging as an international religious destination, but the city was not a technologically advanced or a significantly secularised place. Thus, Fraga's emphasis on modifying the religious image of Santiago by promoting it as a secular and modern city, illustrates his confidence in urban place marketing, rooted in the neoliberal narrative investment and urban competition.

For example, the CdC was initially predicted to cost €108 million, but the Foundation spent over €400 million by 2012, with only four out of the six planned buildings open to the public. In the context of European structural policies, Santiago and its region, Galicia, economically weak (European Commission). Traditionally dependent on its agriculture and fishing industries, Galicia's economy still shows signs of late development in comparison to the rest of Spain. The region's GDP is well below the Spanish national average and suffers from a particularly underdeveloped and slowly modernizing service sector (ibid). Galicia's agricultural sector, which includes subsistence farming, was much less specialized than other regional members of the European Community when Spain joined in 1987. Since that time, Galicia faces open and increasing economic competition with other regions throughout the European Union. The necessity to increase economic investment through technology in one of Europe's poorest regions is driven by one of the region's key problems – its poor technological infrastructure. When compared within Europe, the level of Internet use in both Spain and Portugal is very low – and Galicia's is well below the Spanish average (e.g., Sexto, 2006, 2006). Instead of prioritizing funds to invest in technological infrastructure and training, much of the public funding for infrastructure and culture was redirected to finance the CdC. As Galician economist explained in an interview:

The construction of the CdC is like a poor man owning a Ferrari. No one believes that Santiago or Galicia can afford that single luxury. They will build it, but they won't have the money to run it. It is a splurge we cannot afford. (Prof. Sanjiao, personal communication, 22 July 2008)

The siphoning of public funds into a single project presented a severe economic detriment to the community as it began to hamper local economic development. For example, the CdC construction budget was equivalent of the annual cost to run Galicia's three largest universities. It also represented 40% of the total cost to construct the highly

coveted AVE high-speed train line into Santiago, which still remains unconnected to the AVE today (De Galicia, 2015). Additionally, while CdC stakeholders promised that the museum would generate finances from international collaborations, they relied primarily on local tax-generated finances for the project (Consello de Contas de Galicia, 2006). Indeed, the Foundation made no attempt to solicit any support from the European Commission of Culture, despite the fact that numerous cultural projects throughout the European Union benefitted from the recognition and financial support of the Commission. Similarly, the project failed to garner any financial contributions from the Spanish government as well (Castro, 2007). Thus, the CdC project was intended from its origin to be financed by the Galician public – without their input or approval.

As the revelations about runaway costs of the CdC became public, many inhabitants in Santiago began to reproach the government's concentration of funding into the CdC instead of distributing throughout the city. Similarly, Galicians living outside of Santiago disparaged the allocation of funds for the CdC that were exclusively centred in the modest sized capital city, instead of investing those funds into to larger more entrepreneurial cities such as La Coruna (De Galicia, 2015).

The structural violence of the misappropriation of public funds was conceivably facilitated by what some of his detractors identified as Fraga's political control of Galicia (e.g., no author, 2012; Burns, 1981). After Francisco Franco's death, Fraga continued to be powerful political figure within Spain, becoming the last prominent member of the authoritarian dictatorship to remain in politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Daily Telegraph 16.1, 2012). He was also a key founder of the largest conservative party in Spain, the PP (Spanish Popular Party), and many regarded him as the face of the party. During his two decades as Galician president, Fraga accumulated a network of connections within the region that helped facilitate the development of the CdC project (e.g., Seoane, 2001). As Swyngedouw et al. (2005) argue, such urban megaprojects can reveal political efforts to garner visibility and power through urban governance in order to control of the built landscape for their own political gain. Indeed, the mayor of La Coruna referred to the CdC as 'Fraga's megalomaniac personal project' (Losa, 2005, p. 8). For example, one member of the public explained:

I wish they would invest more in basic necessities here in Galicia instead of the CdC. That's politicians for you. It's a political project and not one that helped the members of the public' (#215, interview, October 2019).

However, before construction of the CdC was completed, Fraga's conservative PP government lost the 2005 regional elections. The change in power resulted in a new CdC Foundation appointed by the new socialist coalition government, the PSOE/BNG. This new PSOE/BNG Foundation discovered that the previous CdC Foundation had secretly destroyed several of the museum's financial documents before surrendering the building in 2005 (Boletín Oficial do Parlamento, 2007). The new government also learned that the former Foundation lacked any definite plan or specific purpose for any of the six buildings. As the spokesperson of the BNG government stated during a personal interview, 'The serious problem with the PP's CdC was that there was no initiative or economic plan for the project. It was just a megalomaniac plan created by PP politicians' (Carlos Aymerich, personal interview, 15 October 2009)



This disclosure details some of this structural violence, in this case the economic abuses, that was obscured by neoliberal narratives of development and urban competition. Instead of developing a project that could provide key benefits and support for its local community, the CdC was little more than an architectural sculpture. After the new government evaluated the cost of the inherited CdC, the PSOE/BNG decided to complete only four of the six proposed buildings. One of the ‘paralyzed’ buildings, the Opera,<sup>7</sup> remains an open and exposed concrete foundation on the landscape today.

### **Concealed structural violence: denial of shared governance**

A second significant form of structural violence obscured by the construction and publicity for the CdC was the lack of shared governance for the project. Indeed, the CdC stakeholders’ tactic to mobilize a secular narrative for a historically recognized religious city through a publicly funded flagship construction was implemented with a complete disregard of local businesses, public opinion, or insight. As the CdC Foundation forged ahead with construction, public outrage regarding the lack of information regarding its cost, necessity, or purpose, began to intensify.

During a personal interview, the Galician Minister of Culture and a CdC Foundation member, Pérez Varela, confirmed that he promised to forge ‘think tanks’ with local business owners, cultural advocates, artists, urban planners, and other members of the general public. He also pledged to establish financial collaborations with various international cultural institutions to co-fund and co-direct the construction and programming of the CdC (personal interview, May 2005). However, my research reveals that neither he nor other stakeholders established any contacts with cultural or financial organizations prior to commencing construction.

There was also a notable lack of transparency when any member of the public or media endeavoured to obtain official plans, expenditures, or future budgets for CdC (Boletín Oficial do Parlamento, 2007). Rather than seeking insight from local or international museum curators, members of the business community, or members of the general public, the CdC stakeholders formulated their specific vision for the ‘mission’ of the complex. Then they enacted the administrative mechanisms necessary to set the project in motion. Many critics feared Fraga’s exclusive control of how this secular museum portrayed Santiago failed to represent the diversity of its residents and culture.

As the public had been excluded from the decision-making processes, some of the public reported feeling emotionally and physically separated from the structure. During my interviews conducted in Santiago throughout 2005, 2008, 2015, and follow-up interviews in 2019, many individuals expressed disappointment regarding what they perceived as a general lack of involvement in the CdC from local businesses, organizations, and artisans. For example, interviews with the public reveal that the lack of public governance regarding the CdC damaged public trust in elected officials and soured perceptions of the museum (e.g., interviews # 3,7, 11–21, 37, 46–49, 143–247, 2011; 2015; 2018; 2019). As one member of the public, who openly identified as an atheist, explained:

The Cathedral is the most important building in Santiago. It was important long ago and remains important today. In contrast, the CdC is a building built by politicians, for politicians.



The CdC did not and will not change the image of Santiago, because it was built for the foreigners. No members of the public wanted it or were allowed to help design it. I believe the CdC will never replace or be more important than the Cathedral is for Santiago (personal interview, 4 July 2019).

Other respondents were dismayed by the environment violence and destruction of Monte Gaiás, the mountaintop on which the CdC was constructed. For many in Santiago, Gaiás was hallowed ground. Like Monte do Gozo, Monte Gaiás was one of the first places weary pilgrims are able to see the Cathedral of Santiago. Thus, before crews commenced excavation of the mountaintop, several members of the public attempted to stop the removal of 1.5 million cubic meters of Monte Gaiás, which architect Eisenman named the 'artificial excavation' of the Santiago landscape.

Some Santiago residents argued that the architect's 'strip-mining' of Gaiás was a reprehensible form environmental violence (see [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)). In response, in a candid interview Eisenman admitted, 'I'm anti-nature. I don't care about nature ... If you like nature, become a landscape architect! (Berlage Lecture, 2010, Berlage Lecture 23.3.2010). Additionally, subsequent analysis of the construction project by sustainable architects declared the CdC an 'unsustainable project' (Fique, 2012).

To many, the CdC looming and overpowering buildings visible on Monte Gaiás high above the city are a physical manifestation of the financial and political 'weight' of the



**Figure 1.** The CdC was carved out of the natural mountaintop to become a man-made mountain. Photo by author.



**Figure 2.** An aerial view of the excavation for the CdC's extensive system of underground service tunnels. Source: Fundación cidade da cultura, 2008. Photo of display board provided by Fundación Cidade da Cultura, 2008. Photo by author.

project for Santiago (Llano, 2000). As the aforementioned Galician poet, Suso de Toro, stated, 'We here are all living *underneath* the looming CdC' (ibid), (see Figure 3).

Ultimately, after the subsequent PSOE/BNG government inherited the CdC in 2005, it held a civil trial against Fraga's CdC Foundation, in which Vice President Quintana condemned the previous Foundation for: 'its intentional disregard of public opinion and lack of dialogue with local businesses, artists, and cultural figures' (Contas Trial testimony, 12:30:00).<sup>8</sup>

The rhetoric utilized by PSOE/BNG in public statements following the trial reveals their effort to take responsibility for any future changes or successes generated by the CdC, while classifying Fraga as an irresponsible authoritarian leader for commencing the CdC project. However, despite the PSOE/BNG's assurance to include public opinion and insight into CdC future development plans, the new political elite exclusively maintained power over the project. During an interview with the PSOE/BNG's CdC Foundation's Cabinet Advisor, the new CdC online public forum website, which represented the public's only avenue of communication with the CdC Foundation, did not work 'as well as they had hoped.' Indeed, during personal interview with Xaime Subiela Pérez, the CdC Foundation's Cabinet Advisor, he explained that their public online forum did not work as well and decided to close the webpage and public phone lines (personal interview, 9 November 2009). Once again, the power to shape the CdC remained in the hands of the political elite.





**Figure 3.** Caption: The CdC roofline looms large over the city's roofline. Photo by author.

## Conclusion

As this article illustrates, the CdC was marketed as a vessel to forge a global image of the city of Santiago (and Galicia), which concealed the production of political structural violence – economic and autocratic governance – that the local political elite utilized and exploited. Unsurprisingly, the 2008 economic crash had a profound impact on CdC funding. Initial reports revealed that CdC construction was temporarily suspended, but as the extent of the economic crisis in Spain grew, future progress was increasingly questionable. After the 2009 regional election, the PP regained control of the project and the new CdC Foundation decided to only complete the structures that were close to completion. When only four of the planned six buildings opened to the public in 2011, at over four times its initial projected cost, the CdC faced local, national, and international criticism and distain. As the *Guardian* newspaper stated, the CdC had become a political ‘cemetery for money’ (Tremlett, 2011) and the BCC described it as a ‘broken vision’ of architecture (Morris, 2012).

As this article demonstrates, the inspiration for the CdC project was underpinned by narratives that many European urban stakeholders unconsciously accept regarding the increasing intensity of neoliberal place competition. The political discourse surrounding the project purported the essentiality of creating a flagship cultural museum that would generate, a secular tourism industry in Santiago. The secular promotional angle of the CdC is representative of political and urban stakeholders’ aspirations to diversify the urban imaginary of the historic-religious city. However, the construction of an iconic museum was a perilous venture in a world increasingly saturated with urban competition efforts to include flagship

architectural projects. The erroneous belief that constructing a museum that was larger than Bilbao's Guggenheim, without securing external funding or including input from public proved disastrous. In essence, its stakeholders, seduced place marketing narratives, possessed great expectations for a museum complex that could generate economic development exclusively through its existence. Additionally, the assertion that the CdC would become the representative summation of Santiagoan and Galician culture was an elite-driven, top-down declaration delivered to a public that was excluded from the project's conceptualization.

As I have sought to illustrate, a close examination of the CdC controversy illuminates the obfuscated structural violence inherent in this project. The lack of shared governance coupled with economic abuses and environmental destruction wrought by the project are manifestations of the violence of the CdC and political-administrative control. Instead of investing municipal and regional funds in infrastructural, technological or social welfare agendas, which could concretely improve conditions in the economically weak region, political elites were allured by the neoliberal narrative of flagship icons. Consequently, the silenced public – residents of Santiago and Galicia – face crippling financial losses from funds filtered into the CdC, while reaping insignificant profits from its creation. Indeed, many in Santiago and Galicia perceive the CdC to be an empty monument signifying the structural violence of political hubris and neoliberal dreams of urban competition.

## Notes

1. The city of Santiago de Compostela was named in reference to Saint James. Initially known as 'el lugar de Santiago' (the place of Saint James), during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, 'Compostela' is added to the name of the city. Some believe Compostela derives from *Compositum* or 'composite place,' but popular myths suggest it comes from *campus stellae* or 'field of stars,' a reference to the heavenly lights a hermit followed to discover the body of St. James (Gemie, 2006).
2. Jerusalem and Rome are two most important pilgrimage sites within Roman Catholic tradition.
3. Based on recommendations from local urban planners, university professors, and pollsters, I conducted public interviews: 1) daily in the city's public market, Mercado de Abastos (this popular market is also located near the city center and university); 2) Area Central, Santiago's largest shopping mall, located on the opposite end of town of the Mercado de Abastos; and 3) the city's famous central park, Parque Retiro. I conducted interviews in these three locations throughout the week and weekend as well as during various times of the day (and in all weather conditions). I also interviewed people on the public tours of the CdC construction site.
4. Particularly in 2005, 2008 and 2015, internet and social media access in Galicia was the lowest in Spain; instead, locals identified these two newspapers as the most widely read news outlets for Galicia.
5. Manuel Fraga declined a personal interview regarding the CdC, but instead, requested I contact his Cultural Minister (Pérez Varela), as the PP's representative for the CdC project.
6. The CdC Foundation consisted of fifteen Galician members: Fraga as president, a vice president (the Minister of Economy) and 12 cultural directors (i.e., four directors from the Cultural Heritage, Cultural Promotion, Social Communication and Tourism councils; the president of the Institute of Galician Arts and Music (IGAEM); two members from Galicia's Economic Bureau, and the director of Public Finance and Treasury); Santiago's mayor and a representative from the banks Caixa Galicia, Caixanova and Fundación Barrié also served on the board (Consello de Contas de Galicia, 2006).

7. As a result of the 2008 economic crisis, construction on the four buildings stopped again in 2010. All construction halted permanently in 2013.
8. A subsequent trial investigating the CdC ruled that Fraga and small number of his selected political elite were founded guilty of abuse of power by denying any form of shared governance in this publicly funded project (Contas Trial Testimony – recorded audio from the Consello de Contas de Galicia, 2006).

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