

International Society of
City and Regional Planners



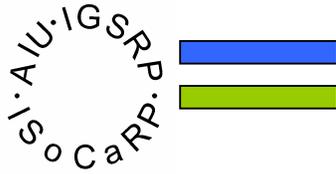
UNESCO-MOST
Management of Social
Transformations



15th Young Planning Professionals' Report

**BILBAO LA VIEJA AS A SPACE FOR
THE CREATIVE ECONOMY**

ISoCaRP Congress 2005
Making Spaces for the creative Economy
Bilbao, Spain
October 2005



International Society of
City and Regional Planners



UNESCO-MOST
Management of Social
Transformations

15th Young Planning Professionals' Report

BILBAO LA VIEJA AS A SPACE FOR THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

ISoCaRP Congress 2005
Making Spaces for the creative Economy
Bilbao, Spain
October 2005



**International Society of City and Regional Planners
Association Internationale des Urbanistes
Internationale Gesellschaft der Stadt- und Regionalplaner
Asociación Internacional de Urbanistas**

P.O. Box 983
2501 CZ The Hague - The Netherlands
Phone: (31-70) 346 2654
Fax: (31-70) 361 7909
e-mail: isocarp@isocarp.org
homepage: www.isocarp.org/

The workshop and this report have been made possible with the support of the UNESCO-MOST Programme (Management of Social Transformations).

COLOPHON

© IsoCaRP 2006

ISBN

Coordinators

Editors and Layout

Responsibility

Production

Published by

Supported by

Printed by

15th Young Planning Professionals' Report

Bilbao, Spain, 2005

90-75524-42-0

Héctor Floriani, National University of Rosario, Faculty of Architecture, Argentina; Juan de las Rivas Sanz, Universidad de Valladolid, Spain

Sybren van den Busken (Young Planning Professional)/
IsoCaRP Secretariat

IsoCaRP Editorial Board 2006/

Vice-President Fernando Brandão Alves

IsoCaRP Secretariat

IsoCaRP

UNESCO-MOST

The Printer, Voorburg, Netherlands (2006)

Contents

BILBAO LA VIEJA AS A SPACE FOR THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Foreword Alfonso Vegara, President of ISoCaRP (2003-2006)	7
Preface Thinking of a creative future for Bilbao La Vieja Héctor Floriani, Juan de las Rivas Sanz Young Planning Professionals' Coordinators	9
Group 1: General View La Vieja: Problems and Proposals Jon Asua Aberasturi (Spain), Craig Gilbert (Australia) Sybren van den Busken (Netherlands)	11
Group 2: The Riverfront (revisited): an Opportunity for Revitalization Izaskun Aseguinolaza (Spain), Li Dong (China) Deddy Halim (Indonesia), Arif Yasin Chohan (Pakistan)	19
Group 3: The Railway Area as an Engine for urban Change Sanhita Bandyopadhyay (India), Barbara Carbone (Spain) Ana Mateus (Portugal/Germany), Jessica Webster (Canada)	27
Group 4 From Corazon de Maria Square onwards Miguel Alonso Flamarque (Spain), Ambreen Iqbal (Pakistan) Guneet Kaur (Australia), Arunava Sarkar (India)	37
Group 5 The Cantera Square and Surroundings Alvaro Cerezo (Spain) Tolga Islam (Turkey) Evrin Ozkan (Turkey), Maria Villalobos (Venezuela)	45
Annexes: List of Participants Presentation of MOST Presentation of ISoCaRP	

Foreword

by the President of ISoCaRP (Jan. 2003-Jan. 2006)

One of the objectives of ISoCaRP is to encourage the participation of Young Planners in the annual Congresses. Since 1991 our Young Planning Professionals' Workshops (YPPW) have brought together young professional urban planners from all parts of the world. The Workshops provide them with an opportunity to work together as a closely-knit team on a specific subject, to establish a good hands-on working relationship and achieve results in a very short period of time. For the Workshop participants, they are unique opportunities for international exchange of not only technical and scientific knowledge, but also social and human experiences.

In 2005 the city of Bilbao hosted the 41st Annual ISoCaRP Congress with the theme "Making Spaces for the Creative Economy". Instantly recognised for its Guggenheim Museum and enjoying its new-found status as a "renaissance city", Bilbao is channelling the socio-economic spin-offs of the "Guggenheim Effect into a clear vision for the urban future of the greater metropolitan region. While there is a shift towards a more technological and digital economy, there is a corresponding interest and investment in art, culture and other creative industries. Therefore, ISoCaRP brought together outstanding young professional urban planners from all around the world to Bilbao to focus on planning issues and sites related to the overall theme of the Congress: "Bilbao La Vieja as a Creative Space: Strategies for Urban Redevelopment". This workshop was organised with the support of UNESCO.

The Workshop took place before the Congress itself, and the results were presented at a Special Session that also celebrated 15th years of ISoCaRP Young Planners Workshops.

I am very grateful to everyone involved in the very successful Workshop in Bilbao. In particular, I would like to thank Fernando Brandão (VP) and the Workshop coordinators: Héctor Floriani and Juan Luis de las Rivas Sanz. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of UNESCO for sponsoring the Workshop, Bilbao Arte for hosting it, and the support of the Bilbao LOC.

Alfonso Vegara

Preface

“Thinking of a creative future for Bilbao *La Vieja*”

by the Young Planning Professionals' Coordinators
Héctor Floriani, Argentina; Juan de las Rivas Sanz, Spain

During four days of intense work, a very motivated group of nineteen young planners coming from a most diversified number of countries faced the challenge of elaborating –in a very quick way- some urban proposals for the improvement of Bilbao *La Vieja*, a part of the Basque Metropolis' Old City, born slightly later than –and right outside the boundaries of- the very original, founding area of the “seven streets”.

The work was guided by two experienced professional planners –one from Argentina, the other from Spain, both University professors as well-, and was developed in the framework of this year's ISoCaRP International Planning Congress: “Spaces for the creative economy”.

Since the very beginning of the Workshop, the young planners committed themselves to the task putting to work their knowledge, their observing capacity, and their interest for Bilbao *La Vieja*. After a presentation by Juan Luis, in which the history of the city as a whole, and of the study area in particular, was outlined, a “field trip” through the neighbourhood was organized. All the members of the group -young planners and coordinators- made a study walk through the streets and the squares of the quarter, stopping frequently to make comments, ask questions, and take photographs. In doing that, the group had the invaluable company of Pedro Marcos, from Bilbao Ría 2000.

The information and the impressions taken from the presentation, from the opinions of different experts and actors, and from that direct contact with the area, made up the “raw material” for the studio work, which started immediately in the official seat of the Workshop, *Bilbao Arte*, located right in the middle of the study area.

From the very beginning of that studio work an agreement was reached regarding a general understanding of the situation: participants were facing not only a space with problems, but also a space full of extraordinary opportunities, mainly derived from the fact that the area is in the heart of historical Bilbao, with so many potentialities. The first idea that appeared, then, was to try to overcome the quarter's relative isolation –due to the presence of some important physical constrains, like the *Ría*, the topography, and the railway-, trying to reconnect it with Bilbao as a whole, so vibrant and prosperous. There was consensus in considering positive actions - the construction of *Cantalojas* square, the street openings in continuation of *San Antón* bridge, the improvements in the *Ría* embankments; but all this was deemed to be not enough.

Looking for the maximum of efficacy in the work, five teams were organized within the general group, each one of them having to deal with one of the five components of the situation identified through the analysis and the recognition of the area. Such components – defined both as *problems* and *opportunities*- were:

- The *Ría* waterfront, with all its actual and potential interactions
- The railway station, and its borders to the city and to the neighbourhood
- The *Corazón de María* square, in connection with *San Francisco* street
- The *Cantera* square, and the possibility of a positive relation with the new *Miribilla* quarter
- A general view and the insertion of the area in the urban and metropolitan context.

Focusing each team on a specific, partial matter was not an impediment for the implementation of general discussions and group interactions. In fact, the work carried out by each group in itself was complemented by several collective sessions, in which everyone had the occasion of exchanging ideas, impressions, and reflections, in order to feedback the whole process.

In spite of cultural differences and time constrains, on the last day of the Workshop the task was *complete*, although *open* to further developments. The results showed that not only it is possible to work with small “surgery” interventions in Bilbao *La Vieja*, but that it is also necessary to act on the borders, on their interactions and connections (from the neighbourhood outwards and from the city inwards into the neighbourhood). In other words, a correct attitude seems to be the simultaneous search of (a) improving the inner quality of the quarter, and (b) profiting from the borders’ potential to improve the insertion of the quarter into the city as a whole; and this is what young planners did.

The future transformation of the *Abando* railway station, due to the arrival of the *AVE* (the high-speed train), and the reorganization of the railway spaces, offer a great opportunity for Bilbao *La Vieja* to definitely get integrated into the city. A very good basis for that is the quarter’s excellent, well preserved urban front. But, since this action is only viable in the mid-term, it is possible to start immediately improving the quarter’s connectivity with the rest of the city: the *Ría* should be enhanced (assuring its continuity, even with the development of an efficient water transportation), and the neighbourhood should get inserted into the public transportation network, perhaps through a tram line going along *San Francisco* street. *La Vieja* should get much closer to the “seven-streets ” Bilbao and to the *Ensanche*.

An intelligent and coordinated action between the *Corazón de María* square and the *Cantera* Square, with more or less “radical” interventions –that is, incorporating all possible lots- offers the opportunity to regenerate simultaneously the neighbourhood’s form and activities. The development of initiatives and tendencies already present in the neighbourhood -restaurants, workshops, studios, art; all with a strong participation of young people, in a multicultural atmosphere, and with the support of public social assistance- may give this part of Bilbao a system of public spaces in connection with the new constructions, from the slopes of *Miribilla* down to the *Ría* through the *belvedere* of *Corazón de María* square; spaces that are at the service of an urban life that is progressively rehabilitated, a system of spaces conceived as infrastructure for urban creativity.

The group of young planners who participated in this Workshop looks with optimism at the future of Bilbao *La Vieja*. The group offers their proposals with the only aspiration of motivating local people, in the understanding that people are the main resource of a creative city.

Lastly, let’s make some remarks regarding the working atmosphere during the Workshop. It must be said in that regard that there was a very positive environment, characterized by a permanent, constructive exchange among young planners and between them and the coordinators. Besides, participants showed an extraordinary dedication to face the challenges that were in front of them in such a short time. For that dedication the Workshop coordinators are sincerely thankful to all the participants.

1.

General View La Vieja: Problems and Proposals



Contents:
Introduction
The context of La Vieja
La Vieja now
Proposals



Craig Gilbert (Australia)
Sybren van den Busken (Netherlands)
Jon Asua Aberasturi (Spain)

Introduction

The concept of the general view on Bilbao La Vieja, “Bilbi” as we say, is based on two predetermined intentions.

The first one derived from the congress theme *‘Making spaces for the creative economy’*. This motto implies the spatial factor to be at service of the social-economic factor. The goal is a creative economy and points to urbanism as a means to achieve this. Consequently the aspired potential software must be defined before deciding the direction of the hardware. It required thinking about the future of the La Vieja neighborhood in terms of activities, cultures and ambiances before designing buildings and public spaces. This resulted in a discussion about the work domain of urban planners and in particular the sociological aspect of the planning discipline. Should we concentrate upon *urban design* as our core business and leave the sociological aspects to other specialists? Or are they inevitably in our design practice? Interestingly the same controversy could be witnessed in the presented works of two keynote speakers of the congress: Albert Speer and Charles Landry. The first creates a complete new city around the Volkswagen fabric in Anting, China, from the design table. The second states that *culture strategy* should be the master strategy for city development. Taking into account the congress theme and the context of La Vieja we concluded that the assignment should include *social and cultural* aspects in the general view.

The second intention originates from the awareness that, after the success of the past years, Bilbao needs a *‘second wave’* of regeneration. The city and its policymakers recognise that they cannot keep counting on the impulse of the “Guggenheim effect”. The construction of one icon, combined with the renovation of the city center’s public spaces, put Bilbao back on the map and gave confidence to the city. It resulted in a boost for the local economy and improved the cultural climate. It is not probable that this unique piece of city marketing will be successful a second time. A complete new strategy is more likely to have the desired effect rather than concentrating on what has been successful in the past. Whereas the first wave implied a top-down strategy with large interventions in the urban fabric and the foundation of cultural institutions, the second should be a low-profile cultural strategy which defines the strength of the existing hardware, preserves it and adapts it to the benefit of the software.

Above this, what we want to add to Bilbao is a neighborhood that exhibits spontaneity - this kind of flamboyant, authentic or dazzling place which some cities possess. Places of which people say: “that’s the place to be”: Like Navigli in Milan, La Latina in Madrid, De Pijp in Amsterdam or Soho in London. We aim to define what needs to happen for La Vieja to become such a place. During the following analysis we indicate what direction we sought for a solution and formulated a 10 point strategy which brings forward this approach.

The Context of La Vieja

Regional

Before the nineties the roles between the three main cities of the Basque country were clearly divided. Vitoria was the administrative and political capital with the siege of the Basque parliament and government. San Sebastian was seen as the cultural and tourist centre with its famous film festival as a major attraction and Bilbao was the economical motor of the region, with its financial district and active port. After the magic transformation of Bilbao the city became a major center of attention in cultural activities. This led to a relative cultural transfer or shift from San Sebastian to Bilbao (Figure 1). This momentum of attention towards cultural institutions and activities is still ongoing in Bilbao and should be exploited in the regeneration strategy.