

BOOK CHAPTER - Chapter 10 of:

Tourism in European Cities:

The visitor experience of architecture, urban spaces and city attractions

Architecture and tourism

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*Citation: Ebejer, J. (2021). *Tourism in European Cities: The Visitor Experience of Architecture, Urban Spaces and City Attractions*. Rowman & Littlefield.*

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10.1 The role of architecture in city tourism

Architecture is part of everybody's lives even if people are not aware of it. Many aspects of people's lives take place in a building that has been designed and constructed with a specific purpose in mind. The most common uses of city buildings are as residences or offices as well as for retail, transport, industry and worship purposes but there are also tourism-related buildings such as hotels, catering establishments and visitor attractions. The word 'architecture' is normally associated with buildings that are monumental or that stand out because of their design or their size. More recent commentators have adopted a broader definition of architecture to include everything that is built¹, including the more mundane buildings in the city.

Attractiveness in a city is created by a mixture of buildings from different eras with different functions and styles.² Many cities provide diversified architectural structure from different eras of their history including a broad range of contemporary architecture. Examples include Berlin, London, Paris, Barcelona, Moscow and many others. There are however some cities that are bound to a few specific eras from their past. For cities such as Rome, Florence,

Venice and Jerusalem, the dominant urban heritage and their tourist image are closely associated with a specific period of their history. They also provide contemporary architecture but these are mainly located at the outskirts of the city and are barely present in the tourist's mind.

Buildings are built for a specific purpose or mix of uses. But beyond that, architecture communicates meaning. In Chapter 8 we discuss how buildings acquire meaning and explain how the communication of architecture is dependent on a process of codification whereby people understand messages on the basis of pre-determined meanings.³ In tourism, semiotics is mostly linked with clear recognizable images. A tourist visiting the Alps will take pictures of mountains, timber cottages and cattle. Visiting San Gimignano in Italy, a tourist will take a picture in which one or more of the towers typical of the place are included. A visitor to Paris will take at least one photo which includes the Eiffel tower. This symbolises Paris and, in a larger context, French culture. According to Specht,⁴ “For the masses, architecture is a major element in the semiotics of tourism leading to the connotation of place”.

Contemporary architecture is unlikely to have a historical meaning or significance. Yet it would be wrong to refer to contemporary architecture as meaningless. It is not uncommon for recent works of architecture to have meaning that is either intended when being developed or one that is acquired over time. The meaning of architecture does not necessarily evolve from historical events. Most architecture has been contemporary at some point in history while in time it may have gained, changed and sometimes even lost significance.⁵ Meaning in architecture depends on many factors but mostly on the perspective of an individual or of the community. For example: for residents of Bilbao the meaning of the city's Guggenheim Museum locals might range from cultural invader to economic redeemer to transformational activator. On the other hand, for visitors, the museum might stand for extraordinary contemporary architecture while the connection to the city of Bilbao itself plays a secondary role.⁶

Tourism cannot happen without architecture, more so in cities. It creates the basic conditions for tourism to happen as the facilities and services are provided in buildings or in urban spaces. Architecture plays a critical role in almost every area of tourism. It provides infrastructure to enable tourists to reach their destination and, upon arrival, accommodation where to stay. It also offers venues for leisure activities. Beyond the functional use of building and spaces there are instances where architecture becomes a place that draws visitors by

providing something of interest and hence becomes an attraction. Moreover, architecture can be a major motivator in the tourist's destination choice. Some historical monuments have been attractions since the early days of tourism. Some examples include St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Pyramids in Cairo, Egypt. Cities are attractive to visitors not only because of their iconic architecture designed by internationally renowned architects but also because of "their overall design, harmonious composition of open spaces and built form, and streets with views and interesting or surprising features."⁷

There are instances where a building is developed to address local need without any direct function related to tourism. In time, however, the building becomes a place of interest for tourists. There are diverse circumstances why this could come about, that can be broadly grouped into two. This could relate to physical features such as design, scale or architectural treatment (for example Casa Batlló in Barcelona). Alternatively it could be because of a historical event with which the building becomes associated (for example the General Post Office in Dublin which still bears bullet marks from the 1916 rebellion).

Some buildings of the recent past are considered as attractors in cities sometimes even more than the historic architecture. In most cases, however, the visit to the recent architecture may be a brief one in a city that offers many other attractors. The exception to this is Bilbao where a piece of modern architecture has become a strong motivator for people to visit the city. No building has increased the awareness of contemporary architecture as a tourist attraction as much as the Guggenheim Bilbao.⁸

The shift to a globalised environment has meant that cities are forced to compete with each other in order to be attractive tourist destinations, desirable workplaces and more. The awareness and image of destinations are amongst the most important factors regarding their competitiveness. Destinations without a perceptible face and a clear image often have difficulty to compete globally. Accordingly, visually distinctive attractions can provide a competitive edge if linked to a positive destination image.⁹ Urban destinations need to reinvent themselves over and over again in order to remain attractive and interesting places for tourism.¹⁰ The development of contemporary architecture is one possible means that cities can do this. Over the last twenty years tourist cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin and Paris have invested heavily in contemporary architecture to further enhance their image and elevate their position in the perception of the world, attracting interest and investment far beyond the field of tourism.¹¹

Uniquely-designed architecture captures and enhances the special local characteristics of place to which tourists are attracted. City authorities and cultural organizations are increasingly aware that architecture has the potential to be a visitor attraction in its own right.¹²

Skyscrapers are a form of architecture that merits some discussion in tourism academic literature. Increasingly the skylines of more and more cities are being dominated with tall buildings and skyscrapers as they are physically prominent features in many cities. Politicians, corporate tenants and architects often believe that “large, upwardly thrusting symbols have promotional and competitive benefits.”¹³

Skyscrapers are normally ineffective as tourism attractions. London provides some interesting exceptions to this. In a discussion on vertical urban tourism in London, Andrew Smith¹⁴ considers several developments that provide opportunities to visitors to experience the city from up high. He lists a number of buildings and structures that allow visitors to consume London from above including viewing platforms in new skyscrapers or in regenerated industrial structures (for example SkyGarden, the View from the Shard and Tate Modern). There are also moving attractions that simulate flight, most notably the London Eye. Other attractions facilitate a more physical experience, such as climbing onto the O2 or descending down The Slide at The ArcelorMittal Orbit in London’s Olympic Park. In the last two decades developments in London have capitalised on the aesthetic appeal of urban panoramas and the popularity of viewing platforms with tourists. The provision of tourism facilities in tall buildings and structures generate rent revenues and thus makes the development investment more financially viable. Panorama attractions enhance the public perception of the tall building and thus also enhance the rental value of the commercial spaces.

10.2 Museum architecture

Cities have been increasingly looking for new ways to promote themselves. In efforts to distinguish themselves from competitors cities often seek to present themselves as young, modern, contemporary, forward-looking, creative and stimulating and to do so they resort to a good ‘cathedral of contemporary art’.¹⁵ Such ‘cathedrals’ are normally museums located within easy reach of ‘cathedrals of consumption’ – shopping malls or the streets of commercial districts. Museums have been increasingly identified as catalysts for urban attractiveness and also as means for giving a new image to the urban environment. This has led to a considerable increase

in the number of museums and exhibition spaces of modern and contemporary art, often as part of urban regeneration projects.¹⁶

In an interesting book chapter on urban attractiveness Guerisoli¹⁷ discusses the architectural form of ‘hypermuseum’ describing it as “a place where the container has become the content, like a work of art that attracts mass consumerism and use of space.” The museum acquires a monumental presence in the urban landscape and becomes a symbolic building linked to the city’s urban identity. Hyper-museums are often hybrids that combine exhibition activities with other activities such as shopping, consumption of food and culture-oriented meetings and events. When a city commissions a hyper museum the intent, or at least the hope, is that the innovative architectural addition to the city will become a global icon. Examples of hyper museums include the MAXXI: National Museum of XXI Century Arts¹⁸ in Rome, Centre Georges Pompidou¹⁹ in Paris, the MACBA in Raval, Barcelona and the Acropolis Museum²⁰ in Athens.

Museum revenues from tickets, bookshops, cafes and restaurants have minimal effect on a city’s budget. The presence of a new art centre however may have a powerful effect on the urban context through its architecture and its symbolic value. It is the outside, rather than the inside, where considerations about image and financial impact become important. A museum exceeds its cultural value if and when it takes on a flagship status. Apart from its normal museum culture functions, a flagship museum attracts local, national and international visitors as places of culture, urban centres for leisure and city icons.²¹ Their strong visual impact and their formal bold experimentation make them the emblems of the presence of contemporary arts in the city.

Two books^{22, 23} in architectural literature on museums describe new major museums that were built and came into operation in Europe and elsewhere in the years 1992 to 1999 and 1998 to 2004 respectively. Virtually all were designed by world renowned architects and most have some quality or feature that potentially makes them iconic. In just twelve years (1992 to 2004) as many as twenty-eight new, potentially iconic, museums were developed across Europe as described in these two books. Given the major investment involved for each this is a remarkable number; reflecting the importance that cities are giving to this form of cultural development. In addition, there were museums and art galleries built before and after this period and others developed across Europe that did not attract attention in the architectural literature.

In the introduction to his book Barreneche ²⁴ captures the spirit of museum's role in modern society as follows:

“The beginning of this new century will surely go down in history as a golden age for the museum. Since an ongoing boom in museum building started in the 1990s, the public has greeted openings of new museums and expansions of older institutions with a previously unimaginable level of fanfare and excitement. Travelling exhibitions have become certifiable blockbusters as popular as hit movies and musicals. ... The way museums now market themselves is a big reason for their surge in popularity. No longer elitist institutions, they vie with theme parks and other mass-market entertainment for a slice of the public's leisure time and disposal income. But an even bigger motive is, quite simply, the architecture.”

In the last fifty years two major museum developments brought about a radically new approach in the design of museums and a dramatic transformation in the museum as an institution. They also brought about a change in how museums are used as part of urban policy and are perceived by the wider public. Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Bilbao were instrumental to bringing about this ‘golden age for the museum.’ Aspects of museum design of these two museums are discussed in Case Studies AT2 and AT3 respectively.

In an essay on museums Stanslaus van Moos²⁵ reviewed major museums, new and older ones, and identified four different forms or architectural approaches to layout and design.

1. The museum as a converted monument. Many of the better-known, well-established museums were conversions of buildings that previously served as royal or ducal palaces. With one important exception, conversions from palace to museum did not attract attention as an architectural project. The Louvre Museum is the exception when its remodeling and modernisation, completed in 1989, generated significant controversy because of the introduction of a glass pyramid in the centre of the courtyard over the museum's spacious and welcoming new entrance.²⁶

Other major museums and art galleries found their new home in former railway stations or industrial buildings; normally monumental buildings with a prominent location in the city. Examples include the Museum for Contemporary Art in Berlin. The former railway station was renovated and converted into an arts museum in 1996. The most renowned example of this type

of conversion is the Musée d'Orsay in Paris housed in the former Gare d'Orsay. The railway station was built in 1900 and converted into an arts museum in 1986. With 3.6 million visitors in 2019 it is the second most visited museum in Paris after the Louvre. Other examples include the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg (formerly a railway station), the Tate Modern in London (housed in the former Bankside Power Station) and the Hallen für Neue Kunst in Schaffhausen, Switzerland (located in a former textile factory).

2. *The 'open' museum.* In its simplest form museum architecture consists of “four walls, light from above, two doors, one for those who enter and the other for those who exit.”²⁷ This thinking gives rise to a second museum form which is minimalist and which relinquishes all pretensions to architecture in the traditional sense. Mostly popular in the 1960s, it is hailed as ‘open’, democratic and user friendly by its proponents as it diminishes the ‘threshold fear’ that grips visitors as they enter into other ‘hallowed’ museum spaces.²⁸ The Centre Pompidou, Paris is a spectacular example of this approach as its architecture did away with ornamentation and monumentality in museum design.

3. *The museum with traditional enfilades.* In architecture an enfilade is a suite of rooms formally aligned with each other such that the doors of connecting rooms are along a single axis. This was a common feature in grand European architecture and is a common arrangement in museums and art galleries. Twentieth century museum design never really abandoned this traditional approach of layout and design, even if it contradicts the ‘open’ museum concept. Associated with this approach is the application of ornamentation on the facades of the building, normally in line with classical norms. This approach is illustrated in the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London opened in 1991. Interestingly, a previous architectural proposal for the National Gallery extension was infamously described by Prince Charles (May 30, 1984) as being “a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend.”²⁹ The comment reverberated for many years in the architectural and cultural circles in the UK and it reinforced the polarisation between traditional and contemporary architecture styles and thinking.

4. *The museum as 'sculptural architecture'.* The museum interior consists of a series of organic and non-conventional internal spaces and forms that depart from the traditional museum design concepts. The external visual qualities and aesthetics of the building emerge from the juxtaposition of forms of its various elements. External ornamentation, for its own sake, is avoided. Examples include the Jewish Museum³⁰ in Berlin, the Phaeno Science Center³¹ in

Wolfsburg (Germany), Graz Kunsthaus³² (Austria), the Imperial War Museum North³³ in Manchester (UK) and the Guggenheim Museum³⁴ in Bilbao (Spain).

Case Study AT1: The redesign of the Military History Museum, Dresden

The Military History Museum (Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr) is located on the outskirts of the city of Dresden, Germany.³⁵ Following a radical redesign in 2001, it is now an important museum that seeks to present the causes and consequences of war and violence rather than glorify military armies and war. It was built in 1876 to be used as an armoury for the military. Within thirty years of completion the building was converted into a military museum. With strong horizontal lines, the main neo-classical facade echoed the traditional and authoritarian thinking of nineteenth century architecture. The exhibits were chosen and displayed to reflect the idea of power and grandeur of war which the museum sought to uphold. Reflecting the region's shifting social and political positions over the last 135 years, the building served as a Nazi museum, a Soviet museum and an East German museum. The history and identity of the building was deeply rooted in war. It was closed in 1989 because of doubts about how the museum would fit into the history being created by German reunification.

The design process for the remodeling of the museum and building was initiated in the mid-1990s and completed in 2001. Architect Daniel Libeskind was entrusted with the design following a competitive process.

The redesign seeks to divert the focus of the museum away from military technology. While the then-existing collection was considered a valuable core around which to develop the concept, the new museum communicates to visitors the past and present impacts of the military on different parts of society. Apart from symbolic meanings, the redesign seeks to reconcile aesthetic aspects with functional needs including the comfort and convenience of visitors and the appropriate presentation and conservation of the artefacts. The museum drew two hundred and twenty thousand people in its first ten weeks in 2001.

The concept of the museum is first made apparent when approaching the building. A wedge cuts into the façade breaking the continuity of the façade horizontality. The wedge has a dramatic effect on the appearance of the building. The shape and modern material of the wedge contrasts sharply with the stone and the orderly design of the historic building

façade. Within the wedge, a viewing platform enables visitors to look over the modern city. The wedge points to the area which the first bombs struck the city in the Second World War. The wedge symbolises two things. Firstly it is an acknowledgement of Germany's history of war and violence. Secondly it symbolises a break from the past and an end to the glorification of war. In every aspect the museum is designed to alter the public's perception of war.

<figure 10.1 near here>.

10.3 Iconic architecture and the city

In many destinations iconic architecture is part of the overall tourism product that is offered to tourists. What does icon mean? What is an iconic building? What makes it an icon? An icon can be defined as “a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol or as worthy of veneration.”³⁶ An icon thus has an inherent positive and often emotional connotation. Landry³⁷ describes icons as “projects or initiatives that are powerfully self-explanatory, jolt the imagination, surprise, challenge and raise expectations. In time they become easily recognizable.” For example: the Eiffel Tower is an icon as it reflects the confidence of Paris' role in the industrial age. Its size and method of construction offered a challenge and raised expectations for subsequent structures. To this day the Eiffel Tower jolt's people imagination.

Defining 'iconic building', rather than just 'icon', may be a bit more difficult. Sklair³⁸ describes it as one which is sufficiently innovative or famous to represent a movement, style or era. With reference to iconic architecture, Alaily-Mattar et al³⁹ emphasize its two characteristics namely its ability to generate identity to a place and the intention to capture attention. These in turn affect both the perceptions of visitors and the local population.

A limitation of Sklair's definition is that people's understanding of what is iconic is different depending on the own cultural and professional background. The extent to which a building is representative is subjective, just as meanings associated with buildings are subjective. Similarly the extent to which a building is considered innovative is also subjective. What may be iconic to a person knowledgeable of architecture might be environmental degradation and 'just more of the same' to someone who is more focused on environmental issues. A further

limitation of Sklair's definition is that it excludes innovative buildings that are representative of place.

In academic literature there are various different terms that are used to refer to iconic buildings including 'signature buildings', 'destination icons' and 'cultural flagships'.⁴⁰ These are often used interchangeably. Other terms that are used interchangeably are 'flagship architecture', 'iconic architecture' and 'star architecture'. Alaily-Mattar et al⁴¹ draw a distinction between flagship and iconic architecture. The former refers to buildings and institutions that attract visitors with corresponding economic implications for the institution and the city.⁴² The latter is an architectural genre.⁴³

Architecture is very much a product of a particular time, place and people and therefore it is often perceived as a potent cultural and political symbol. Indeed, societies are often defined by their surviving architectural achievements.⁴⁴ Throughout history iconic buildings have reflected and displayed the aspirations and values of society. For example: in the middle ages large and impressive cathedrals were built to emphasise the importance of religion to society. More recently, with the rise of consumerism and the demands for corporate identity, buildings are increasingly looked upon as images or marketing objects.⁴⁵ Buildings that acquire the iconic status are built to symbolize something greater than their intended functions. They also provide an architectonic 'fix' for the need to create meaning and value in societies in search of a new image and identity.⁴⁶ The emergence of contemporary iconic architecture is an expression of the long-standing desire of economic elites to materialize their power in urban space.⁴⁷ They do so by means of attention seeking buildings that are "resources in struggles for meaning and, by implication, for power."⁴⁸

Cities competing for tourist dollars strive for distinctiveness in an increasingly globalised world; a distinctiveness that is frequently achieved through the making of new urban icons. In the global drive towards iconicity architecture is no longer considered to be merely an object with a specific function but also in terms of its ability to bring about relevant transformations.⁴⁹ In an era of competition between cities architecture is being used increasingly as a tool for economic development, particularly through the development of spectacular and iconic buildings.⁵⁰ City authorities have increasingly sought to develop or emphasise new buildings to act as place symbols.⁵¹

In the last three decades there has been constant increases in tourism activity across Europe. The architecture iconography is often used to develop images of place so, with expanding tourism, the construction of architectural icons has become an increasingly popular phenomenon.⁵² Internationally recognised tourism icons are a powerful draw to any city destination fortunate enough to have inherited or created one. When using icons to attract visitors the challenge is to make the icon uniquely associated with the city while at the same time making it internationally popular.

In many cases the public rhetoric that accompanies the launching of attention seeking architectural projects suggest that the appointed star architect will design the best architectural solution and grant the needed visibility for the project and the city hosting it. The name of the star architect has become a key factor in the design of the project and more crucially in defining a positive image that can be communicated to a much wider international audience.⁵³ The star architect is encouraged “to take risks, break the rules, upstage the competitors and shamelessly grab the spotlight.”⁵⁴ It is a unique combination of fame with symbolism and aesthetic qualities that creates the icon.⁵⁵

In the last fifty years two projects in particular set the tone for the development of other iconic architecture in Europe. These were the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Guggenheim Bilbao. These were already referred to in the previous section in the context of their impact on the design of museums globally (see also Case Studies AT2 and AT3).

It is not clear how an iconic building becomes significant for tourism nor how it eventually becomes part of the tourist imagery of the city destination. Being visually interesting and pleasing is one factor. This in turn makes it more likely for the building to be represented in the international media and this in turn encourages people to visit. Whether historical or contemporary a radically different aesthetics attracts attention, even internationally. Another possibility is that at the time of their construction the buildings looked like no other architecture. A similar outcome might even come about from chance or mistake, such as the leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy.

Interestingly buildings that are iconic tend to be those that are popular and well known to tourists. It is a self-reinforcing cycle. Being visited by large numbers of people makes a building more well-known not only amongst visitors and potential tourists but also across a wider international public. Behind the scenes there are the promotional efforts of the owners of

the building, the architects and of the city authorities, especially those responsible for tourism. The promotion adds fuel to the process as the building moves from anonymity to an iconic status, at least as hoped by the city authorities. The iconic building's promotion takes place in subtle ways and also more covertly. It takes place before, during and after construction. Controversies accelerate a building's path to iconicity as they get the building debated in the media and this makes it more widely known.

The more a building is visited the more it becomes iconic. And the more iconic it is the more it is visited. This means that, for a building that is sufficiently innovative and visually prominent, a museum or some other form of visitor attraction is more likely to be recognised as being iconic than, say, an office or residential building.

Another element that increases a building's potential for iconicity is the manner of engagement of the visitor with the building and its surroundings. There are many reasons why the Centre Pompidou in Paris became iconic, including the very unusual high-tech architectural design and the controversies that surrounded it. One element that made the building more interesting for visitors, and hence eventually more iconic, is the escalator on the front of the building. To enter the different levels of the building, people ride on the escalator which takes them from level zero right up to the top level. As the escalator is moving up, the visitor's perspective of the urban piazza below changes progressively from close street level view to an almost bird's eye view from the top. Another example is the Aarhus ARoS Art Museum in Denmark that has a 360 degree enclosed viewing gallery on the roof. Visitors spend time strolling around the walkway and taking in the views of the city below.

Marques and McIntosh⁵⁶ emphasise the role of context in iconic architecture as a means for developing an image and an identity for city. To create an image the design of the architectural icon needs to consider context and character of a place. Iconic architecture is a more powerful tool for city branding if the building is site and context specific, and hence not reproducible.

In reality there are few icons of contemporary architecture that have world recognition, even if many cities have made it their objective to create a globally recognised icon. There is also a growing concern that in a world of attention deficit we are being subjected to 'icon overload'. The icons built in secondary cities normally acquire regional and possibly national recognition but not global attention. This is partly because the cities are not sufficiently known at an international level. Across Europe there are many examples of highly innovative

architecture, some of them by star architects, that could arguably become global icons but that remain relatively unknown, other than in architectural circles. Two examples are TempPELLIAUKIO Church, Helsinki and the Military History Museum, Dresden both of which are described in more detail in case studies in this chapter. Other examples include Havenhuis (Antwerp), Kunsthhaus Graz, City Gate and Parliament Building (Valletta, Malta), The Deep (aquarium, Hull) and The Titanic Museum (Belfast). Iconic status accrues more easily to major developments in global cities such as Paris, Berlin and London. Secondary cities have to try much harder in a world where people are constantly being bombarded in cyberspace with information and images.⁵⁷

Smith and Strand⁵⁸ argue for more modest and nationally-oriented, rather than globally-oriented, objectives. If cities try too hard to develop a global icon potential cultural, regeneration and experiential benefits may be compromised. For contemporary architecture they argue in favour of a domestic focus and the provision of attractive public spaces. Modest initial submissions may, in time, result in a project that attracts international attention. Oslo's National Opera and Ballet House is a case in point (see Case Study AT4).

Case Study AT2: Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Centre Georges Pompidou was opened in 1977 in the Beaubourg district of Paris. It was not referred to as a museum but “as a centre open to forms of contemporary creation” and its function was said to be that of “a meeting place, open to the city and its inhabitants.”⁵⁹ Half the site area was designated as a public square in front of the building. This was conceived as a place for socialization and in fact many people congregate in the square, especially during the opening times of the Centre. The architecture was a radical break from the past, especially from past museum architecture. In their design architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers rejected the idea of the building with the classical treatment of facades and adopted a high-tech industrial style. Building elements such as electrical, hydraulic and air-conditioning installations are normally located out of sight on the inside of the building. Piano and Rogers turned the building inside-out and put all structural and services facilities on the outside of the building making them clearly visible from the surrounding urban spaces. The service installations stand out in four colours according to their function: blue (air conditioning), yellow (electrical) green (hydraulic) and red

(escalators and elevators). The placing of building elements on the outside freed up the interior to create large open spaces providing for flexibility in the way the interior is subdivided and used. Inevitably the radical design generated significant controversy with some critics arguing that the exceptional industrial style did not fit into the Beaubourg neighbourhood. The architecture was also criticised as it gives priority to form over function, thus compromising its functionality as a museum. Open plan layout and free standing temporary walls made it almost impossible to show sculpture and painting satisfactorily.⁶⁰ In fact after just eight years a major overhaul was carried out. More conventional, solid galleries were created and some of the original high-tech features removed.

Of the many thousands of daily visitors less than one in five actually enter the art museum section of the building with people preferring to just meet, hang-out and walk through. Some argue that, like many public art centres, the building serves mostly as “a culturally legitimated amusement park and culture café.”⁶¹ There are several counterarguments to this criticism. The building’s role as a visitor attraction is an important one as it has helped in the regeneration of the Beaubourg district and generally added value to the overall tourist experience of Paris. Moreover, the way the public, including tourists, use the building is one step towards democratization of culture as the casual visitor may in time be encouraged to enter the museum proper. Finally, the ancillary spending in bookshops, souvenir stores, restaurants and franchises (which are not a prerequisite of exhibition entry) generates much needed funds that enhance the financial viability of the cultural institution.

Another aspect of the Centre Pompidou is the way it has regenerated the Beaubourg neighbourhood- an area which until then was largely neglected by the authorities and which was considered as one of the least desirable areas of Paris. The development generated a significant influx of visitors into the area as well as investments in commercial and residential properties. These greatly enhanced the area’s overall image. Centre Pompidou set a precedent in that, since its opening in 1977, museum developments in Europe are expected to act as catalytic agents of urban transformation and not just function as repositories of the arts.⁶²

Case Study AT3: Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain opened in 1997 as a cooperative venture between the Guggenheim Foundation and the Basque regional administration of northwestern Spain. Designed by internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry, the museum building consists of a series of interconnected structures whose extraordinary free-form mass suggests a gigantic work of abstract sculpture.⁶³ The interior space is organized around a large atrium. The curved forms required the use of computer-aided design using software programmes that were originally developed for the design of aircrafts. The use of computer software made it possible to design and shape every element including the titanium panels that provide the external skin to the building.⁶⁴ The museum building derives aesthetic energy from its location on the edge of the water, thus making it not only a piece of architecture but also an exercise in landscape design.⁶⁵

Many tourists visit Bilbao mainly, or possibly only, to see the Guggenheim. It is by far the most well-known site in the city. Moreover, many visitors to Bilbao are attracted by the architecture of the building and not necessarily by its museum function. Some visitors opt to view the building from the outside only instead of visiting the museum and the exhibits.⁶⁶

Substantial impacts on Bilbao's tourism economy can directly be traced back to the Guggenheim. It was estimated that in its first 3 years of operation the museum helped to generate approximately five hundred million dollars in economic activity.⁶⁷ In 2012 the number of visitors surpassed one million.⁶⁸ Of every five visitors, four are international tourists or visitors from outside the Basque region. This development is particularly interesting as it achieves a phenomenal success due to a combination of stunning architecture, a big name collection and huge amounts of publicity.⁶⁹ Bilbao successfully used the Guggenheim to regenerate itself; giving rise to what has been termed as the 'Guggenheim effect'-⁷⁰ whereby entrepreneurial city authorities commission world-renowned architects to design eye-catching buildings with the explicit aim of positioning the city favourably in the global competitive environment. This remarkable piece of architecture epitomizes the new wave of iconic urban buildings which have been designed to reposition cities on the global stage and act as a focus for economic regeneration initiatives.⁷¹

The Guggenheim Bilbao was not just an audacious architectural achievement. It immediately became synonymous with an entire city and a symbol of regeneration of the city and the region. That a single building could capture so much of the popular imagination was a stunning architectural surprise of the end of the twentieth century.⁷²

Case Study AT4: Norwegian National Opera and Ballet House, Oslo , Norway

Oslo's new Opera House⁷³ is located in the waterside borough of Bjørvika, an urban area that overlooks the fjord. It was previously a run-down industrial area partly occupied by drug users and prostitutes. The project completed in 2008 is an example of how cultural projects are used for the regeneration of undesirable areas in cities. The overriding justification for the project was to provide a dedicated venue for cultural performances, opera in particular. But beyond the functional and artistic objectives there were other objectives including to enhance the image of Oslo, to encourage further tourism activity and to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the urban area of Bjørvika. As is the case with many iconic developments, planning for it was characterised by significant debate and controversy- mostly about location and cost. Many politicians and cultural operators preferred a central location for the Opera House as they were more interested in the cultural legacy rather than the project as a means for urban regeneration. In 1999, the Norwegian Parliament decided in favour of the Bjørvika site over two other alternatives. The project cost was another controversial aspect of the project. Public funds were needed not only for the capital cost of the project but also for subsidies to cover part of the operational cost. Eventually the cost of the building and the adjoin spaces was four hundred million euros. It requires a fifty million euros annually to operate. The cultural venue generates income from ticket sales, sponsorships, retail and catering leases and donations but the revenue generated covers only twenty-five per cent of running costs. The rest of the running costs are covered by public finances.

Interestingly those supporting the project for cultural reasons recognised that the urban regeneration objective provided added justification for the government to cover the significant costs. National objectives were also ascribed to the project, in particular to develop and reinforce the nation's identity and to promote citizen's self-esteem. This is also reflected in the official name given to the building – Norwegian National Opera and

Ballet House. Research carried out on the project ⁷⁴ shows that a recurring theme is ownership, with many interviewees arguing that the new cultural facility belongs to all the people of Norway and not just to the cultured elite. The Opera House is now a leading visitor attraction in Oslo, especially for residents of other Norwegian cities when visiting the capital. The Opera House is relevant to international tourism in that it may tip the scales in favour of Oslo when a potential tourist is considering which city to visit in Scandinavia.

More than just visual, the building and the area also have a wider experiential dimension. People go there not just to see the building but also to experience the space around it and over it. They go to walk, to sit, to relax and to look out towards the fjord. The urban setting that has been created fits with Norwegian priorities for good public space and “turn rhetoric about reconnecting cities with their waterfronts into reality.” ⁷⁵

Case Study AT5: Tempeliaukio Church, Helsinki

Tempeliaukio Church ^{76, 77} is located in the heart of Helsinki in a large rocky space surrounded by apartment buildings. The rock outcrop was kept as intact as possible by embedding the church into excavated rock thus preserving the openness of the setting and allowing public access onto the rocky ground above. The church is covered with a shallow copper-lined dome. The dome seems to float over the church interior, supported by narrow beams around the entire circumference connected to the surrounding the rugged rock wall. Inclined areas of roof glazing around the dome shed light onto the rock walls of the church highlighting the contrast between the irregularities of the rock walls and the exact geometry of the dome structure. In a similar fashion, the altar piece at one side of the church space is lit by natural daylight from above. With about half a million visitors annually Tempeliaukio Church is a must-see sight in central Helsinki.

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