Art Tourism, Guggenheim Effect and Abu Dhabi

The new Guggenheim Abu Dhabi will be located in the Cultural District of Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Designed by internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry, the 450,000-square-foot museum will house its own major modern and contemporary art collection and present special exhibitions that will include works from the Guggenheim Foundation's extensive collection. The museum, the largest Guggenheim in the world, will have global art, exhibitions, and education programs with particular focus on Middle Eastern contemporary art. The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi joins other leading international cultural institutions in the unprecedented creation of a vibrant cultural destination for visitors from around the world. Courtesy of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi website.

http://www.guggenheim.org/abu-dhabi/

DAY 16 Today is Wednesday, January 18th, and we turn to the relatively new (but actually tried and true) form of tourism called art tourism. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and later, European gentlemen would travel abroad on 'grand tour' learning first hand about the art, politics and culture of foreign lands. This form of proto art tourism was available to only the privileged few. The same, it appears, will be the case for the cultural district being created in Abu Dhabi. Discuss the so-called Guggenheim effect and its consequences for the art market. Use the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project as an example or choose another example of contemporary art tourism and its relationship to the art market.

Readings

“The Guggenheim Effect”
http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2002/oct/30/urbandesign.architecture2


Individual Contributions

Charles Saunders
Put simply, the Guggenheim effect demonstrates the extraordinary power of art and its possible effects in transforming its immediate surroundings through the cultural and social aura that it produces. Examples like Bilbao prove that this effect is significant enough to alter entire cities, even in the midst of economic downturn and recession. The Guggenheim effect produces economic and social transformation through the opening of a single museum, allowing its surrounding environment "resuscitation through art." Mayors across the world are attempting to duplicate this success in their own respective localities, but the root of the phenomenon can be traced back to Bilbao, Spain.

Bilbao had risen to prominence as a mining and industrial center along the coast, but had experienced massive recession, unemployment, and population emigration since the 1980s. The public clamored for city funds to support industrial job creation and attract foreign investment. The city created a plan whose key tenets included the establishment of a new vision of Bilbao of a world-class metropolitan area, associated with art, culture, and advanced services. The hope was that this recreation would transform Bilbao into a more attractive, innovative, and cultural city, persuading its population to stay and increasing the incentive for investment and capital flows to modernize and rejuvenate the city. The city opted to pay a hefty price for the construction of new Guggenheim museum, hoping that the brand name would provide instant credibility as an artistic center, even opting to use more expensive, big-name architects to achieve this goal. Their plan succeeded to an unexpected degree.

Today, the Guggenheim is seen as the most prominent symbol and driver of the city’s rejuvenation. Adjacent neighborhoods have had their real estate prices soar, indicative of the increased demand for commercial and industrial enterprises to expand into the sought-after space. The museum stimulated new leisure and cultural economies, increasing residential, restaurant, hotel, and retail industries both directly and indirectly. It’s affluent citizens saw Bilbao as a more attractive place to live, and population loss was stemmed. The museum served to increase tourism to the newly-branded cultural capital, and wealthy tourists helped generate income, capital inflows, investment, and ultimately employment. The building, by Frank Gehry, has been described as the "greatest building of our time," and has so far attracted over ten million visitors from around the world, at an astonishing rate of over one million per year. The building has produced a high degree of art tourism, with complementing effects of job creation, international recognition, capital investment, and indirect benefits to other sectors which have helped to fully reverse the downward recessive trends of the Bilbao economy in the 1980s. Some estimates have painted the monetary benefits of the building at an increase of $1.5 billion to Spain’s GDP, $250 million in tax revenue for the Bilbao government, and a job creation estimate of about 4,500 new opportunities.

Many other cities have sought to replicate the success of Bilbao, and the Guggenheim Foundation is eager to meet their demand, requiring a greater amount of space to house their ever-growing contemporary art collection. Feasibility studies are performed at every opportunity, analyzing and evaluating such factors as financial situations, social mixes, physical and logistical set-ups, and the quality and supply of art collections in the immediate region. According to director Thomas Krens, there is a $600 million price tag for "a Bilbao," and the Foundation has become exceedingly competent at cost-benefit analyses.

As per usual in the art world, there has been critical opposition. The Guggenheim Foundation has been accused of cashing in on their success and "franchising their brand name," much like a McDonald’s or Burger King. This is a common argument in the art world, in that the commodification and profitability of artwork has generally been a point of contention, as it is seen by art purists as tarnishing or devaluing the aesthetic and cultural values of art. However, a McDonald’s or Burger King requires it’s franchises to offer the exact same product at every international location they serve as a way of ensuring quality control. The Guggenheim operates with an opposite strategy; every experience is different and unique, reflecting the surround geographic region and its individual characteristic to a much larger extent than traditional franchises, becoming a reflection of its surrounding culture and helping to emphasize it rather than replace it. In this way the expansion of the Guggenheim could be seen as highlighting the cultural and artistic value of its house city, which would lend itself incredible legitimacy in the art world. It is possible to argue that the success of Bilbao might be over-exaggerated, in that the museum could merely draw funds from other cultural activities and tarnishing or devaluing the aesthetic and cultural values of art. However, a McDonald’s or Burger King requires it’s franchises to offer the exact same product at every international location they serve as a way of ensuring quality control. The Guggenheim operates with an opposite strategy; every experience is different and unique, reflecting the surround geographic region and its individual characteristic to a much larger extent than traditional franchises, becoming a reflection of its surrounding culture and helping to emphasize it rather than replace it. In this way the expansion of the Guggenheim could be seen as highlighting the cultural and artistic value of its house city, which would lend itself incredible legitimacy in the art world. It is possible to argue that the success of Bilbao might be over-exaggerated, in that the museum could merely draw funds from other cultural activities and more deserving investments, and commodify the local culture without truly contributing anything. Yet, it is difficult to believe that the success of Bilbao is uncorrelated with the opening of the Guggenheim museum, and there is solid, quantifiable analyses that supports this perception.

All in all, the Guggenheim effect represents the ability of a culturally significant artistic creation to significantly alter the economic and social environment of a house city through increased international cultural recognition, which incentivizes foreign tourism, capital investment, employment and quality of life increases. It is true that every city consists of different circumstances and situational requirements than Bilbao, and it may be challenging to fully extrapolate the success, job creation and international recognition effects, and dollar-quantity multipliers resulting from the culture increases to other cities. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to underestimate the positive effects of culture in transforming a surrounding city.

Articles cited, and for further reading:

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http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2002/oct/30/urbandesign.architecture2

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Complexitys

ACC Tourism
In the current art market, branding and prestige have become predominant markers of wealth and status among the cultural consumers and producers. As it happens, the more famous you are, the more trusted you are, the more recognized you are, the more money you make and the bigger impact you have on society. Guggenheim would thus seem like the perfect franchise! It is a large and globally respected institution that has flourished in New York City and indeed in installments all over the world. Yet this branding is not the same as the branding of an artist or an art fair. The Guggenheim has taken it to a whole different level and there could eventually be negative fall out from this. An artist's work is branded because it is made by them. An art fair is branded because people go there to see the best. The Guggenheim is branded for its unique perspective on contemporary art and its respected reputation in the art community. Unfortunately, no artist would ever attempt to clone themselves. By proliferating its physical establishments around the world, the Guggenheim runs the risk of weakening its strong standing as an art community staple. For one, they expose their true motives for money, which is generally frowned upon in the art world. They remove themselves from the roster of pure, art supporting institutions around the globe. Further, they run the risk that the downfall of anyone of the other Guggenheims, a scandal or a misfortune befalling any of the franchises, could dramatically impact the importance and appeal of all the other museums. When the Guggenheim multiplies itself, it makes itself available to a wider audience, yes. But it also makes the experience of going there less unique, less desirable, and less authentic. The store runs the risk of becoming a glorified McDonalds… a cookie cutter institution which can be found in any city and which loses its main appeal as a foundation of the art scene. Furthermore, in building the Guggenheim in Bilboa, the government spent a great deal of money. This public money went towards bringing an outside cultural form into the city, and in effect the governance of the city took that money out of the hands of local artisans, workers, and cultural impetus. They potentially stunted the artistic development of an authentic and unique cultural scene. The work that can be seen at the Guggenheim is work that would shown at any other Guggenheim, but what makes a thriving city is a cultural identity of one's own to adhere to and to propagate around the world. All is not immediately lost however. We can see in the article on the gentrification of BLV that new artisans are beginning to move into the area attracted by the low rents in combination with the prime location in the heart of the city. The city is thus supporting this growing bohemia of sorts, hoping to cultivate a bustling and creative sector which seems preferable to the poverty and marginalization which was taking place there before. Yet, like the example of SoHo in the 1990s, some good things can't last. Without a firm and stable grounding for the group, we can predict that in a few years, maybe a decade's time, they will be replaced by a middle-class buyer, an upperclass family, when rent prices rise due to the desirability of the new creative sector. Creativity and local cultural forms like galleries and restaurants elevate the quality of life in an area and thus draw in people willing to pay to live in these areas. When rents go up, however, the original cause of the upturn - the artisans themselves no less - are evicted from their homes and then must relocate elsewhere to start the process over again. The presence of the Guggenheim may have temporarily attracted a cultural epicenter, but there is no doubt that with the city government's support of gentrification the creative population which brought on this change will relocate leaving only middle-class / upperclass citizens to live in a place that could easily be confused with many of today's less unique metropolises.
There are a variety of ways the Guggenheim effect can play a role in a city. In one instance, it can affect the art market of a particular region. In Bilbao, the Guggenheim effect led to the construction of the Guggenheim Museum as a part of the gentrification of the city. This will likely create an influx of visitors to the Museum and city, possibly leading to an increase in the number of viewers, artists, and collectors, in the art market of Bilbao. The Guggenheim effect also led to the creation of new cultural facilities like the Guggenheim Museum, Euskalduna Conference and Concert Hall. This too can lead to greater numbers of visitors to the city, and leading to more players in the art market and greater revenues for the city.

In Bilbao, the urban regeneration had success in attracting visitors and possible developing a cultural tourist industry. The undertaking of such a significant task of creating a new culture center for Bilbao would lead to the creation of many jobs in order to see this project completed successfully. A tourist industry could once again bring more exposure and money to the city. Visitors who go to Bilbao La Vieja can help to fund developing arts and cultural movements with money they spend during city visits.

Real estate prices can also rise as the Guggenheim effect sets in. This raise in the cost of living can possibly create a place that is too expensive for previous inhabitants to afford. If there were galleries, it could force and exodus of artists, galleries, etc to regions more affordable. As more of the old inhabitants move out, new inhabitants move into the area. With the arrival of these new inhabitants called, “early gentrifiers and pioneers,” to the neighborhood there is a “different atmosphere of the neighborhood, with an ‘authentic’ flavor, air of ‘freedom’ and feeling of living in a place that is ‘different’, full of cultural diversity thanks to the presence of immigrants.” These “pioneers” could open art galleries and studios, shops, tapas bars and cafes, and a new nightlife could emerge. In some cases this local region of the city could be transformed in the art district of the city. Such was the hypothesis in Bilbao La Vieja. A transformation like this in any city could lead to an enhancement of existing cultural efforts. IN Bilbao, this consisted of the development of avant-garde activities, ethnic diversity-based activities, the creation of performing arts and music centers, a multimedia school, galleries, restaurants—all things which will expand the influence of the art market in that city and rebuild its image. This effect can help to boost the development of local culture and create openings for new trends and young, emerging artists. These artworks they create will attract people, spawn new creative innovations, and generate economic growth.

Interesting Article:
http://www.designbuild-network.com/features/feature1506/

Picture of Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao:

References:
Daniel Chazen

I never would have thought that art can completely regenerate a city. But as seen in the example of what happened in Bilbao, it can – and in a big way. The revitalization of the city of Bilbao through the building of a Guggenheim, is proof that cultural projects can economically and socially transform, revitalize and regenerate a city. And that is the essence of the so-called “Guggenheim Effect.”

Here is a photo of the outside of the Guggenheim Bilbao:

The impact and consequences for a city, as well as the art market, of building a massive cultural project like a Guggenheim, is significant. With respect to the impact on the city, Bilbao is a good example. The Guggenheim basically transformed a decaying city known for high unemployment and economic decline, into one with new hotels, new restaurants and new building projects. It now attracts tourists from around the globe, with some estimates that 80% of them come to the town to see the Guggenheim. The Guggenheim web site reports that more than 10 million have already visited the Bilbao Guggenheim.

The Guggenheim Bilbao is an enormous magnet for art tourism.

Here is the link to their web site: http://www.guggenheim.org/bilbao

Impact on the art market: The increase in Bilbao’s tourism from the Guggenheim has likely in a significant expansion of the art market. Such a well-known museum brings a cultural dynamic of large proportion to a city that previously had nothing like a Guggenheim or other major art presence. The cultural impact of the museum can only serve to increase an awareness of art and, in turn, expand the art market.

While Vicario and Monje claim that the Guggenheim effect doesn’t attract international capital, it does create a “new city image associated with art and culture, thereby making it possible to pursue economic revitalization.” The Museum provides a “brand image” which attracts wealthy tourists, generates income and creates employment (Vicario, 2395). These factors, in turn, have resulted in an “enhanced residential appeal” (Vicario 2396), which increases property values – a gentrification that is not always welcome by people that can’t afford increased rents.

Here is a very good YouTube video of the Bilbao Guggenheim and the transformation of the city:

Elena Cestero

The “Guggenheim Effect” is the cultural and economic revitalization of a city or certain neighborhoods as a result of an influx of money and interest driven by the introduction of new cultural attractions and aggressive marketing of them such as a high profile art museum. The Guggenheim Museum in particular has been used for this purpose in cities around the world such as Bilbao and its newest venue in Abu Dhabi. These projects appear to be successes but the truth is more complicated.

Upon further inspection, the effect seems to primarily benefit the already privileged in each place. While the newly revived cities or areas do attract more tourism and enhance their images, the revenue that is created seems to benefit the few rather than the many. While the tourism (especially art tourism) industry is maximized, according to the authors of the reading, the effect does not seem to translate to an increase in international capital investment and services in the area as hoped. In other words, only certain sectors of the economy benefit rather than the whole society.
As seen in the paper by Vicario and Martinez Monje, Bilbao is the perfect example of this in that, “The city’s revitalisation strategies tended, therefore, to focus mainly on the physical regeneration of the city, while ignoring the socioeconomic aspects of revitalisation.” The result of the Bilbao project was the creation of a consumer center that caters to the wealthy; more or less their own “playground”. Along with these programs came rising real estate prices (both residential and retail) which made the area inaccessible to anyone of lesser means. In addition, while many of the improvements were attributed to local government, much was actually been done by private business. This leads to a greater privatization of the commerce in a city overall which again benefits the wealthy who own the companies but not the general population.

The additional focus on the neighborhood of Bilbao La Vieja (BLV), a poor section of the city with a reputation for crime but an enviable location and architecture, will most certainly lead to its gentrification. While the zone may be revitalized, these measures will most likely drive the current population out. Instead of addressing the problems of the current inhabitants through social programs, the program will instead focus on the physical problems of the neighborhood and most likely result in the current inhabitants leaving and take their issues elsewhere. This will, “accentuate social exclusion and polarisation in the city,” rather than truly transforming the city from of its former economic and social state. In fact, the tables show that while the city’s revitalization has led to more jobs in the professional sector, it has resulted in a decrease in manual labor jobs. Also, while BLV is being touted for its bohemian culture and art scene as motivation for its facelift, this aspect of it will surely be destroyed by the commercialization of the area.

While outsiders now have a much more positive image of Bilbao due to its new reputation as a center for art and culture, the benefit for the masses that inhabit the city is more questionable. It seems that this has also been the case in other cities as well and will be again in Abu Dhabi as the city has created an island cultural district that caters exclusively to the wealthy.

The consequences of the “Guggenheim Effect” on the art market will be monetarily positive as the art market already primarily caters to the elite and this will provide them with further opportunities to interact with, buy, and invest in art. Socially I think the art market will be affected negatively as it is further reduced to a commodity, and the vast majority of the population finds it increasingly difficult to access. I think that the “Guggenheim Effect” would be more significant in benefiting the entire population of a city or region if care were taken to combine the physical revitalization with meaningful social reform.

Additional Guggenheims:
The Guggenheim effect shows how a cultural, artistic project can lead to a regeneration of a previously derelict city. This name comes from the Guggenheim Foundation’s international expansion and the socio-cultural impacts it brought to the regions. Starting with its merging with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice in the 1970s, it has embarked on grand projects such as the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Each of these museums has distinctive architecture -- a Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Gehry; the Louvre Abu Dhabi designed by Jean Nouvel; a performing arts center by Zaha Hadid; the Zayed National Museum designed by Norman Foster; and a Maritime Museum by the Japanese master Tadao Ando (Aspden) -- and celebrated art collection. By establishing these hallmarks around the world, Guggenheim has sought and continues to seek international recognition as a “pioneer and touchstone for all cultural institutions” (Guggenheim).

The international collaboration on Abu Dhabi seeks to turn the entire district on Saadiyat Island into “a center for global culture, drawing local, regional, and international visitors with unique exhibitions, permanent collections, productions, and performances” (Guggenheim). The key institutions in the cultural district are: Zayed National Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Performing Arts Center, and Maritime Museum. The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi aims to focus on the “interconnected dynamics of local, regional, and international art centers as well as their diverse historical contexts and sources of creative inspiration” by celebrating the identity specific to the not only the culture of Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates but also the entire Middle East (Guggenheim). However, the implications of a cultural project like Guggenheim Abu Dhabi are more profound than success as merely a tourist attraction. Many of the benefits that the city gains from having Guggenheim are indirect. Apart from the millions of visitors who will help support an economy that is almost entirely dependent on oil revenue, restaurants, golf clubs, luxury resort, beach accommodations, and others do great service to the city by providing jobs and generating income (Aspden). The ultimate goal is the city’s regeneration.

Saadiyat Island

http://www.guggenheim.org/images/content/Affiliates/abu-dhabi/master-plan-district_490.jpg

However, the Guggenheim effect can also be negative. In the case of Bilbao, one of the problems that surfaced was the luxury housing that “Many will see... from the outside ...[and] Only a few will enjoy... from the inside” (Vicario 2388). This forced old residents to move out to re-settle where housing was more affordable. The initiative that purportedly tried to raise the quality of life in the city just replaced the poor residents with the wealthy ones. In the case of Abu Dhabi, Human Rights Watch reported the abuse of migrant workers from South that was part of the making of the new Saadiyat Island (Aspden). The Sultan said that “a museum is a device for developing civic society,” but when people are being maltreated, a civic society seems like a long way. Moreover, the first exhibitions held in Abu Dhabi City only attracted about 75 people a day (Aspden). The number must rise as more people become accustomed to arts and culture, but I can’t help but suspect that the same, accentuated “social exclusion and polarization” seen in Bilbao may happen to Abu Dhabi.

Something else that seems to worry people, especially art connoisseurs, is the practice of museum franchising and the conflict of interests between the public good and private interest. Some speculate that museums are perhaps too eager to expand that they face the risk of neglecting their mission as world-class museums (Chayka). The Atlantic compared the museum to Starbucks and Wal-Mart. Critics of museum franchising argue that, traditionally seen as “educationally-driven non-profit organizations,” museums are now becoming money-driven institutions (Mullin). The Guardian stated that Guggenheim has become a “global art circus, positioned conceptually somewhere between a casino and a department store” (Mullin). Hopefully the many Guggenheim museums around the glob will indeed serve as a platform for accessing greater audiences and nurturing new art communities instead of ending up as a “vanity project” that has compromised a museum’s foremost goal for financial profit and meaningless fame. Despite the opposition, I think that Guggenheim’s venture into Abu Dhabi is good in that it may help people think about and view the Middle East in an entirely new way. Aspden asks, “can a region that has become a watchword, in Western circles, for intransigent problems and violence once more become an energizing cultural force?” I believe that, if watched with guidelines to maximize the benefits but also minimize the negative consequences, gentrification through cultural initiative can be advantageous for all.

Works Cited

Kelly Zona

The ‘Guggenheim Effect’ refers to the rapid influx of tourism and gentrification that overtakes a city with a new cultural icon. The term was coined in reference to the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. While the iconic museum by ‘starchitect’ Frank Gehry was able to create a successful brand for Bilbao and generate a huge influx of art tourism, these effects are not without their downside.

While the Guggenheim in Bilbao did generate a large amount of tourism for the city, these tourists tended to be at least moderately wealthy. (Vicario, 2395). The museum also brought the wide-reaching effects of gentrification along with it. In Bilbao, residential rents skyrocketed to be amongst the highest in Spain. Commercial rent prices shot up as well (Vicario, 2386-2388). Many criticize the museum for these adverse effects, as well as the fact that it has detracted attention away from other local institutions. Because of its intense international focus, the museum did not do much to promote local artists. It took ten years for local artists to be recognized in its exhibitions [5].

A new Guggenheim will be built in the new Saadiyat Cultural District of Abu Dhabi, leaving many wondering exactly what the consequences of the ‘Guggenheim Effect’ might happen there.

A blurb on the project website sums up its vast scope:

“In its essence, Saadiyat is a multi-faceted island destination offering a great variety of attractions to many different people. A buzzing business hub for international commerce; a relaxed waterfront home for residents; a cultural magnet for arts aficionados; the home of dazzling architectural icons; a pristine beachfront tourism destination and a focal point for compelling sporting experiences, such as the Gulf’s first tidal and ocean golf courses. It will also be the only place in the world to house architecture designed by five individual Pritzker prize winners. Saadiyat will be an irresistible magnet attracting the world to Abu Dhabi – and taking Abu Dhabi to the world.” [3]
It seems that Abu Dhabi is trying to recreate the Guggenheim effect to the extreme. It is described as the “world’s largest single arts-and-culture development project in recent memory” [4]. The cultural district will boast not only a new Guggenheim, but also a New Louvre. It will not only have designs by Gehry, but by other starchitects including Zaha Hadid, Jean Nouvel, and Tadao Ando [3].

But with such grandiose plans and so much money being thrown into this project, who will this new cultural district be for? No doubt this will throw Abu Dhabi into the limelight of the international arts scene, but for a project that aims to promote local culture, might it end up hurting that which it seeks to promote? A local community member voices concern “One can only hope... that the policy of the Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi is more open than in Bilbao,” referring to the fact that it took a decade to start exhibiting works by local artists [5]. And while some point out that “everyone knows that art is good for the economy,” who will benefit? [2] As in the case of Bilbao, will the money stay concentrated in the hands of the wealthy?

It may be too early to tell exactly what consequences the ‘Guggenheim Effect’ will have in Abu Dhabi, but we may have a pretty good idea, judging from the effects in Bilbao.

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Kwame Nana-Atoo

Art tourism is a merge between tourism and culture and as a result increases the uniqueness of its location. (Community, City, Country). The artistic heritage and cultural life of an area can attract tourists and create better quality of life for those who live there. Arts and culture happens to be a potent force in the life of smaller cities, which makes them more attractive, thus increasing the chances for more visitors. A city or town with diverse cultural options and attractions like museums, restaurants, art galleries, operas, theaters, and symphonies are attractive not only to their residents, but for visitors because tourists can discover more and have memorable experiences. People might argue that the pursuit of creating tourism from art is another way of taking advantage of what art is and equate it to the negative attitude of the auctions houses and collectors. The artistic energy of art, in its wake of art tourism enhances one country’s global appeal.

The Guggenheim Effect suggests that a relatively unknown industrial city is transformed into a rapid, frequently visited tourist powerhouse. The Guggenheim effect was a success in Bilbao, Spain. A city that was in dire need of help-Unemployment was high and people were crying out for job-creating initiatives. When the Guggenheim was built there to solve the financial crises in the city, it surpassed everyone’s perception. It created enormous tourism revenue for the city that it changed the entire façade of the city and became one of the most frequently visited places for tourism. I believe the success was because this was done at the right time, a time when the world was becoming much more connected globally, and people were travelling much more and seeking cultural and artistic experiences. One factor, for this huge success, was that the Guggenheim was already making name, and for them to go to a place to build such a place might have been mid boggling to people that they wanted to see why. Now, we must not also forget that the architecture was a major influence. In the 1990’s a building of such design and size will was definitely going to create wave and it did. I believe the whole reason why people flocked the city was because of curiosity and to their amazement it was work it, and that is why after over 10 years since it’s opening it is still a much sort place to be. When a city is having such number of people coming in as tourist, of course once its bringing revenue to them, changes will be made in the city to keep it as a busy center for tourism and that is what they did. The government developed the place and it changed the city. Many companies and organizations also found themselves settling in there thus creating more jobs and improving the architecture and infrastructure of Bilbao.

Bilbao before the Guggenheim

There has been a proposal for another Guggenheim to be built in Abu Dhabi and already people are asking if the Abu Dhabi is going to be the next Bilbao, I don’t think it is going to happen. Abu Dhabi is a rather wealthy and luxurious city well established and has already its own tourism established. Yes, people are going to flock the place but it is not going to change much of what is there, actually, since it is already an expensive city, it is not going to be frequented by just anyone like it was for Bilbao, because not all can afford the cost of living there as they could for that of Bilbao. It will grow and generate income but the effect is not going to be as much as it will during the Bilbao period. I picture it as New York, having a new and expensive Guggenheim, What is going to change? Nothing much, because it already has a name for being a tourist site, where tourist always come. Its going to be the same people who tour New York, but this time just visiting the new Guggenheim.

Bilbao after the Guggenheim

A new Guggenheim will always have its positive effect on where it is being built, but it is not going to be the same as it was in Bilbao.
Art tourism is a thriving segment of the tourism industry. For centuries the art sector had been appreciated worldwide, people do hesitate to travel to other countries solely to visit museums and art galleries. The “Guggenheim Effect” is the cultural and economic revitalization of a city as a result of money and interest driven into new cultural attractions like a luxurious art museum.

One example of a relatively successful “Guggenheim Effect” is the Guggenheim Bilbao. Bilbao, the port city of 500,000 in the Basque region of northern Spain was suffering from severe economic trouble in the early 1990s because of the decline of its port. Thus the Bizkaia Provincial Council and the Basque Government presented an economic regeneration model that included creating a one hundred million dollar cultural icon for the city that would create an economic ripple effect from 400,000 visitors a year spending money in hotels, shops, bars and restaurants and regenerating areas near the port that had fallen into neglect.

The vision was very unpopular with many people in Bilbao who claimed the money would be better invested in creating manufacturing jobs.

“The museum was very controversial because in the situation of an economic crisis it was not an obvious thing to do,” says Juan Ignacio Vidarte, who played a pivotal role in negotiations from 1992 and is currently director of the museum. “The obvious way to confront it was to put more money into declining industries. There was a lot of political opposition and a high level of scepticism from the public.” Nevertheless the government approached the Guggenheim Foundation with its plan in 1991 and construction started in 1994.

The city now the Guggenheim Bilbao, a twisting, titanium-plated masterpiece of curving forms, designed by Frank Gehry, which has been called 'the greatest building of our time' by the famous US architect Philip Johnson. Many people that opposed the original plans are now applauding the museum, which has since had ten million visitors from all over the world.

“There are many buildings that would probably not have been built if this had not happened,” said Vidarte. "It has made cities far more aware of the power of architecture and it has provided proof that bravery when it comes to architecture can very successful."

However, the “Guggenheim Effect” only really benefits certain areas. While the newly gentrified or revived areas do attract more tourism much of the revenue benefits only few. The effect does not guarantee an increase in international investment in the area.

In Vicario and Martinez Monje’s study, they point out that Bilbao had a great physical regeneration because of the museum. As Guggenheim director Vidarte stated, many buildings and infrastructure came after the Guggenheim; however, the socioeconomic aspects of revitalization have been ignored. The result of the Bilbao Guggenheim was the creation of a consumer center that caters only to the wealthy. Numerous studies have shown that people who include the arts in their travel plans often have higher income levels than other tourists to that locale, have a greater likelihood of staying in local hotel, take longer trips and shop more, therefore driving Bilbao citizens out.

Along with the infrastructure came rising real estate prices, which made the area inaccessible to many citizens.

Instead of addressing the problems of the current inhabitants through social programs, the program will instead focus on the physical problems of the neighborhood and most likely result in the current inhabitants leaving and take their issues elsewhere.

While the international community now has a much more positive of Bilbao due to its new reputation as a center for art and culture, the benefits for the citizens of Bilbao have been less that expected.

The next definite Guggenheim museum to open in 2012 will be on Saadiyat Island, in Abu Dhabi, also designed by Frank Gehry, and the foundation is looking at building new museums in Salzburg, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, Taiwan, Tokyo, Osaka, Mexico, St Petersburg, as well as a second one in New York. It seems that this socioeconomic neglect will also occur in Abu Dhabi as the city has built an island that caters exclusively to the upper class. I do believe the “Guggenheim Effect” has had a positive impact on Bilbao and will promote tourism and invigorate certain areas of the economy in Abu Dhabi; however, I do not believe the “Guggenheim effect” can be replicated in any city. Each city has its own problems, agendas and disadvantages. The building needs to be in sync with the other elements of the city. If Guggenheims start popping up everywhere they will simply become a franchise brand.

Interview with Bilbao Museum director http://www.designbuild-network.com/features/feature1506/  
http://www.guggenheim.org/bilbao

The Guggenheim effect is seen as the process of gentrifying an area for cultural and economic reasons. Often cities and countries aim to create a cultural center for visual and performance art. Committees push parts of the city which were once barren or derelict to be cleaner, more sophisticated to attract a better group of residents.
The Guggenheim museum system exists in 5 places: Venice, New York, Abu Dhabi, Bilbao and Berlin. Each one has incorporated the culture of the area in which the museum is based, along with masters of contemporary art. There are extreme critics of this system however. Often these Guggenheim off-shoots are seen as franchises, the “Wal-mart” of art museums. Critics often cite that these Guggenheim off-shoots are countries’ or regions’ synthetic attempts at bringing culture to their area. This criticism does have some merit, and further bringing art and other culture by throwing money at it is something a plan which the United Arab Emirates knows all too well. The places which these “franchises” are located are often in run-down, previously industrial areas of town. This changes the landscape of these areas, however displaces all people living there in exchange for a synthetic cultural experience.

This synthetics art culture does not sit well with many in the art world. The museums in Bilbao, and Abu Dhabi are not just about the art. In fact the classification for which these museums fall into is more “art tourism”. The Guggenheim effect is credited by bringing both the museum and other attractions to the area. Hotels restaurants and other attractions are all brought to the area to support the museum. The influx of businesses and attractions often displace current business and residents through the high rent prices. The areas are seemingly transformed over night, luring in the high-class citizens with condos and high class living arrangements. This however has become a slow process. Many citizens’ opinions of the areas have not changed from its previous use. Often, wealthy older citizen still consider the areas to be rundown and crime ridden despite the new status as a cultural icon.

However there are also many positive aspects associated with the cultural expansion of the Guggenheim effect. The influx of art can absolutely be seen as a positive for run-down decrepit neighborhoods. Further, bringing fine art to a country or region thousands of miles away from New York or a comparable art center may inspire artists who previously were not able to see anything like contemporary art. The intersection of art and diplomacy is best exemplified through the Guggenheim effect. Exhibitions featuring controversial issues can be shown easily through this museum, pushing citizens’ thoughts and country-wide problems.

Besides the cultural aspects of building a synthetic cultural experience, the economics of the endeavor are quite compelling. In Bilbao, the building of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has created both jobs and revenue for Spain along with transforming a previously unattractive area. Roughly 4,500 jobs were created from the projects and over $200 million in tax revenue were collected from commerce related to the museum. One of the bigger perks is that the area of Bilbao was known for having one of the highest crime rates in the country, and essentially with the influx of the Guggenheim has helped clean up the area and change its reputation.

(Guggenheim-Bilbao)
The Guggenheim Effect’s influence on the art market can be vast. The ability for more people to view great art, both international and domestic exhibitions, increases the amount of collectors of fine art. The contemporary focus, and aspects of the home culture bring prominent issues to the forefront, and provide yet another intersection for art, culture and diplomacy. The museums provide an opportunity for cities to change the image of some parts from crime ridden to cultured, and provide jobs to an area which often desperately needs them. The negative effects of the expansion are often shown to be a displacement of the current culture. Instead of an organic rise of culture and art appreciation within a country, the mass marketing of the “McGuggenheim” forces art of different cultures and on to a new population, homogenizing tastes and preferences. Bringing an international art powerhouse to a country may also polarize the art market. Many criticize the current art market as being too consumer focused, with prices of works reaching tens of millions. A common criticism is that the Guggenheim museums are not for the average person in the UAE. Instead they are meant for the elite to gain exposure to Western contemporary art and increasing the collector base with the large amount of capital found in the UAE. There is no doubt that with more collectors (especially within the UAE where a vast amount of money is present) prices will rise at the large auction houses and the average collector may be driven out of the market.

Sources:
http://www.newcolonist.com/bilbao.html