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In the Shadow of the Guggenheim-Bilbao: legislation and museum policy in the Basque Country

Museums shape dominant understandings of a nation; they connect individuals with the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1993). As public sites of culture and memory, they make use of histories and collective memories to promote and renovate collective identities and social consciousness (Bouquet, 2012:122; Crooke, 2007:119), and in doing so, also become powerful agents in legitimizing identity and enacting national values (Roigé, Boya, Alcalde, 2010:168). However, as Sharon Macdonald (2003) argued, while museums have aimed to construct and reinforce national narratives and identities, they have not always succeeded in doing so. This is in part because the links between collective identity and the cultural heritage that is exhibited in museums cannot be taken for granted, nor is the

identity that is expressed and constructed through heritage can be assumed as being a fixed one (Smith, 2008:159). Indeed, museums are products of their times as well as the increasingly complex and plural societies in which they are asked to play an increasingly greater role. Their processes of identity building and museological forms in identity work are constantly renewed and reinvented (Macdonald, 2003). After the French Revolution, for example, museums reflected the new Republic, exhibiting patriotism and shaping a national heritage and identity in a manner which departed from museum policies under the Ancien Regime (Díaz Balerdi, 2008a: 109-110; Duncan, 2007: 46-47; Poulot, 2005:61-63). In the 1960s, the first ecomuseums were an alternative to national museums and with the aim to promoting the development and safeguarding of local and regional identities (Chaumier, 2005: 23; Duclos, Veillard, 1992: 129). Since the end of the twentieth century, source com-

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Paraules clau: Guggenheim, País Basc, identitat, política museística

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munities and anti-colonial activists have been advocating for greater reflexivity and the inclusion of diverse voices in exhibition narratives toward a more ethically responsible museum practice (Bouquet, 2012: 98; Harris, O'Hanlon, 2013: 10; Phillips, 2011; Sandell, 2006: 184; Van Geert, 2016: 28-29; Van Geert, Arrieta Urtizbera, Roigé, 2016: 354).

Likewise, museums are products of local and national economic realities and territorial management strategies, and the integration of marketplace models to museums has received a great deal of attention since the 1990s. Such models have been seen both as a way to ensure the financial sustainability of museums, namely through highly-attractive blockbuster exhibitions, and that they also remain socially embedded organizations, through more flexible and community-driven curatorial redistributions designed to narrow the gap between museums and society (Boylan, 2011; McCall, Gray, 2013; Viau-Courville, 2016). As argued by Jean Davallon in 1992: 'The entry of museums into a marketplace logic', he wrote, 'actually means something else: it signals the museum's commitment to acting as a mediator between the public and the display—that is, the objects and sets of knowledge, whether artwork, scientific knowledge, artefacts or

the memory of a given social group. It signifies that museums seek to produce "exposées" and to develop greater communication tools for the public' (Davallon, 1992:12). A great number of cultural policies today have subordinated economic models to museological ones, with most public funds programmes favouring those museums expected to boost the local touristic economy (Mairesse, 2010:105) or to the promotion of a coherent territorial branding (Aronsson and Elgenius, 2011:16; Drouguet, 2015:219), in addition to generating positive externalities for the economy and society. A known example of such cultural policies to valuing heritage is the so-called Guggenheim-Bilbao effect (Asensio and Pol, 2012: 165; Esteban, 2007: 143; Holo, 2002. 167; Mairesse, 2010: 17; Moix, 2010: 255; Pezzini, 2014: 51; Poulot, 2005: 93; Yúdice, 2002: 16), although the 2008 economic crisis has since revealed some vulnerabilities to such a model (Bergeron, 2012: 66-68, Chaumier, 2011: 87-88).

In this paper, we trace both the social and economic contexts that contributed to shaping the development museums in the Basque Country. We pay particular attention to those created since the 1970s and in relation to changes in legislation and cultural and heritage policies. Following a brief review of the history of museums in the Basque Coun-

The aim of this article is to analyze the evolution of the creation of museums in the Basque Country since the 1970s. Two criteria will be taken into account in this analysis. On the one hand, the criterion of identity and, on the other hand, the economic criterion. After the death of the dictator Franco in 1975, sociocultural and political movements emerged with force in favor of an identity denied during the Dictatorship. In this context, the first contemporary museums emerged. Later, at the end of the 20th century, the causes for the creation of new institutions were mainly economic. Because of the Guggenheim effect, many Basque institutions supported the opening of new museums to the public. However, the economic crisis of 2008 significantly altered this evolution.

Aquest article pretén analitzar l'evolució de la creació de museus al País Basc des dels anys setanta. Per fer aquesta anàlisi, es tindran en compte dos criteris. Per una banda, el criteri de la identitat i, per l'altra, el criteri econòmic. Un cop mort el dictador Franco l'any 1975, van aparèixer amb força tot de moviments socioculturals i polítics que defensaven una identitat negada durant la dictadura. És en aquest context que apareixen els primers museus contemporanis. Més endavant, a finals del segle xx, la creació de noves institucions va obeir bàsicament a causes econòmiques. L'efecte Guggenheim va fer que moltes institucions basques donessin suport a l'obertura de nous museus al públic. Tanmateix la crisi econòmica de l'any 2008 va afectar de manera important aquesta evolució.

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la evolución de la creación de museos en el País Vasco desde los años setenta teniendo en cuenta dos criterios. Por un lado, el criterio de identidad y, por el otro, el criterio económico. Tras la muerte del dictador Franco en 1975, surgieron con fuerza movimientos socioculturales y políticos a favor de una identidad negada durante la dictadura. Es en este contexto que se crearon los primeros museos de arte contemporáneo. Más adelante, a finales del siglo xx, las causas de la creación de nuevas instituciones fueron principalmente económicas. El efecto Guggenheim hizo que muchas instituciones vascas apoyaran la apertura de nuevos museos al público. No obstante, la crisis económica de 2008 alteró de manera significativa esta evolución.

try, we examine the impact of the return to democracy on Basque museums at the end of the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975). We describe how the reinstating of democracy in the Basque Country after the centralist dictatorship produced a series of new cultural policies prioritizing intimate relations to identity and 'regional cultures' alongside other attempts to reproduce the Guggenheim-Bilbao model. Finally, we also take a sociological and economic approach to describe some financial and management changes that the 2008 economic crisis brought on to Basque museums.

The shaping of a Basque cultural conscience

The history of museums in the Basque Country¹ is relatively short compared to that in the rest of Europe. Their development coincides with the industrialisation and deep social and economic transformation of the country around the turn of the twentieth century. They marked the beginning of consolidated efforts to shape a cultural and intellectual Basque conscience. Alongside the creation of Basque newspapers, and together with the recognition of local writers, painters, musicians and other intellectuals, Museums integrated a broader agenda driven by the ideal of collectively shaping a Basque identity and nationality. Such interests were evident namely at the Museo Municipal de Donostia-San Sebastián (today Museo San Telmo) inaugurated in 1902 where its first exhibitions dealing with archaeology, history and the fine arts soon were replaced by topics highlighting Basque folklore and ethnography. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, and until the early 1930s, museums continued to be created into mainly two types of institutions reflecting some of the distinctive characteristics of the Basque society at the time. On the one hand, the many folklore and ethnography museums such as the Museo Arqueológico Vizcaya y Etnográfico Vasco (Bilbao) and the Museo Municipal de Donostia-San Sebastián, were all dedicated to safeguarding and exhibiting the Basque culture and identity, and promoting Basque nationalism. Their devel-

opment was also in keeping with different folk movements also taking place in Europe at the time (Rivière, 1936: 61-63). On the other hand, and by sharp contrast, the many fine art museums also being inaugurated in the Basque Country during the same period, particularly those in Bilbao such as the Museo de Bellas Artes and the Museo de Arte Moderno (which today form the current Museo de Bellas Artes) reveal efforts to highlight a new bourgeois class looking to establish social prestige and European visibility.² Alongside these museums, four other notable heritage institutions were inaugurated during this period: the Aquarium (Donostia-San Sebastián), the Museo de Armería (Eibar), the Museo de Ignacio Zuloaga (Zumaia) and the Museo de Reproducciones Artísticas (Bilbao).

The Spanish civil war (1936-1939) and subsequent Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) deeply affected the development of Basque heritage. So-called 'minimal' policies (Bolaños, 1997: 374) put in place by the centralist and catholic Francoist government aimed at consolidating a unified Castilian identity. This led in many parts of Spain to the repression and revisionism of much of its regional cultures, seeing any cultural differences –namely the Basque, Catalan and Galician– as a mere "regionalism" and derived from the same national identity (Bolaños, 1997:378; Ortiz, Prats, 2000: 243). For museums, this meant that institutions such as the Museo Arqueológico de Vizcaya y Etnográfico Vasco were renamed as Museo Histórico de Vizcaya, marginalizing any references to local identity in favour of promoting the national identity (Museo Arqueológico, Etnográfico e Histórico Vasco, 1996:10). Other institutions such as the Museo Municipal de Donostia-San Sebastián would be singled out and approved by the Junta to be transformed as an "honorable and dignified centre for the new Spain" (Arrieta Urtizberea, 2012: 41).

Only a handful of museums were inaugurated in the Basque Country during the forty years of Dictatorship, most of them

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In this paper we focus on the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco) which encompasses the territories and provinces of Araba/Álava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. These three territories are administered by the Basque government and each is part of and depends on their corresponding Provincial Council (Diputación Foral).

2

It is worth noting that all these museums were located in Bilbao and Donostia-San Sebastian, the capitals of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, respectively. They were subsidised locally by the municipalities and Provincial Councils since the Basque government was only created in 1936 following the civil war and, following the fall of Bilbao, the Basque government remained in exile until the death of Franco in 1975.

dealing with religion and military history. These were mainly inaugurated in Araba/Álava, the most notable being the fine art, archaeology and history museums of Armería, one of few territories not be declared as a “traitor province” by the Franco regime (Díaz Balerdi, 2007: 111). By contrast, “traitor” provinces like Bizkaia or Gipuzkoa saw their public institutions downgraded to minimal administration and representation. Few local and modest initiatives did however lead to fruitful museum developments and inaugurations during the dictatorship, namely those dedicated to a variety of saints, including Ignacio de Loyola (Gipuzkoa) and Valentin Berriotxoa (Bizkaia), the Museo del Pescador in Bermeo (Bizkaia), the Ferrería de Mirandaola in Legazpi (Gipuzkoa), and the Casa de la Historia de Urgull in Donostia-San Sebastián.

Democracy and museums in the Basque Country

Franco’s death in 1975 marked the progressive return of democracy in Spain. The approval of a new Constitution in 1978 recognized Spain’s cultural diversity and distinct regions, some eventually acquiring their status as Autonomous Communities. The Basque Country, comprised of its historical territories, or provinces, of Araba/Álava, Bizkaia y Gipuzkoa, thus gained political and administrative autonomy in addition to establishing its own government in 1979. In this new context, each Provincial Council gained particular importance in its capacity to arrange for the collection and administration of taxes. An administrative organization which remains to this day unique in Spain, affording autonomy as well as ensuring the relevance of each Provincial Council that compose the Basque territories.

An Autonomous Community, the Basque Country was now empowered with nearly exclusive control over its cultural policies, including the management of its cultural heritage and museums and with minimal intervention from the Spanish government. It was responsible for a small network of around twenty museums which, according

to a report from the Basque government, were all seriously underfunded, lacked organization and qualified staff, and had poor links to the local population³. The refurbishment of the Basque museums did not however immediately fall within the government’s new priorities, who instead chose to concentrate the better part of the 1980s to promoting the Basque language—Euskara—and, as a second phase, to launch its own public television and radio broadcasts. The Basque Cultural Heritage Law was finally approved in July 1990.

Despite of the government’s initial lack of support to museums, however, at least fifteen museums were created in the 1980s and directly resulting from considerable efforts and engagement by members of the different Basque communities, small cultural associations and, in some cases, also with the support of small municipalities. These modest museums were nearly all created in the hinterlands of the Basque capitals and initially managed by volunteers, namely the Museo de la Confitería, the Museo Zumalakarregi, the Caserío Iturraran and the Museo Ibarraundi, in Gipuzkoa; the Museo Etnográfico de Zaldondo, the Museo Etnográfico de Artziniega, the Museo del Poblado de la Hoya and the Museo de Ciencias Naturales in Araba/Álava; and lastly, the Museo Simón Bolibar and Museo de Arte e Historia de Durango in Bizkaia. All generally offered no more than one or two exhibition spaces designed to showcase the ethnology, history and archaeology of the Basque Country, and with a clear engagement to safeguarding and sharing the Basque identity. After forty years of dictatorship and cultural repression, these local efforts also reflected the Basque population’s devotion to nationalist claims (Apalategi, 1985; Pérez Agote, 1987).

The Basque Cultural Heritage Law of 1990 allowed some of the above local initiatives to be supported by the Basque newly established cultural and heritage policies and absorbed by the Sistema Nacional de Museos de Euskadi (National Museum System of the Basque Country) which was initially

3

Internal Report 1980-1984 (undated). Basque Government, Culture Division.

implemented to encourage the creation of a city museums for each community with a population of 10.000 or more.

The 1994 Plan Nacional de Museos (National Museums Plan) further highlighted the Basque government's interest in playing a central role in the development of its national identity. The Plan lay the groundwork for the creation of "National Museums" which, as stated by the government at that time, "the Autonomous Community should have and for these institutions to represent important facets of our collective memory and knowledge that the Basque government should be part of and contribute in its development". Likewise, the Plan was meant to facilitate the coordination of what may be referred to as the "museum boom" taking place at the time.

Eleven National Museums were initially planned to be either created or restored within ten years of the approval of the Plan, and with a total anticipated budget of 140 million Euros. National Museums were further defined as "repositories" of Basque knowledge and memory and distributed across the Basque Country as follows: Bizkaia: the Museo de Bellas Artes, the Museo Guggenheim-Bilbao, the Museo de la Ciencia y la Técnica and the Museo de Ciencias Naturales. In Araba/Álava: the Museo de Bellas Artes, the Museo de Arqueología and the Museo Fournier del Naípe y de las Artes Gráficas. In Gipuzkoa: the Museo de Arquitectura, the Museo de Antropología Vasca, the Museo Naval, and the Museo de Cerámica y Artes Populares. Half of these were new National Museums to be created while the rest were existing and poorly preserved buildings expected to be either demolished or rebuilt or set to undergo major renovations.

In spite of the government's ambitions and general approval, the Plan sparked considerable debate and generated much controversy across the Basque communities, namely for identifying as National Museums both a foreign franchise—the Guggen-

heim-Bilbao—and another museum "where 'Spanish' art would have been front and centre" (Díaz Balerdi 2008b: 84). The Plan was further criticised for subordinating heritage policies to political decisions related to equal territorial distribution within the Basque Country, not taking into account the realities and potential contribution of some of the local economies "in a small Country with hardly no museum tradition" (Mujika Goñi, 1995: 288). The matter of equal territorial distribution was in this particular case a by-product of the Country's unique administrative system, designed to ensure equal voice to each of the Provincial Councils forming the Autonomous Community.

While the Basque government was aware of the need to revamp the poor state of its museum network, it also considered the implementation of the Plan as relevant insofar as its intrinsic cultural value would contribute to the region's economy and society⁴. Whereas the first years following the return of democracy in the Country were intimately linked to political and identity building concerns, rapidly during the 1990s culture became the fundamental ingredient to economic growth. Thus it was perhaps inevitable that the subordination of heritage policies to external political realities would lead the Basque government to sign the agreement with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation for the construction of its new museum in Bilbao. This moment many have argued as significantly marking the Basque cultural landscape and what has since been known as the Guggenheim-effect, seeing culture as "added value to the touristic and urban landscapes, and cultural policy as a tool servicing the promotion of economic endeavours" (Zallo, 2011:47), most notably through impactful icons that is the Guggenheim-Bilbao and their branding potential.

The National Museums Plan failed to materialize, just as the idea of a city museum for every 10,000 citizens was never enforced. Such policies have since been replaced by a new Museums Act signed in 2006 which

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Garmendia, Mari Karmen, "Kultura ekipamendu handiak. Kulturaren Sailburuaren agerraldia", Basque government, March 15, 1995.

is focused on creating a national system of museums comprised of a series of Basque museums fitting with a series of pre-established requirements and characteristics.

Throughout the 1990s, and during the time government was working on establishing the National Museums Plan, nearly thirty museums were created and focused on Basque history and ethnography, including: the ethnography museums of Félix Murga, Usatxi, Oyón-Oion and Irubidaur in Araba; the Museo de Euskal Herria, Museo de las Encartaciones, Museo del Nacionalismo Vasco, Museo de la Paz in Gernika and the Ecomuseo del Caserío Vasco, in Bizkaia; the Museo Naval, the Museo Vasco del Ferrocarril, the Parque Cultural de Zerain, the Museo Laia del producto artesanal del País Vasco, the Museo de la Sokatira, the Ecomuseo de Larraul and the Museo de la Máquina-Herramienta, in Gipuzkoa. Among these new museums, the Guggenheim-Bilbao had the most impact following its inauguration in 1997.

The Guggenheim was a product of a period between the late 80s and early 90s during which the leaders of the Basque Nationalist Party (main party since the democracy, with the exception of 2009-2012 under the Euskadi Socialist Party) felt they were becoming left-out of the “pomps of ‘92” that were being organized throughout Spain, most notably the Barcelona Olympics and the Seville Expo ‘92 (Zulaika, 1997:27). In this context, the Basque Country was becoming isolated by comparison to other Autonomous Communities that were gaining international visibility through such high-profile sporting, cultural and economic events. The partnership between the Basque government and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (at the time looking to open a new European branch) came in part in response to the above context. More than a museum project to promoting the international cultural image of the Basque Country, this association was for the government above all a financial endeavour designed to implement a new economy in Bilbao and

its hinterlands which had been experiencing since the 1980s a steady economic and demographic decline after the deceleration of its steel and shipbuilding industries. For the Foundation, the Bilbao project was also a significant opportunity to overcome some of the organization’s economic difficulties at the time. Culture, then, was both a means to enhance the Bilbao economic and urban regeneration as well as an internationalization strategy; it was an international projection through an “adornment” (Esteban, 2007) that, for many, was also removed from the Basque country and its heritage.

Nevertheless, the Guggenheim-Bilbao would rapidly become the icon that it is today, namely a showcase of what Basque people can achieve, a museum developed in the Basque Country by and for the Basque (Esteban, 2007). Its overwhelming economic, architectural and urbanistic success has extended to the point that it now embodies the Basque cultural identity, perhaps best described through the words of the Basque writer Lertxundi Esnal: “heart, mirror and stem” (2005:50). There is little doubt of the “effect” of this museum across the Basque Country. In the following section, we show that during the decade of the 2000s, more than fifty museums were created in the Autonomous Community, representing the most significant growth in the Country’s short museum history.

Basque museums in twenty-first century: a statistical review

The Guggenheim effect sparked new interest from public administrations to open new museums or take on a more active role and contribution to new museological initiatives undertaken by local organizations. These new projects all endeavoured to implement cultural and museum programmes capable of attracting large numbers of tourists, and in doing so, contribute to boosting the socioeconomic development and image of the rest of the Basque territories –this was also fueled by the fact that the Guggenheim-Bilbao largely surpassed its estimated 400,000 annual visitors, averaging 900,000

throughout its first decade in existence (Esteban 2007:21).

Clearly, such economic strategies and possibilities to brand the Basque territories aligned well with the interests of the Basque public administrations. As stated in the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council's annual budget for the year 2000, culture is a "major source of employment [that generates] significant economic drive".⁵ That same year, the report produced by the Bizkaia Provincial Council's Department of Culture stated that Bilbao and its surroundings were configured as "one of Europe's cultural capitals" thanks to institutions such as the Guggenheim-Bilbao, the Museo de Bellas Artes and other cultural centres which had stood out as showcasing a "cultural apparatus of global relevance"⁶. In Araba/Álava, the Guggenheim effect materialized through the creation of the Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo-Artium (Díaz Balerdi, 2007: 115) which represented a particularly significant financial investment. More than half of the fifty museums created in the 2000s were inaugurated in the territories of Gipuzkoa, including the Centro de la Cultura Marítima y el Barco-Museo Mater in Pasaia, the Museo de arte Chillida-Leku in Hernani, the Museo del Hierro Vasco in Legazpi, the Museo de Arte e Historia in Zarautz, the Centro de la Música Popular in Oiartzun, the Museo de la Sidra Vasca in

Astigarraga, the Caserío-Museo Igartubeiti in Ezkio, the Museo Romano Oiasso in Irun, the replica of the Ekain cave – Ekainberri – in Zestoa, the Centro Internacional del Títere en Tolosa and, in Donostia-San Sebastián, the Museo Cemento Rezola, the Museo de la Ciencia-Eureka and the Museo del equipo de fútbol de la Real Sociedad.

Ten institutions were inaugurated in the Bizkaia territories, including the Museo Etnográfico de Orozko, the Museo de la Minería del País Vasco in Gallarta, the Museo de Boinas La Encartada in Balmaseda, the Ferrería El Pobal in Muskiz, the Museo de la Industria Rialia in Portugalete, the Museo Marítimo Ría de Bilbao and the Museo del equipo de fútbol Athletic Club, the latter two located in Bizkaia. Also significant is the renovation of the Museo de Bellas Artes of Bilbao which reopened its doors in 2001 following a major public investment of more than 15 millions euros.

Finally, ten other museums opened in Araba/Álava, including the Valle Salado in Añana, the Centro-Museo del Deportivo Alavés and the Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo-Artium.

A majority of the above institutions were financed through public funds, resulting from either official public programmes and strategies, or local private or community ini-

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Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, *Presupuestos generales de 2000*, p. 224.

6

Provincial Council of Bizkaia, *Presupuestos generales de 2000*, p. 449.



Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao.

SOURCE: IÑAKI DÍAZ BALERDI, 2006.

tatives soliciting government support. Also significant were private donor organizations, such as the Basque football teams (financed two football museums), other banking and finance institutions like Kutxa-Kutxabank (funded the Museo de la Ciencia – Eureka), private companies such as FYM Heidelberg Cement Group (funded the Museo Cemento Rezola) and private families such as that of the artist Eduardo Chillida. In all of these cases public funds were also significant, namely supporting the development of each of these museum's cultural programmes and activities. However, an examination of public funds also reveals how the development of museums in the Basque Country experienced a decline following the 2008 economic crisis, with the most significant financial impacts being noticeable from 2010 onwards. Important cuts in the public budget significantly affected the cultural and museums sectors. In consequence, few museums opened in the 2010s with the exception the inauguration of those museums projects which had already been initiated in the previous decade, including the Museo Balenciaga, the Conjunto Monumental de Igartza, the Centro de Patrimonio Cultural Mueble-Gordailua and the Txakoligunea.

Our analysis of the budgets of main Basque public administrations serves to highlight the processes of expansion and contraction of museum development over the last two decades. Budgets have been compiled to include the budgets of the Basque government, specifically its Cultural Heritage Division which manages funds to heritage, libraries, archives and museums, as well as those of its three Provincial Councils (Araba/Álava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa). The latter also includes specific expenditures related to museums and, where available, budgets from cultural divisions for each Council.

Table 1 shows the attribution of public funds to culture and museums by the Basque Government and split by Provincial Council. Table 2 highlights the proportions of attributed total budget.

The tables reveal a decrease in funding to Provincial Councils between 2010 and 2016

Table 1: Budgets of the Basque government and Provincial Councils (in thousands of Euros). Source: Presupuestos generales del Gobierno Vasco y diputaciones.

	2.000	2005	2010	2016
General budgets				
Basque government	5.173.761	7.117.102	10.315.210	10.933.299
Araba / Álava	1.323.436	1.828.485	2.204.539	2.282.467
Bizkaia	3.989.117	5.609.266	6.827.498	7.437.778
Gipuzkoa	2.619.973	3.539.026	4.200.286	4.533.952
Own Budgets (<i>budget managed independently by each Provincial Council</i>)				
Araba / Álava	285.604	371.995	516.545	438.194
Bizkaia	704.381	1.225.115	1.744.084	1.587.875
Gipuzkoa	507.680	685.384	938.418	813.280
Culture				
Basque government	30.310	40.020	64.562	54.792
Araba / Álava	15.183	28.098	22.073	12.229
Bizkaia	24.569	42.150	36.375	33.579
Gipuzkoa	17.834	24.652	25.773	25.889
Museums				
Basque government	18.611	21.804	30.142	18.792
Araba / Álava	3.038	11.246	6.771	4.820
Bizkaia	7.389	14.220	14.196	15.501
Gipuzkoa	3.031	4.952	10.115	3.337

Table 2: Proportional expenditures for culture and museums by the Basque Government and each Provincial Council (%). Source: Presupuestos generales del Gobierno Vasco y diputaciones.

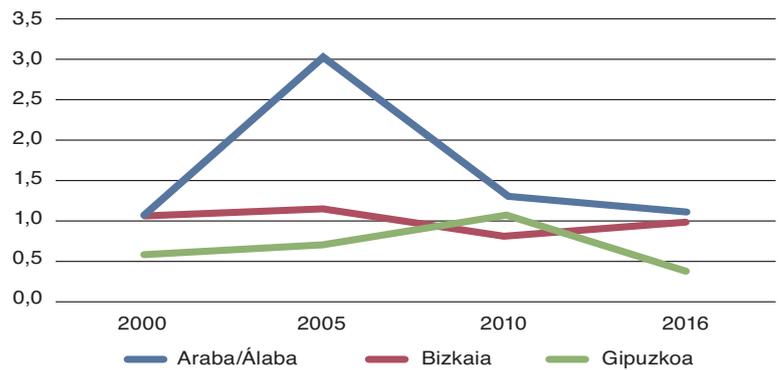
	2000	2005	2010	2016
Culture				
Basque government	0,59	0,56	0,63	0,50
Araba / Álava	5,32	7,55	4,27	2,79
Bizkaia	3,49	3,44	2,09	2,11
Gipuzkoa	3,51	3,60	2,75	3,18
Museums				
Basque government	0,36	0,31	0,29	0,17
Araba / Álava	1,06	3,02	1,31	1,10
Bizkaia	1,05	1,16	0,81	0,98
Gipuzkoa	0,60	0,72	1,08	0,41

ranging from 10-15%, whereas that of the government's increased by 6%. Additionally, Provincial Councils proportionally allocated more resources to culture than the government. General decreases in funding begin in 2010 and continue throughout 2016, with the exception of Gipuzkoa which showed growth due to its nomination as European Capital of Culture alongside major renovations of its Centro Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo-Tabakalera.

Graphs 1 through 5 illustrate the evolution of overall budgets attributed to museums from 2000 to 2016 by Provincial Council. While there are certain variations in budget spent throughout the years, there is also an overall consistency in budget attributions in both the years 2000 and 2016. However, the overall decrease in budget allocation to the government's Culture Division, from

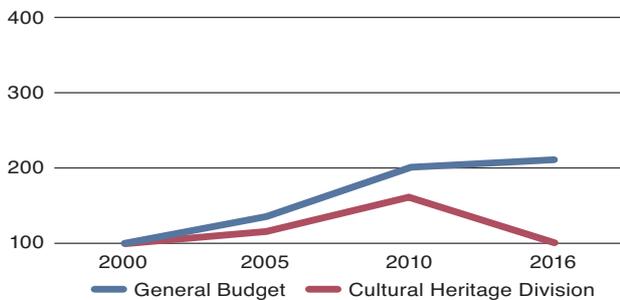
0,36% in 2010 to 0,17% in 2016, should also be contrasted against the fact that several new museums were also inaugurated during these years and, consequently, a reduced overall budget also meant lesser funds for each individual museum.

Graph 1.
Expenditure in museums by Provincial Council proportional to own budget (%).



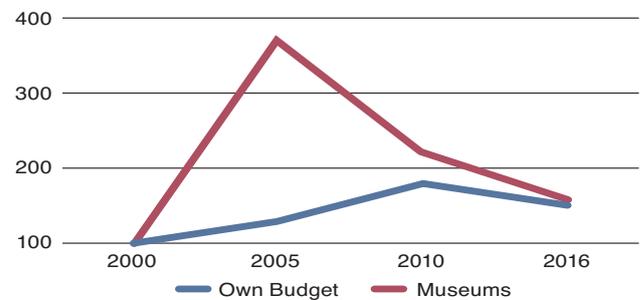
SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DE LAS DIPUTACIONES

Graph 2.
Budget variations – Basque government (index numbers).



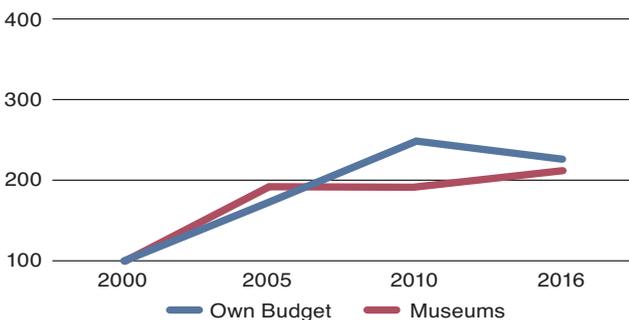
SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 3.
Budget variations – Araba/Álava (index numbers).



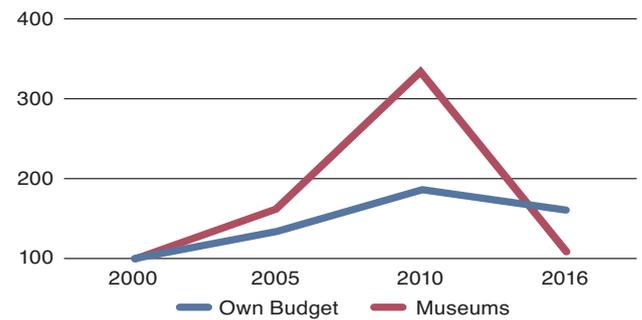
SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 4.
Budget variations – Bizkaia (index numbers).



SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 5.
Budget variations – Gipuzkoa (index numbers).



SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Table 3 shows the detailed expenditures of museums which are useful to deepen the analysis of museum management during the economic crisis. The table details budgets in personnel costs, operating budget, and general transfers of assets.⁷

Table 3, along with the below graphs 6 through 9, show steady increases in personnel costs which coincide with normal expectations given that staff in all museums are permanent public servants. Operational costs, however, showed greater variation. Budgets allocations to the Governments Cultural Division remained more or less stable. In Araba/Álava they followed a steady increase according to normal anticipated inflation. Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa revealed the greatest variations which can be accounted for not only in terms of higher/lower expenses but also because of changes in the type of management chosen by these Provincial Councils. This latter point does not affect the government’s Culture Division given that the public administration is not involved in the micromanagement of its different museums and only provides budgetary support.

There are currently four museums in Araba/Álava: Museo de Bellas Artes, Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Museo de Armería and the BIBAT (inaugurated 2009 and integrates the old Museo de Arqueología and Museo Fournier de Naipes); and three museums in Gipuzkoa: Museo Zumalakarregi, Museo

Table 3. Budget attributions in museums by type of expenditure. Source: Presupuestos generales del Gobierno Vasco y diputaciones.

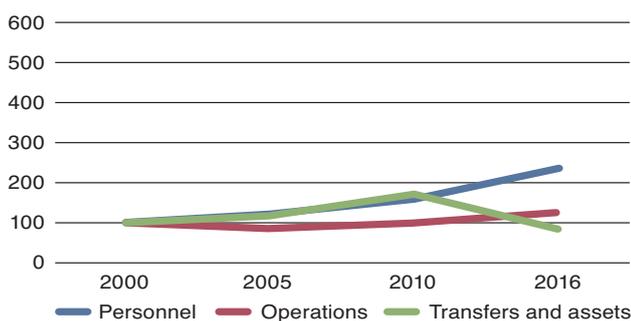
	2000	2005	2010	2016
Basque Government				
Personnel	1.190.605	1.500.510	1.934.400	2.806.100
Operations	2.563.317	2.267.713	2.615.600	3.272.000
Transfers and assets	14.857.020	18.036.164	25.591.500	12.714.100
	18.610.942	21.804.387	30.141.500	18.792.200
Araba / Álava				
Personnel	826.548	1.079.840	1.685.823	1.677.044
Operations	236.505	255.514	482.515	432.700
Transfers and assets	1.975.433	9.910.470	4.603.130	2.710.275
	3.038.487	11.245.824	6.771.468	4.820.019
Bizkaia				
Personnel	395.967	562.197	718.261	446.992
Operations	563.299	606.716	2.248.677	84.000
Transfers and assets	6.430.229	13.050.861	11.229.219	14.970.000
	7.389.494	14.219.774	14.196.157	15.500.992
Gipuzkoa				
Personnel	367.831	448.345	569.552	603.168
Operations	287.885	417.700	1.208.550	1.231.200
Transfers and assets	2.375.590	4.085.927	8.336.961	1.502.950
	3.031.307	4.951.972	10.115.063	3.337.318

FONT: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOVERN BASC I DE LES DIPUTACIONES

Naval and Caserío-Museo Igartubeiti, the latter inaugurated in 2006: The Araba/Álava museums are managed by the museum staff of the Provincial Council. In Gipuz-

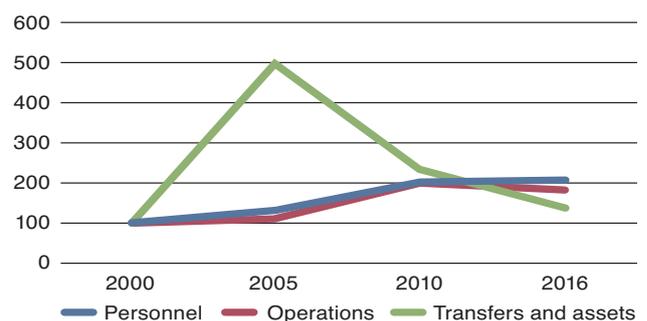
⁷ Transfer of assets includes a) current transfers, b) investments, c) transfers of capital, and d) holdings and assets.

Graph 6. Budget variations in museum costs – Basque government (index numbers).



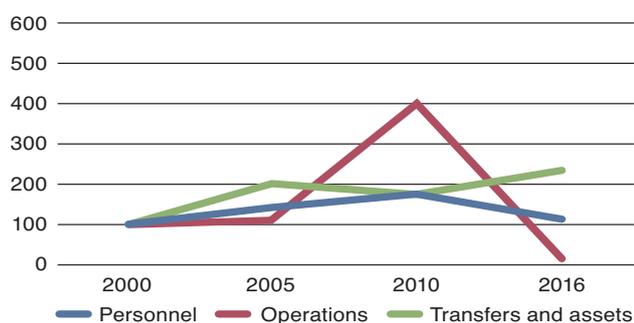
SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 7. Budget variations in museum costs – Araba/Álava (index numbers).



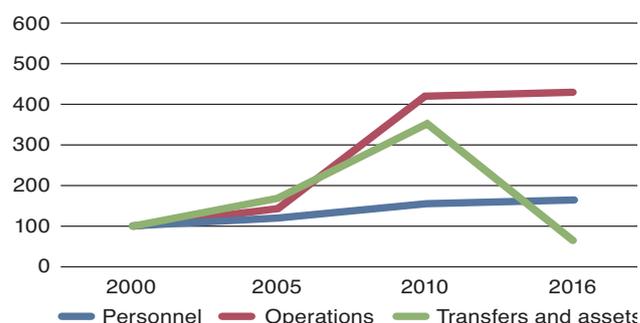
SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 8.
Budget variations in museum costs – Bizkaia
(index numbers).



SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

Graph 9.
Budget variations in museum costs – Gipuzkoa
(index numbers).



SOURCE: PRESUPUESTOS GENERALES DEL GOBIERNO VASCO Y DIPUTACIONES

koa, however, museums are managed by an external firm which is hired by the Provincial Council through a process of public tender. This accounts for a notable rise in operational expenses in 2010—the hiring of a new firm— compared to other years. However, this rise simply corresponds to a transfer of funds – that is, from the operational costs budget to the transfers and assets budget and then directly to the new management firm. Bizkaia also chose a similar management strategy by hiring the firm BizkaiKOA (created in 2010 by the Provincial Council). But in this case, not through a private firm but public one that has been managed directly by the Provincial Council. This also entailed the transferring of both museum staff and associated personnel costs to the new firm. In 2016, the annual funds transferred to BizkaiKOA elevated to nearly five million euros for the management of the Museo de Euskal Herria, Museo del Pescador, Museo de Arqueología, Museo de Boinas la Encartada, Ferrería de El Pobal and Museo Txakoligunea, along with other cultural centres – Graph 8 illustrates this increase in transfers of funds and decrease in the Provincial Council's attribution to personnel and operational costs.

With regards to the Government's budget, shown in Table 2 and Graph 6, there was a noticeable decrease in the category of general transfers of funds from 2010 to 2016⁸; a significant drop of 40% compared to the

numbers which had been steadily increasing throughout the 2000s. This impacted negatively on the funds allocated to the Bilbao Museo de Bellas Artes, the Valle Salado de Salinas de Añana or the Museo Balenciaga which, as group, dropped by 13%. In the cases of the Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo-Artium, it experienced a decrease of 25%. The Guggenheim-Bilbao also dropped by 33%, representing a reduction from 6.7M to 4.5M.

Araba/Álava also showed the greatest budget variations. Graph 7 showed a significant increase in 2005 in transfers of funds. Two reasons accounts for this increase: first, funds to secure the creation of the new BIBAT Museum. 3.6M Euros were also transferred from the Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo-Artium which had opened three years earlier. Four other museums were also funded that year, the Museo de Alfarería Vasca, Museo Etnográfico de Zaldondo, Museo Vasco de Gastronomía y Museo Diocesano de Arte Sacro, roughly representing 100,000 Euros. Five years later, in 2010, expenditure had decreased by 50%, mainly explained by the inauguration of the BIBAT and reduced allocated funds to the Artium (reduced to 1.8M Euros). General funding and grants also were reduced by 10%. The tendency continued through to 2016, with another 25% reduction for the Artium, along with a general decrease for all museums of 25%.

8

In addition to museums, public budgets also include expenditures for cultural heritage, libraries and archives.

Graph 8 showed less variations in the case of Bizkaia, revealing also an interest in maintaining operational and personnel budgets at flow – whereas personnel costs decreased, it is worth noting that transfers to Bizkaia KOA augmented, thus securing staffing and operational stability. Another example of this interest to keep encouraging culture is that, during the early years of the crisis, in 2009-2010, and in spite of an overall 7% reduction for the Provincial Council (*own budget*), its Culture Division allocated 1M Euros to support studies toward the new satellite museum Guggenheim-Urdaibai in the municipality of Sukarrieta. Nevertheless, recession did eventually affect Bizkaia institutions which saw their funding reduced, namely the Guggenheim-Bilbao (-8%), the Bilbao Museo de Bellas Artes (-5%), and several others with reductions averaging – 22% (Museo Bolibar, Museo de Arte e Historia de Durango, Museo de Arte Sacro, Museo del Nacionalismo, Museo de Pasos de Semana Santa, Museo de la Paz, Museo Vasco de la Historia de la Medicina y de las Ciencias, Museo de Berriotoxa, Museo de la Minería del País Vasco, y Museo Marítimo Ría de Bilbao). A few projects did however receive favourable funding during this period of crisis such as the firm Bilbao Bizkaia Museoak which saw its funding double from 600k Euros to 1,2M Euros for the management and renovations of the Museo Vasco and the Museo de Reproducciones.

Finally, Gipuzkoa distinguished itself from the other

Provincial Councils –Araba/Álaba and Bizkaia– by choosing not to intervene in the management of its major museums which normally would require considerable public funds. Coupled with the fact that Gipuzkoa also has fewer sizeable institutions across its territories (its funding has been dedicated to its two main art centres, Arteleku and, from 2014 onwards, Tabakalera), this accounts for the fact that it dedicated lesser funds to museums than Bizkaia and Araba/Álaba. With regards to transfers of funds in Gipuzkoa, the sudden growth and subsequent reduction shown in Graph 9 for the year 2010 corresponds to an investment of 7M Euros for the construction of the new Centro de Patrimonio Cultural Mueble-Gordailua. Although not officially classified by the administration as a museum, the Centro is now keeper of two important collections, that of the Provincial Council's and of the Museo San Telmo. In addition to this investment, two other inaugurations impacted on funding and transfer of assets between 2010 and 2016: Ekainberri (2008) –the replica of the Ekain cave– and the Museo Balenciaga (2011). The main transfer of funds for these two projects totaled nearly 400k Euros in 2000. Five years later, another 2.3M Euros were allocated

Artium.

INIÁKI DÍAZ BALERDI, 2006.



**BIBAT.**

IÑAKI DÍAZ BALERDI, 2009.

to begin construction. In the years 2010 and 2016, additional funds of 666k and 775k Euros were budgeted, respectively, revealing an increase in their funding after inauguration. Nevertheless, the total transfers to museums in Gipuzkoa reduced by 25% between 2000 and 2016 – though the decrease would be less important by taking into account the abovementioned changes and management strategies which have entailed significant transfers of capital.

Conclusion

The recent history of museum development in the Basque Country has been impacted by mainly two key elements: identity and economy. We analysed their development by mainly focusing on those created following the fall of the Spanish dictatorship after 1975 and marking the return to democracy. Early museums under the new democracy were informed by strong motives of democratization and claims to restore and empower

**Ekainberri.**

IÑAKI ARRIETA URTIZBEREA, 2010.

the Basque identity. These claims rapidly materialized into small community-led museum projects. Meanwhile, public institutions focused on safeguarding and disseminating the Basque language (Euskara) by establishing ten new public television and radio broadcasts.

Museums truly became a national (Basque) priority in the 1990s as part of broader agendas to promote positive social and economic change throughout the Basque territories, and following the example of the Guggenheim-Bilbao's overwhelming success. All Basque museums have been steadily sharing the same leitmotiv of identity building and safeguarding; even the Guggenheim's American roots did not stop the museum from becoming the embodiment of Basque knowhow: a "pioneering building dedicated to modern and contemporary art that will allow us to better understand how a community (the Basque) was able to successfully work through a severer crisis and by making use of their creativity in order to reinvent a new model, a new city and, above all, a new museum" (Azúa, 2007: 79).

Following a positive economy throughout the 2000s, during which time Basque public organizations generously sustained its museum network, the 2008 economic crisis affected museum policy in the Basque Country –with public funding showing signs of decline, museums escape closing altogether by maintaining all personnel and operational costs to a minimum, leaving little funds for cultural or educational activities, and toward the development of attractive cultural programmes for tourists and local citizens alike.

The success case of the Guggenheim-Bilbao also casts a shadow to other museum developments across the Basque Country and in itself cannot be taken as representative of Basque museums. Beyond its "effect", as argued by Guasch and Zulaika (2007: 18), it reveals the fragility of such economic models based fundamentally on economic trends – that is, their dependence to economic models which are designed to foster economic externalities, but which also undermine the basic cultural, social, and even political roles of museums. Thinking about the sustainability of museums, as a whole, we believe, requires taking into account the sociocultural reality of the territory and their communities. ■

Museo Balenciaga.

IÑAKI ARRIETA URTIZBEREA, 2012.



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