

Emergence and relevance of urban waterfront transformations in the second half of the XX century

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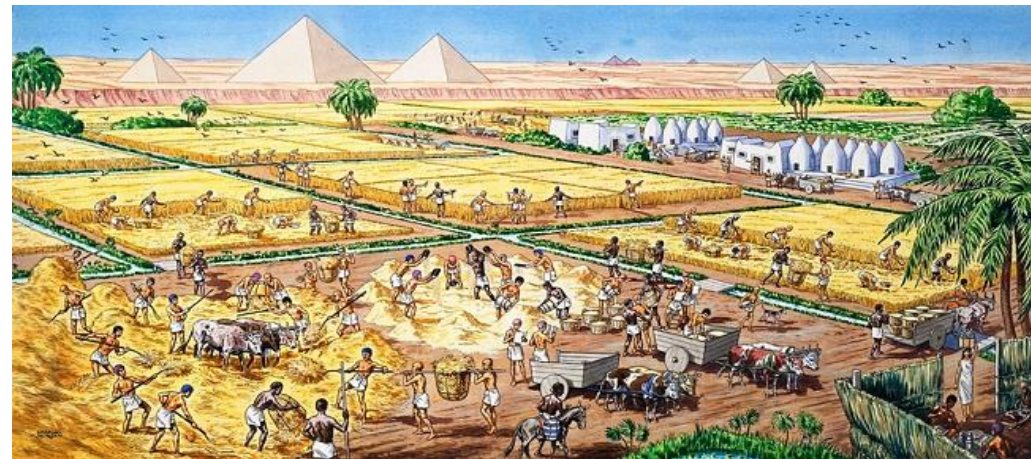
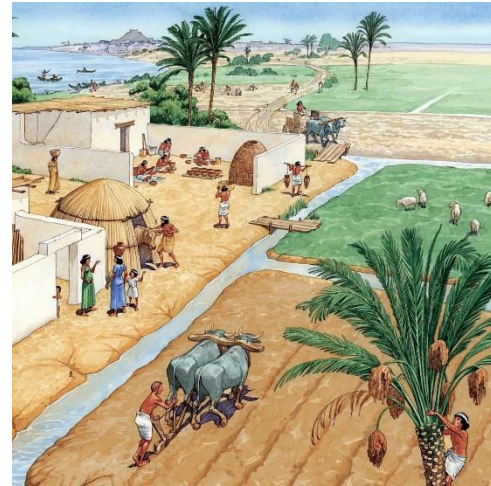


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- Through history, urban waterfronts have played a diversity of roles in our cities, from the primary usage of their water, to transportation, recreation and industrial purposes. Since recently, they are gradually evolving to become a catalyst of urban transformations
- The significant turn has occurred in 1960s and 1970s when the industrial base ceased to exist and all the areas it was occupying faced the problem of the degradation, unemployment, emptiness and presence of vacant industrial buildings;
- Consequently, there were big loses of the population in the central urban areas. The phenomenon gave birth to the appearance of numerous urban regeneration policies worldwide, with majority of them implemented exactly on the inner urban waterfront areas
- Waterfronts are seen as an opportunity for cities to improve structurally and visually
- Waterfront regeneration is gaining importance as an outcome of deindustrialization trends, sustainable and environmental development and globalization process
- Projects are addressing issues such as sustainable development, search for urban quality, environmental improvement and urban resilience
- However, the process is made more complex by the range of actors and organizations involved, as well as its local context and citizens participation
- Key issues are seen in defining who the actors of the processes are, how are these new places created and finally who benefits from it



- First urban settlements in the Eurasian continent were created in river valleys, due to strong link of water as a resource for agriculture and also a mean for sanitation, transport and trade
- Major urban developments connected to the presence of water started being linked to globalization process
- Robertson (*The Three waves of globalization: A history of Developing Global Consciousness*) in its first wave, globalization in the sixteenth century spread through Spain, Portugal, England, France and the Netherlands, and was connected to expansion and mercantilism: **COASTAL SEAPORT**
- Second wave in the 19th century, brought a demand for docks, ports and deposits located in the waterfront areas that were parts of cities but lost their larger significance as a public space: **INDUSTRIAL CENTER**
- 20th century: technological development led to relocation of the port and industrial areas out of the city center: **DECLINE AND DECAY**



- The most relevant waterfront zones that underwent transformations at the end of 20th century, were those in inner city areas, created mainly in the second wave of globalization that occurred in 19th century Europe
- Globalization and industrialization processes meant an extension of the port facilities in the urban area as well as surrounding infrastructure and numerous warehouses serving the port. As a consequence, large industrial areas on urban waterfronts were places of production, transit and storage that have lost their role in public life
- Industry went closer to the water edge that made natural landscape and environment disappear from the waterfront areas. Waterfront became the no-go area in the city and the barrier for the citizens to reach the waterside

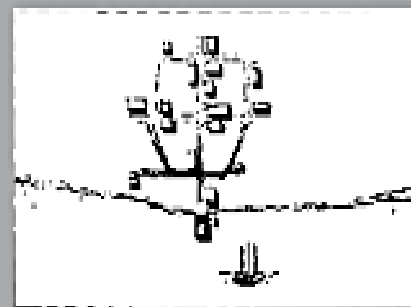
Direct contact with shore

Ports and docks formation

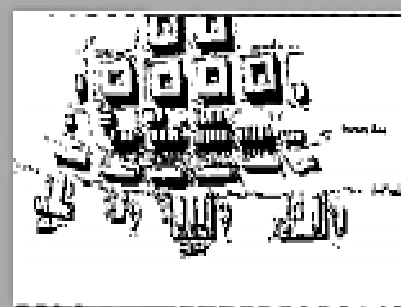
Industrialization

Relocation and abandonment

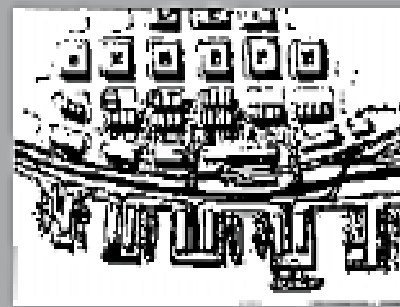
Reconnecting city and its waterfront



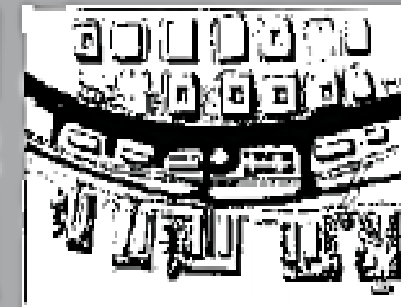
SETTLEMENT



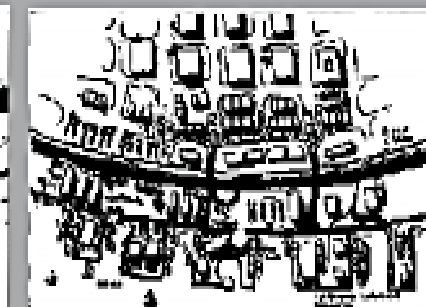
A PORT IS ESTABLISHED



CITY DETACHES



DECLINE



REDISCOVERY



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Second part of 20th century

- Riverfronts seen as less desired locations for international large-scale commercial projects as it is the case with seaports. However, from 1960s, urban riverfronts located in the central, historical sites of the city that usually went through deindustrialization and abandonment, were gaining big relevance as areas for regeneration. Therefore, at the end of last century rivers have been rediscovered as greenways of the cities
- In 80s, economic growth declined significantly in developing countries, being unable in that way to cope with population growth. This was a radical change after 60s and 70s that presented decades of prosperity and growth, but were followed with rising problems of unemployment, lack of education, environment decline and lack of housing (Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, 63)
- Waterfront urban area became abandoned, polluted zone with bad reputation left to urban decay. In 1980s, old harbor areas were an ideal sites for the development of the new urban milieus



- In last decades of the 20th century major changes in cities became evident and frequent, reflected also on urban waterfronts that underwent functional and morphological transformations
- Actions focused on regeneration of urban economies and requalification of declining urban areas to new economic roles. Urban development practice shifted from social to more economic objectives and from national to international market competition
- In that particular circumstances, city authorities world-wide were creating policies for urban transformations in order to tackle with ongoing social and environmental problems
- Urban growth followed by an increase of population, inner-city decay and economic decline were the main issues that cities were facing and therefore, local authorities were resorting to urban regeneration strategies that found their major implementation at the inner urban waterfronts areas
- The chapter of postmodern cities has been opened with international practices aiming to achieve a sustainable city
- In this context of free market liberalism and tendencies for economic growth that spread around the Western world, planning has undergone changes towards the formation of a neo-liberal approach
- Planning tendency was in correspondence with the big change in international policy for the city development and environmental protection that occurred after Brundtland report. In 1987, the General Assembly of the United Nations brought questions about long-term environmental strategies and agreed on the common need for a new type of growth that is socially and environmentally sustainable



- “sustainable development that we are aiming to achieve, should meet the need of the present without compromising ability of future generations to meet their own needs (...) under the limits of technology, social and environmental resources that requires new economic growth and greater democracy in decision making process” (Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, 1987, 16)
- harmony between humanity and nature became in the scope of the governmental aims together with citizen participation and ecological development

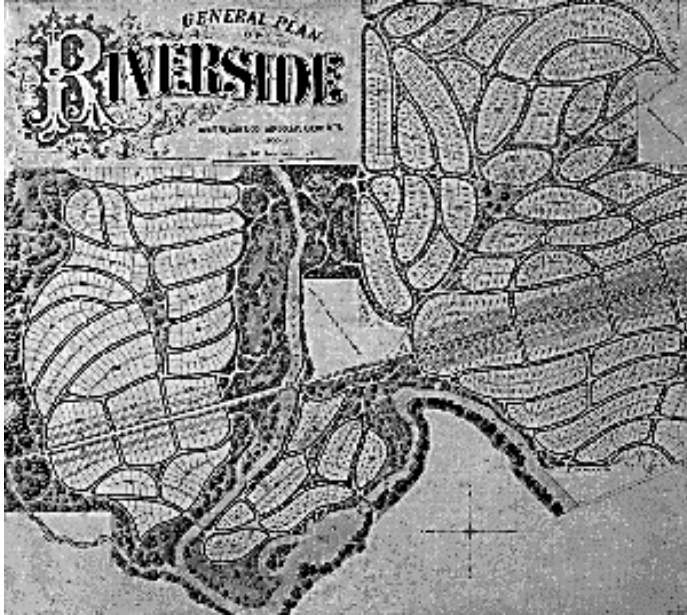


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- The origins of the idea for waterfront regeneration lead to the North America. The attempts to bring the nature in the city through presence of the river as a blue corridor, bring us back to 19th century to the work of famous Frederick Law Olmsted. It was in 1860s when Olmsted and Vaux recognized the potential of the Riverside Chicago, followed with inclusion of Muddy River into Emerald Necklace 1880
- In following decades revitalization of riverfronts through landscape practices with the aim to provide public access and recreational quality started being largely advocated by the works of Simonds, Little, Houck
- John Ormsbee Simonds published a book *Landscape Architecture: The Shaping of Man's Natural Environment* in 1961 and undertook the study of the Chicago River in 1962. The proposed transformation of the area into pleasant landscape, was about to become a part of the metropolitan park system that would provide a recreational quality of the waterway
- At the same time, Jacobs published “The Death and Life of the American great Cities” 1961, as a response to Moses’ attempt for urban renewal and introduced ‘social capital’
- Centrally located waterfronts started being core places of the urban renewal, nature restoration and recreation





“The waterfront isn’t just something unto itself. It’s connected to everything else.” Jane Jacobs



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- Projects of the revitalization in United States' port cities that spread globally, could be seen as a response to changes in demography that led to exigency for new residential properties, increasing heritage protection, need for higher quality of the life and increasing importance of the tourism as an economical mean
- New residential areas requested higher living standard, the demand for the leisure and recreational activities would be born, and the market price of properties would increase. On the other hand, tourism brought higher awareness, protection and conservation of architectural and historical heritage sites
- Changes brought a new type of public space in the cities that is reflecting real estate trends and has a tendency to present market good rather than market place
- In this context, recent dynamics of the waterfront regenerations are aiming to create competitive environments that are expressing new image of the city formed after deindustrialization
- Innovations and technological progress in that kind of urban environment are expected to attract capital

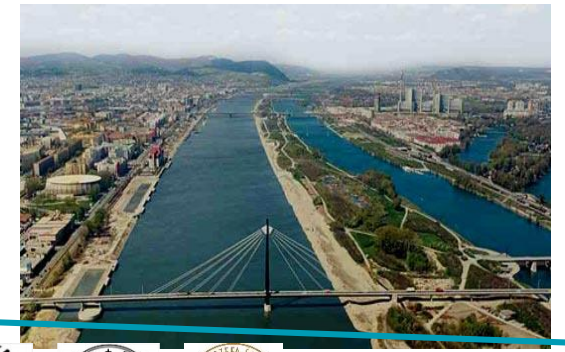


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- Numerous successful examples of the waterfront regenerations world-wide lead us to the contemporary practices that testify the importance and relevance of the waterfront regeneration in current urban tendencies. Recently, several authors have classified different waterfront projects according to their role in the urban context. Once implemented, waterfront regeneration becomes the catalyst of the numerous processes happening in the city
- It is essential to distinguish the differences between many types of waterfronts in order to understand the varieties in their urban role and complex urban development
- Moretti offered the classification of different types of the waterfront regenerations according to their main cause:
 1. “New Urban expansion” (Hafen City Hamburg)
 2. “Waterfront Projects for great events” (Barcelona, Genoa, Lisbon, London, Zaragoza)
 3. “New Waterfront Itineraries”- innovation along the waterfront for public use (recreation and leisure) and soft mobility paths (Barcelonetta Beach, London Thames)
 4. “Reuse of the port areas”- regeneration on the former ports, reuse of the old functions (Rotterdam)
 5. “Flood Defense”- structures for the flood defense can have more new urban uses, such as green areas, recreation, leisure activities (Danube Island Vienna)
 6. “Urban beaches”- created natural environment for the recreational and social activities (Pauli beach in Hamburg)



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- Nowadays, waterfront regeneration projects are aiming to rediscover new methods in planning, reconnect waterfronts with the city, recreate urbanity, rethink safety and most prominently, revitalize economy
- Positively affect urban quality and contribute to preservation of the heritage (Babalis, 2017). Finally, by expressing new aspirations and urban identities these projects influence significantly formation of the new image of the city. Often, implemented patterns could be found in a variety of projects that relate to principles for future sustainable development of urban waterfront

Global Conference on the Urban Future in Berlin, the principles are:

- Waterfront development needs to secure the quality of the water and the environment
- Waterfronts are parts of the existing urban fabric, and should act as an integral part of the existing city and urban landscape
- The historic identity of the place gives the character to the transformation, collective heritage should be utilized to give the meaning of waterfront redevelopment
- The priority in these transformations should be mixed use facilities
- Waterfront areas should be physically and visually accessible and should act as public places
- The process of the transformation is speed up if the PPP planning is implemented
- Cities should benefit ecologically, economically and socially; public participation is an element of sustainability
- Waterfront regenerations are long term projects that should insure the benefit for the whole city from its potentials
- Revitalization is an ongoing process; management and operations of waterfronts should have the equal priority during the day and night
- Waterfronts should profit from international networking

Peter Hall and Ulrich Pfeifer, *Urban 21: World Report on the Urban Future 21*, (London: E&FN Spon, 2000), Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing, Berlin



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- From the beginnings of human settlements, an important element such is water plays a crucial role in establishing the balance between the natural, urban and social life in the city. Moreover, it adds functional and aesthetical value to the existing urban environment by contributing with visual, audial, tactual, psychological, climate and recreational welfare
- Nevertheless, water in the city has a specific spatial meaning as the particular open place where built and natural meet forming a specific urban landscape
- As the typical perception of the European city had been related to representation of the settlement taken from the distanced point observing its waterfront and skyline, we still tend to create an image of the city in our minds appearing from its waterside
- In ages of heavy industrialization, cities have turned their back to the waterfronts, leaving them as irrelevant “backyards” and excluding from their identity and public life
- In the context of the 20th century, with the increasing urban density, industrialization, bad living conditions and urban expansion, the presence of green areas restarted being desired in the urban environment. The idea of nature in the city was connected to health, well-being and commodity. Water elements and urban waterfronts sights present a major potential for creating blue-green belts and might affect in that way to a more healthy and quality living
- Experiences gained from studying implemented urban waterfront regeneration projects in the XX century, showed that waterfront projects offer a standpoint from which processes happening in the city could be observed. Moreover, they testify the complexity of urban challenges and demands of the local context
- Positive effects of the waterfront regeneration in the urban area are seen in the preservation of historical and local heritage, improvement of water quality and ecology, provision of new housing and job opportunities, increase of the real estate property and new economic investments and finally reinforcing the relation between the city and the water
- this type of major transformations also involve relevant risks: loss of identity due to the standardization of the interventions for all contexts (adoption of the model), the lack of correspondence between the initial idea and realized solution, the appearance of extraterritoriality due to creation of exclusively commercial and tourist functions, gentrification and finally the prioritization of profit over urban quality of the project
- The successful urban transformations are shown to be those that recognize the different potentials of the changes, include the concerns of the citizens when planning, understand the local character



“Cities seek a waterfront that is a place of public enjoyment. They want a waterfront where there is ample visual and physical public access- all day, all year- to both the water and the land. Cities also want a waterfront that serves more than one purpose: they want it to be a place to work and to live, as well as a place to play. In other words, they want a place that contributes to the quality of life in all of its aspects- economic, social and cultural.”

Urban Land Institute, *Remaking the Urban waterfront*, (Washington D.C., 2004)



Thank you for your attention!



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