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## Port heritage as a tourist asset and a lever for urban renewal: the case of the Bay of Pasaia (Gipuzkoa)

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### KEYWORDS

Tourism  
Port  
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### THEME

The conflictive port-city relationship. The transition from an industrial port model in crisis, with signs of deceleration and economic recession, to a model in which cultural heritage, landscape and tourism play a preponderant role in urban renewal.

### OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to explore the convergence of the tourism sector with the cultural industries and to orient the heritage field towards concerted planning at two levels:

The first focuses on public administration and multi-level governance, enabling dialogues for overcoming conflicts. The shift from landscapes of production to landscapes of consumption has been evident in recent years, but when incorporated into tourism networks, it produces other problems such as the overcrowding of places, and its negative consequences.

The second focuses on approaching a sustainable economic transition by bringing together the different actors, renaturalising cities and recovering landscape and heritage values, by means of integrated planning in which tourism plays a prominent role.

The value that cultural industries and museums can bring, with a broad quality proposal covering a full range of heritage themes specific to the territory, will be analysed. It focuses on their contribution to the local landscape, which makes use of an idealised image through maritime Festivals and memory as a tourist complement, and a local economic development strategy that was affected in particular in relation to covid-19 and its overcoming.

In short, we argue for an inland port, specialised in post-industrial functions related to culture and leisure, together with clean and ecological traffic on demand, by means of Short Sea Shipping (SSS) that benefits and improves the quality of the territory. To this end, a complete museum proposal is presented, consolidated during the recovery after the health crisis, which is differentiated by the degree of spatial action (locational analysis) that continues to show the dichotomy of the capital city and the periphery.



## METHODOLOGY

A new look at the relationship between heritage, cultural industries and tourism is proposed, using a holistic geo-historical model that takes into account modes of production, society and space (figure 1). A territorial diagnosis is obtained by framing the relationship between the following units:

- Society: to answer questions on how to revitalise and animate the Port of Pasaia, and how to manage governance.
- Geographical space: to respond to the factors of how to preserve the architectural identity/historical and port heritage of the space, how to tackle environmental challenges.
- Modes of production: to respond to the factor of how to develop new economic strategies associated with tourism.

The main research technique used was the systematisation of documents and information from the Oarsoldea Regional Development Agency and the Albaola Maritime Factory, which were interpreted considering the literature on ports, landscape, cultural heritage and governance. In addition, data from reviews on *Google Maps* have been examined (map 2).

Data collection through 38 in-depth interviews with people selected for their involvement in the subject, experts and qualified informants with different profiles (members of neighbourhood associations and movements, health professionals, town planners, architects, residents of the bay area) who express themselves through their daily practices, was the technique used to gather information.

The coding (Annexes 2 and 3) was carried out by categories of phrases, using the *Atlas.ti* programme (these in turn will take into account their frequency, diversity, richness of content, etc.). This will enable two more specific tasks to be carried out:

- Construct a cognitive map which can be found in Annex 2 and elaborate two figures (Annex 3) that refer to the answers given by the interviewees according to their frequency, so that the weight of these frequencies has been used to select the most repeated ideas, converting them into keywords.
- Point out the sensitising concepts, which stand out according to the importance attributed by the interviewee to the ideas expressed in their answers. These concepts (marked in green in Annex 2) helped to group the interviewees' comments. They are based on the development of sensitivity to the significance of the data (Strauss & Corbin 2002, p. 52).

## MAIN RESULTS

The museum wealth of Donostialdea and the territorial development model reflected in map 2, is extensive, but a hierarchy is observed in terms of the influx of visitors to the Bay of Pasaia at present. This is because it is a peripheral area in terms of tourism, given its proximity to Donostia-San Sebastián, with its long tourist tradition, as opposed to the industrial and port past of the Bay. Hence, the Bay appears erased in the tourist imaginary, which constitutes a challenge. With a view to the future, greater cooperation with the Port of Bilbao is proposed, as both ports should be understood and managed as complementary infrastructures, emphasising specialisation and differentiation, focusing on elements of value, in order to seek a niche in Short Sea Shipping (SSS) and bearing in mind that it is a small port that can compete in a globalised world.

The Albaola Basque Maritime Factory is presented as a case study, as a component that generates heritage, cultural and landscape value. It contributes to the recovery of trades of the past, knowledge of an intangible heritage, and prepares teenagers in seafaring skills. The data show the economic and social impact it generated between 2014 and 2019. It is interesting to consider the diversity of change in use linked to heritage processes. The port facilities and the reconstruction of old ships constitute an original tourist offer and generate several cultural activities from the museum, thematic boat trips or maritime festivals.



In addition, this experience also demonstrates how ships can be used indirectly in the construction of the city's image and form part of local development projects. Based on this proposal, together with a series of museums, the Bay is full of cultural, gastronomic and musical activities, film, dance and theatre festivals. The irruption of covid-19 in 2020 is reflected in a loss of employment, mainly in creative and cultural activities, (figure 2) as it conditioned their economic position and the suspension of festivals and all kinds of activities.

The argumentation about the interest of these data demonstrates what a post-covid recovery looks like. It is necessary to encourage society's interest in the port landscape and to involve politicians and the scientific community in the protection of urban, periurban and rural environments.

The port of the Bay of Pasaia was important from the 16th to the 20th centuries, but has lost functionality (VV.AA., 1999), due to the fact that its industry has practically disappeared and it is currently a peripheral area in terms of tourism, given its proximity to Donostia-San Sebastian, with its long tourist tradition, in contrast to the industrial and port past of the Bay of Pasaia. In the discussion, several problems and conflicts are highlighted which have not been resolved over time: 1) the administrative boundaries between Donostia and Pasaia; 2) inter-institutional governance, due to the difficulties in reaching agreements; 3) port governance, given that the port is managed by the State and this deprives the Bay municipalities of important economic resources; and 4) an identity in reconstruction, due to the decline of the industrial and fishing sectors.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORK

The contribution of the research is achieved through a triangulation between interviews, focused literature review, maps and case study, coupled with quantitative data with a special focus on the irruption of COVID-19. It concludes that what is needed is both a greater permeabilisation between the port and the city and to reuse heritage buildings by converting them into cultural buildings and tertiary activities. This system of spaces can play a key role as "urban laboratories", to test innovative and resilient solutions.

The results of this analysis confirm that in order to meet the objectives it is necessary to accept the role played by the actors who have been considered experts in this research (members of neighbourhood associations and movements, health professionals, urban planners, architects, residents in the vicinity of the bay), taking into account the importance of the different cultural and creative sectors.

The preservation of the architectural and port identity is built through the Maritime Festival, as it constitutes an opportunity to open up the port to the citizens. The recovery of the port area of Pasaia through tourism makes it necessary to implement an economic development strategy, taking into account the landscape, cultural identity, and the heritage associated with the port economy and the maritime specialisation of tourism.