

HOW CAN JOINT URBAN AND PORT PLANNING FACILITATE THE NEXT ECONOMY – FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORKS OF PORT AND CITY?

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Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to the topic of joint planning frameworks for ports and cities within the broader conference theme of cross-overs. Both ports and cities invest considerable resources in planning, an activity that entails imagining, preparing for, and attempting to shape possible futures. However, as I have long argued, while cities and ports are stuck with each other, that their past and their futures are tied, they often fail to really recognize this in their planning activities. Truly joint port-city planning has to be open to the aspirations of the other.

So let's not pretend that the relationship is, or has ever been, easy. In most places around the world, and especially in the era of globalization and containerization, the relationship between ports and cities has been conflictual. The people who run ports want more cargo; the people who run cities want more people. Mostly, both of them forget that you can't have one without the other. Port and city may exist side by side but they've stopped relating to each other.

To put this in more formal terms – ports and cities are spatially proximate and yet are disconnected from each other in physical, economic and epistemological terms. Changes in governance, ownership and management of ports have put further institutional distance between ports and cities. Port and city impose externalities on each other, they compete for the same spaces and urban resources, yet they lack empathy and intimate knowledge of the other. Academics have fed this view - the dominant theories of port-city evolution have emphasised the increasing physical separation of port and city. Those studying ports reinforced the view that what happened on the ocean was the main influence on what happened in port cities. Those studying cities focused on finance, housing and amenities as drivers of urban growth, ignoring the movement of goods. These assumptions are being re-thought in the academy, but the implication for a long time has been that ports and cities don't really need each other.

So much for the academy; it's not like we have any power in the real world. The people who create ports and cities fed this analysis – port authorities, terminal operators, truckers have behaved as if city residents and administrations exist merely as inconveniences, as barriers to the free flow of cargo. And, real estate developers, residents and city managers have behaved as if the movement of cargo is irrelevant to their post-industrial growth machines. Or worse, if they actually realise that post-industrial does not mean post-consumption – that local residents and businesses actually use the stuff that comes on ships - they have behaved as if the conflicts caused by the movement of cargo was a problem for someone else, somewhere else, to solve.

Indeed, one of the key challenges for joint port-city planning is that we often don't agree on precisely where the port and the city each begin and end. The idea that port-city planning is the management of conflicts at the well-defined port-city interface is especially outdated. Yes, the perimeter of a marine terminal is one interface of port and city, but in functional terms the port

really is an activity system that extends across the entire metropolitan region – it includes a network of highways, industrial parks, warehouses, railyards and inland terminals. And where is the city in relation to the port? Surely the place where marine terminal workers have their lunch is just as much a part of the city as are waterfront office parks and cafes? Aren't office-workers handling trade finance also, in some sense, port workers?

I would like to do two things in the time available: first, very briefly I will situate joint port-city planning strategies in relation to three macro-trends. I will suggest that these trends may indeed be exacerbating the loss of mutual understanding between port and city. Second, I will highlight how planning both requires, and can assist in, the creation of shared knowledge of the waterfront and related territories. The line of logic that I will pursue is that the port, city, waterfront and other related places in metropolitan space, are deeply connected and always changing.

The first macro-trend is the ongoing spatial restructuring and rescaling of both port and city. It turns out that the predicted separation of port and city was neither inevitable nor irreversible, and hence separation was not the 'natural' solution to managing the port-city interface. In some places the port cannot escape the city for reasons of physical geography – for example, in Durban, South Africa. Separation also doesn't apply when cargo volumes can't justify the massive investments required by new terminals. Even where port facilities did migrate downstream towards deeper water, as predicted – in Rotterdam, Hamburg, Shanghai - we've since realized that most ports can't escape their cities. In part this is because ports in big cities tend to perform rather well. Hence, in many places, urban development has followed the port towards the deeper water.

The sheer scale of shipping activities and the terminals they require mean that port facilities have 'regionalized' back into metropolitan space. To have large, efficient terminals at the waters' edge, you need inland storage and handling facilities, and connective infrastructure. Hence many of the conflicts between ports and cities have moved off the waterfront, becoming conflicts over trucking, over rail lines and grade crossings and even over pipelines as forms of connectivity. An example is the political deal to manage port-destined container truck traffic after the Port of Vancouver closed one of its entrances, and residents woke up to find trucks in their neighbourhood. Such conflicts raise institutional and jurisdictional dilemmas, because the Port Authority is often not the best placed, nor the legally authorized body, to deal with planning conflicts away from the water.

Cities themselves are, of course, also continuously changing and growing. In most places in the world, the "port city" is not much more than the core municipality in a larger multi-jurisdictional metropolitan region. We have seen a revalorization and embrace by social elites of the urban core around the world – at present, both retiring baby-boomers and the best educated and upwardly mobile millennials want to live and play on the urban waterfront, as does a class of wealthy transnationals. Such residential and consumption-oriented colonization of historic port lands furthers the displacement of industrial activity to the urban periphery. The new residents know the waterfront as a place of consumption and relaxation, not as a place of work and commerce. This is why the proposed mix of industrial, residential, educational and

commercial space in the Anable Basin redevelopment in Queens, New York, is so exciting, as is the NordHavn, Copenhagen commitment to creating equal numbers of jobs and residences.

So both ports and cities are continuously rescaling in a cycle of disconnection and reconnection in which port and city can never escape each other. In “port cities”, the port is everywhere in the city, just as the city is everywhere in the port.

The second major trend I want to mention is inequality – again, both in an urban and a port context. Staying in Copenhagen, I recently had the pleasure of attending the Kulturhavn Festival Day – a wonderful celebration of the waterfront for local people. As an event for locals, the guides on a harbour tour made their presentations in Danish; an older woman seated beside me translated. As we moved on the water towards the north-harbour, I asked who lived in some older waterfront apartments – I was told that they were for “normal people”. She then told me about the exorbitantly high prices of new waterfront apartments, something which is by no means unique to Copenhagen’s waterfront.

Of course it is difficult to simultaneously secure investment for waterfront redevelopment, while providing housing for all income levels and tenure types. But there is a deeper port-city planning issue at stake here: it is a problem if the waterfront today is marked as “only for rich people”, just as it was a problem that the waterfront was marked in the past as only for dockers, sailors, fishermen and criminals. The waterfront again becomes a site of exclusion, with silos of knowledge about who and what it is for. It constrains our imagination and it makes the task of creating shared visions all the more difficult.

Inequality is also present in the maritime industry. Many of us shake our heads at how quickly new container ship sizes have blown past the new Panamax. Similar trends are visible in the ocean cruise industry. Larger ships bring larger terminals and fewer port calls, which means greater disparity among winners and losers. The impacts on the ‘winning’ communities hosting these larger ships are ever greater. There is also a real danger that we are seeing port developments that mirror and enhance the inequalities already in urban space. To go back to Copenhagen; at least some of that freeing up of urban space for residences has come at the price of more cargo moving through Malmo’s urban communities, and along the transportation routes connecting the two cities.

It is not easy to change these maritime industry dynamics, just as it is not easy to change the social dynamics of urban development. But port-city planners need to appreciate of how inequality shapes public understandings and discourses of port-city relations if we are to mitigate the effects.

The final trend is environmental sustainability: it is only relatively recently that the green agenda has come to ports. Port greening today encompasses a variety of measures to improve environmental performance through incentives, regulations, joint ventures and technology improvements. It is no surprise that the largest urban ports on the West Coast of North America – Vancouver, Los Angeles, Long Beach – have led the way. These ports are capable of generating resources for environmental clean-up – the supply-side if you will – and they are located in places with informed and wealthy citizenry, and democratically accountable

governments – the demand-side if you will. These are fertile grounds for innovations that may have applications well beyond the port.

Let me also emphasize that sustainability is not just a port problem. Urban-based actors can and do act in ways that make the environmental impacts of ports (noise, poor air quality, congested roads, and so on), and especially the unequal distribution of their negative impacts, worse than they need to be. Every time waterfront land is converted from industry to residences, every time the port finds it easier to ally with highway builders and truckers rather than rail and water-based goods transporters, they make it easier for shippers to choose trucking and logistics sprawl – so further inserting the port into farmland and other greenfield sites and inducing demand for more road infrastructure.

At the same time, I am encouraged that port cities are the places where these difficult questions will be contested, debated and resolved. Where else? Even environmental challenges to do with shipping on the high seas, are increasingly being addressed because they become public policy dilemmas in port cities – for example, sulphur emission and ballast water controls were initiated in particular port cities when an informed and concerned citizenry, academia, government and business groups took leadership.

So, what are the ways forward in this challenging context? How can we have joint planning when port and the city lack shared knowledge of the other?

Planning theorist, Patsy Healey, talks about the importance of “opportunity structures” in strategic planning. A key goal of planning, in her view, is to identify and comprehend this structure of opportunities: but the challenge is that these opportunities don’t easily or simply reveal themselves through traditional analysis, forecasting, or following the prescribed steps in planning textbook. Telling citizens who have no shared knowledge of a port that cargo is projected to grow by 1 million TEUs is probably not meaningful. You might simply be heard as saying that truck trips are going to increase. Instead, what Healey argues for, what I am arguing for, is for a collaborative approach to planning that emphasises the co-creation of shared knowledge to guide action.

We need to pay particular attention to constructing knowledge at and about the multiple interfaces of port and city. This has implications both for who needs to be included in the learning and planning process, and also the types of knowledge that they need to discover together. Knowledge, in the sense that I am talking about it comes from experience. Hence, a starting point for joint port-city planning practice should be to build upon social activities at the interfaces of port and city, whether on the water or away from it. Such planning conversations give more value to ordinary people – they are not dominated by vaguely defined futures, technological fantasies and black-box projections of experts.

Here are 6 principles for improved port-city-waterfront planning based on the arguments I have made, although surely this list is not complete:

First, make space for flexibility: Waterfront and other port-city interface spaces need to be understood and planned in less fixed ways. For example, instead of thinking of ‘buffers’ to separate port and non-port activities, rather think about how these interstitial lands can be used

for alternatives such as urban agriculture, parks, and so on. An important dimension of promoting less fixed uses of the waterfront is time-sharing. A great example of this is along the Seine in Paris, both with the seasonal 'plage' or beach conversion of waterfront roads, but also the time-of-day and -week based public use of waterfront walkways around the Port de Tolbiac cement plant, or the sharing of the underground garages of waterfront offices for local goods distribution at Port Austerlitz. The thing to avoid is unbroken, linear systems along the waterfront - whether they are truck, rail, auto, bike or pedestrian lines – that serve to separate and divide.

Second, when at the water, think about the land: Planning practice should explicitly consider the implications of waterfront projects for land development elsewhere in metropolitan space – which also means including a wider range of stakeholders in planning processes. Including farmers in port planning, for example, increases the understanding that the taking of greenfields on the urban edge is related to the conversion of core urban industrial land to residential development. In this way, we may start to reduce the metropolitan environmental footprint of the port. This argument also extends to housing on the waterfront – an argument for having diversity of tenure types, income levels and social groups on the waterfront is that it ensures that knowledge of the waterfront is socially distributed. If the people who work on the waterfront do not know it as place of residence and fun, and if the people who live there never know it as a place of work, the potential for discovery of new possibilities is reduced.

Third, cross the land-water divide: Citizens should have multiple opportunities to safely cross the boundary between land and water. There really does seem to be something special about being able to physically touch the water. This is another reason why I am against lateral routes that sterilize or isolate the waterfront for one use only. Instead, I am in favour of public pools, boating, public docks, as well as diverse waterfront work places - anything that allows the public to gain knowledge of the water. Waterfront festivals are often a wonderful way to share knowledge about the port. So is tourism, but note that I am arguing that the tourism and recreation are more important as a means of shared knowledge production, and less because of whatever economic benefits they may have. In my view, one of the biggest mistakes made in Vancouver's Port was the security-enforced closure of the Cannery Restaurant in 2010. That chef has opened a new restaurant away from the water - so what was lost is not economic but instead something less tangible – a place from which the public could comprehend the working port. We need to consciously plan so that people can experience multiple, diverse, complex connections to the waterfront...

Fourth, educate, meaningfully: Part of improved collaborative planning practice entails knowledge creation in formal sites of learning. The range of possibilities and good examples is enormous, ranging from:

- a. general public education through exhibits, plaques, walks, public talks...
- b. education which uses the marine environment as a site of learning – such as the Port Townsend Maritime Discovery School, or the New York Harbour School – and
- c. education resources for schools about the maritime industry – such as those provided by the Port of Long Beach Academy.

Of course, the more you educate the public, the more you can expect them to demand meaningful action on the things they care about... informing people makes their questioning more informed.

Fifth, institutionalize sites of learning: At an institutional level, port and city need to learn more about each other – but knowledge comes not from the downloading facts, rather from the creation of common frameworks for making meaning of these facts. Actors in the port industry should be encouraged to think about their connections to other local industries in new ways – about their non-cargo roles if you will. If “the port” is only about moving cargo, and not about the overall health of the urban economy and society, then soon enough citizens will ask questions about who the cargo is for... Instead, we might focus on the role of the port industry in stimulating and not undermining other industries – from tourism to finance to manufacturing in all sorts of creative combinations. And for its part, the city also needs to ask what the waterfront means in terms of cargo, green transportation, and in other ways... Collaborative planners emphasise the need for conversations between stakeholders. And not just when you – the city, the port, the developer, whomever - have a particular goal or outcome in mind, and certainly not just after conflicts have emerged, but in an ongoing, reliable, trust-building way. Here I think it is important to emphasize and protect well-resourced agencies that balance professional competence with public accountability.

And finally, plan incompletely: Port-city interfaces are continuously shifting, arising in new locations within metropolitan space. This incompleteness can be positive in a planning sense, because it means that we are not locked into the existing set of port-city relations. Indeed, let's get over the idea that the waterfront should (and can) ever really be continuous or complete. The waterfront and other points of port-city interface are at their most vibrant and innovative when they are diverse, open and changing. We should not try to make the waterfront too neat, too tidy, too safe, or too finished... This way of thinking connects with the ideas of many urban economic theorists who have argued that cities are the dominant sites of economic activity precisely because they offer an environment rich in heretofore unrecognized opportunities. Urban economies are vibrant not because they do the same thing more cheaply – quite the contrary – they are vibrant because they make it possible for us to match up resources in new and surprising ways.

In conclusion, in this presentation I have argued for joint planning as a conscious process of creating shared knowledge about the port, the city, and their many points of connection. And I have pushed back against a dualistic view of waterfronts: land-versus-water, work-versus-leisure, industry-versus-nature, global-versus-local, even port-versus-city. If we think about waterfronts in this either-or way kind of way, then planning will serve merely to further separate and isolate. Let us instead imagine what it means to plan, across divides, for port-city interfaces that are complex, beautiful and never complete. Thank you.