

Start of the Demolition of Dalia

Today, June 13, 2024, we have definitively confirmed that demolition work on Dalia, the former cutlery factory in Gernika, has begun. This site was chosen by the Fundación Museo Guggenheim Bilbao and the authorities of the Bizkaia Provincial Council as one of the two locations for the Guggenheim Urdaibai project.

On January 22 of this year, unexpectedly for many, the Lehendakari Iñigo Urkullu announced a period of reflection regarding the viability of the Guggenheim Urdaibai project, hinting at the need to implement an economic development plan for Busturialdea based on consensus and citizen participation.

Since then, there has been little news about the demolition of Dalia, despite the fact that its demolition was definitely announced in May 2023 by the PNV candidates during the municipal and regional elections campaign. At that time, it was published that the first building for the Guggenheim Urdaibai project would be located on the land currently occupied by Dalia.

On May 10, during an event held in Gernika as part of the electoral campaign, current deputy Elixabete Etxanobe surprised us with the words:

“I commit to turning these industrial ruins into a unique and innovative project that will make Urdaibai a global reference for transformation and sustainability.” (Mirari Arttime, *El Correo*, 19/05/2023).

Shortly after, the Basque Association of Industrial Heritage and Public Works (AVPIOP) corrected Etxanobe’s statement, affirming that:

“Dalia is by no means an industrial ruin; it is heritage. It is a significant work by architect Luis María de Gana y Hoyos.”

(“Derribar Dalia: una acción contra el patrimonio cultural y la sostenibilidad en Gernika,” 21/05/2023).

Later, on July 4, 2023, Aitor Esteban publicized an agreement signed with Teresa Ribera’s Ministry for Ecological Transition, boasting of having secured 40 million euros from the Spanish government to give the final push to the “nation project” (sic). This agreement stipulated the subsidy for works to be carried out at Dalia, emphasizing environmental

improvement but without mentioning any museum. The factory, abandoned and contaminated with asbestos for nearly four decades, has never been properly decontaminated.

Since then, the PNV has not made any further public statements about this part of the project. However, it has come to light that the Provincial Council has not ceased the task of the “administrative clearing essential to the possibility that the museum develops,” as noted by Juan Ignacio Vidarte, director general of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (El Correo, 10/09/2023).

The only thing that has not been done during all this time is what is truly necessary: reflection.

Moreover, in response to the motion presented by the Guggenheim Urdaibai Stop platform at the Gernika council meeting on May 29, Mayor Jose Maria Gorroño highlighted the lack of information on the project, lack of environmental reports, and lack of consensus. But words and actions do not go hand in hand.

If there are so many doubts about this project, why was the demolition license for Dalia signed in May 2023? Why was a supramunicipal agreement signed alongside the PNV mayors of Murueta and Forua granting the Provincial Council a free hand to change urban planning in the three municipalities solely to accommodate this project? In Gernika’s case, these changes concern Dalia and its surroundings.

Today, the Guggenheim Urdaibai Stop platform denounces the beginning of the demolition of Dalia. A demolition that clearly demonstrates that the new governance model we were promised is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Contaminated land, a high flood risk area, risk of further contaminating the underlying aquifer, a necessary change of land classification from industrial to services and all this supposedly with no concrete objective, since neither the signed agreement nor the license granted to allow the demolition mention the Guggenheim Urdaibai museum project at any point.

No reflection on the viability of the project, no information to citizens, no consensus among the local councils in the region, no citizen or municipal participation.

Shamefull!