

THE REVITALIZATION OF METROPOLITAN AREA OF BILBAO: THE BILBAO RÍA 2000 MANAGEMENT, TERRITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

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The constant growth of Bilbao, throughout its history, saw prisoner abruptly, at the end of the years 70 and beginnings of those of 80, by a deep crisis that affected to many of the structural factors of the economy, urbanism and, really, of the territory of its Metropolitan Area.

The reaction of the administration and the institutions for the overcoming of such crisis were, at any moment, determinant for the initiated transformation. This transformation has contributed to the city and its surroundings a new urban image. The obtained results have deserved the general recognition, including a international level, of the carried out actions for the overcoming of the character of area depressed of the Region.

The change operated in the surroundings of Ría of Bilbao has leaned in two basic initiatives. First of them it responds to the joint intervention of all the administrations and institutions implanted in the territory that fomented the definition of a Strategic Plan developed under the supervision of a created society to the effect: Bilbao Metròpoli 30. The second initiative corresponds to the creation of the instrumental society Bilbao Ría 2000 whose specific function has been the one to manage the different provoked city-planning operations in some from the denominated «spaces of opportunity».

These «spaces of opportunity» are constituted by great ground surfaces of the Metropolitan Area. They are spaces that had not been arrived to urbanize or that were lost their previous industrial use, harbour use or railway use. They are zones, in addition, whose redefinition implies very directly to the conception and structures of the territory.

Throughout the years in which they have taken shape the development of the Strategic Plan and the actions of the Society Bilbao Ría 2000, some studies and works interested in the characteristics of the transformation and the critic of the possible reached results.

Nevertheless, although in some of the works reference to the management has become of the Bilbao Ría 2000 Society, little one has deepened in the characteristics of his mission and the weaknesses or strengths of the exposition of the same one.

The mission of Bilbao Ría 2000 appears, frequently, prestigious by the direct results that can more impress the urban spectator. It is necessary to say, in addition, that the effectiveness demonstrated in the city-planning and constructive management of the projects developed by the Society, has been very remarkable.

Our objective is, basing to us on its different performances, to put in evidence the fact that it subsists, in different measurement, an initial conflict between the proposals of Bilbao Ría 2000 and the directives of an arrangement raised from the global contemplation of the territory and the possible strategies of geographic and environmental, social, economic and urban order that affect he himself.

The City council of Bilbao, the Provincial Authority of Biscay, the Basque Government and the Central Government, as well as different organisms such as the Harbor Authority or tie companies to the central administration like the RENFE, FEVE, SEPES and INI, was united with the purpose of creating the instrumental society denominated Bilbao Ría 2000:

The objective of the creation of the Society was, in essence, to solve a series of questions that affected the metropolitan city-planning arrangement, to the properties and subsequent economic exercises of those companies and institutions, guaranteeing to them agreed to and safe benefits and taking control of the capital gains in benefit of other performances in the set of the Metropolis and of special way in own Bilbao.

Nevertheless, the singularity of most of lands pertaining to the referred companies and institutions resided in the fact that they constituted an important strategic located ground stock market, in great way, the surroundings of Ría of the Nervión.

The creation of Bilbao Ría 2000 supposed to have of a suitable instrumental mechanism to solve performances that, in a situation of normal development of the planning, would have found the habitual difficulties of time, management and political and administrative coordination and resistance in a process of public participation.

On the base of both types characteristic of carried out performances by Bilbao Ría 2000: the own operations to obtain capital gains and the performances for the improvement of certain surroundings of the city without no benefit of economic character, we have reviewed, of critical way, the performance in the different urban scopes in which it is taken part and, in individual, the management of those in which the obtaining of the greater capital gains has been focused.

Most important of the questions that arise from the contemplation of the performances of the Bilbao Ría 2000 society has a fundamental character: the knowledge to what extent the development of the city-planning initiatives, in altars to the opportunity of its accomplishment, is conditional the territorial and general planning of the Metropolitan Area of Bilbao. Also it matters to what extent, those performances, has prevented the reflection on an economic model of future on urban scale and metropolitan, they have affected the geographic aspects on territorial and urban scale and are conditioning of positive or negative way the future evolution of the Metropolis.

One does not treat, in any case, to question the change of the urban image nor the validity of the management processes that, of another way, could even have been made unfruitful or they could have failed. One treats, in fact, to remarked the fact that, the alternatives adopted in the different performances able to generate capital gains with which to approach other deficit programs, they came marked by previous conceptual conflicts. Thus it happens in

the project of Abandoibarra, the process of rearrangement of the railway network, in the Barakaldo-Galindo operation and even in the anticipated proposal for Basurto-Garellano.

The positive aspects in the management of Bilbao Ría 2000: forum of encounter of the main agents interested in the transformation of the territory and its municipalities and the great installed companies in that one, the agility and versatility, the means accumulation and the best use of the human and technical resources, the unitary and coordinated management, the optimization of the economic yield, the capacity of initiatives or alternatives to adopt for the different zones, as well as the capacity to catch special technicians of prestige and means and the fact, coverall, of to have turned a stock market of interchange of the capital gains for the rehabilitation of depressed and deficit urban scopes, constitute the main strength attributable to the management of Bilbao Ría 2000.

Against, a series of controverted aspects: deficiency of a global perception of the territorial dominion, lack of reflection, in detail, on metropolitan model of occupation of the ground, the lack of projection of the criteria of continuity of the urban plot in the structured sense as much in the plane of the city like in the arrangement of the Metropolitan Area, some confusions detected recently on the systems of generation of income by way of urbanism or the subsidies, the vulnerability of the Bilbao Ría 2000 as opposed to the pressures of the different for-institutional and economic groups or the use as screen of the order to professionals of prestige as opposed to possible vindications of the citizenship, becomes the main heel of Aquilles of the had performances.

One concludes, after the exposed thing, that can be adduced the existence of an essential bankruptcy in the same base of the process of management of the revitalization of Metropolitan Bilbao.

The philosophy anticipated for the design and the management of the zones to recover (the concept of «opportunity spaces») has been effective for the improvements, today perceivable, in the urban image of Bilbao and its Metropolitan Area. Nevertheless, it is enough to throw a glance to the location of the mentioned «spaces of opportunity» and its relation with the natural elements, the pre-existing urban zones and yet the infrastructural system of the Metropolitan Area, to realize importance in the Territory of the delimited zones and the actions defined in its grounds.

All it takes shape, in the reality, many dilemmas that we have aimed. Dilemmas put in evidence in the performances of Bilbao Ría 2000 in individual and, in general, the performances, in addition, of other agents who have taken part or take part in the process of revitalization of the Metropolitan Area of Bilbao.

It is enough to realize of which one is considering, in the greater one of the scales, the treatment of the whole of a bank of an essential territorial element: the Ría of the Nervión. The coincidence, in this space, of different interests can have diluted or have grown dark, and we are convinced that thus it has been, the reflection on several aspects: ecology, sustainability, balance of uses and identity and territorial functionality, essentials for a correct one and balanced projection in the future of this natural and urban scope of singular importance.

