Urban Transformations towards the Port City
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ABSTRACT:

The transformation of ports and waterfronts has produced the most innovative and flexible spaces for the urban renewal and cultural transformation, regaining the prominence thereof in the port history from their cities.

Since the first interventions in the sixties to the present day, there are hundreds of waterfronts which have been transformed, passing through different stages, uses and strategies, successes and failures, that have taken place in these port areas.

It can be considered that, in many cases, they have been an urban and economic success, since which have attracted a considerable number of visitors to a port area that were abandoned or underused and difficult to access, even located in the city center. Notwithstanding not a few waterfront interventions, after years of success, have returned to their origins, on in the search for port activities compatible with the city, since the absolute transfer of the port became those docks to real shopping malls without identity and a clear date of expiry.

The integration of operational port areas in cities is a difficult challenge, a situation which is a conflict but in turn extremely interesting and fruitful for both sides. The paper is located in this search for balance between the port and the city, in coexistence. It is now a key time to stop and reflect. It is the opportunity to analyze the diverse experiences and proposals that this territory has suffered, look on the outside, to so many other cities that have been supported by their ports to a common development, and discuss their opportunities for both the port and the city, ultimately, to the port city.

KEYWORDS: Docklands Urban Regeneration, Port Cities, Ports and Waterfronts, Transformations of Urban Waterfronts.
01. Toward the Port City.

"Whatever its form, its architecture or civilization that illuminate it, the Mediterranean city is always the daughter of space, creator of routes and, at the same time created by them"¹

No doubt, I dare say that the great historic cities are ports. It has been the sea, and by extension rivers, the one that has been generating them and transforming throughout history, acting as a route of cultural exchange and flows of population and goods, forging a plural and polyvalent place where diverse landscapes and environments of different epochs coexist.

The relationship of these cities with their ports has changed throughout history, generating scenarios and different circumstances, without losing the particular landscape and maritime life that still resonates in its people.

However, the technological change has profoundly modified the geography and the relation of these places with their ports, provoking in many cities the oblivion of their port condition.

In recent years, the mass application of containerization has altered the competitive landscape of seaports. As links in the transport chain, seaports remain indispensable, but port-city interdependence depends in every case, being able to go from the total disconnection to the reintegration of port activities in the urban life of the cities.

This relation is one of the most important paradigms of the contemporary city. There is therefore no single simple model of the port city; it is a question of a dynamic context which implies multiple dimensions, geographical and historical, social and economic, technological and environmental...

In most cases a movement has existed, in a major or minor degree, of the port activity to face to the current needs, which has led to the liberation of the docks of the historic port, which have been revealed and showed again to the city recovering them for urban use.

Ports move away from their cities in search of better conditions for their development and cities take advantage of these derelict docks to extend their plots and reconnect with the sea. Opportunity gaps in damaged core areas. Areas that have resulted a variety of situations and citizen dynamics, transformation of urban settings.

We are witnessing since the recapture of these ports that were once locked up in themselves and through Waterfront operations returning citizens.

The problem is how to return: as a nice walk on the edge of the sea, being reduced the port city to a coastal city, or as it actually was, an operating port, which still maintains its vocation and through its presence raises the challenge of coexistence and a fluid relationship between port and city.
There are many cities that have made these waterfront interventions, but only a few have kept the memory of that port that was their raison d'être².

Port cities are not just coastal cities. They belong to that huge gear that has moved the world throughout the centuries. The role of the port city has been essential in the historical evolution, being the footprint of many civilizations engraved on it. These facts have led to a constant adaptation to maritime needs.

² We recently conducted research on twelve port cities where we study the true relationship of these cities and their ports. This study is published in Andrade, M.J., Blasco, J. (2011) Puerto Ciudad: estudio comparativo de buenas prácticas. O mau, Servicio de Programas Europeos Ayto. Málaga. website:http://www.omau-malaga.com/bibliografia/ficha/pag/12/Puerto-Ciudad.Estudio_comparativo_de_buenas_pr%C3%A1cticas..html
02. Are these docks a chance place only for the city?

We live in a time where not only ports enter into competitive dynamics. Cities try to differ from each other, highlighting and climbing positions in the ranking of cities. Which is such a successful way of being distinguished using the local identity.

Cities that still retain their operating port in them, are eager to recover that single space, land of great real estate value, next to the sea and the historic centre. Too many temptations that lead them to fight for the exile of the port. But they are not aware, they do not perceive that they are fortunate to retain that port as one that can truly enhance the development of the city through its own identity.

The port city must take advantage of this maritime condition and use the existing resources to improve the quality of urban life.
The removal of ports has allowed a greater competitiveness and development of their activity. However has also caused negative consequences such as widespread forgetfulness of port operations, lack of interest in port employment and education, the decline in support of citizens ...

More and more port authorities are becoming aware of the need to devise ways to develop co-operative synergies with cities, to recognize the erosion of public support for seaports as an issue that needs attention from port management. Although for many ports it still seems to be a distraction from the traditional engineering culture and commercial rationale of port operations, there are ports that are committed to maintain certain port activities near urban areas, which have been greatly enhanced through the interaction with citizens. Such is the case of the fishing port of Sydney, which has become a center of attraction for locals and visitors, being able to participate in the fish auction, the market, restaurants ... Not a few waterfront interventions, after years of success, have returned to their origins, on in the search for port activities compatible with the city, since the absolute transfer of the port became those docks to real shopping malls without identity and a clear date of expiry.

The integration of operational port areas in cities is a difficult challenge, a situation which is a conflict but in turn extremely interesting and fruitful for both sides. Social, physical and functional factors, different rhythms that must intermingle allowing the correct development of both and guaranteeing the conviviality to a mutual benefit.

The paper is located in this search for balance between the port and the city, in coexistence. It is now a key time to stop and reflect. It is the opportunity to analyze the diverse experiences and proposals that this territory has suffered, look on the outside, to so many other cities that have been supported by their ports to a common development, and discuss their opportunities for both the port and the city, ultimately, to the port city. Both ports and cities take a parallel path towards sustainability. On the one hand, ports employing an important environmental management, work to reduce waste, lessen noise and control the quality of the air and water. Meanwhile, cities work to this end by reducing the private traffic, limiting the extension of the city boundaries... Maybe forty years ago, the coexistence of the working port and the city was unthinkable, but today, these parallel lines can converge in the recovery of the port city, the joint search for a better quality of life.
03. Port Cities: Global Problems >> Local Solutions.

Port cities since their origins are part of a network, a system of routes that have linked them throughout history, a real global gear.

Virtually all port cities have gone through the same process in a time interval more or less close, each in a way, others from another, responding to the same problem in different way. Port cities are cities that have been generated and developed around its port, which has given them the opportunity to join a global network system from its origins. This has caused that, however small that were, port cities, throughout history, resolved through local projects, the needs of global changes, which granted an extreme each singularity.

The morphology, topography, climate, culture, particular aspects of each city caused local responses to this global problem. However, the search for the answer to a common question by a series of connected cities, has raised the comings and goings of solutions according to local conditions.

For this reason, it is of great interest an approach to those transformations that have taken place in different cities and have enriched the port city as a whole.

Actions undertaken by these port cities in response to common problems, global problems, which they face, each adapted to the local context. Key actions that contribute to sustainable development of port city, improving the quality of life of the city and promoting the competitiveness of the port.
04. Evolution of Waterfronts: from Urban Leisure to Port Vocation.

"No walker could differentiate between the city and harbor. For him there will only be a huge port landscape. Conventional images of cities that store its memory, made of more or less wide streets and closed horizons, be displaced by the spring hundredfold spaces, docks and warehouses. His eyes might get used to it, but feel possessed by an antagonistic feeling of freedom and inability to explore this vast space. Reduced, more than ever, to its limited human scale. Vertigo should not to vertical, as in the case of a pedestrian who discovered New York, but to the horizontal." \(^3\)

Since the first interventions in the sixties to the present day, they are hundreds of waterfronts which have been transformed, passing through different stages, uses and strategies, successes and failures, that have taken place in these port areas.

It can be considered that, in many cases, they have been an urban and economic success, since which have attracted a considerable number of visitors to a port areas that were abandoned or underused and difficult to access, even located in the city center.

Proposals supposed to open these areas to urban life and provide them with services and facilities obtained wide acceptance.

But there are many cases that have failed, as there is a predominance of patterns of standardized intervention, focused on the unique implementation of commercial use, not responding to urban understanding, nor the integration and balance the city can get with these areas. Stagnant replicas of operations designed and developed elsewhere. Reconversion proposals that are based on others, and trivializing contents and forms, without starting from a analysis of the characteristics and potential of these spaces and the real needs of urban and socio-economic development of the city itself. Only the mimicry of other projects that have had a successful acceptance elsewhere.

In the case of the waterfronts, the theory has been drafted from the practice, which is why it is helpful to those researches and studies on each case, learning not only the successes but also the failures. The study of these operations, some already carried out more than thirty years ago, has led to learning from the successes and mistakes of each one, to the analysis of the project and the adaptation time of each action and their subsequent response from citizens in each conformation phase.

All these reflections have been collected in various manuals of best practices focused on facilitating the coexistence of port operations with urban life. The key points or advice of studies have passed through different stages. Firstly the earlier surveys whose keys insisted on mixed uses to prevent the degeneration of the American model based on the binomial commerce + entertainment. Subsequently the recovery of the identity of place with the rehabilitation of old port buildings. And currently the need to recover the port vocation of the city, and the importance of public support to carry out these plans for regeneration. Ideas which are leading to the series of transformations of recent years.

More than projects capable of generating inclusive dynamics and synergies between the renovated port and the existing city, begin to overrun the experiences of transformation with intervention processes vague and questionable results, unable to generate multipurpose and cross relations between different territories and economic activities.
Old urban ports undergoing a reorientation of its activity to become, through a kind of action generic and standardized, in containers of metropolitan leisure. Flat surfaces where to place the widespread use that make up the new menu of interventions, a menu with an expiration date: an aquarium, a cinema, a shopping and leisure area.

It is possible to recover the true port identity of the city, not only through the physical and functional integration of the historical ports, with those docks released its port function, but through the permanency and social integration of the working port.

One of the most important qualities is the presence of the port operating in the historic city center. A rehabilitated and revitalized historic center with strong appeal to residents and visitors, which has an important cultural offer that is key to attracting cruise.
Saturated of globalization, we live in an age where there are looking for models of quality and excellence in the tourist product, as well as a diversification of the same one. In a period where the sector of the cruises grows by leaps and bounds, it is not surprising that the historic port cities of the Mediterranean, such as Genoa, Marseille, Barcelona or Malaga, have opted for the presence of this port activity in the recovered docks. This trend is increasingly present in the actions of Northern Europe, where this activity is implemented in an unstoppable way.

But the cruise activity is not the only one that allows to keep the port in the city. It is essential to use the presence of the working port in the historic center to recover the characteristic features of a city that was port.

The presence of the working port in these areas requires considerable reintegration work in citizenship. The Northern European cities are at the forefront in terms of social activities that promote the presence of the port in the city. Cities such as Helsinki employ a great effort to improve the image and enhance the support of the citizens to the port before even beginning planning their own waterfront. Other cities such as Gijon carried out an exhaustive monitoring of the image that has the port on its citizens through regular surveys. It is essential to invest in education, information programs at various levels where through the knowledge of the port, its history, its activity and its impact on the city, the approximation is achieved for citizens.

The proximity of the activity itself is key to this approach, places of observation of the changing landscape of ferries, cargo ships, containers and cranes, events on the docks...

In this sense, we could not stop talking about Hamburg, a port city par excellence. The great port of Hamburg has managed to become an indispensable part of life for citizens. The location of the port activity opposite the city allows the contemplation of its activity, in turn highlighting the dimmer task of Elba, which more than a separating element, becomes the absolute coexistence of large freighters with small boats of public transport. The port and its activity is part of the daily life of its citizens.
fig. 6, 7, 8. Hamburg, Malaga, Genoa. Source: Author

The Waterfront is the place where it has carried out the most innovates architectures, but we cannot let to eliminate the raison d’être of our old port cities. It is the opportunity to recover all that historical memory so that it can put in value the importance of ports in their cities.

Therefore, these three existing resources, both the historical centre, such as docks transformed into urban docks and, certainly, the working port, may act in a joint and coordinated way, benefiting each other, mutually, by the recovery of the port city. Not as a single reality absolutely fused, but since the autonomous character of each, articulated in the pursuit of a common will, the coexistence of an active port and a living city in the same context: the port city.

These cases can be very different from each other and without apparent connection, however, each known for organizing a intervention designed by and for citizens, the everyday inhabitant of that space, who live, work and enjoy that environment constantly. These are cases of very different scales, different features, different uses employees from different morphology, situation and location in the city, nevertheless have had great social acceptance, have deeply improved urban quality of their cities, have maintained the atmosphere of the port at the waterfront and have sufficient background to be considered a reference field.

This huge opportunity, which today opens out in front of the port cities, supposes the ability to base themselves on the announced global changes of today in order to make their projects for the local future. But for it, urban and port stakeholders have to learn to rethink their territory together and to construct the mixed character of the Port City. This should, at the same time, be functional, reinforce the identity of the port city and contribute towards the production of living surroundings corresponding to the expectations of the citizens. It also obviously requires constant consultation between all the economic, institutional, and social partners of each community and the definition of a federating common vision.
It is thus necessary for the stakeholders of each port city to engage in the time of stocktaking and reflection in order to adjust and clarify this common vision.

We must not forget that the ultimate aim of the action is the own citizen, so it is essential to sensitize them on the dynamics of the port city, and share common ambitions beyond the improvement of quality of life with the urban renaissance of dock spaces.

The citizen must go from being subject indifferent or even opposition to become an active part, finding in his attitude to the true identity of the city port.

Only when a correct social integration has been achieved, only when the civic pride exists of belonging to a port city, only in this instant, the integration will have achieved port-city.

To recover the port identity of the city, to overcome the physical and psychological barriers, integrating in the daily life of its inhabitants so much the port spaces, with those wharves liberated for urban use, as the own port activity by means of the strategic situation of these complementary uses.

Any urban development intervention must have a will, and in this case the willingness goes beyond mere integration, it is endeavoring to achieve the harmonious coexistence of two independent realities, an active port and a living city, in the same context, the port city.
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