



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

**The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in
scientific journals: Asymmetries between
the American art perspective and the
European regional planning viewpoint.**

Plaza, Beatriz and Haarich, Silke

Faculty of Economics / University of the Basque Country Art4pax
Foundation, Infyde SL and Art4pax Foundation

24 September 2008

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/10751/>
MPRA Paper No. 10751, posted 25 Sep 2008 11:58 UTC

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Scientific Journals: Asymmetries between the American Art Perspective and the European Regional Planning Viewpoint

Abstract:

Bilbao has gained fame with the Guggenheim Museum, even in the Academic world. *Google Scholar* yields 2610 outcomes for "Bilbao Guggenheim" and the number of articles published in ISI-WoK listed-journals is 93 up until today. Surprisingly, however, almost 80% of these articles have been published by foreign authors, whereas many prestigious local authors have little or almost no scientific production in the ISI listed journals. This article analyses the connexions between nationality, language and publications, and offers an explanation for the disproportion between foreign and local knowledge, which causes mistaken scientific and public opinions about the "Guggenheim-Effect".

Introduction

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (GMB) represents a type of Global Museum, founded with local money but with mostly foreign art pieces and under the rules of an American Foundation going global. Despite the overall success of the museum with regard to the attraction of visitors and tourists to Bilbao which is contributing to structural change in the region, almost 80% of the articles regarding the GMB listed by ISI-WoK have been published by foreign authors, whereas many prestigious local authors have little or almost no scientific production about this topic in WoK¹. The aim of this article is to analyze and provide explanation for these gaps, since we believe that it is not only a matter of language or nationality but also depends on the professional perspective of authors and an understanding of the Guggenheim-Museum itself; some academics see the museum as an art branch, whilst others see it as an instrument for regional development. Furthermore, we want to highlight the missing local knowledge in ISI-WoK with respect to some of the aspects of the Guggenheim-effect, thus throwing away the opportunity that is offered to local authors by this famous museum and the Bilbao case, for scientific analyses and publication.

Materials and Methods

The year 2007 was the GMB's tenth anniversary, sufficient time since its opening for a first evaluation of its presence in ISI-WoK. To verify this, firstly, we check the articles regarding GMB listed by both ISI-WoK (93 articles) and EconLit (17 articles), which is 110 in total. Secondly, we perform 11 regressions against the dependent variable "*articles about the GMB listed by ISI-WoK*" (Table 1) and/or Econlit (Table 2), to determine the significance level of the following explanatory variables: Foreign vs local

¹ For a full list of academic works and statistical updates regarding Bilbao and its regeneration, see www.scholars-on-bilbao.info .

authors; language of publication (English, Spanish, French); and the relationship between EconLit and ISI-WoK. In our regression models the variables are binary or dichotomous, that is, the response is 1 or 0, and therefore we perform the estimates through LM Logit.

Results

The results are the following:

[Place Table 1 and Table 2 about here]

In binary regressand models, goodness of fit R^2 is of secondary importance. What matters is the expected signs of the regression coefficients and their statistical significance, and the overall statistical significance measured by the LR statistic.

The coefficient for Spaniard authors of -2.59 means that if the number of articles written by Spanish authors increases by a unit, on average the estimated logit decreases by about 2.59 units, suggesting a negative relationship between the two. The same applies to the number of articles regarding the GMB published in the Spanish language. On the contrary, the articles regarding the GMB listed by ISI-WoK are positively correlated with foreign authors, mostly written in English and French (Table 1).

Together all the regressors have a significant impact on the final grade, as the LR statistics are high, and their respective p values are very small.

As regards Table 2, the articles about the GMB listed by EconLit are mostly written by local authors, in the Spanish language, and include the analysis of the GMB from the regional development perspective, rather than a curatorial/museum management angle.

Discussion

Bilbao city did not construct the museum simply for the sake of having an iconic building; this was only one answer in a quest to address a number of serious problems. The city suffered an extremely high unemployment rate, up to 25 percent. Traditional industries had become obsolete, and the city center hosted a busy riverport plagued with severe traffic congestion. Other troubles included violence from extremist Basque separatists, urban deterioration, pollution and a poor public transport system.

The city determined to tackle these problems through a holistic plan. It created a new subway line, new drainage and water/air clean-up systems and an airport; residential, leisure and business complexes were built in town, while new river and sea waterfronts, a seaport and industrial and technology parks were built away from the urban center. The icing on the cake was the construction of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and additional cultural investments, such as a concert hall and incubator for young artists, to promote art and cultural tourism as a means of diversifying the economy and reducing unemployment.

If we map the knowledge regarding the GMB in ISI-WoK, the authors analyze the GMB mainly from a curatorial, art management viewpoint, the details of which are a major preoccupation of the American journals. This is

obviously because the headquarters of the Guggenheim are in New York, and the regional impacts of their foreign satellite museums are of less importance than those issues concerned with art management. This fact contributes to the misunderstanding of the nature of the regeneration of Bilbao, which has been only partly fuelled by the GMB, contributing to defining the Bilbao case as a cultural-led regeneration process, which is essentially inaccurate. This is even more critical considering that the case of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is being mistakenly emulated by many cities worldwide (e.g. the Louvre-Lens museum in northern France, the Hermitage-Guggenheim Vilnius museum in Lithuania and the Guggenheim-Guadalajara in Mexico to mention but a few). Bilbao is an integral part of a larger coherent public policy targeted at productivity and diversity, with a strong cultural component, as has been analysed by many local authors, mostly listed by EconLit.

If we classify our 110 articles into American (58 articles) and European (35) journals, the dichotomy continues: American journals focus mainly on the art market and management, whereas the European journals concentrate on both the art market and most importantly on the social/economic impact of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. The presence of local authors (Spanish and Basque) in European journals is significant (27 articles out of 35, only 9 of which are listed by ISI-WoK), whereas it is not like this for the American journals (8 articles out of 58, although all 8 of them are listed by ISI-WoK). We should raise the interesting question as to whether European researchers of the GMB encounter barriers of access to the USA journals, and identify these obstacles. One obstacle might be the fact that English native writers dominate the scientific publications (Flammia and Saunders 2007). In fact, 16 out of the 27 ISI-WoK listed European articles were written in English. However, this argument is still weak. Could it be due to a different mentality, or a lack of interest in the European approach? Or could it even be due to the dominance of American journals in the ISI rankings? Or just simply lack of interest of local authors who do not recognize the GMB topic as an opportunity for first-hand knowledge creation and publication in the international scientific journals?

The agenda for future publications in ISI-WoK listed journals calls for an increase in regional policy articles, to delimit more accurately the redevelopment model of Bilbao, in order to correctly explain the city's real recipe for its revitalization. Future studies on the GMB's regional impacts may also enable us to determine the real "Guggenheim Effect" in order to demystify the Bilbao culture-led regeneration "myth", and to prevent its ineffective replication worldwide.

References

- Art4pax Foundation (2008) *Scholars on Bilbao*. Guernica. <http://www.scholars-onbilbao.info> [accessed on 25 September 2008].
- Del Castillo, J. and Haarich S.N. (2004) Urban Renaissance, Arts and Culture: The Bilbao Region as an Innovative Milieu. In *Ressources naturelles et culturelles, milieux et développement local*. Editions EDES.

Flammia, M. and Saunders, C. (2007) Language as power on the Internet. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* **58**(12), 1899-1903.

Plaza, B. (2006) The Return on Investment of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **30**(2), 452-67.

Plaza, B. (2008) On Some Challenges and Conditions for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao to be an Effective Economic Re-activator. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **32**(2), 506-517.

Velasco, R and Plaza, B. (2003) La industria española en democracia, 1978-2003. *Economía Industrial*, No 349-350, 155-180.

**Table 1: Dependent variable: Articles regarding the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao listed by ISI
Method: ML - Binary Logit**

Regression Number	Variable	Coefficient	Z-Statistic	Prob.	LR statistic (1 df)	Probability(LR stat)
1	C	2,53	5,98	0,0000	27,31	0,0000
	SPANIARD	-2,59	-4,78	0,0000		
2	C	-0,06	-0,16	0,8658	27,31	0,0000
	FOREIGN	2,60	4,78	0,0000		
3	C	2,04	6,67	0,0000	44,10	0,0000
	SPANISH	-36,05	-83,78	0,0000		
4	C	0,38	1,05	0,2917	10,01	0,0015
	ENGLISH	1,52	3,15	0,0016		
5	C	1,17	5,04	0,0000	7,43	0,0063
	FRENCH	32,98	94,77	0,0000		
6	C	1,65	6,07	0,0000	7,29	0,0069
	ECONLIT	-1,54	-2,76	0,0057		

Note: All the coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level.

**Table 2: Dependent variable: Articles regarding the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao listed by EconLit
Method: ML - Binary Logit**

Regression Number	Variable	Coefficient	Z-Statistic	Prob.	LR statistic (1 df)	Probability(LR stat)
7	C	-3,69	-5,15	0,0000	30,37	0,0000
	SPANIARD	3,40	4,28	0,0000		
8	C	-0,28	-0,84	0,3996	30,37	0,0000
	FOREIGN	-3,40	-4,28	0,0000		
9	C	-2,25	-6,77	0,0000	14,64	0,0001
	SPANISH	2,58	3,84	0,0001		
10	C	-1,27	-2,97	0,0029	1,78	0,1810
	ENGLISH	-0,74	-1,36	0,1728		

Note: Bold coefficients are not significant at the 0.05 level.

French: Near singular matrix