# MSMEs Partner with Large Firms to Build Bilbao

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City of Bilbao is an international reference model within the field of urban transformation and renovation. It was recognised in 2010 by the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, considered to be the Nobel prize for cities. From an industrial collapse in the 80s, Bilbao has been able to make a transition from an industrial city to emerge as a city of services and culture.

This process has created the conditions necessary for innovation and excellence, therefore, knowledge and technology-intensive companies coexist within the city and its surrounding, Bilbao has an international vocation, qualified professionals and extensive experience in projects linked to urban solutions. The role of the MSMEs in this proccess was truly important, due to their knowledge, flexibility and capacity of collaboration.

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Famous architects had identified important buildings and infrastructure in the renovation of the City, while local engineering, real state and small technological companies developed the works. The best example is the construction of the Guggeheim Museum, with its mathematical complexity of the curvilinear shapes designed by Frank Gehry, that needed the use of advanced aerospace industry software to faithfully transfer their concept to structure and facilitate its construction. For the outer skin of the building, for the first time, 33,000 extremely thin titanium sheets were used, that provided a rough and organic effect to the biulding.

The participation of local companies in these kind of projects is now being used to understand the strengths and the potential of Bilbao, Bizkaia and the Basque Country as references of the best practices in urban solutions and advanced services. Another important fact for the participation of MSMEs, is their local connections and knowledge. A smart city without the participation of the local companies, will make no sense, as the main objective should be favouring economic development.

Many times the smart cities are thought to be under the vision of big technology companies, that want to incorporate to cities on an integrated technology platform, that would manage the city, allowing improved efficiency in their processes and therefore, improve the quality of life of their citizens. However, each city is unique, with different problems and challenges and it is not possible to standardize the same technology in a similar way for everybody.

It has been observed that big companies usually are not able to adapt their platforms to the complex operation process of a city and at this point, the local small companies have many clues to such complexities that unfortunately many times are ignored.

It is therefore clear, that a smart city should be one of the aspects of city development, that cannot be separated from the three main objectives of local development namely:

- Economic competitiveness

- Environmental sustainability
- Social cohesion

A smart city directly affects environmental sustainability and quality of life in the city, therefore, it is necessary to design it to boost the competitiveness of the local economy and social cohesion. In Bilbao, we followed this philosophy and we could say that the new City was erected based on four pillars:

- First came mobility, with new public transport systems like the underground and tram, to also include â??smartâ?? communications in terms of fibre optics and broadband technologies.
- Then the Cityâ??s environment was boosted, polluted rivers cleaned up and parks and pathways improved, creating new urban spaces where citizens could meet and make outdoor activities and open the City to the river.
- The third strand was the opening of the City to a knowledge economy: It is noteworthy to mention that, the wealthiest cities today are not those with the greatest natural resources but those which have the best educated people.
- Finally, the fourth element was cultural expansion, which eventually would include the Guggenheim Museum and a range of other similar initiatives.

So what is there at present, is a good City to live, work and invest â?? our best way of a smart city. From experience, each city has to define a local economic development policy in response to three major criteria to improve economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social cohesion. In order to achieve this, there is the need for a strategy and vision with clear priority lines of action.

It is also important to make available to society the information and tools used to promote development and application of innovative ideas, since it is through these ideas that the city will be the hub in which future societies are born. Although, applied standard technologies is used, it is important to be open to innovations coming from entrepreneurs and small companies.

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In this sense, Bilbao City Council became the first public institution of Spain to obtain a quality certification UNE 178 301 in Open Data and Intelligent Cities, as a recognition of maturity and open data management by the Bilbao Town Hall.

Indeed, innovation applied to cities will bring deep changes to the way of life of the society, affecting mobility and relations between people (elderly care, child care, home business or citizen democracy) and to ways that cannot now be imagined.

https://wtcmumbai.org/images/on-trade/2015/On-Trade-Apr-Jun-15.pdf

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