

(Re)Building an Image for a City: Is A Landmark Enough? Bilbao and the Guggenheim Museum, 10 Years Together¹

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The new global economic scenario has driven cities to urban entrepreneurialism and to a holistic marketing approach to define and manage successful redevelopment projects. Positioning in the chosen target market requires an image and a brand to communicate the city values, the assets that make her unique and better than her competitors. Urban design based on iconic buildings is one of the models of the culture-led regeneration programs that are being developed to re-image the city, to make her an attractive tourist destination. The present study analyzed the image and perception of Bilbao 10 years after the opening of the Guggenheim Museum, and concluded that more than the spectacular landmark should be considered to create a new image.

During the last two decades, many cities, basically in North America and Europe (e.g., Baltimore, MD; Buffalo, NY; Glasgow, Scotland; Marseille, France), have undertaken urban-regeneration planning to change the images of their cities. For this city “re-imaging,” they have used conventional marketing tools (i.e., slogans, logos, promotional literature) and sometimes more subtle techniques (e.g., staging events, constructing iconic buildings, implementing sophisticated public-relationship strategies; Smith, 2005). Urban design used as a tool for development, based on iconic, emblematic buildings (e.g., Sydney Opera House, Cathedral of Brasilia) can be found all over the world. Some have been extraordinary successes, but there are also examples of significant failures.

The specific purpose of the present study is to analyze the image of the city of Bilbao, Spain after 10 years of living with the world-famous Guggenheim Museum. The focus includes the perspective of Bilbao potential visitors, who were randomly selected and queried during the empirical survey. The author, taking an interdisciplinary approach, is convinced that besides considering the broad literature about urban regeneration and city imaging (Couch,

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Fraser, & Percy, 2003; Judd & Parkinson, 1990; LeGates & Stout, 2003; Tallon, 2009), more attention should be devoted to the mechanisms through which the city is perceived, the image created or changed, and the way the Guggenheim Museum may contribute to this process.

In the mid-1970s, when Barry Commoner visited Bilbao, he considered the city "The museum of environmental horrors" (Allende, 1982, p. 169). More than two decades later, some have talked about the city as a cultural Mecca, owing fundamentally to the Guggenheim Museum. More than 10 million persons visited the museum during its first 10 years, and famous architects had designed attractive buildings and infrastructures around it, which has been called the *Guggenheim effect*.

The primary hypothesis of the present study is that—despite the spectacular changes in the city—many people still associate Bilbao with the industrial, gray city it used to be, and that the iconic building designed by Frank Gehry, which is recognized as a landmark by the majority, is not enough to redefine and create a positive, strong image for the city of Bilbao. If the hypothesis is true, some relevant conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of the programs developed to create a new image of the city of Bilbao, the effectiveness of the communication programs, and the way people perceive. This has significant potential implications, not only for urban policy, but also for other disciplines, in Bilbao and in other urban centers. The author believes that marketing and branding could have and should have been applied more efficiently, considering that the city is and must be much more than a building. According to Jacobs (1961), "Cities, like anything else, succeed only by making the most of their assets" (p. 140). The citizens are essential in the achievement of this success, and as Aristotle (1984) stated, "[A] city is excellent, at any rate, by its citizens" (I332a34).

In addition to presenting a historical overview of Bilbao, this paper offers insights into the city's urban regeneration, including episodes of crisis. It begins with a succinct mention and analysis of the two most important examples of the first urban renewal projects developed in the United States: Boston and Baltimore. It continues with a reflection on the new urban entrepreneurialism, showing the necessity for marketing and branding the city, and it finishes with a description of the plan for the revitalization of Bilbao.

The analysis goes on with the architecture as emblem, and the image of the city, paying attention to the process of perception and construction of the image. The last section of the paper presents the results of an empirical survey that the author conducted in 2007, selecting a random sample of university students in Barcelona and Madrid (the largest cities in the country and the origin of the majority of people who visit Bilbao) and in Santander (the capital of the province close to Bilbao) to determine their perception and



Figure 1. Bilbao on the map of Europe.

image of the city, and whether these depended on their place of residence. The author is aware of the necessity for continuing this line of research and expanding the sample, and considers this a first step of a bigger project that must be developed in different phases.

Bilbao: A City Beside a River

According to the 2006 Census (Bilbao City Council, 2007), Bilbao is a city of 354,145 inhabitants that is located on the northern coast of Spain (see Figure 1). It is the capital of the province of Biscay, one of the three provinces that constitute the Basque Country. It is the principal business and services



Figure 2. Metropolitan Bilbao.

hub of Metropolitan Bilbao, an area comprised of a set of municipalities along the Nerbioi River, which is the sixth most populated metropolitan area in Spain, with over 900,000 inhabitants structured into different zones (see Figure 2).

The Appendix describes the Metropolitan Bilbao area. All of these different areas are well interconnected at present, as many infrastructures have been

built and developed in the last decade: a subway, designed by Norman Foster; a tramway; and new lines and railway stations of the suburban rail network. The city also has a new airport, designed by Santiago Calatrava, with important international flights and connections, and a new harbor (see Figure 2).

Since the foundation of Bilbao in 1300, the port has been a cardinal asset, allowing trade and relationships with other parts of the world. In the 19th century, the seaport and its vast mineral wealth determined the economic and social development of the city of Bilbao, which lasted more than 150 years. At the beginning of the 21st century, the geographic location of the city of Bilbao in the Bay of Biscay, the harbor, the industrial tradition, the infrastructure, the percentage of educated people, and the mild climate are key factors in the project of her revitalization, with one of its prime objectives being to convert the city in the “Capital of the Atlantic Axis.”

In a sense, the city of Bilbao is defined by the large estuary of 10 miles that lies at the common mouth of the Nerbioi, Ibaizabal, and Kadagoa Rivers, which extends from the city to the Bilbao Abra Bay and makes the final transition between the river and the sea. According to Zulaika (2003), “The prodigious river [is] the soul of their history and identity” (p. 10). As with any other human achievement, Bilbao has been determined “by time and fate” (Tennyson, 1842). It was founded as a medieval villa in 1300. It became a commercial villa after the establishment of its consulate in 1511, and it was an industrial city from 1800 until the second half of the 20th century. Since the middle 1990s, a post-industrial Bilbao has been trying to recover from the crisis of the iron and steel industry and is facing the challenges in front of her.

The first industrialization of Bilbao, from 1800 to 1880, was based on mining, metallurgy, and shipbuilding because of the special richness of Bilbao ores, the ease of their extraction, and the proximity to the river. This process was closely related to British demand for iron ore during the second half of the 19th century (Bilbao, 1988; Gómez, 1998). The associated great accumulation and investment of capital favored prosperity for the mining industry in the province (Cipolla, 1976; Flinn, 1955; González Portilla, 1975).

The birth and consolidation of the modern iron and steel industry in Biscay took place from 1841 to 1913 (Fernández de Pinedo, 1983). In the beginning, the Basque entrepreneur class adopted free-trade attitudes opposing the protectionism that Catalan and Castilian entrepreneurs were demanding. But when the European market was lost for the Basque ingot, the industry was oriented to the Spanish market and protection was required (García Crespo, 1987).

It can be said that during the first half of the 20th century, in economic terms, Bilbao was dominated by protectionist and stagnant policies, the latest of them stemming from the first period of Franco’s dictatorship: the autarchy period, from 1939 to 1959. Economic expansion appeared from 1950 until the mid-1970s. There was a permanent increase in the number of industrial jobs

Table 1

Evolution of the Index of the Gross Domestic Product (%)

	1962/60	1964/62	67/64	69/67	71/69	73/71	75/73
Spain	23.1	9.5	14.9	14.9	12.1	7.5	7.5
Basque Country	24.7	13.2	17.7	17.9	11.4	9.5	9.5
Biscay	28.4	10.6	18.9	12.8	12.3	11.8	11.8

Source: Banco Bilbao. (1977). *Informe Económico*. Bilbao, Spain: Basque Country, Servicio de Estudios del Banco Bilbao. Reprinted with permission.

in the province of Biscay and a very low unemployment rate (Gómez, 1998). The growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) was always greater in Biscay than in Spain (see Table 1). During these years of economic expansion, thousands of workers from all over the Iberian Peninsula arrived in Bilbao, attracted by the possibilities offered by the city, almost doubling the population of the city, which grew from 216,417 in 1950 to 405,908 in 1970 (Bilbao City Council, 2007).

Because of the 150 years of industrial boom, the left river's bank became the home of Spain's largest iron and steel industries, and Bilbao became the "capital" of the Basque Country (although it was never officially declared), being at the forefront of Basque commerce, industry, and urban life. The iron and steel industry, along with shipbuilding, created sustainable development for decades, but the characteristics of these industries also caused other undesired consequences. The productive processes were intensive in labor and too dependent on exterior technology, and they caused environmental pollution and consumed high amounts of energy. Along with these two big industries, other auxiliary and service industries were created, but they were very much dependent on the big ones and were located in particular places, which caused strong diseconomies of agglomeration (Esteban, 2000).

From 1950 until the mid-1970s, there was growth, but there was no city planning and no control over the construction industry. The houses needed for the avalanche of people who arrived in the city were sited without any prior urban design. There was no control over pollution and no city design. As a result, in the late 1970s, the city image was that of a rusty, polluted one, with smoking chimneys and environmental degradation. There were town-planning problems—economic and social—derived from the uncontrolled growth and the lack of a democratic system that could give special attention to the needs of the citizens.³

³Francisco Franco, the dictator who ruled Spain for more than 30 years, died in 1975.

Table 2

Aggregate Population: 1975–1996

	1975	1981	1986	1991	1996
Basque Country	2064002	2134967	2125922	2104041	2098055
Biscay	1146043	1181401	1168964	1155106	1140026
Metropolitan Bilbao	933141	955550	942472	927481	912565
Bilbao city	429797	433030	378221	369839	358875
Left bank municipalities	265280	268218	259974	250400	241911

Source: INE, National Statistics Institute. (2002). *Censos de Población y Viviendas*. Madrid, Spain. EUSTAT, Basque Statistics Office. (1997). *Estadística de Población y Viviendas 1996*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Country. Reprinted with permission.

Consequently, Bilbao at the time was a clear example of what Garret Hardin (1968) revealed in his famous article “The Tragedy of the Commons” and in the extensions that followed (Hardin, 1998): a social disaster caused by the lack of control and the competitive individualism showed by the industry. The necessity to come up with better ways of living in balance with the environment was obvious. All of the growth was based on a very strong economic specialization, which was successful while the international juncture was favorable. No one was able, or willing, to recognize the need to adopt adjustment measures in response to the impending economic crisis. Therefore, when the crisis appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s—later than in the rest of the economies of the developed world—the costs of dismantling the industry were much higher than necessary, had the situation been predicted more accurately.

In Biscay from 1979 to 1985, the entire provincial economic structure collapsed. There were high unemployment rates, huge swaths of derelict industrial areas, and negative threatening images. Metropolitan Bilbao lost population (see Table 2) and—particularly worrying—young, qualified people, something that had no parallel in other Spanish areas. Population losses and unemployment were more intense within industrial municipalities, predominantly located on the left bank of the river (Gómez, 1998).

From 1975 to 1996, the Metropolitan Bilbao area lost 45% of its industrial employment, in absolute terms (see Table 3). This loss was more severe in the Left Bank municipalities, home of the majority of the activities in crisis (Esteban, 2000). There was economic and social crisis, and the political institutions reacted late. It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that

Table 3

Unemployment Rates: 1975–1996

	1975	1981	1986	1991	1996
Basque Country	2.4	16.2	22.9	19.1	23.3
Biscay	2.8	17.2	24.4	20.5	25.7
Metropolitan Bilbao	2.0	18.5	25.8	21.4	27.2

Source: Banco Bilbao Vizcaya. (1998). *Renta Nacional de España y su distribución provincial*. Bilbao: Basque Country. Servicio de estudios del Banco Bilbao Vizcaya. Basque Government. (1998). *Censo del Mercado de Trabajo*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Country. EUSTAT, Basque Statistics Office. (1997). *Estadística de Población y Viviendas 1996*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Country. Reprinted with permission.

different plans, projects, and guidelines were passed. As a result, from 1997 to 2007, the economy in Biscay and in the Basque Country as a whole had a growth rate of more than 5% (see Table 4).

In 1997, the unemployment rate in Biscay reached the terrible value of 24.3% (21.1% in the entire Basque Country; see Table 5), but it began to decrease gradually. By 2007, its value was 4.0% in Biscay and 3.3% in the Basque Country. Considering the city of Bilbao and the principal municipalities of the Left Bank (see Table 6), the unemployment rate was decreasing since 1999. By 2005, its values were 7.2% in Bilbao, 12.1% in Santurtzi, and 10.5% in Sestao, these last two the dominant locations of the steel and shipbuilding industries, which were most affected by the crisis. These economic data tell us that things were moving in the right direction. The industry lost importance in the GDP, and the services sector increased its importance in it. There was a shift from manufacturing to a more strongly services- and culture-based economy. Already by 2005, the activities of the services sector in Biscay generated 63.9% of the gross added value (GAV; Euskal Estatistika Erakundea, Eustat, Basque Statistics Office).

In spite of previous economic trends, there are data that induce us to think that the political and socioeconomic intervention was not enough. From 1997 to 2007, the population of the city of Bilbao continued to decline, from 358,811 persons in 1997 to 353,938 persons in 2007, according to the Register of the City Council. The evolution of the population during this decade also shows the aging process of the city. In 1997, 18.8% of the citizens of Bilbao were 65 years old or older; and by 2007, this percentage had increased to 21.4%, while the number of persons whose age was in the range of 10 to 40 years had decreased (Bilbao Metròpoli-30).

Table 4

Evolution of the Gross Domestic Product (%): 1997–2007

Year	Spain	Basque Country	Basque Country	Biscay
1997	3.9	4.8	7.1	6.7
1998	4.5	5.9	9.0	8.2
1999	4.7	4.8	8.1	8.5
2000	5.0	5.2	7.9	8.2
2001	3.6	3.3	5.5	5.3
2002	2.7	2.4	5.2	5.5
2003	3.1	3.1	6.5	7.3
2004	3.3	3.7	8.3	8.0
2005	3.6	4.0	7.5	8.3
2006	3.9	4.4	7.8	7.4
2007	3.7	4.2	6.7	6.7

Note. The first two columns, at market prices. Basque Government. Treasury and Public Administration Department. Retrieved from www.ogasun.ejgv.euskadi.net/r51-19218/es/contenidos/informacion/estadisticas_dep/es_estadist/adjuntos/RECOPILACION.pdf. The last two columns, at current prices (base 2005). EUSTAT, Basque Statistics Office. Retrieved from www.eustat.es/elementos/ele0003200/tbl0003214_i.html. Reprinted with permission.

Crisis and Urban Regeneration

Urban Renewal in the United States

The crisis of Fordism and the transition toward a so-called new regime of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1989a; Rodríguez, 1998) specially affected cities in regions where old industrialization was located, forcing them to create and adopt new policies in order to survive. By the end of the 1970s, American cities were supposed to have found the magic formula to deal with the crisis: urban renewal, based on a creative collaboration between the municipality of the city and the private sector, whose objective was to find a new destiny for the city as a service center.

Boston's Docks and Baltimore's Inner Harbor are the foremost examples of this earliest time of urban renewal. In 1976, the dilapidated structures of Faneuil Hall Marketplace were revitalized and, as a consequence, the face of downtown Boston was thoroughly changed. Nowadays, this is one of

Table 5

Unemployment Rates: 1997–2007

Year	Basque Country	Biscay
1997	21.1	24.3
1998	17.8	20.5
1999	15.5	18.0
2000	13.7	16.8
2001	11.1	13.5
2002	8.3	9.7
2003	8.6	9.3
2004	7.8	8.5
2005	5.7	7.4
2006	4.1	5.0
2007	3.3	4.0

Source: EUSTAT, Basque Statistics Office. (2002–2008). *Anuario Estadístico Vasco*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Country. Reprinted with permission.

Table 6

Unemployment Rates in Bilbao and Industrial Municipalities on the Left Bank

	Bilbao City	Barakaldo	Portugalete	Santurtzi	Sestao	Others
1999	15.0	20.2	19.5	19.2	19.5	20.4
2002	10.2	11.1	11.9	13.7	11.7	6.2
2003	10.8	10.9	12.9	12.2	11.3	10.5
2005	7.2	5.9	4.8	12.1	10.5	7.8

Source: EUSTAT, Basque Statistics Office. (2002–2008). *Anuario Estadístico Vasco*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Basque Country. Reprinted with permission.

America's most famous shopping and dining experiences. It offers an extensive list of services for the tourism industry: an array of shops, restaurants, and outdoor entertainment that has made it a premier urban destination and one of the country's top 10 tourist attractions.

Apart from the city's 62 historic sites, its nearly 2,000 restaurants, and its hundreds of hotels, Boston is considered one of the top places in which to do business in the United States. Major industries include finance, high-technology research and development, medicine, education, commercial fishing, food processing, printing and publishing, and government. More than 18 million people visited the Boston metropolitan area in 2007 and spent an estimated \$11 billion there. This first urban renewal project spawned imitation in the United States and abroad.

Baltimore City also experienced a revival of its downtown and transformed a moribund port city into a model of urban renaissance, through projects like Charles Centre and the redevelopment of the Inner Harbor. Baltimore had been a major U.S. seaport since the 1700s, but because of the shallow water of its Inner Harbor, it was mainly a light freight commercial port and passenger port, something that the economic shifts ended by 1950s. Facing rotting warehouses and abandoned piers, the city mayor at the time decided to begin the renewal of the harbor area, transforming it into a major cultural and economic area of the city. On July 1, 1980, the waterfront festival marketplace officially opened, and since then, the Inner Harbor has become home to many tourist attractions.

Today, Baltimore's Inner Harbor is one of the world's newest travel destinations, one of the most photographed and visited features of the city, and an iconic landmark of the City of Baltimore. More than 11 million visitors every year go to see and experience the different attractions it offers: museums, ships, concert halls and arenas, sports, an aquarium, restaurants, unique shopping, live entertainment, local pubs, and taverns. But not all the city benefits from the attraction of millions of tourists, nor at the same pace. There exist in Baltimore large areas with problems of housing, poverty, and urban decline (Hula, 1990), what some authors mention as the risks of the "two speeds" (Busquets, 1993, p. 166). The apparent success hides another reality that should be taken into account as well when designing and developing programs for the city.

James Rouse, the pioneering American real-estate developer who is famous for having built some of the first enclosed shopping malls and who is considered by many, in retrospect, a major contributor to the decline of the city downtown core, worked on the Faneuil Hall and Inner Harbor projects. This is why Peter Hall (1988) talks about the *Rousification* of Boston and Baltimore and what it means: the deliberate creation of the city as a scenario. It looks real, but it is not urban life as the one we have always known. The model is the American Broadway Street of Disneyland in California, where everything is clean and safe, as in a Walt Disney movie (Hall, 1988); far from what Jane Jacobs (1961) wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, one of the most influential books in the history of urbanism in the 20th century:

When we deal with cities, we are dealing with life at its most complex and intense. Because this is so, there is a basic aesthetic limitation on what can be done with cities: A city cannot be a work of art. (p. 372)

Urban Entrepreneurialism: Marketing and Branding the City

Since the 1970s and 1980s, many cities have experienced a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989b) in order to be competitive and to survive in the new scenario, characterized by rapid technological change, global competition, and intergovernmental power shifts: external forces that are responsible for leading cities into trouble. To solve their problems, the cities must undertake serious “market-oriented strategy planning” (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993, p. 17); and they must think like businesses and develop products, markets, and customers that allow them to be competitive and revitalize their economies.

The first task of this strategic “city marketing” is organizing a planning group that is made up of citizens, business people, and local and regional government officials who are in charge of diagnosing the condition of the city, and developing a vision of the long-term solution to the problems of the city and a long-term plan of action (Kotler et al., 1993). After the planning group is established, the long-term solution involves improving the four major marketing factors found in every city: infrastructure, attractions, people, and image and quality of life. These factors are determinant in the success of the city in attracting and satisfying the five potential target markets: manufacturers, corporate headquarters, new residents, investors and exporters, and tourists and conventioners. Kotler et al. summarized the objective of strategic city marketing: “Place marketing means designing a place to satisfy the needs of its target markets” (p. 99).

Holistic marketing, based on the customer-centric idea (Kotler, Jain, & Maesincee, 2002), means paying attention to the perception of the offered products and services, and implies trying to satisfy clients’ needs. It defines the “sense-and-respond” paradigm, which is quite different from the classic “make-and-sell” paradigm that implied selling what a company could make and that is not useful anymore in the dynamic, competitive markets of the global economy. In order to be successful, the new urban entrepreneurialism must take into account this holistic approach, know how the city is perceived, and respond properly to the requirements of its chosen target markets: the customers. Actually, this can be predicated on a much earlier foundational source; that is, Aristotle’s conception of the urban space. Aristotle believed that the purpose of the city was the common good; the virtue and happiness of the citizens:

It is clear that all partnerships aim at some good, and that the partnership that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so particularly, and aims at the most authoritative good of all. This is what is called the *city* or the *political partnership*. (Book I, I252a3; emphasis added)

In order to accomplish good marketing—which, according to Kotler (2003), “consists of being different and better”—cities must brand themselves, understanding that branding is much more than building names or putting a logo on a product or service. A brand name is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes (Levy & Gardner, 1955). The brand resides in customers’ minds and has to deal with a promise and the totality of perceptions and experiences. A holistic branding approach requires a strategic perspective in order to gain a competitive advantage and long-term profitability (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

For the new urban entrepreneurialism, “city branding” is a primary issue, since brands facilitate identification and communicate the benefits and value the city can provide. A new city brand image must be created, with structure and content (Levy & Gardner, 1955), keeping in mind that the image of the city is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of it after judging the city by the quality of its everyday services (Kotler et al., 1993). This quality is driven by perception and rests at the core of the new emphasis on customer satisfaction (Arnold, 1992). The cities forced to act as businesses must also take into account the importance of the human factor in the companies, as “success depends on being able to take advantage of human talent” (Geus, 2003). The *human factor* in the city refers to her citizens, her residents. They are part of the city as much as are the infrastructure, the buildings, and the surroundings; and they must be heard and we must listen to them, because they are producing the urban image every day.

Revitalization of Bilbao

The success of Boston’s Docks and the recovery of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor—the earliest examples of urban renewal—have been widely imitated by cities such as Pittsburgh, Glasgow, Rotterdam, and Geneva. Bearing them in mind, in 1989, Bilbao decided to undergo a very important process of urban regeneration, setting in motion the Strategic Plan for the Revitalization of Bilbao at the request of the Autonomous Basque Government, the Territorial Council of Biscay, and the Bilbao Town Council. To drive the implementation of the Plan, the association Bilbao Metr poli-30 was cre-

ated⁴ to conduct planning, research, and promotion projects aimed at the recuperation and revitalization of Metropolitan Bilbao. The main objective of the Strategic Plan was to turn Bilbao into the economic, financial, and cultural center of the geographic area, which extends from the Cantabrian cornice to Aquitaine. Bilbao's motto shows this clearly: "Bilbao, capital of the Atlantic Axis." The key components of the plan were as follows:

1. Expansion and modernization of the port
2. New transportation facilities, including a subway designed by Norman Foster
3. Expansion of the airport, designed by Santiago Calatrava
4. Construction of a new bridge (the Zubi-Zuri), designed by Santiago Calatrava
5. The Abandoibarra riverfront development, including a 1 million square-foot office and shopping mall complex, designed by César Pelli
6. Construction of the Euskalduna Convention Centre and Music Hall, designed by Federico Soriano and Dolores Palacio
7. Construction of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry

A \$1.5 billion urban renewal plan was put in place in order to obtain a new service economy and to attract leisure and cultural industries. This was a culture-led regeneration plan, a model of regeneration through cultural projects based on "cultural flagships" (Evans, 2005, p. 969). These models of regeneration use culture as a development tool and try to benefit from the cultural contribution to physical, economic, and social regeneration (Evans, 2005). The core of this plan was Abandoibarra, an old industrial and harbor area of 35 hectares along the left bank of the river, just on the hearth of the residential and tertiary sector of the city, where the Guggenheim Museum and the Euskalduna Convention Centre and Music Hall would be built. This entire area of Abandoibarra would be redesigned according to Cesar Pelli's master plan, and would be transformed into a cultural and leisure district, with the final purpose of converting Bilbao into an international tourist place.

Besides tourists, the city needed industrial and services activities as well; companies that could link Bilbao to the new economy. Although much was said and published about different plans, in the end everything was limited to housing, shopping, and leisure. This was the case of the plan for Zorrozaure, a peninsula in the middle of the river, where Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid was chosen to design Bilbao's "Manhattan," as Iñaki Azkuna, the mayor of

⁴Information provided by Bilbao Metr poli-30, www.bm30.es.

Bilbao, liked to say. Initially, the plan for Zorrozaure included a plan to build a small urban technological park, but announcement of the construction of more than 5,000 houses, a mall, and leisure areas led many to believe that it would seriously limit the park's size; and they voiced their doubts about its capacity to contribute to changing the image of the city.

Architecture as Emblem

The new processes of urban regeneration in our post-modern global world are as much about image as they are about investment and production. This is why the presence of international star architects is indispensable in order to change the image of the place to be recovered (Zulaika, 2003). Urban designers all over the world are trying to erect trophy buildings in the hope of turning second-tier cities into tourist magnets (Lee, 2007). We are facing a new form of urban cultural consumption, which incorporates architecture, art, and spectacle (Hamnett & Shoval, 2003) and consolidates a new segment in urban tourism: that of cultural tourism.

Emblematic buildings and cultural quarters originated in the United States and have become a marketing tool for the city. This has been also implemented in Bilbao, where between all the different buildings and structures, there is one that has attracted all the attention and made Bilbao a pilgrimage town: the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry. This new urban landmark, with its image of innovation and excitement and its magnetism is, for many, the prime reason to visit the Guggenheim Museum (Krens, 1999), since they believe it is more interesting than the collection it was designed to house.

The Bilbao Guggenheim Museum was considered by an authority like Philip Johnson, the first architect to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the "greatest building of our time" (as quoted in Van Bruggen, 1998, front flap). In his acceptance speech, Johnson encouraged America to change the ugly surroundings, the inadequate housing, the sad slums, and he spoke about how new societies had always demanded new buildings, expressing his conviction about their importance: "Whole civilizations are remembered by their buildings: indeed, some only by their buildings" (Johnson, 1979). This attractive building in Bilbao is also a good example of the key role of architecture and architects in the creation of new images of culture and novelty (Hamnett & Shoval, 2003), a priority in many urban-regeneration policies in recent decades.

The year of its opening, *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp (1997) wrote about the "miracle in Bilbao" and considered the Guggenheim Museum building the reincarnation of Marilyn Monroe. There

was astonishment, but some soon began to reflect on many other aspects related to the museum. By the summer of 1999, Carol Becker, the Dean of Faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, published an article in the *Art Journal* about the experience of traveling to Bilbao to see U.S.-organized exhibitions in a museum with little to do with art making in Spain, even less in the Basque Country. According to Becker (1999), "This fabulous new building brings an international audience to Bilbao, but stands apart from its cultural locality" (p. 22).

Cities must survive dealing with global economic forces, being forced to position themselves with a defined image. Finding a right balance between local and global is central to much of global branding today, showing the need for a new model, *glocal*, which can be summarized in the adage "Think Global, Act Local." As Friedman (1986) indicated, "We would expect cities to differ among themselves according to not only the mode of their integration with the global economy, but also their own historical past, national policies, and cultural influences" (p. 69). Knowing that one of Bilbao's aims is cultural centrality, many feel that the Basque identity should be recognized and promoted, making the most of the possibilities that provide this international museum as "strong cultural identity should be forged from within and not be imported" (Baniotopoulou, 2001, p. 10).

Seven years after the opening of Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum, many began to ask if any measurable change, apart from the fact that the building was an iconic architecture in itself, had taken place at all; that is, if Bilbao was a miracle or a myth (Hammond, 2004). Hammond presented the interesting opinion of Paul Cheshire, professor of economic geography at the London School of Economics and expert on the factors determining the economic growth in European cities, who stated that "Contrary to popular belief, there is actually no evidence that the Guggenheim has had any significant effect on the wider Bilbao economy. Any effect is almost certainly local—within the immediate vicinity of the museum" (Paul Cheshire, as quoted in Hammond, 2004).

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was visited by 1,360,000 persons the first year; and by 1,265,000 the second year. Total direct visitor expenditures came to 72,000 million pesetas (\$450 million US), which is five times the initial construction costs of the museum, according to the annual report developed by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 2000. It can be said that the museum attracts an average of 800,000 persons every year. As of October 2007, approximately 9 million people had visited.

The impact of the activities of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao on the Basque Country economy, from 1997 to 2007, can be seen in the last report developed by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2008). In 2007 alone, museum activities generated 220,240,289 Euros (\$301,729,196 US) of the

GDP and provided additional income for the Basque Treasury amounting to 29,994,526 Euros (\$41,092,500 US). The increase in the number of tourists in Bilbao is undeniable, but there are some critical attitudes that question the ability of this growth to regenerate the economy in terms of employment and per capita income (e.g., Gómez, 1998). The amount and significance of the impact has been a subject of discussion in recent years, and continues to this day in the academic forum (e.g., Plaza, 1999, 2000; Gómez & González, 2002).

Some have suggested that Bilbao is a “one-horse town” because although she seems to have it all—a world-class museum, fine Basque cuisine, and a great deal of shopping—the city lacks the critical mass of attractions to take it from a provincial post-industrial town to a global cosmopolitan city. People visiting the city arrive primarily to see the Guggenheim Museum (Zulaika, 1997), and then they leave. In Bilbao, the concentration of first-rate architecture is astounding, but does it alone make a city? For many, she is “all dressed up,” but has not figured out yet where to go (Lee, 2007).

The City and the Image

The Strategic Plan for the Revitalization of Bilbao was designed to attract business and visitors. It was obvious from the very beginning of the need to change the image of the city in order to achieve this purpose. But, how is the image created? How can it be modified?

The Image

The image we have about someone or something is built up as a result of our past experience. This knowledge structure constitutes the image of the world, what we believe to be true. It is so crucial that it determines the way we act and react and the way we behave, as thoroughly explained by Boulding (1961). Images can be created, developed, or modified; and any new perception or experience can affect them. Therefore, the chosen message is important when branding the city and dealing with its image, since “The meaning of a message is the change which it produces in the image” (p. 7).

The *image* is a set of ideas, feelings, and attitudes that people have in their minds, associated with the complex symbol of the brand name (Levy & Gardner, 1955). Hence, the fact is that the city branding managers must discover what kind of symbol the brand name is or what they want it to be. They must decide on the symbolic character, and the personal and social meaning (Levy, 1959) that should be linked to the city. This is a matter of

public policy in the end, since the image can also change society, in the sense that it can influence the behavior of its citizens. According to Boulding (1961), “The image not only makes the society, society continually remakes the image” (p. 64).

The Image of the City

This issue should not be addressed without paying attention to Lynch’s (1960) most famous work, *The Image of the City*, in which he described the results of his 5-year study about how users perceive and organize spatial information as they navigate through cities. He revealed the elements that are important in the popular perception of the city and set out what is fundamental for people living in the city about its built environment. Lynch’s findings transformed the way design professionals and social scientists deal with urban form and design. He introduced for the first time the concept of *place legibility*, which is essentially the ease with which people understand the layout of a place. He discovered that, first and foremost, people create a mental map, mental representations of what the city contains, and its layout according to the individual. In Lynch’s opinion, these mental representations contain a network of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. He assumed that people would more likely know—and, therefore, use—an environment that is easy to read, or *legible* (Nasar, 2001).

Lynch (1960) also introduced the term *imageability*, which is the quality of a physical object that gives the observer a strong, vivid image. He pointed out that the image of the city must necessarily have the following three elements: identity, structure, and meaning. These three concepts have been “deconstructed” by post-modern thought, the intellectual movement that emerged during the 1970s and that has enormously challenged many notions converting life into a commodity. The adoption of post-modern ideas by cities has powerful consequences for urban planning because the post-modern city becomes a place for spectacle, consumption, and worldwide corporate decision making (Zulaika, 2003).

The question of the identity in general is being revised nowadays by anthropologists, who are trying to understand the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) stated, “The identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality” (p. 8). The idea that space is made meaningful is a well established anthropological truth. From at least the times of Durkheim, anthropology has known that the experience of space is always socially

constructed. So, as Gupta and Ferguson asked, “How are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces?” (p. 7).

It will help to remember here the work of William Whyte, the mentor for Project for Public Spaces, who spent his life studying human behavior in urban settings. Whyte believed in the perseverance and sanctity of public spaces. He considered urban places priceless and the city street the river of life. According to Whyte (2001), “The street is the river of life of the city, the place where we come together, the pathway to the centre.” He was convinced of the fundamental contribution of social life in public spaces to the quality of life of individuals and society. Whyte reported the results of a decade-long research project observing human behavior patterns in streets, plazas, and malls. In 1986, he talked about the design studios and the students who present them.

These overhead bridges encased in glass, all sort of architectural acrobatics, sunken plazas. . . . You realize that this is a generation that never knew a city. They never knew a successful downtown. It is not their fault. Their image is of a suburban shopping mall. They recreate it. They do not know how important the street is. I want to show them that the best contemporary developments, just like the best old ones, have a strong street presence. This is what unifies. It is what brings us together. (Whyte, as cited in Birch, 1986, p. 8)

Many people shape the city form and are affected by it. As different researchers have shown, appearance is a determining factor in human responses to one’s surroundings. Regrettably, very often, designers and other experts who shape places do not produce designs that please people (Nasar, 1994, 1997). The evaluative image of the city and the evaluative response to places may arise from formal variables that have to do with the structure of form and include such things as shape, proportion, scale, complexity, incongruity, novelty, order, and symbolic or content variables that have to do with the connotative meanings associated with the forms (Nasar, 2001). Different kinds of theories have discussed the relationship between these variables and response.

One set of theories views preference as dependent on arousal, which can be increased by complexity and novelty (Berlyne, 1971; Mandler, 1984; Wohlwill, 1983). Although complexity and novelty increase arousal, interest, and excitement, the preference has an inverted-U-shaped relationship to arousal, so after a point, increases in complexity or novelty produce a downturn in preference.

Another theory offers an evolutionary model and sets out that humans nowadays prefer places that offer involvement and either make sense or promise to make sense. This theory posits that people should like a mix of complexity, mystery, coherence, and legibility (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Rachel Kaplan and her husband are at the forefront of research on what they call *restorative environment*, exploring nature's impact on people's mental functioning, social relationships, and even physical well-being. They have tried to explain the mental and physical restoration we receive from nature, and its implications for how we build our homes, work environments, and cities (Clay, 2001).

Following Lynch's work, Nasar (1994, 1997) has explored the role of human evaluations of the cityscape during the last four decades. After so many years of research, he is capable of describing how to assess, plan, and design the appearance of cities to please inhabitants. Focused on the image of the city, Nasar coined the term *linkability*, which is the probability that an environment will evoke a strong favorable response from observers. He has also found the environmental features that are prominent in human perception and evaluation of places: naturalness, order, complexity, novelty, upkeep, openness, and historical significance (Nasar, 1994, 1997).

The Perception

Perception, inherently linked to the creation of the image, takes us to the works of J. J. Gibson, one of the most prominent 20th-century psychologists in the field of visual perception. Gibson (1950) detailed how perception is the process of maintaining contact with the world and is a direct function of stimulation. By the time of his retirement, Gibson (1986) had formulated a radical, ecological approach to visual perception—the ecological theory of perception—which is striking in many ways and is explained in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, which was published posthumously in 1979.

Based on an evolutionary perspective, it can be said that Gibson's theory is a theory of perception, a theory of what the world consists of, a metaphysic, an epistemology. Gibson (1950, 1986) believed that there exist reciprocal links between the individual and the environment, and his theory revolved around the information acquired through persistence under change. For Gibson, perception is both direct and meaningful.

More than 20 years after the publication of Gibson's ecological theory of perception, Heft (2005) wrote *Ecological Psychology in Context*, a book that

was recommended for its searching account of Gibson's historical significance and the implications of his work for the human science. One of the book's thesis is that knowing is rooted in the direct experience of meaningful environmental objects and events (Heft, 2005). Heft analyzed the connection between Gibson's ecological psychology and the later work of William James—particularly his radical, empiricist philosophy—and he described radical empiricism as commitment to three hypotheses:

1. All and only things that are experienced exist.
2. Along with the objects, relations are experienced.
3. The structure of experience is known directly, not via inferences on mental representations.

It can be concluded that these describe James' neutral monism, a view of the world as ultimately made up of experience. In Heft's opinion, radical empiricism and neutral monism are ancestors of Gibson's theories of perception (Chemero, 2003).

Method

Research participants were 200 university students (99 women, 101 men) who were randomly selected in Barcelona, Madrid, and Santander. They were asked to complete a questionnaire that was designed specifically for this project.

Available data show that the majority of people who visit Bilbao arrive from Barcelona and Madrid (the most populated and economically developed areas of Spain) while Santander (the capital of the province close to Bilbao on the west) was chosen in order to check if this proximity was responsible for differences in the opinions and perceptions of the students. With regard to their age, 51.8% of the participants were 18 to 25 years, 27.9% were 26 to 33 years, and the remainder were older than 33 years. Regarding their origin, 41.1% were from Barcelona, 17.8% were from Madrid, and 41.1% were from Santander. The aim of the study was to determine what image the participants had of Bilbao, knowing that, in general, they were born after the crisis and, therefore, that they never saw the gray and polluted city.⁵

⁵The author is aware of the need to continue with the research and to expand the sample, as the present study is not representative of all university students in Spain. However, the obtained results provide an interesting clue in understanding the image of the city among these young people and reflecting on many aspects of it.

Results

Global

It is well known that some cities have strong images, and people are able to associate them with specific features, buildings, or geographic characteristics. This is easily confirmed if we consider the primary cities that are situated at the core of the hierarchy of world cities, as proposed by Friedman (1986) in the world city hypothesis:

London	Big Ben, Tower Bridge, Tower of London, Royal Palace, the city of London, River Thames, Hyde Park
Paris	Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, l'Arc de Triomphe, Concord Square, Sacré Coeur, "the City of Light"
New York	Statue of Liberty, Fifth Avenue, Central Park, Yellow cabs, "Big Apple," "the City That Never Sleeps," "the Capital of the World"
Chicago	Lakefront, Sears Tower, Chicago Water Tower, buildings of the Chicago River frontline, "the Windy City," "Second City"
Los Angeles	Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Universal Studios, Paramount Pictures, Sunset Boulevard, Melrose Avenue, UCLA
Tokyo	Shibuya (central business district), traditional Japanese gardens (Shinjuku Gyoen), Imperial Palace, Tokyo Tower, Tokyo subway

At the core of the world city hierarchy, but as secondary ones, Friedman put cities such as Brussels, Milan, Vienna, Madrid, Toronto, Miami, Houston, San Francisco, and Sydney, each of them easily associated with strong images related to the city's history, economic activity, and spatial organization.

In an attempt to determine if Bilbao is able to evoke an image or a feeling, the first question was "What is the first thing that comes to your mind when mentioning Bilbao?" The most frequent answers were Guggenheim Museum (30.5%), industrial activity (22.8%), football team (14.2%), kind people proud of their city (6.6%), and rainy weather (5.6%). With percentages of less than 5% each, the following responses were also given: terrorism; designer architecture; geographical location in a hole; industrial activity and Guggenheim Museum; Basque Country and conflict; dark and dirty city; horrible traffic; industrial activity beside the river; traffic jam in the highway; IKEA; and the food.

Table 7

Bilbao Visually Appealing

	Inadequate	Indifferent	Satisfactory	No answer
Parks	19.8%	27.9%	22.8%	29.5%
Open space	16.2%	30.5%	21.8%	31.5%
Historical significance	13.2%	25.9%	29.5%	31.4%
Sense of order	20.3%	23.9%	25.4%	30.4%
Evidence of good keeping	17.8%	18.8%	33.6%	29.8%

The majority of the students said that they had previously visited the city and mentioned a variety of primary reasons to do it, with no single response clearly prevailing: beauty of the surroundings (20.8%), Guggenheim Museum (17.8%), commercial activity (16.2%), night life/atmosphere (15.7%), and cultural life (14.2%). The other reasons, with much smaller percentages, included shopping, fiesta, sports, going to the airport, tourism and family, music, and friends. More than half of the participants (64.5%) considered Bilbao a city with a strong personality. Some did not give any answer (23.8%), while very few said that the city does not have any personality (11.7%).

While the majority of the students (66.0%) said that there was a landmark in the city, when they were asked to name it, many of them did not respond (40.1%). They mainly pointed out the Guggenheim Museum (51.8%); the estuary (2%); and with much smaller percentages (< 2% each), they mentioned industries, pollution, football team, Guggenheim Museum and the river, and the dog in front of the Guggenheim Museum.

The students were asked to evaluate the five components of the city of Bilbao that make it visually appealing (Nasar, 1997): parks, open space, historical significance, a sense of order, and evidence of good keeping. Responses were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very inadequate*) to 7 (*very satisfactory*). The answers appear in Table 7 where the values have been gathered in three intervals (1–3 = *inadequate*, 4 = *indifferent*, 5–7 = *satisfactory*). The most frequent answer was the *No* response in four of the five considered components: parks (29.5%), a sense of order (30.4%), historical significance (31.4%), and open space (31.5%). Only the evidence of good keeping in Bilbao was considered satisfactory (33.6%) in a bigger percentage than the *No* answer (29.8%).

Finally, the students were asked to provide a definition of the city of Bilbao, writing anything they considered suitable. The majority did not give any answer (51.8%), and the more frequent responses were clearly related to the old image of the city: industrial city (5.6%), sad/gray (3.6%), great (3.6%), fun (2.5%), polluted (1.5%), capital of the north (1.5%), prosperous (1.5%), cosmopolitan (1.5%), kind/nice (1.5%), and warm (1.5%). Definitions mentioned by less than 1.5% include the following: redefined city that gets better every year, business and leisure, ugly with good shops, historic, industry and leisure, radical, modern, a little chaos, city for working not for living, not very beautiful but with everything, charming people and surroundings, and cultural.

Bearing in mind that satisfaction is obtained when the perceptions at least match with the previous expectations, the students were asked whether the city of Bilbao had disappointed them. More than half of the participants (52.8%) replied that they did not feel disappointed by the city; a small group (11.7%) said that they did; and the rest (35.5%) did not answer. The majority of students (67.0%) answered that they would come back to the city, and only a very small group (4.1%) said that they would not, while less than one third (28.9%) did not provide an answer.

Gender and Place of Residence: Cross-Cultural Perception

Understanding how we acquire culture and how it influences our lives is, and has been, a prime subject for many cross-cultural psychologists for decades (Gardiner, Mutter, & Kosmitzki, 1998; Matsumoto, 2003). Research has shown that cultural differences challenge mainstream theoretical notions about the nature of people and force us to rethink basic theories about perception and cognition.

No topic is more compelling in contemporary psychology than culture, and no other topic has the potential to revise in fundamental, profound ways almost everything we think that we know about people (Matsumoto, 2001). Convinced of the importance of culture in human perceptual processes, particularly visual perception, the students' answers were analyzed, taking into account two determinant variables: gender and place of residence.

Gender is a very determinant factor that can condition the way we mix with other persons and perceive space; the way we focus on things; and the way we choose what is attractive for us. Asked about the first thing that came to their minds when mentioning Bilbao, women mentioned the Museum more frequently (34.4%) than did men (25.3%). Industrial activity was noted by women (23.3%) and men (23.1%) in more or less similar percentages, and the football team was mentioned more often by men (19.8%) than by women

(10.0%). Women and men also showed differences in their principal reasons for visiting the city: for women, commercial activity (22.2%), beauty of the surroundings (21.1%), and Guggenheim Museum (17.8%); and for men, beauty of the surroundings (20.9%), Guggenheim Museum (17.6%), and commercial activity (13.2%). When they were asked about landmarks, the majority pointed out the Guggenheim Museum (women, 55.6%; men, 48.4%), followed by no response (men, 42.9%; women, 36.7%), and the river (men, 4.4%; women, 2.2%). The majority of participants did not give a definition of the city of Bilbao (women, 55.6%; men, 47.3%). When they gave one, it was related to the old city: its industrial activity (women, 7.8%; men, 3.3%), and its ugliness (women, 3.3%; men, 3.3%).

Participants' place of residence was also considered an interesting factor that could condition the way its citizens perceived and acted. In 2007, when the sample was taken, Madrid was a city of 3,132,463 inhabitants and also was capital of the Community of Madrid, which held 6,081,689 persons. Barcelona had 1,595,110 residents and was the capital of Catalonia, a very rich and developed area with its own language and culture, very proud of its own history, which had 7,134,697 inhabitants. Santander was the capital of the small province of Cantabria, which had only 572,503 residents; 181,802 of whom lived in the capital (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007).

Asked about the first thing that came to their minds when mentioning Bilbao, the participants gave different answers, depending on their city of residence. For residents of Barcelona, the responses were as follows: Guggenheim Museum (40.7%), industrial activity (18.5%), football team (12.3%), kind people proud of their city (6.2%), and rainy weather (4.9%). The rest of the responses, with percentages smaller than 3% include the following: designer architecture (2.5%), and terrorism (2.5%). For residents of Madrid, the responses were as follows: football team (38.5%), rainy weather (15.4%), Guggenheim Museum (15.4%), industrial activity (7.7%), kind people proud of their city (7.7%), geographical location in a hole (7.7%), and no answer (7.7%). For residents of Santander, responses were as follows: industrial activity (32.1%), Guggenheim Museum (23.5%), football team (9.9%), kind people proud of their city (7.4%), industrial activity and Guggenheim Museum (3.7%), terrorism (3.7%), and rainy weather (2.5%).

The students also indicated different reasons to visit Bilbao, depending on their place of residence. For residents of Barcelona, the responses were as follows: beauty of the surroundings (33.3%), Guggenheim Museum (19.8%), night life/atmosphere (12.3%), cultural life (9.9%), commercial activity (6.2%), and academic activity (3.7%). For residents of Madrid, the responses were as follows: cultural life (26.9%), Guggenheim Museum (23.1%), beauty of the surroundings (15.4%), night life/atmosphere (11.5%), academic activity (3.8%), and architecture (3.8%). For residents of Santander, the responses

were as follows: commercial activity (33.3%), night life/atmosphere (22.2%), cultural life (14.8%), Guggenheim Museum (13.6%), and beauty of the surroundings (11.1%).

Asked about a landmark in the city, all of the students mentioned the Guggenheim Museum, but the percentages differed when taking into account their city of residence. For residents of Barcelona, the responses were as follows: Guggenheim Museum (48.1%), no answer (43.2%), the river (2.5%), industries (1.2%), and Guggenheim and the river (1.2%). For residents of Madrid, the responses were as follows: Guggenheim Museum (15.4%), and no answer (84.6%). For residents of Santander, the responses were as follows: Guggenheim Museum (67.9%), no answer (22.2%), the river (2.5%), and the dog in front of the Guggenheim Museum (2.5%).

When the participants gave a definition of Bilbao, differences appeared according to their city of residence. For residents of Barcelona, the responses were as follows: no answer (49.4%), industrial city (4.9%), hell of a city (4.9%), sad/gray (3.7%), kind/nice (2.5%), cultural (2.5%), and capital of the north (1.2%). For residents of Madrid, the responses were as follows: no answer (84.6%), capital of the north (3.8%), football team (3.8%), spectacular (3.8%), and from iron to culture (3.8%). For residents of Santander, the responses were as follows: no answer (43.2%), industrial city (8.6%), capital of the north (3.7%), very polluted (3.7%), good standard of living (3.7%), sad/gray (3.7%), cosmopolitan (3.7%), and not very beautiful but has everything (2.5%).

The major finding of this study is that many things, still, must be redefined and done in order to change the image of Bilbao, understanding that "Image change should be one of several outcomes of successful regeneration strategies, not the ultimate objective" (Smith, 2005, p. 418). Many persons still thought of the city as the industrial, gray one it used to be and were unable to associate Bilbao with any strong image, nor give a definition of it, although they consider the Guggenheim Museum an outstanding landmark in the city.

In considering the results of the survey, it is evident that Bilbao must clearly define her "mission" and her "niche," and work with the different involved actors in order to achieve the proposed objectives. To be attractive, the city must change her image and communicate that she is ready for the new century and the new economy, after overcoming the crisis. But for this, the Guggenheim Museum does not seem to be enough. It is a great, iconic building, perhaps the best of the 20th century, as Johnson said, but the city is and should be much more than a building. People come to visit the city from anyplace in the world, but the city does not make any impression on them. They enjoy the building, and they leave.

Any perceived pessimism raised by this paper should be balanced against the fact, which the author acknowledges, that certain initiatives have, indeed, been launched in Bilbao. These initiatives have resulted in ameliorating the quality of

life for the city and its citizens. Bilbao is cleaner than ever, the river is beginning to breathe, the fish can be seen from the river banks, pollution is less than 30 years ago, there are more green areas and walk areas, the subway designed by Norman Foster is a symbol of modernity, and the city has been “put on the map” because of the Guggenheim Museum. But the advanced services that were to come—banking, insurance, high technology, specialized commerce—have not arrived yet. Mainly, architects have taken charge of the revitalization of Bilbao and, as a consequence, the container is ready, but the contents have not appeared yet. There has been insufficient integration of the physical, social, and economic dimension of the process of revitalization (Esteban, 2000).

Final Reflections and a Research Agenda

The city of Bilbao, which is more than 700 years old, has a long history, culture, and identity that should not be erased in the process of (re)building her image. The transformation of the city into a tourist attraction, through innovative designing of space, should go along with conserving her identity and her culture, finding ways to apply the glocal model in this context of urban planning.

Surviving in a competitive world may require being brave and imaginative. Copying and repeating successful experiences may drive us to a scenario with no differences and saturation of the same: lakefront developments, riverfront developments, and iconic buildings. Keeping in mind the principles of Gibson's (1986) ecological theory of perception, more attention should be paid to the role of perceptual systems other than vision in order to create meaningful spaces.

If being unique, different, and better than any competitor is a fundamental factor for succeeding in the market, it seems essential, considering the soul of the city, maybe the only one that cannot be copied or imitated. The study and analysis of the soul can be useful for branding and re-imaging the city, focusing more on experiencing the city than on consuming it.

Urban marketing and city branding should be used more efficiently, beginning by defining properly the value the city can provide, and paying attention to the human factor: citizens and customers. If we are not aware of what the city is, we can design beautiful scenarios that are devoid of life.

With a holistic approach, the triangular interrelationships between the city, the society to which she belongs, and her image should be studied in depth (see Figure 3). Politicians and experts should consider all of the variables involved and the multiple interdependences between them, without forgetting the key role played by the citizens of Bilbao in the design and creation of the city and, therefore, in its image.

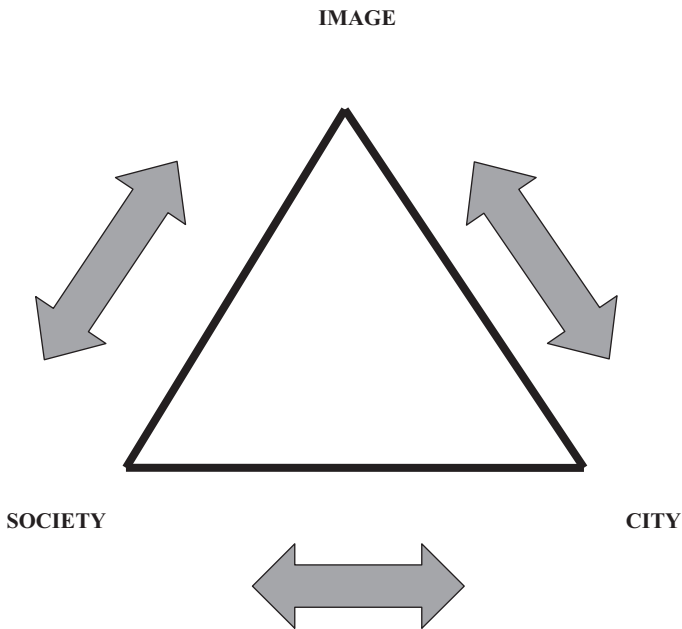


Figure 3. The city and its image.

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Appendix

Metropolitan Bilbao

The city of Bilbao	From Bolueta, in the south, to San Inazio
The left bank	Traditionally, an industrial port and manufacturing zone; it includes municipalities such as Barakaldo, Sestao, Portugalete, and Santurtzi (northwest of Bilbao)
The right bank	A residential area that includes municipalities such as Erandio, Leioa, and Getxo (e.g., Las Arenas, Algorta; northeast of Bilbao)
The mining zone	Where the main iron-ore resources were once located, it includes municipalities such as Trapagara, Ortuella, Gallarta, and Muskiz (northwest of Bilbao)
Txori-herri	Where the international airport is located, it includes municipalities such as Lezama, Zamudio, Derio, Sondika, and Loiu (east of Bilbao)
HegoUribe	High-density residential and industrial areas in the south, which include municipalities such as Galdakao, Arrigorriaga, and Basauri (south of Bilbao)
Uribe Kosta	Low-density residential areas, north of Getxo, which include municipalities such as Berango, Sopela, and Plentzia (northeast of Bilbao)