

Editorial

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Welcome to July issue of AIZ. Yes, we are in July, and that means summer is in full swing, and along with it comes warm weather and longer days to be spent relaxing by the pool or the sea.

In this issue, under the July sun, I would like to bring you to Bilbao and talk about its 21st Century architecture in Abando district. Actually, I visited Bilbao nearly 2 months ago, but my impressions are still alive in my mind.

I was in Bilbao in May for the final four games of Fenerbahçe. Actually, my match-going days stopped nearly 4 years ago, when I started my duty as the coordinator of construction affairs at ITU with a busy schedule, and when I found time to go, either good seats were sold, or the price of tickets were not acceptable. So, my relationship with Fenerbahçe was felt from the safety of a middle-distance, but the club was as much a part of my life as a relative and relatives are missed. And Final four in Bilbao, which was hosting two Turkish teams, -not only Fenerbahçe, but also Efes Pilsen- was a good opportunity to fulfill my longing.

Bilbao is a prime example of urban restructuring, having transitioned from an industrial city to a city of services



Walking in Bilbao rain with Ramón Rubial Cavia.

and culture. Bilbao wasn't in the traveler's radar until recently, when the city transformed itself from a grim industrial city to a city that is known for architecture, arts and food.

The city was founded in 1300 through a town charter granted by the Lord of Biscay Don Diego Lopez de Hara. Its geographic location and the fact that it was an inland port increased its chances for commercial and industrial development. The wool route from Castile crossed through the area of the Las Encartaciones towards the sea to export this prime material to northern countries and to import finished cloths as well as other products.

In the 19th Century the historical center went into decline and a new city was created on the other side of the Estuary. The need for an expansion onto flat land of Abando was reflected in a series of projects and it was annexed in 1890.

From the time it was annexed to the Bilbao at the end of the 19th Century, what was once the parish of Abando became the location for the extension development of the city, which crossed the Estuary from the old historic walled enclosure. Abando District is a compact urban weave with an extensive collection of buildings of great interest and well-ordered and harmonious city planning. The development of the District, upon the freeing up of space previously occupied during the industrial era, is allowing for the integration with the Estuary and with it the historical center of the city.

Abando District is the essence of Bilbao's international image today. Home to Metro Bilbao by Norman Foster, the Guggenheim by Frank Gehry, Zubizuri Bridge by Santiago Calatrava, the Bilbao Conference Center and Concert Hall by Soriano & Palacios, Atea Towers by Arata Isozaki, The Library of University of Deusto by Rafael Moneo and Iberdrola Tower by Cesar Pelli, the river represents the artistic and youthful nature of modern Bilbao.

The Guggenheim museum deserves a mention here. This unique building has transformed Bilbao, opening the city to the world and projecting it into the future. It is the father of iconic architecture. The museum was opened

nearly 20 years ago, by the king and queen of Spain, since when it has become the most influential building of modern times. It has given its name to the “Bilbao effect” – a phenomenon whereby cultural investment plus showy architecture is supposed to equal economic uplift for cities down on their luck. Nowadays, most of the cities want to create the next Bilbao-Guggenheim-Gehry vortex: hire a star architect to design a branch of a famous museum, and watch your city blossom with culture, such as the effect of Jean Nouvel’s latest designs, Louvre Abu Dhabi or National Museum of Qa-

tar. After all, it worked for Bilbao and why not for the others?

After sharing my impressions and thoughts about my Bilbao visit, as it always has been, I would like to thank all our readers for the support they provide to the Journal. We really look forward your comments, contributions, suggestions and criticisms. Please do not hesitate to share with us your feelings and especially, let us know if you have ideas or topics that we could be focusing on.

Enjoy your reading and meet with us again in next issue on November 2019.