

**Bilbao and Barcelona ‘in motion’. How urban regeneration
‘models’ travel and mutate in the global flows of policy
tourism**

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Abstract

This paper explores how the so called ‘Bilbao effect’ and ‘Barcelona Model’ are diffused internationally through what I call ‘urban policy tourism’: short trips made by policy makers to Bilbao and Barcelona to learn from their regeneration in the last 15 years. The paper reveals for the first time the substantial scale of this practice and contextualises it within a wider phenomenon of urban policy transfer and the international ‘motion’ of urban policies. Although both models are internationally known for a set of elements, this research shows that in fact the messages mutate and shift as they circulate through the policy circuits. Ultimately, however, the popularity of the Bilbao and Barcelona models suggests a process of global urban policy convergence.

The Next Bilbaos and Barcelonas

In the world of urban policy making, there is a fascination for cities that have managed to turn around their economic fortunes or emerge like a phoenix after crisis. Occasionally, some cities acquire a ‘paradigmatic’ or ‘celebrity’ status as they seem to “sum up an era, the place where it all comes together” (Thrift, 1997: 142). If Paris was the capital of modernity and Los Angeles of postmodernity, Bilbao and Barcelona in Spain have become meccas for urban regeneration, from industrial cities of a post-

authoritarian regime to culturally vibrant magnets of visitors, and all in only a few decades. They have been constructed into “places for consumption” (Urry, 1995) for policy makers and professionals in the planning and architecture sphere who want to know the secrets of their success. This paper investigates policy makers’ experiences in learning, producing and exchanging international stories about ‘what works’ in urban regeneration by focusing on these two model cities. In particular, it presents the findings of research into what I call ‘urban policy tourism’: short fact-finding trips by urban and planning professionals to other cities to learn about their transformation.

Bilbao jumped to fame in 1997 with the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum designed by the world famous architect Frank Gehry. The story of why an international art brand like the Guggenheim Foundation opened its second European museum in a seemingly provincial industrial city in Spain has already been told (Zulaika, 1997). Suffice to say that the entrepreneurial, politically autonomous and financially rich local and regional authorities of the Basque Country saw in this Museum the icon for the urban transformation of Bilbao (Del Cerro, 2006; Gonzalez, 2004; McNeill, 2000). Since then, the city has become famous for the ‘Bilbao effect’ defined as “the transformation of a city by a new museum or cultural facility into a vibrant and attractive place for residents, visitors and inward

investment” (Lord, 2007: 32). Many cities have attempted to emulate this ‘success’. Thomas Krens, the Director of the Guggenheim Foundation, has confessed to receiving “requests from ambitious Mayors all over the world who have seen what the Guggenheim here has done for Bilbao” (Pitman, 2007: 64). Various cities across Europe have or are aspiring to become the ‘Bilbao of the North’: from Liverpool (Sudjic, 2002) to Aalborg (Jensen, 2007). In February 2003 the then British Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell sent almost identical ‘press releases’ to Newcastle-Gateshead, Birmingham, Manchester and Cornwall encouraging them all to become the ‘new Bilbaos’¹.

Barcelona has inspired similar aspirations across the world following its clever use of the 1992 Olympics as a catalyst for a major infrastructure and urban regeneration programme and subsequently for its combination of cultural policy, tourism and urban renewal (Marshall, 2004). The British ‘love affair’ or “obsession” (The Economist, 1999) with Barcelona was made official in 1999 with the award of the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture, the first time the prestigious title had been presented to a city. It was also held as a model for regeneration in the government-commissioned report *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 1999) in which the Mayor of Barcelona provided a prologue. In 2006, a British Minister claimed that Manchester could become a ‘Barcelona of the

North' (Kelly, 2006), mirroring the reported desires of other British cities as diverse as Plymouth (Norwood, 2007), Croydon (Booth, 2007), Leeds (Marsh, 2003) and Glasgow (Symon, 2002).

It is clear, then, that these two cities have become elevated as 'role models' for regeneration and exemplars of "universal global best practices" (de Jong and Edelenbos, 2007: 690). There is plenty of academic literature in English and Spanish exploring the nature and impact of these models (for Barcelona see Balibrea, 2001; Degen and Garcia, 2008 and forthcoming; Capel, 2005, 2007; Delgado, 2007; García Ramón and Albet, 2000; Monclus, 2003; Zusman, 2004 and for Bilbao see Esteban, 2000; Gonzalez, 2004 and 2006; Rodriguez, et al, 2001; Plaza, 2006, 2008; Vicario and Monje, 2003). In contrast, the aim of this paper is to look at how these models are diffused, what is learnt from them and how, and what is elicited through the study of 'urban policy tourism'.

The paper first introduces the concept of urban policy tourism linking it to wider issues of policy learning and transfer and further reflecting on how to do research on it. It then presents and analyses the data on the scale and nature of policy tourism to these two cities. The next section contextualises this phenomenon within the uneven circulation of the Bilbao and Barcelona models around international policy and professional circuits. Finally, the

paper reflects on what the main elements being picked up by policy tourists are and whether these lessons are connected to a wider trend towards urban policy convergence.

Global flows of policy tourism

Urban policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona forms part of the increasing phenomenon of policy learning and policy transfer, the “process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000: 5).

Although policy makers have always engaged in learning and transferring ideas from elsewhere, this phenomenon has become more ubiquitous in recent decades. Obvious factors include the annihilation of time and space by technology, the rise of Transnational Corporations and the promotion by nation states and international institutions of the exchange and transfer of ideas through programmes such as the EU-funded INTERREG or city networks like EUROCITIES. The OECD, UN Habitat or the World Bank all promote the sharing of best practices or benchmarking.

Policy transfer and policy tourism have also become more relevant as the “evidence-based policy making movement” (Clarence, 2002) has swept

across governments. The positivist rationale behind ‘evidence-based policy’ is that policy should be based on what works best, rather than on a particular ideological position (Campbell, 2002). The field of urban policy has welcomed this emphasis on evidence and the exchange and diffusion of ‘best practices’. In Britain, the practice has become more intense since the arrival of New Labour in 1997 but is equally present in other countries and institutions such as the EU (Böhme, 2002),

Within critical geography, emerging research is contextualising this rise of policy transfer as part of a wider process of global knowledge creation and diffusion of neoliberal ideas. As the main sites of knowledge creation shift from the public to the private sphere, hegemonic global values are increasingly rooted in economistic and rationalistic notions of policy (Carnoy and Castells, 2001). This cannot be divorced from the ascendancy of a transnational capitalist class made up of globalizing bureaucrats, professionals, corporate executives and media (Sklair, 2002).

Analysis of policy transfer, therefore, needs to extend beyond the methodological nationalism and somewhat scale-limited remit (Stone, 2004) that has so far characterised it. It also has to move on from a literal definition of transfer and focus on linear transactions to a much wider and flexible notion of policy mobilities (MacCann, 2010) and mutations (Peck

and Theodore, 2010). More emphasis is needed on the role of the institutional and socially constructed environments through which policy ideas flow, recognising the uneven power relationships between actors engaged in the process. Finally, the whole process of policy learning, transfer and diffusion has to be seen as “acutely political [...] there is nothing natural about which policies are constructed as succeeding and those that are regarded as having failed” (Ward, 2006: 70), which in turn defines the policies that become mobile and those that remain “immobile” (McCann, 2008). In sum, recent research has argued for a shift from the somewhat narrow study of policy transfer to the analysis of ‘policy mobilities’ (McCann, forthcoming; Peck and Theodore, 2010)

Research in this field has already identified the relevance of travel, conference going and fact-finding trips to the urban policy transfer repertoire (McCann, forthcoming, Gonzalez, 2004, Ward, 2007, Wolman and Page, 2000) as well as the particular experiences of the “travelling bureaucrats” (Larner and Laurie, 2010) as an important “connecting tissue” of neoliberalism. Conceptualising this policy travelling as a form of tourism – as I do in this paper – has interesting implications. It has of course been used negatively to mean the adoption of policies in a decontextualised way (Sheldon, 2004) or using fact-finding trips as “jollies” (see Cook, 2008:

783). But it can also help to conceptually deepen the meaning of policy mobilities in various ways.

Just as leisure tourism tends to turn foreign places into “objects of desire” (Sheller and Urry, 2004: 2), policy tourism is also wrapped up with myths about policies in ‘other’ places. The experiences of professionals who visit cities to learn from their policy success also resemble the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 2002). The leisure tourist and the urban policy tourist are often presented with environments that have been turned into spectacles as part of a wider “economy of signs” (Scott and Urry, 1994). Like the tourist gaze, the ‘urban policy tourist gaze’ also involves anticipation, previous daydreaming and a sense of being taken out of the ordinary which makes the place become more exotic, a place where anything can happen (Urry, 2002) and perhaps where policies that you would struggle to implement at home can see the light of day. Policy tourism also resembles leisure tourism in offering a “retreat-like” (MacCann, 2010: 22) time-space where things are often taken out of context and ‘orientalised’.

Policy tourism just like its leisure counterpart involves the re-scripting of places, the re-assembling of cities out of the bits and pieces that are visited. In doing so tourists produce a “hierarchy of cultural significance” (Gregory, 1999: 116), where some “sites” get turned into “sights” worth

photographing while others are ignored or downplayed. Tour guides play an important role here, choosing and adapting itineraries. In the same way, policy tourism also requires careful “knowledge management” (Solesbury, 2002), selecting what pieces of information to highlight about a policy while obscuring others.

This is linked to the fact that the tourist (policy or leisure) often wants to confirm the previous image she had of the place. Edensor (2007), for example, reports that despite the many different angles from which the Taj Mahal could potentially be photographed, most western tourists actually take the classic shot in a quite unreflexive manner. In a similar way, policy tourists often seek confirmation of views they have formed before their trip and want to be given the best “snapshots” of the Barcelona Model or the Bilbao effect, with little variation or deviation. This analogy also brings attention to the ‘performativity’ aspect of policy tourism where both guests and hosts comply to a certain set of rules about what can and cannot be discussed.

Researching mobile policy tourism

The starting point for this paper’s methodological approach is the micro or even mundane practices of policy transfer, sharing McCann’s (2008: 887) interest in “how urban policy actors are engaged in mobilizing policies by

utilizing expertise, invoking authority and/or legitimacy, and conducting their daily activities”. It also follows McCann’s investigation into how experts mobilise policies and knowledges from city to city and how this process is mediated through an array of multi-scalar institutions. As such, I do not rigidly conceptualise Bilbao and Barcelona as ‘exporter localities’ – the starting points of unidirectional transfer flows – but more as nodes in a “space of policy flows” (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 70). The analysis of policy tourism to these cities offers a window into much wider networks and my methodology maps these tentacles in a “relational” way without being bounded by rigid notions of geographical scales (Ward, 2009). The research focus goes beyond the tourists’ experiences to encompass the institutional environments where policy tourism takes place in order to embed the mobile policies into particular political and geographic contexts and also unpack their ideological nature. This reflects the recent emphasis on seeing policy transfer as geographically, historically and politically grounded rather than an innocuous open market of ideas (Peck, 2009).

Research² began by unravelling the host organisational networks in Bilbao and Barcelona, which are central to the analysis of what and how policies are communicated as they construct the itineraries that policy tourists follow. These networks represent the key sites in the Barcelona and Bilbao ‘stories’ (the names of the key institutions are listed in Tables 3 and 4 later).

Initial contact with these cities regeneration agencies facilitated further contacts with other parts of the network. Once the host organisational networks were fully mapped, the research employed a mix of methods (for interviews and participatory observation see Tables 1 and 2) and data sources to explore three other key areas - the quantitative scale and nature of the policy tourism phenomenon, the experiences of the visiting tourists and the international diffusion network. I take each in turn.

As no centralised or comprehensive data set exists on urban policy tourism in Bilbao and Barcelona, I compiled my own data set through requests to all the individual agencies in the host network and by inspecting their annual reports. These different organisations have not always collected data in a standardised way meaning the level of details regarding origin of visits or size of delegations varied. I have gone to great lengths to minimise double counting as many delegations visit more than one institution³. Finally I have only taken into consideration official urban policy tourists, those that have gone through the host network system⁴. The compiled data therefore presents a useful snapshot of official policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona which is sufficiently rigorous to make wider points about policy transfer, diffusion and mobilities.

Table 1: Details of interviews

N as referred to in text		Date
1.	Interview with Barcelona local authority planning officer	September 2007
2.	Interview with Director of Leeds International	September 2007
3.	Organiser of architects trips in Barcelona	21/05/2008
4.	Architect, regional regeneration agency of Barcelona	21/05/2008
5.	Group of three local economic development officers in Barcelona	22/05/2008
6.	Architectural exhibition guide in Barcelona	23/05/2008
7.	Organiser of urban tours in a Museum in Barcelona	27/05/2008
8.	Communications of officer at regeneration agency in Barcelona	28/05/2008
9.	Director of think tank in Barcelona	28/05/2008
10.	Professor at the Universitat Oberta in Barcelona	28/05/2008
11.	Lecturer at the Autonomous University in Barcelona	29/05/2008
12.	Director of Regional regeneration agency in Barcelona	30/05/2008
13.	Local authority officer in the international relations department in Barcelona	30/05/2008
14.	Lecturer at the Catalan Polytechnic University	30/05/2008
15.	Communications officer at regeneration agency in Bilbao	04/06/2008
16.	Director or public-private partnership in Bilbao	04/06/2008
17.	Architect in Bilbao	05/06/2008
18.	Professor at Deusto University, Bilbao	09/06/2008
19.	Communications officer at regeneration agency in Bilbao	09/06/2008
20.	Deputy Mayor of Bilbao	13/06/2008

Source: Author

Table 2: Details of delegations that I joined

n. as referred to in text	Origin of delegation	Place of visit	Date
1.	A group from the Association of Austrian Architects	Barcelona	21/05/2008
2.	Students from the University of Poitiers	Barcelona	22/05/2008
3.	Institutions and companies from North Brabant and Flanders	Barcelona	22/05/2008
4.	Group of Dutch engineers	Barcelona	29/05/2008
5.	A <i>Churchill Scholar</i> from Australia	Bilbao	4/06/2008
6.	Basque Teachers	Bilbao	5/06/2008
7.	Mexican delegation from León and Guanajuato local authorities	Bilbao	9/06/2008
8.	American delegation of <i>German Marshall Memorial Fellows</i>	Bilbao	11/06/2008

Source: Author

In order to understand the experiences of the visiting tourists, two main methods were employed. 'Policy guides' were interviewed about the nature of the visits, what visitors were normally interested in, what kinds of questions they asked, what comparisons they made with policies back home. In addition, I undertook participant observation of eight visitor delegations, which included attending presentations and following guided tours. This created further opportunities to spontaneously survey visitors about their reasons for the trips and their opinions about the 'models' and their transferability. This kind of ethnography is described by McCann (forthcoming) as being particularly useful for the analysis of the policy transfer field, paying attention to the settings, meeting rooms, standardised powerpoint presentations, language, architectural models or promotional literature. It also follows de Jong and Edelenbos' (2007: 701) advice to follow "transnational transfer agents in action" by observing them while they interact.

Finally, the diffusion network was uncovered through semi-structured interviews with academic 'policy guides' in Bilbao and Barcelona and followed up through discourse analysis of secondary information, mainly the regeneration agencies' policy reports and academic literature (on for example the transfer of planning practices to Latin American cities). Some

interviews were relatively formal and pre-arranged, whereas others were more informal and took place alongside a visit, on-site⁵.

This methodology fits the shift in focus mentioned earlier from policy transfer research to policy mobilities (Peck and Theodore 2010) which encourages a mix of methods such as documentary analysis with ethnographic approach, comparing and contrasting public materials and private stories (Larner and Laurie, 2010). It also brings together precisely the territorial and relational aspects of policy mobilities, the relationship between fixity and mobility (MacCann, 2010). Rather than seeing policies floating in an unstructured universe, this research places attention to the socially and culturally constructed nature of the policy tourism field (cf Peck, 2009). The emphasis is on how and why certain ideas become 'mobile' and what channels are used to diffuse them. As Peck (Ibid: 39) suggests, these channels are likely to be "well trodden paths between politically aligned interest and jurisdictions [...] ideologically lubricated and institutionally enabled". Therefore following policy tourists and mobile policies also uncovers power networks and can shed some light on who actually benefits from these mobilised policy ideas.

The scale and nature of urban policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona

Urban policy tourism, very much like leisure tourism, is sustained through a network that hosts visitors, organises their itineraries, finds experts that they can talk to and sometimes guides them around the city selecting sites and telling stories. In both cities, this ‘host network’⁶ mirrors the structure of their respective urban regeneration agencies as a series of hubs through which visitors navigate and access organisations and sites. Urban policy tourism is not a rigidly organised activity; visitors move in and out of the ‘official’ host network, having the freedom in theory to choose the sites they visit. In practice, however, the short duration of trips (two or three days), means that visitors generally stick to pre-planned itineraries with little time to encounter alternative experiences. It is worth noting that in both cases the host network has emerged as a reaction to its city’s policies becoming mobile and in turn producing an increasing number of requests for visits from abroad. In most cases, staff have had to accommodate this new hosting function on top of their existing jobs.

The nature and scale of urban policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona must be conceptualised within the recent history and urban transformation process of these two cities. Key events were the hosting of the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992 and the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao in

1997. Although quantitative data of policy tourism mainly corresponds to the mid-2000s onwards, secondary literature and interviews have helped to shed light on the earlier nature and scale of this phenomenon.

In Barcelona, urban policy tourism follows the rhythms of the distinct phases of the Barcelona Model⁷. In a first phase in the late 1980s, even before the Olympics, the city received visits mainly from very specific groups such as artists or architects interested in its innovative public space projects and modernist architecture. There were also visits from Mayors and high responsibility politicians with whom local leaders had particular relationships (Buenos Aires or London). A second phase brought the Olympic Games and international recognition, and with it, a new set of visitors, such as investors and real estate developers mainly from cities organising or bidding to organise major events themselves. Finally, from the late 1990s, the phenomenon has been characterised by a less homogeneous set of people, ranging from specialists in planning and architecture to city managers, students, and professionals who often combine the trip to Barcelona with holidays. The range of interest has also broadened to include local economic development, innovation policies, management of populations in regeneration projects, public-private partnerships, waste management or transport. Barcelona has during this time become a major tourist destination in vogue (attracting around 7 million tourists a year) and

new events and regeneration projects have kept the interest of urban managers, investors and real estate sector.

Most host organisations only began to record data of foreign delegations visiting for professional reasons in this last phase, from 2000, when, according to an economic promotion officer from the municipality, they became aware of “their brand abroad” (interview 5). In this last phase, I have calculated an average of 270 group visits per year⁸, or at least one foreign delegation visiting Barcelona every working day. With delegations composed of an average between 15 and 21 people we can conservatively estimate that some 4,000 professionals annually visit the city to learn about the different aspects of the Barcelona Model. The scale of urban policy tourism to Barcelona is therefore very substantial. The origin of delegations can be classified into three main geographical areas: Europe, Latin America and East Asia. Europe is the largest group, led by France, Italy, Germany and Scandinavian countries, while the UK⁹ and Eastern Europe hardly send any groups. The second largest geographical origination is from Latin America with the main countries being Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Mexico. East-Asia makes the last relevant category with China and South Korea being the main contributors. Visits from the United States and Canada are not really significant, although there are delegations most years, while groups from Africa, Middle East and Australia rarely visit.

Table 3: Total numbers of visits of international delegations to Barcelona

	Municipal Planning Department*	Municipal International Relations Department*	Association of Catalan Architects *	Barcelona Activa **	Forum	22@ *	Foment**	Total	Total adjusted
2001	76	43	97	73		23	15*	327	277.95
2002	61	43	106	108		33	15*	366	311.1
2003	52	43	109	54		38	20	316	268.6
2004	80	47	84	49		32	20	312	265.2
2005	67	36	81	38	2	30	10	264	224.4
2006	67	43	107	39	17	48	11	332	282.2
2007					22	126			
2008					18				
Average a year								319.5	271.575

Source: Compiled by author. See below for methods.

Figures in bold are estimates assuming average number of visits of existing data from the rest of the years

* Data provided by the organisation itself

** *Barcelona Activa* is the Municipal Local economic development agency. *Forum* refers to the exhibition building that was left after the celebration of the Forum of the Cultures in 2004. *22@* is the municipal society in charge of the regeneration of a vast old industrial neighbourhood called *22@* in Poble Nou. *Foment* is municipal company in charge of the planning and regeneration of the Old Town (Ciutat Vella) district. All data from these organisations was obtained from their annual reports.

Policy tourism in Bilbao is also intrinsically linked to the city's regeneration, which although a complex and broad phenomenon, has been internationally recognised mainly through the Guggenheim Museum inaugurated in 1997. We can identify four phases. During the early stages of the regeneration (end of the 1980s until the mid-1990s) experts from Bilbao went to visit other cities, for example Glasgow and Pittsburgh, to learn from their experiences. In a second phase (up to 1997-8) selected experts (from Newcastle, Lille or Pittsburgh to name some) either came to visit or were invited to talk about industrial restructuring in a two-way dialogue. In a third phase, from the late 1990s contacts increased with other middle-sized European cities and also with Latin American cities which in their turn started to visit Bilbao. Finally, as can be seen in Table 4, in the last years visits have escalated and since 2003, when more accurate data is available, there is an average of at least 54 visits a year, which amounts to a weekly visit by a foreign delegation, or about 800 professionals a year. The scale of urban policy tourism in Bilbao, while considerable, is therefore much smaller than Barcelona as one would expect given that Bilbao is in international terms a less well known and far less visited city (620,000 visitors per year of which 63% were from within Spain, Bilbao Turismo, 2008).

Table 4: Total numbers of visits of international delegations to Bilbao

Year	Bilbao Metrópoli 30 *	Bilbao Ria 2000 **	Deputy Mayor ***	Municipal Tourism office***	Adjustment due to double accountancy
2000	11		7		14
2001	9		6		13
2002	17		15		25
2003	23	21	8		37
2004	16	21	18		43
2005	30	22	33		66
2006	25	26	26	15	59
2007	31	26	29	11	67
2008			21		
Average since 2000					40.5
Average since 2003					54.4

Source: Compiled by author. See below for methods

* Bilbao Metrópoli 30 is a public-private partnership mainly dedicated to urban marketing. Data here comes their Annual reports where it is not clear that they report all the visits.

** Bilbao Ria 2000 is a public-public partnership of government agencies at different levels (local, regional, national) and a key agent of regeneration. Data was provided by the organisation itself

*** Data provided by the organisation itself

The origin of these visitors differs slightly from those coming to Barcelona. The proportion of visits from Europe is relatively smaller and slightly more skewed towards the north, with groups from Norway or Finland visiting regularly. However, Eastern European countries remain equally absent. Like in Barcelona, Latin American cities regularly come to visit Bilbao, particularly from Mexico, Chile, Colombia or Argentina. East Asian countries such as Japan and the South Korea have also recently become more interested in the case of Bilbao.

In both cities, these urban policy tourists tour around the hosting network of urban regeneration agencies which become central hubs. These “earthly domains” (Peck, 2009: 25) where the policy tourism performance takes place are mainly meeting rooms and offices but also encompass the city itself which becomes transformed into a stage where urban transformation policies are dramatised. Beyond the physical spaces, the urban policy experience involves an immersion into the local institutional governance network and

practices. All these spaces can be conceptualised as “globalizing microspaces” (Larner and Le Heron, 2002) that for MacCann (2010) bring out the importance of mundane and seemingly banal channels through which ideas are transferred and potentially globalised.

In Barcelona two main contrasting sites are worth mentioning. First is the old historic quarter, a very dense, residential, commercial and touristic area which has become a ‘best practice’ for socially inclusive regeneration (but compare with Pascual Molinas and Ribera Fumaz, 2009 for a different view). Here the public-private company *Foment de Ciutat Vella*, responsible for the physical regeneration, occasionally organises visits or distributes information to interested groups (see Table 3 for the names of the different host organisations). The Association of Catalan Architects, which has been organising fee paying itineraries since 1997, also takes delegations to this area to show the mixture of old and new architecture. In contrast, the current showcase neighbourhood of Barcelona is the *Poble Nou* and the so called 22@ area¹⁰, a 200 hectare former industrial village now set to be transformed into a global digital quarter and a natural destination for policy tourists. The Municipal Planning Department has moved here along with the local economic development agency, and a special 22@ office has been set up to attract creative industries. The Planning Department has a purposely dedicated room with multimedia technology, an impressive floor map of Barcelona and views to the iconic Agbar tower, designed by Jean Nouvel, where host network staff gives standardised talks followed by more tailored information relevant to visitor questions. The sight of cranes demolishing old factories and low rise houses while new glass office blocks and university buildings spring up provides the perfect scenario for policy tourist tours about Barcelona’s creative city ambitions.

The ‘host network’ in Bilbao encompasses a similar matrix of regeneration agencies (See Table 4 for the name of the host organisations). Since 2004 attempts have been made to coordinate the policy tourism process by the municipality’s tourism office. Most delegations are directed to the main regeneration actors who are all located in the city centre. The role of the current Deputy Mayor an ex-senior officer and councillor for over 20 years is particularly worth mentioning. Since 1995, he has received (and recorded) over 160 visits of groups and has spoken at conferences all over the world about the ‘Bilbao effect’, over time crafting a standardised lecture now available on CD. He generally receives delegations in the Town Hall, where translation is provided. Another key Bilbao player is the Director of *Bilbao Metropoli 30* a public private partnership mainly dedicated to city marketing. Since the early 1990s he has regularly presented on the Bilbao regeneration story, and in the past few years has appeared many times on South Korean television.

Uneven geographies of urban policy circuits

The phenomenon of urban policy tourism is inserted into a wider context of the circulation of policy ideas. If professionals visit Bilbao and Barcelona to learn from their regeneration models it is because they have previously heard about them through the press, specialist literature, policy documents, policy networks, photos and exhibitions. Having focused on the policy tourism hosting experience, we now need to explore how this phenomenon is part of the wider transnational mobility of the Bilbao and Barcelona models. This will reaffirm Stone’s (2004) view that policy is not only transferred through bilateral relations between exporting and importing states or cities, but that the circuitry of policy mobility also includes international organisations (see Table 5 for a summary of networks to which Barcelona belongs to) and/or trans-national non-state actors. Cities are increasingly inserted in world networks (Taylor, 2004) through which not only the economy but also policy ideas circulate.

Indeed, Bilbao and Barcelona are inserted in what Peck (2004: 399) calls “scalar and network architectures” through which their experiences move around.

Table 5: Participation of Barcelona in International Networks and current roles

Transnational general	United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) (Chair 2000-2007) United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Metropolis (Headquarters and Vice-presidency)
Thematic international	International Association of Educating Cities (Presidency and secretariat) Observatory of Participatory Democracy (Technical Secretariat) International Association of Science Parks International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Local Governments for Sustainability REN21 Renewable Energy Policy Network for 21st Century C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group The League of Historical Cities
Europe	Committee of the Regions Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (part of the Council of Europe) Council of European Municipalities and Regions Eurocities POLIS (Chair 2008-2009) IMPACTS Europe Airport Regions Conference Energie-Cités Major Cities of Europe European BIC Network - EBN European Forum for Urban Safety - EFUS South European Association for Contemporary Creation - IRIS Initiatives in Dance European Exchange - IDEE YOUROPE – The European Festival Association
Mediterranean	MedCités (Secretariat general since 1996)
America	Ibero-American Centre for Urban Strategic Development (CIDEU) Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI)

Source: Barcelona City Council Website

The Bilbao and Barcelona models have become international celebrities. To recap, a combination of civic participation, the strong role of public spaces and the use of mega-urban projects are the identikit of the Barcelona model. The Bilbao effect, however, is more linked to the use of culture and iconic architecture to re-launch an industrial economy in crisis. These elements were all present in the fieldwork and secondary analysis that I have conducted but what also emerged is that these models actually acquire a myriad of different versions as they are communicated, diffused and mobilised by different actors.

During the fieldwork, the strength, leadership and direction of the respective local authorities stood out as a major feature of the cities' regeneration experiences in testimonies from hosts and visitors alike. This was also confirmed in an interview with an urban policy tourist guide in Barcelona who said that foreign delegations particularly from big cities like Paris or London are often surprised by the rapid transformation of the city and the ability of local leaders to embrace change compared to the cumbersome planning systems in their own contexts (Interview 6). An almost semi-authoritarian governance regime with omniscient local leaders was portrayed in both cities; there was no mention of public participation or civic engagement, which contrasted sharply with Barcelona's external image.

In the case of Bilbao many delegations were interested in the partnership arrangements between different levels of public institutions and with the private sector. In particular visitors showed interest in the special financial mechanism used for regeneration in the two cities which to simplify involve the public sector developing land, assuming risks and selling up to the private sector. Governance style seemed to inspire visitors the most.

Not only the content but also the style of communication changed in the interaction between hosts and tourists depending on whom the policy was being narrated to. For example, one local economic development officer in Barcelona would place heavy stress on the aggressive nature of policies to attract businesses to a private sector audience, but would hold back the specific details to a "competitor" audience of foreign local authorities (Interview 5).

What needs to be stressed is that in these networks of policy mobilities the flows and connections between the hubs are not equal or carry the same weight. Some partners are more receivers than givers, some policy ideas or actors become much more mobile than others. More interestingly from a geographical viewpoint, the message that is spread around through

the network changes as it circulates around different circuits. In this section we deal with the geographical mutations that the policies go through as they get mobilised by different actors in different networks, something not yet well covered by the existing literature. In particular this research has identified that the Barcelona and Bilbao models move in a different way across two main circuits: a North-Atlantic (European and North American) and a Latin American. This is linked to the historical and trade links of these two cities and their role in the global economy. Indeed the pathways of policy transfer can be seen even as an already pre-constituted field (Peck, 2009: 39), in other words, they map onto already existing trade, colonial, business or cultural links. The message is therefore tailored in a different way depending on the perceived geopolitical and geoeconomic relationship between the cities in the network. This research found that in the North-Atlantic circuit, the Bilbao and Barcelona models have been presented and sold as exemplars of quality of urban design, public spaces and architecture, and best practices in innovation policy, training and technology; in other words, a relatively technical and ‘rationalistic’ discourse. In contrast, in Latin America, the models are epitomised by local democratisation and leadership, decentralisation and strategic planning (public-private partnerships), the importance of values and citizenship; a much more ‘paternalistic’ approach¹¹.

This geographically differentiated message depends in part on how the actors involved in policy mobilities re-imagine themselves in this process, re-making power relationships vis-à-vis other cities, sometimes as equal partners, sometimes as higher up in the hierarchy. The Director of International Relations for the local authority in Leeds (UK) observed that Barcelona was in a “different league [to Leeds], portraying itself as much more international, almost as a mentor, most of all for Latin American cities” whereas Bilbao was “at the same

level as Leeds, Dusseldorf or Lyon, second tier cities that want to compete at an international level” (Interview 2).

Barcelona’s mentoring role for Latin American cities has been particularly developed through the CIDEU network founded and headquartered in 1993 in Barcelona and covering more than 80 Ibero-American cities. Its original objective was to “diffuse the model and methodology of the Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan to any interested Latin-American City” (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2004: 44). It was inspired by a developmentalist discourse to intervene in poorer countries to counteract a “lack of urban strategic planning culture to channel the fast urbanization process” (March Pujol, 2003: 61). Indeed, the Barcelona local authority has always complemented their international economic promotion activities with solidarity actions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2004) although the two circuits have overlapped.

In a parallel way, the Bilbao example has been diffused to Latin American cities through the *Bilbao Metropoli 30* public-private partnership as a model of local government reform via New Public Management techniques, particularly the use of indicators. More recently, *Bilbao Metropoli 30* has launched an initiative called *City and Values Forum* aimed at Latin American cities that specifically seeks to “foment a greater familiarity with Metropolitan Bilbao as a reference, and turn it into a model internationally in the values of leadership, innovation, professionalism or openness” (<http://www.cityandvalues.com>). The emphasis of the Bilbao and Barcelona Models in Latin America therefore is around private-public partnerships and strategic planning¹², transparency and efficiency. But the message is also tangled, particularly in the case of Barcelona, with the politically emancipatory aspects of the regeneration process (Borja, 2007) impossible to reproduce. Inevitably, this model has

brought mixed results (Steinber, 2005; Segre, 2004) to Latin American cities which have a different local political culture.

The particular geographical focus on Latin America for these two cities in diffusing their models has gone hand in hand with a much more instrumental objective to promote them in Latin American markets. Two key planners involved in the early transfer of the Barcelona Model expressed it succinctly: “Latin American and some regions of Africa can be, in a medium term, important markets, as long as today we make a generous effort to transfer capital and technologies and training of human resources and modern infrastructures (Borja and Forn, 1996: p. 35 in Compans, 2004: 22). Similarly, the transfer of the Barcelona Model ideas of local decentralization and civil society was combined with a strategy to recruit votes for Barcelona’s bid for the Olympic Games in the late 1980s (Interview 10).

In contrast to the Latin American circuit, Barcelona has developed a more peer-to-peer and equal relationship with other “global cities” such as New York and London. The New York connection goes back to the early days of the Barcelona Model when the director of services of urban projects for the municipality, Josep Antoni Acebillo, reports having spent much of his time talking to American artists about public space projects some of which were eventually built (Interview 12). In Bilbao analysis of *Bilbao Metropoli* reports from the early 1990s show a link with middle-range European and North-American cities with whom mutual visits, workshops with businesses and local officials or training exchange programmes were organised mainly around industrial restructuring. Bilateral relationships with Glasgow, Rhur region, Lille and Pittsburgh were particularly important. The emphasis from the reports is on learning and exchanging ideas with these cities’ experiences of industrial restructuring.

When it comes to the North-Atlantic circuit Bilbao and Barcelona have portrayed themselves as equal partners in the mobilities network.

This “uneven transnationalization of policy knowledge“(Peck, 2009: 2, mimeo) that we are describing is also apparent in the direction in which the policies are moving. Recent literature on policy mobilities has stressed their circular nature, moving beyond linear schema where policies travel from one place to another or between two places (MacCann, 2010). However research on the diffusion circuits of the Bilbao and Barcelona urban regeneration models suggests that we cannot abandon the more old fashioned unidirectional or bidirectional view. A unidirectional flow is particularly true for the case of Barcelona where consultancies have effectively “sold” the model to mainly Latin American cities. In 1989, the Barcelona municipality founded TUBSA, a limited company aimed at the “transfer of [Barcelona’s] urban technologies to other cities” through agreements with Latin American and African municipalities (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1991). The company was formed by public and private engineering, transport, infrastructure and environment related businesses that offered their services to cities abroad and was chaired by Jordi Borja, academic and head of the municipal International Relations Department at the time. The company was subsequently privatised in 1994 and has continued to work both in Barcelona and Latin America in projects such as the privatisation of water recycling plants in Mexico or masterplanning for cities in El Salvador (Pedraforca, 2004). Jordi Borja discontinued his involvement but instead opened his own consultancy *Jordi Borja Urban Technology Consulting S.L.*, participating in the setting up of strategic plans in Mexico City, Buenos Aires or São Paulo. Borja¹³ has, however, recently become critical of planning in Barcelona and has distanced himself from the uncritical transfer process (Borja, 2007), arguing that it is not justifiable to present the experience of Barcelona as a replicable model (Interview 10).

This analysis confirms the key role played by ‘policy transfer activists’ (Radaelli, 2000) – pressure groups, consultancy firms, think tanks and policy experts – in sustaining the mobility of the policies through the networks. Less explored in the literature is the power that these actors have in shaping the process and more controversially what they gain from it, particularly in relationship to private companies such as planning consultancies or planners or academics linked to the public sector. The diffusion of the Barcelona model has, allegedly, economically benefited Barcelona-based companies. Pedraforca (2004) argues that the aim of CIDEU has been in fact to boost Barcelona’s ‘brand’ and economic presence in the Latin American markets from which it was previously disconnected. Brazilian academics have particularly denounced “the increasing number of cities, in Brazil and in Latin America in general, that are contracting the consulting services of the Catalans and their disciples, or using their teachings” (Arantes et al, 2000: 77 cited in Monclus 2003: 413). Another profitable transfer mechanism has been postgraduate programmes in urban planning offered in Barcelona (by, for example, Jordi Borja and the CIDEU) and targeted at the Latin American market.

What we have seen in this uneven diffusion of the Barcelona and Bilbao models is that policies mutate as they circulate around different geographical circuits. Actors in the network adopt different power positions depending on their perceived status in the global urban hierarchy. For the Latin American circuit, the Bilbao and Barcelona models appear as reformist solutions where the Spanish cities can show and indeed sell a more participatory and efficient local governance model. Within the North-Atlantic circuit the regeneration experiences of these two cities are better known as successful culture and event-led transitions to a post-industrial economic structure with the aid of careful urban design and

global architects. The diffusion mechanisms within this circuit appear more egalitarian where the Spanish cities have also engaged in a two way learning process from other contexts. The much more mobile and fast diffusion of the Bilbao and Barcelona models in the Latin American circuit must be interpreted within a wider process of penetration of Spanish capital in Latin American markets. Spanish foreign investment in Latin America accounted for 47% from 1993 to 2000 and was as high as 63% in 1999 (Sanchez Diez, 2001).

Global convergence to neoliberal urbanism?

The analysis of urban policy tourism and transfer is linked to a wider question about the convergence or not of urban policies across the world. On the one hand, thousands of professionals from the planning sphere visit these two cities to learn from their regeneration which might suggest that there is a general transnational consensus on ‘what should be done’ in terms of urban policy. On the other hand, as we have seen, the message is not uniform and suffers mutations in the very same process of circulation, which would not fit in with the idea of global unidirectional convergence.

The range and levels of engagement of urban policy tourists to Bilbao and Barcelona suggests that it is not a stage in a definitive process of policy transfer. While for some visitors Bilbao and Barcelona were just a stop in a longer study tour or an appendix to holidays, for others it was the ultimate experience as part of their research into the city. A constant comment from visitors, however, was that the experiences in these two cities could not be reproduced in their home contexts. Influential policy makers who act as guides and who have travelled the world showing these models such as Borja and Acebillo in Barcelona or the Director of *Bilbao Metropoli 30* also confessed in interviews that their exact transfer was impossible and attempts to replicate them had failed particularly in Latin American cities.

If most actors involved in policy tourism believe that the direct transfer of models is very difficult then the purpose of these visits has to be interpreted as a more general process of policy learning. Various authors have already identified different levels of transfer from lesson drawing to coercive transfer, (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000) or from shallow, tactical or instrumental, to deeper social understanding (Stone, 2004). In the light of this research, however, it is important to add another less tangible and rational dimension: reassurance, comfort and legitimacy for the kind of urban policies that policy makers and politicians already employ or would like to implement. In the opposite direction it can also reassure the conviction that what they are doing at home is not “in message” with the best practices out there. One participant in a delegation mentioned that what he would take back from the visit was “to wake up our politicians and give them the inspiration to do things, bring them best practices” (Delegation 3).

This reassurance dimension is similar to the process of isomorphism identified by institutionalists, where organisations tend to become more homogeneous, more similar as they copy each other the way they do things. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that organisations do not replicate ideas from each other because they have proven to be efficient in one place and might work in another but to also secure legitimacy in political life and to fit into wider structures. In a similar vein, Offe (1992, cited in Radaelli, 2000) argues that mimicking another organisation can be used as political strategy to hide a particular agenda. This was alluded to in an interview with an experienced urban planning officer in Barcelona who said that sometimes Latin American policy makers ‘used’ the case of Barcelona to stir up organisational change to replace corrupt, traditional or conservative practices (Interview 1). However, the implementation of some elements of the Barcelona model in Latin

American cities has in fact opened up a door for more business-friendly strategic planning techniques and mega-urban projects (Leal de Oliveira, 2000; Vainer, 2000, Compans, 2005).

The mobilisation of the Bilbao effect and Barcelona model can therefore be re-imagined as smoke screens behind which agendas of privatisation, modernization of public services or tertiarisation of the economy can be implemented. On a more positive side they can also be mobilised as agendas for improvement of public spaces, high quality urban design or civic participation although during my research I have found little evidence for this latter interpretation.

The role of policy tourism as part of a process of policy legitimation or reassurance has echoes with the argument that that policy ideas function in a similar way to fashion. Several studies in organisational analysis have found that managers or, in this case, policy makers who do not follow policy fashions risk being peripheral and losing legitimacy (Czarniawska and Joerger, 1996; Abrahamson, 1996). Policy makers use techniques and ideas that appear to be rational and progressive and that stakeholders (investors, politicians or citizens) expect to be used. This can lead to “consensual knowledge by specialists and epistemic communities about the functioning of state and society” (Stone, 2004: 548), which creates a sense of being ‘in tune’ with what is happening elsewhere, a sense of belonging to a particular group, in this case, a club of competitive cities. This shared knowledge can be developed at a global scale, as we have seen with our case studies, via international networks and other arenas.

DiMaggio and Powel (1983) find that one reason why organisations are increasingly looking like each other is the cultural expectations in the society in which they function which acts as a coercive mechanism. In a critical political economy perspective, these cultural expectations

are intrinsically linked to the wider macro-structure of capitalism and its phases. Jessop (1997) has argued that some urban transformation narratives, such as those expressed by local policy makers in Bilbao and Barcelona, become hegemonic because they strike a chord with wider and more general geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses like the rise of neoliberalism since the 1980s. They become “common sense”, the “central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective” (Williams, 1973: 9). The repetition and the elevation to policy mantra of regeneration models like Bilbao and Barcelona has become part of the urban policy common sense and in doing so sets the limits of creativity and feasibility of what can be done in most cities. Neoliberal urbanism is based on “an extremely narrow urban-policy repertoire” which points to the “coercive pressures on cities to keep up with the competition and of the limited scope for genuinely novel local development under a neoliberalized environment” (Peck and Tickell, 2004: 47-48). These neoliberal recipes can become best practices and, in turn, what local politicians, central governments, private investors, international organisation and even large sections of the public expect to see in their own cities.

Neoliberalism, however, as it has already been well established, cannot be understood as a monolithic, immutable and top-down phenomenon but rather as an ‘assemblage’ of different ideas, mobile techniques and discourses which include paradoxes and contradictions and develop in distinctive geographical manners (Ong, 2007; Larner, 2003). As we have seen in this paper, the Bilbao and Barcelona models mean different things to different people and shift as they circulate around different policy circuits. However, even in different versions, this research suggests that the most popular elements of the Bilbao and Barcelona regeneration processes for urban policy tourists visiting the cities and within the international diffusion circuits are those with a strong neoliberal flavour. Social issues and social policy,

despite being important elements in both cities, and appearing in most marketing and official documents had a very low profile in the research I conducted.

Urban policy tourism represents one of a myriad of repertoires within the global urban policy mobilities circuits. It can be seen as a mechanism of reassurance, legitimation and ultimately as a process of hegemony construction of urban policy. It is a circuit through which certain ideas are selected, amplified, repeated and eventually elevated to common sense in the Gramscian sense. We can therefore say that the scale of urban policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona indicates a certain global convergence to a more neoliberal urban policy.

Conclusions

This paper has uncovered the scale and nature of urban policy tourism to two iconic cities as part of a wider phenomenon of global transfer and convergence of ideas in urban policy. One of the most important findings of the paper is the scale of urban policy tourism to Bilbao and Barcelona. Almost 5,000 professionals visit these two cities every year to learn more about their regeneration. The policy tourist flow has increased since the year 2000, to coincide with the fad of ‘evidence-based-policy’ and cheap flights. Most of them come from Europe but also Latin America and increasingly the Far-East. Visitors normally restrain themselves to two or three day visits and generally keep to a pre-planned itinerary organised by the official local host network. Over the years, some actors from the key local regeneration organisations and agencies in Bilbao and Barcelona have specialised in the hosting of these visitors and have collectively constructed a narrative of the regeneration story of their cities. This does not necessarily mean that they have consciously agreed on an ‘official version’ but the increasing external demand to tell a particular story and the relatively tight and formal nature of the host network has led to a consensual narrative. The consequence is that urban policy

tourists learn particular lessons from their visits to these cities based on a stylised and partial version constructed by local authorities of what is happening with none or very little engagement with more critical and alternative voices.

The main lessons and ideas that policy tourists are interested in learning from the cases of Bilbao and Barcelona and that the host network most focuses on are those that have been identified in the literature as part of a trend of neoliberal urbanism: entrepreneurial local public authorities who take the leadership and the risk, semi-authoritarian governance mechanism to quickly implement big urban transformations, the semi-privatization and flexibilization of local public institutions to make them more similar and collaborative with the private sector and the commodification and selling of architecture and built environment. These are the policy ideas more likely to be ‘mobile’ and to travel around the international knowledge circuits. On the contrary, a whole set of problems associated with them, namely, social polarization, gentrification, disempowerment of local communities and erosion of local democracy, remain relatively ‘immobile’ (McCann, 2008) within the official circuits even if widely reported and known by both local and international academics and activists.

This paper has also confirmed the importance of local actors, such as local authority politicians or policy makers, as part of the transmission belt of neoliberalism. If the role of global consultants has been normally stressed as advisors of ‘best practices’ without much regard for political and institutional contexts (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000), in Bilbao and Barcelona we have seen that it is the local actors, very aware of the specificities of their localities who are key players in the diffusion of ‘best practices’. But these actors are at the same time plugged into international circuits of knowledge diffusion, such as international city networks, transnational institutions or international bilateral agreements, through which

their voices are amplified and hegemonised. Interestingly, as we have seen in this case, these international circuits of knowledge are geographically differentiated and the lessons and ideas that circulate through them are also different. The Bilbao and Barcelona models have been diffused in the Latin American circuits as best practices in local democratisation, efficient and business-like local governance and strategic planning, exemplifying a rather paternalistic and almost neo-colonial approach. This has been accompanied, as we have seen, by a profitable business of selling the models, particularly the Barcelona one, through consultancy contracts often led by key members of the local administration. In turn, in the European and north-American and Australian circuit, the lessons appear to be more rationalistic based on urban design, innovation policy or economic restructuring. The diffusion of neoliberal urban policy ideas is not therefore unidirectional or context-free but it adapts itself to 'glocal' circumstances.

The analysis of the profile of the visitors to Bilbao and Barcelona confirms Stone's (2004) assertion that actors involved in the policy tourism business do not just belong to the formal sphere of state (bureaucrats, politicians, etc.) but expand to incorporate other communities such as researchers, interest groups, businesses or think tanks. These actors might not be directly involved in policy transfer in the narrow sense but take part in the wider sense as consensus making and construction of hegemonic ideas. An important example of these are the postgraduate planning courses in Barcelona mainly addressed at Latin American graduates and planning officers where the key ideas of the model are taught. This element brings our attention to the myriad mechanisms through which neoliberal ideas get transmitted.

We are accustomed to viewing neoliberal urbanism as emanating from British or American cities and spreading throughout the urban world. This paper suggests instead that it is cities like Bilbao or Barcelona, with high levels of political and financial autonomy and charismatic leaders who are coming up with creative neoliberal solutions, which are craved by foreign policy makers. It is also interesting to note that some of these initiatives have sprung from a mix of socialist (Barcelona) and nationalist (Bilbao) local authorities, a kind of ‘localist social neoliberalism’ that is quite specific to autonomous regions in Spain with strong identity and political autonomy (Gonzalez, forthcoming). Whilst pursuing internationally competitive projects, authoritarian governance practices and protecting private interests, both municipalities have been careful to develop social projects that benefit their local constituents and have re-interpreted entrepreneurialism as local pride and autonomy from central Spanish government.

Stylised stories such as those from Bilbao and Barcelona, through their diffusion and repetition, arguably become part of the script of ‘what works’ in urban regeneration – they become hegemonic and part of a wider code according to which some ideas are deemed possible and others are discarded. The stories of urban success play an important role in legitimising certain investments in this economic narrow direction. Thus, behind the appearance of these technologies as de-politicised (cf Solesbury, 2002), the ‘making-up’ and travelling of ideas that we have seen in these cases is in fact an “acutely political process” (Ward, 2006: 70). Although the Bilbao and Barcelona models shift and mutate as they become mobile and get territorialised in different ways it does appear that they still represent big icons of neoliberal urban governance.

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¹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Move over Bilbao, Birmingham is the new Eurostyle centre', 'Gateshead shows what culture can achieve to lift a city', 'Move over Bilbao, Manchester is the new Eurostyle centre', 'Cornwall shows what culture can achieve to lift a region', *Press Releases*, 25 February, 2003. Available at: <http://www.gnn.gov.uk>.

² This paper is based on a research funded by a British Academy Small Grant and carried out in May and June 2008 during visits to Barcelona and Bilbao. Additionally I have also made use of other interviews carried at different times within a longer term project to study the diffusion and mobility of urban policy ideas.

³ The complex nature of the local authorities themselves, with a myriad of departments and semi-independent agencies, means that the data is seldom shared and policy tourists sometimes organise independently their visits. However I was able to control the problem of double accountancy in various ways. For example the Planning department at the Barcelona City Council identifies the origin of their requests so you can go back to those organizations and cross them out. In the case of Bilbao as there were less visits and I had more detailed information it was easy to track down the same delegations across the network. I then calculated an average of delegations visiting more than one institution and applied this eventually reducing down the number of visits by a 15%.

⁴ Anecdotal evidence from the fieldwork suggest however that the boundaries of the policy tourism experience are lax and that many visitors to Bilbao and Barcelona who do not specifically come to learn about their policies also engage in some form of policy tourism by visiting regeneration sites, picking up literature, watching presentations, etc. An example of this kind of visitors would be conference attendees that engage in short fieldtrips or architects on holiday.

⁵ Because of the sometimes ad hoc and impromptu nature of interviews these were not recorded although detailed notes were taken afterwards.

⁶ The host network of both cities can be seen on Tables 3 and 4 respectively where the main host organisations are listed with their number of visits.

⁷ Most academics and local planners and politicians recognise relatively distinctive phases of the regeneration of Barcelona. See, for example, McNeill, 2003; Monclús, 2003 or Degen and García, forthcoming.

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⁹ The low number of UK visits can be explained by a shift in the international relations aspects of local government where there is less funding for fact-finding or learning trips and more emphasis on international relations that lead to business deals. Therefore there is also more geographical attention towards places with potential to open markets (Interview with Director of Leeds International, September 2007)

¹⁰ See more information about this project from the Council's website here:

<http://www.22barcelona.com/content/blogcategory/50/281/>

¹¹ Many thanks to Francesc Muñoz for suggesting the geographical differentiation of circuits.

¹² Numerous Latin American cities have indeed adopted the strategic planning model from Barcelona with a mixed success. Steinber (2002) and Pedraforca (2004) report the cases of Córdoba and Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires (Argentina), Bogotá (Colombia), Santiago (Chile), Havana (Cuba), Río, São Paulo, Porto Alegre (Brasil), Montevideo (Uruguay) or Mexico City.

¹³ See interesting exchange between Jordi Borja and two Brazilian academics (Fabricio Leal de Oliveira, 2000 and Carlos B. Vainer, 2000) in Planners Network <http://www.plannersnetwork.org/>.