

Regenerating Bilbao: From ‘productive industries’ to ‘productive services’

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This paper aims at analysing the maintenance, preservation, and (re)interpretation of the urban heritage of the industrial city of Bilbao (Spain). Particular attention will be paid to the effects of globalisation at the end of the XX century in Bilbao's, the relationship between proposals and completed actions put forward by Bilbao's strategic plan (Partial Territorial Plan), and their urban and socio-economic impacts on the city starting from the beginning of the 1990s.

This work focuses on three of the most emblematic actions which have been carried out thus far in the Ria river territory to consider and discuss the treatment of the historical memory of the industrial legacy: the Abandoibarra's abandoned shipyards, the Ametzola railway station, and eventually the Galindo River estuary.

Parole chiave: industrial heritage; urban regeneration; post-fordist city

Rigenerare Bilbao: dalle ‘industrie produttive’ ai ‘servizi produttivi’

Questo contributo analizza la gestione e la (re) interpretazione del patrimonio urbano della città di Bilbao (Spagna) e gli effetti della globalizzazione alla fine del XX secolo nel suo ambito urbano. Sarà prestata particolare attenzione al rapporto tra le proposte e le azioni completate del piano strategico di Bilbao (Piano territoriale parziale) e i suoi impatti socio-economici e urbani sulla città a partire dall'inizio degli anni '90. Il saggio si concentra su tre delle azioni più emblematiche portate a termine ad oggi nel territorio fluviale per dimostrare come è stato impostato il trattamento della memoria storica dell'eredità industriale: le trasformazioni dei cantieri navali abbandonati di Abandoibarra, della stazione ferroviaria di Ametzola e infine dell'estuario del fiume Galindo.

Keywords: patrimonio industriale; rigenerazione urbana; città post-fordista

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1. Introduction

At the end of the 1970s, Bilbao was one of the Spanish cities most affected by changes in global economic patterns and deindustrialisation (Sassen, 1991). Economic focus deviated from local industrial to largescale global economies (Clark, 1996). Bilbao has commissioned ‘urban regeneration’ programmes and a mechanism for the recovery of lost economic activity along with other European spatial entities (Esteban, 2000). These programmes aim to integrate social, physical, and environmental factors of the local territory to encourage economic development (Couch, Fraser, Percy, 2003). Urban transformation schemes have been characterised by the creation of quality spatial areas for a competitive economic claim, often at the expense of the interests and real needs of local citizens (Sklair, 2017; Stein, 2019). Furthermore, urban regeneration schemes often ignore the inherited industrial heritage of the areas that they aim to improve (Zukin, 1995; Marcuse, Van Kempen, 2000).

The purpose of this work is to analyse the maintenance, preservation, and (re)interpretation of the urban heritage of the industrial city of Bilbao together with the effects of globalisation at the end of the twentieth century. Thus, particular attention will be paid to the relationship between proposals and completed actions put forward by Bilbao's strategic plans *Partial Territorial Plans* (1997 and 2008 PTP), and their urban and socio-economic impacts on the city. The paper analyses three of the most emblematic actions carried out thus far in the Ria river areas starting from the second half of the 1990s.

The research hypothesis refers to the fact that even if the international urban studies have tackled several aspects of Bilbao's urban regeneration (among others, Vicario, Martínez Monje, 2003; Aa.Vv., 2004; del Cerro, 2006; Plaza, 2006; Vescovi, 2006; Plaza, Tironi, Haarich, 2009; Plaza, Haarich, 2013; Aurrenetxe, 2018), there is actually not any literature on the up-to-date strategic plan implementation, neither by Public Administrations nor by academics. Hence, it is worth pointing out the originality and relevance of this work. First, we analyse how the 2008 PTP contributes to materialise the so-called *Bilbao Metropolitano* according to the previous 1997 PTP. Second, the relationship between this strategic plan and creation of the new entity will be addressed (§ 3). Third, the idea of urban regeneration in connection with the areas of centrality set up during the 1990s (§§ 4, 5, and 6) and, eventually, their materialisation will be analysed (§ 7).