

Bilbao: The continuous urban evolution towards resilience.

BILBAO THE CONTINUOUS URBAN EVOLUTION. SUCCESSFUL HISTORY OF A CITY'S TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY: LESSONS FOR INTEGRAL, TRULY INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Bilbao urban evolution represents a successful urban transformation track

In the early '80s Bilbao faced the results of the economic decline of its heavy industry. The city started then an integral urban development strategy –on-going today- to cope with the complexity of the urban challenges, common to the ones that many cities across Europe must face today: loss of competitiveness and innovation, urban and social conflicts and polarization, accessibility and reduced habitability of public spaces, inefficient use of natural resources and heavy environmental pollution, flood risk reduction, and more recently climate resilience challenges.

This city's strategy resulted in several interventions – more than 25 projects in nearly 30 years- which truly transformed Bilbao, both in terms of urban development and socio-economic shift.

The emphasis on environmental cleanup, use of culture, internationalisation and design, major improvements to its infrastructure, as well as the restoration of its historic areas over some 30 years have successfully rejuvenated the city.

More significantly, the city was able to connect investment in infrastructure with social integration. The river, which was once a physical and social barrier, is now a hub for social and cultural integration and a centre for innovation and creativity. Besides, the interventions in the river banks and aperture of channels improved the flood risk prevention and protection.

Bilbao has shown that strong leadership and a commitment to a systematic and long-term plan, based on solid processes and supporting infrastructure, are key factors to the success of a city's transformation.

Bilbao transformation strategy can only be understood as a continuous process resulting from a common, agreed and coherent vision of the city by the different spheres of the civil society. The transformation is still alive and contextualized in the city Plan for Urban Zoning.

There are three key site specific interventions that currently operationalize the transformation process addressing regeneration and resilience challenges.

Regenerating Zorrotzarurre Peninsula a degraded post-industrial area into a New Knowledge District with strong sustainable and resilience approach. Zorrotzarurre peninsula and converting it into a new tractor district of the city. Designed by a renowned architect it improves energy efficiency and flood risk protection and highly contributes to Bilbao's climate proofing and resilience. Such approach will be a reference framework when addressing an integrated climate adaptation strategy.

Elorrieta: occupied by industrial pavilions and municipal services in front of the estuary, close to the metro. The future will provide 720 housing units, with strong role in flood risk protection.

Abando Highspeed railway: the hurried arrival of the HST, will allow to connect two separated neighbourhoods, with new residential and economic activities and a big park, improving climate comfort- related to reduction of heat stress.

To define the Bilbao of the next decades, it is essential to rely on the people who currently give it life, seeking their opinion on how to ensure that our city remains an international reference point; which means being fairer, more attractive, more balanced and more open

- Timeframe, dates, important milestones

- 1975: decline of traditional industry
- 1979-current: Integral Clean-up Plan for the estuary
- 1983: catastrophic flooding event in the City
- 1985: Bizkaia Technology Park
- 1987-2002: from surface rail to underground rail
- 1987-2004: regeneration of Amezola
- 1990 Started the urban evolution process
- 1992-2020: Superport
- 1993-2012: regeneration of Abandoibarra
- 1995-current: Metro
- 1996: Airport
- 1997: Guggenheim museum
- 1997-2004: 3 new bridges
- 1999: Euskalduna Conference Center and Concert Hall
- 2001: enlargement of the Fines Arts Museum
- 2002-current: Tram
- 2004: Bilbao Exhibition Center
- 2005-current: regeneration strategy in Zorrotzaurre area
- 2007: Conservatory of Music
- 2007: Regional Library
- 2010: The Alhondiga Center
- 2010: Bilbao Arena Basket
- 2011-current: enlargement of the Public University Campus
- 2013: San Mames Football Stadium
- 2014: green belt GR
- Current: regeneration strategy in Elorrieta area
- Current: regeneration strategy in Abando area
- Current: regeneration strategy in Olabeaga area
- Current: regeneration strategy in Rekalde-Amezola-Irala area

- The link to the specific strategy (with key themes, subthemes, actions)

Our master Plan for urban zoning Strategic municipal planning document that analyses the reality, identifies opportunities, makes urban planning proposals and indicates areas of urban renovation and regeneration. But it is also a legal standard, that regulates the use of land and

buildings, establishes rights and obligations and connects public authorities and private organisations. Now the municipality is designing the new plan for the next twenty years, so this document is a huge opportunity to define the strategy and the concrete measures that the city will take into account for the future renewals, adapting the transformation that began more than twenty years ago to the future goals of the city itself and of the cities in the world.

The city strategy aims at contributing to the objectives of the Operative Program of Sustainable Growth of the EU:

OT2: Improving the use and quality of ICTs and access to them with an Smart City approach in the field of mobility and lighting.

OT4: Boosting the transition to a low carbon economy with focus on building energy efficiency in public buildings and electrification of mobility

OT6: Preserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency with the rehabilitation of urban areas and greening of urban spaces towards flood risk reduction

OT9: Promoting social inclusion and the fight against poverty with the development of cultural, social and entrepreneur activities in old and disused industrial facilities

OT11: Developing institutional capacity and promoting efficiency in public administration

- The main outputs for achieving objective, innovative elements

The success of Bilbao and its current knowhow largely lies on effectively addressing complex multi-agent urban transformation processes, with four main pillars:

- **Integrated and holistic approach** to achieve economic, social and physical transformations.
- **Multi-stakeholder management approach:** considering ad hoc formulas attending different needs at the different moments of the process.
- **A feasible financial operations:** the Public Company BILBAO Ría 2000 was created by Company shareholders, which are all public companies or institutions (between all levels of administration: national, regional, provincial and municipal government), transfer land belonging to them in central areas of Bilbao, and the Town Halls upgrade the land. Thus BILBAO Ría 2000 invests in building work on the land, and sells off the resultant plots to finance its activities. It is a non-profitmaking entity, the capital gains obtained are invested in the regeneration of former industrial areas and in other major metropolitan projects, such as rail infrastructures or regeneration of other districts. BILBAO Ría 2000 also receives European Union subsidies, which in recent years have accounted for 9% of its investment budget.
- **A robust, truly participative and sustainable public policy framework with a holistic and integral consideration of environmental, social and economic dimensions in the planning process.** In this context the **Plan for Urban Zoning** assures, consolidates and allows a common, long term and coherent vision for the future in the city.

- Results achieved, monitoring

Measurement of the sustainability of Bilbao and its districts” (Urban Ecology Agency of Barcelona, 2012): through 48 urban indicators, it analyses the urban sustainability of the city and establishes improvement goals. Some of these indicators have been updated or corrected by the Urban Planning Office.

“Territorial socio-economic diagnosis studies and analysis of urban dynamics in the municipality of Bilbao” (Department of Applied Economics I, UPV-EHU, 2011)

Strong GDP growth from 6695 mill € in 1980 to 66208 mill € in 2009

Industrial strength: Creation and/or consolidation of Advanced Technology Centres such as Tecnalia and IK4.

Investment in R+D 2.1% of the GDP exceeding the EU average

Good Governance Zero Debt

Tourist evolution 24.302 visitors in 1994 to 734215 in 2012 More than 50% increase in number of visitors 1997-2012 linked to the City cultural services and attractiveness

See more in “Bilbao Urban Transformation economic data.pptx”

- Potential for re-use and improvement

Bilbao urban transformation process operates in the wider planning and regulatory context of the Basque Country mature and well-known planning framework.

However the success of Bilbao good practice is not site specific and does not directly depend on this framework and therefore Bilbao know-how and experience could potentially be applied in other different political, governance, societal and financial conditions.

The transferability of the Bilbao methodology and approach to urban transformation is not only feasible but pertinent.

Bilbao transformation process proves that a common share vision of the city, as well as strong political commitment and holistic and inclusive participatory approach to decision making and long- term co-creation in the planning process could lead to success. The model is a flexible and updateable approach that can incorporate existing and future solutions for old and new challenges.

As medium size city it has a great potential to address replicability of lessons/practices from its districts: Downwards to medium and small cities and Upwards to other big cities within EU and abroad internationally.

Bilbao is an exemplary city that continually re-invents and evolves itself amidst dynamic changes, and will serve as an inspiration to cities worldwide.