CITIES ON WATER AND WATERFRONT REGENERATION:
A STRATEGIC CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE

GrunDTVIG, II MEETING
RIVERS OF CHANGE - RIVER/CITIES
WARSAW, POLAND, JULY 24TH-27TH 2008

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In pre-industrial cities, riverfront and waterfront areas were intensely used and thriving with people and activities.

In particular, river cities display an intimate and complex relationship with the water: never considered a limit but an *extension* of the urban fabric.
Parigi, Pont au Change
**Water in cities: from resource to obstacle**

With the industrial era, this relationship was interrupted and cities begin to expand into the mainland. The development of port activities also blocked access to the water.

• with the development of railroads, followed by road networks;
• waterborne transport has become less important.
At the close of the 20th century, the image and structure of the ‘industrial city’ was greatly modified. These cities where large urban areas have first become obsolete and then been abandoned can be defined ‘post-industrial’ cities.
Many cities have reacted with *programs to regenerate* the run-down areas, interpreting the post-industrial phase in a *positive sense* as *an opportunity to re-vitalize* the urban economy, to experiment with *new objectives* and create new *challenges*. 

*Buenos Aires, Puerto Madero*
In more recent years, urban settlements are rediscovering the edges of their water and rivers as a result of renewed attention and awareness towards water in general, also related to the growing interest in environmental issues and the development of leisure activities.
1. Waterfront Regeneration: Strengths and Weaknesses
What do we consider as *waterfront*?
The word ‘waterfront’ identifies the urban area in direct contact with water. In cities on water, this area usually corresponds to the area occupied by port infrastructures and port activities.
• the *revitalisation of waterfront areas* is one of the most interesting phenomena of urban renewal since the 1980s;

• from this point of view, marine cities and river cities can be considered *laboratories* for the process of urban renewal in view of both the broad range of cases and the quality of the results;

• even if different in terms of geography, dimensions, population and culture, these cases can be *valuable sources of ideas* for the future.
After more than 30 years of positive results all over the world in the field of urban waterfront regeneration, a comparison of cases can provide a list of key factors common to their success.
1.1. Key Factors in Urban Waterfront Regeneration
1. The ‘strategic’ value of waterfront areas for the development of the city as a whole

- they were the answer to the need for city expansion in central areas;
- they were convenient in terms of ‘quality’ and ‘quantity’.
2. The ‘location’ factor of the waterfront

- located very close to city centres;
- available spaces for new activities.
3. A rich heritage of infrastructures and historical buildings

- restoration of buildings of great historical-architectural value;
- preservation and maintenance of the site’s original identity.
4. Direct contact with water

- a sort of ‘water renaissance’ has taken place;
- water is once again seen as a resource;
- water has emerged as a positive and influential element for a new urban quality and with the capacity to attract a wide range of activities and people.
5. The evocative and symbolic value of waterfront areas

- port areas, **vibrant** places, often **symbol of wealth** and **power** for many cities on water around the world.
1.2. Dangers in Waterfront Redevelopment Projects
1. ‘Standardisation’ of the interventions.
2. The achievement of high profit levels rather than the quest for a high quality.
3. An excessively commercial-tourist atmosphere rather than a residential function.
4. The scarcity of productive activities.
In conclusion, despite several outstanding and unexpected successes, the waterfront cannot be seen as a cure-all for urban planning.
2. Different Typologies of Waterfront Regenerations
a. New Urban Expansion
b. Waterfronts and Great Events
c. New Urban Waterfront Itineraries
d. Reuse of Port Areas
e. Flood Defences
f. Urban Riverfront Regeneration
g. Urban Beaches
a. **New Urban Expansion**

- building *ex novo* in available areas;
- reclaiming former industrial or port areas
b. Waterfronts and Great Events

- Development of new urban areas - for both, residential use and production - as a consequence of important temporary events such as the Expos: in Seville (1992), Barcelona (1992, 2004), Genoa (1992 and 2004), Lisbon (1998), London (2000), etc.
c. New Urban Waterfront itineraries

• public use along the waterfront implies innovative consequences along the banks and in the surrounding areas;

• pedestrian paths;

London, River Banks along the Thames and the Barceloneta beach in Barcelona
d. Reuse of Port Areas

Waterfront regeneration of former port areas is bringing the heart of cities back to the water.

Rotterdam
e. **Flood Defences**

The construction of infrastructures for river flood defences can become a new opportunity for city expansion and for the establishment of new urban uses.

*Vienna and the Donau Insel Festival*
f. Urban Riverfront Regeneration

As the intersection between different aspects of urban life, the river represents a community heritage and its riverfront demonstrates a great potential for becoming a central axis in a new and articulated public space.

The case of the **Cheong Gye Cheon** canal, Seoul


\textit{g. Urban Beaches}

The function of urban beaches as a sort of ‘piazza’ for public use.

\textit{Paris Plage} in Paris along the Seine River.

\textit{Berlin and Copenhagen}
3.

10 Principles for a Sustainable Development of Urban Waterfront Areas
In the context of the initiatives for the Global Conference on the *Urban Future* (*URBAN 21*) held in Berlin in July 2000 and during the EXPO 2000 World Exhibition, 10 Principles for a Sustainable Development of Urban Waterfront Areas were approved.

These topics were previously developed in international seminars by Wasserstadt GmbH, Berlin in collaboration with the Centre Cities on Water, Venice.
1 - Secure the quality of water and the environment
The quality of water in the system of streams, rivers, canals, lakes, bays and the sea is a prerequisite for all waterfront developments. The municipalities are responsible for the sustainable recovery of derelict banks and contaminated water.

2 - Waterfronts are part of the existing urban fabric
New waterfronts should be conceived as an integral part of the existing city and contribute to its vitality. Water is a part of the urban landscape and should be utilized for specific functions such as waterborne transport, entertainment and culture.
3 - The historic identity gives character
Collective heritage of water and city, of events, landmarks and nature should be utilized to give the waterfront redevelopment character and meaning. The preservation of the industrial past is an integral element of sustainable redevelopment.

4 - Mixed use is a priority
Waterfronts should celebrate water by offering a diversity of cultural, commercial and housing uses. Those that require access to water should have priority. Housing neighborhoods should be mixed both functionally and socially.
5 - Public access is a prerequisite

Waterfronts should be both physically and visually accessible for locals and tourists of all ages and income. The construction of public spaces should ensure high quality to allow intensive use.

6 - Planning in public private partnerships speeds the process

New waterfront developments should be planned in public private partnerships. Public authorities must guarantee the quality of the design, supply infrastructure and generate social equilibrium. Private developers should be involved from the start to ensure knowledge of the markets and to speed the development.
7 - Public participation is an element of sustainability
   Cities should benefit from sustainable waterfront development not only in ecological and economical terms but also socially. The community should be informed and involved in discussions systematically from the start.

8 - Waterfronts are long term projects
   Waterfronts need to be redeveloped step by step so the entire city can benefit from their potential.
   They are a challenge for more than one generation and need a variety of characters both in architecture, public space and art. Public administration must provide the impulse on a political level to ensure that the objectives are realized independently of economic cycles or short-term interests.
9 - Re-vitalization is an ongoing process

All master planning must be based on the detailed analysis of the principle functions and meanings which concern the waterfront. Plans should be flexible, adapt to change and incorporate all relevant disciplines.

To encourage a system of sustainable growth, the management and operation of waterfronts during the day and at night must have the same priority as their construction.

10 - Waterfronts profit from international networking

The re-development of waterfronts is a highly complex task that involves professionals from many disciplines. The exchange of knowledge in an international network between contacts involved in waterfronts on different levels offers both individual support and information about the most important projects, completed or in progress.
4. Case studies analyses
Waterfront - riverfront regeneration and tourism

A selection of case-studies is here provided among those cities on water that have already benefited from the regeneration of waterfront areas in terms of:

• developing tourism at different levels;
• including their cities in cultural networks;
• and, in general, generating a virtuous circle for the city itself, with economic revenues/consequences.
Genoa

Maritime station, Parodi bridge, Galata museum, the Renzo Piano fresco.
Bilbao

The future project for the Port of Bilbao is the development of the Zorrozaure peninsula. The Master Plan, developed by the studio of Zaha Hadid, covers an overall surface area of 70 ha, converting buildings of historical interest into a new residential area as part of the process of economic, social and urban development for the new Bilbao.
Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City

Liverpool was granted the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, as “the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain’s greatest global influence”.

Liverpool will be the European Capital of Culture 2008.
• £2 billion of investment committed, managed through a public and private company.

• projects planned or underway:
  a new Museum of Liverpool, the Liverpool Arena and Convention Centre, an extension to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, mixed use developments at Princes Dock, the Paradise Street retail-led development and the St Paul’s Square commercial development.
In 2003 the Port Authority’s historical warehouses were handed over to the municipal council but the transformation of the ports’ urban waterfront begun in 2004, when Valencia was chosen to host the 32nd America’s Cup (2007). The operation was run under the management of Consorcio Valencia 2007 - a company composed of the three territorial public administrations.
New infrastructures and buildings
Reconnect the waterfront to the territory

• The regeneration of the waterfront produces favorable results along the banks and the immediately adjacent areas in terms of available services and facilities;
• Water represents an extraordinary opportunity for the cohesión of the territory, often fragmented;
• It is important to ‘join the old with the new’;
• It is fundamental to plan perpendicular axes for access to the water.
Rediscover the identity of places

• A public heritage, water is a place that people wish to walk along, sail along, bathe in..;

• The relationship between the city and water is determined also by social and cultural practices;

• Creation of squares on the water for intensive public use.
To define government actions and strategies

• To communicate water as a resource for the enhancement of the territory;

• To promote “development through protection” by managing the heritage with a strategic vision;

• To promote the potential of the territory with initiatives based on the valorisation of cultural and environmental heritage;

• To promote events combining cultural production and economic development.
Timing for development

- Waterfront are long term projects
- Revitalisation is an ongoing and flexible process
- Public participation is indispensable
- Development in successive phases;
- Public funding and private investments;
- Projects and uses that can generate short-term economic resources.
6. **Presentation**  
*International Centre Cities on Water Venice*
Cities on Water is a non-profit association, set up in Venice, Italy, in March 1989.

It develops research and promotes activities pertaining to the multiple aspects of the relationship between cities and water.

The Centre acts as an interface with the cities on water all over the world involved in restoring a positive relationship between water and the city, so as to improve the quality of the urban environment.
To give significance to the water element in different forms within the urban context, the Centre focuses on the following fields of research:

- **Waterfront Revitalisation**
- **Industrial Heritage**
- **Urban Waterborne Transportation**
- **City-Port Relationships**
- **Aquapolises**
4. Web sites

Centro Internazionale Città d’Acqua
www.citiesonwater.com

WiN-Waterfront International Network
www.waterfront-net.org
Thank you for your attention!
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