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The Port Cityscape

Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships

Hein, Carola

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ABSTRACT

Port-related flows of goods, people and ideas cross institutional boundaries and create complex, fuzzy territories without strong, mutually supportive governance frameworks, legal systems and planning guidelines. Multi-scalar markets and global value chains leave their imprint on the spaces of the port and on neighboring urban and rural territories. Stakeholders in these areas are multiple and pursue different goals and functions. Politicians, planners and researchers grapple with the need to provide guidance for spatial and institutional development in a way that acknowledges the ongoing fragmentation and transformation of extended port city territories with their overlapping governance systems and flexible coalitions of actors in different power positions. A careful re-conceptualization of the spatial and institutional impact of port-city connections as a “commons” can provide insight into the form and scale of spatial impact, the places of conflict and opportunity for port cities and the need for new theoretical, methodological and scalar approaches. This introduction proposes the concept of the port cityscape as a framework for the 12 articles included in this special issue. Together, these contributions provide a glimpse of the diverse disciplinary, geographical and scalar approaches to governance in port city regions and form a call for further research.



The Port Cityscape: Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships

Carola Hein¹

¹ Professor, Faculty of Architecture & the Built Environment, TU Delft, Delft, The Netherlands.

KEYWORDS

Port city regions; Port cityscape; Fuzzy territories;
Port city values

The Port Cityscape: Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships

Introduction

As connectors between land and water, between a flexible maritime foreland and an extensive land-based infrastructure in the hinterland, ports and their neighboring cities and their regions have long accommodated extensive flows of goods, people and ideas. Their location on the edge of water has made port cities unique territories with special facilities, needs and opportunities. Ports, cities and rural areas co-exist in limited territories; while they often have shared interests—for example, regarding economic development—they also compete for space and pursue divergent goals regarding environmental issues notably around transport, energy, safety, and emissions.

Ports are regional, sometimes national, economic powerhouses and as such can offer benefits to their urban neighbors. Their development is interlinked with national and regional policy-making, but that means that outside authorities can occasionally overrule the interests and decision-making powers of cities. Their temporalities are different from those of the city and its citizens, creating yet another challenge to co-habitation in the same space¹. Port authorities need to engage with ever more diverse stakeholders as well as political pressures, market forces and legislation. Simultaneously, many cities and regions that exist alongside ports have come to host multiple non-maritime urban functions that occasionally compete with port interests, or even suffer from the presence of port industries and shipping. City governments have limited control over the port authorities, but need to facilitate port functions. Urban growth extends beyond existing administrative borders and often competes with the land use and expansion needs of port installations in the wider region. Choices about the form and function of ports and cities as well as the reuse of historic port areas often depend on local actor constellations.

Port cities, their institutions and citizens are characterized by a particular resilience that has allowed them to respond constructively to changes and disasters. Historically, in some ports and cities (such as the free cities of Europe) the interests of the shipping and trading elites and those of local politicians were aligned. A good example of close collaboration between trade and civic leadership is the bridge in Hamburg that connects two buildings, the stock exchange and the townhall, and therefore connects the economic and political leadership of the city (Figure 1a, 1b).

¹ HEIN, C. 2016a. Temporalities of the Port, Waterfront, and the City. In: WARSEWA, G. (ed.) *City on Water*. Wrocław: Association of European Schools of Planning.

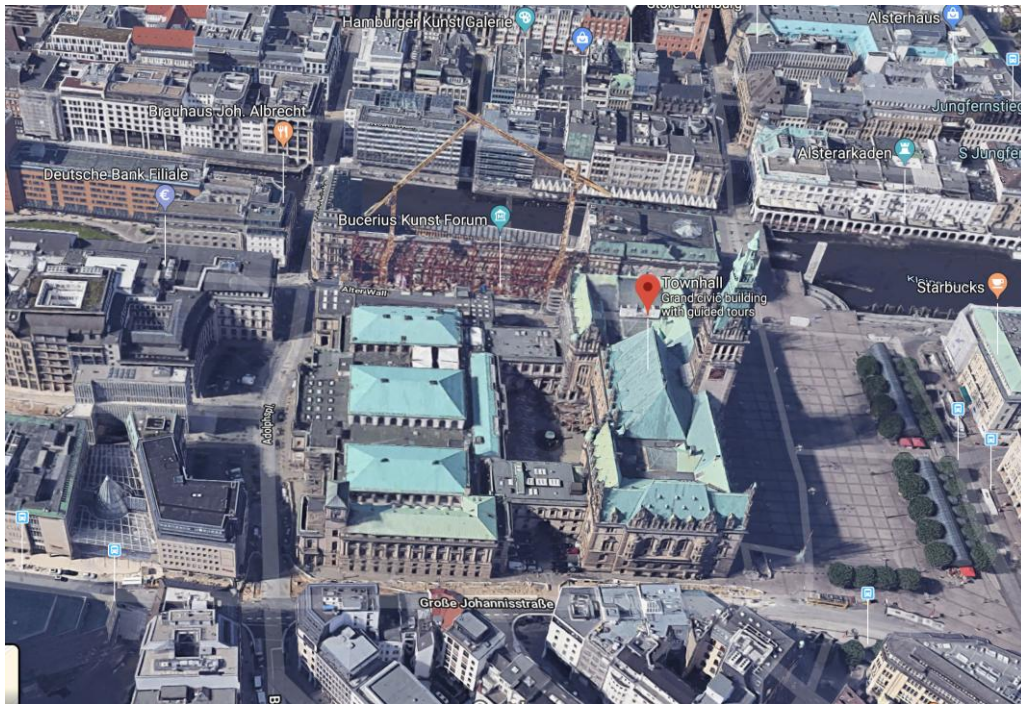


Figure 1a. The Hamburg City Hall and the bridges linking it to the stock exchange, Aerial View (Google Maps).



Figure 1b. Photograph of the bridge connecting stock exchange and townhall in Hamburg, seen from the North West (Author: Carola Hein)

In Hamburg, the local elites developed spatial and institutional practices that facilitated the economic and spatial growth of the port and simultaneously provided spaces for housing port workers. Throughout history, Hamburg's elite balanced the interests of trade and shipping with those of the local population, as needed for the workings of the port. This balance was facilitated by the fact that Hamburg was a free city state for a long time and retained this status even when it became part of the German Empire (1871–1918). Developments such as the HafenCity redevelopment have been possible because of the existence of a strong institutional leadership

granted by the Hamburg city state. Today, the Hamburg city government still manages most port and urban development within its administrative unit. Furthermore, the city has managed to take leadership over a larger metropolitan space, under the label of Metropolregion Hamburg (<https://metropolregion.hamburg.de/>), which is represented at the EU in Brussels².

Literature on port cities often considers the port a clearly bounded entity. Such a perception tends to ignore the many ways in which ports use spaces on sea and land. Many contemporary ports are surrounded by high fences and are controlled by special institutions, but their spatial footprint - for example through infrastructure, warehousing, and logistics networks - as well as their environmental impact - for example, air, water, soil or noise pollution - extends far beyond the port's demarcated borders into neighboring cities and regions. The result is a port cityscape, a networked space that extends from land to sea, including ships and pipelines, port facilities and warehouses, industrial and logistic structures, headquarters and retail buildings, but also housing and leisure facilities. This port cityscape is administrated, planned, imagined and represented by multiple institutions and rarely as part of a shared vision. The separate consideration and planning of all these entities leads to a segregated planning approach to waterfront revitalization or river and coastline development, even though water connects all of these spaces. The segregation of planning is reflected in the different ways these sites are represented: port authorities will write and depict the port city and the water in a different way than a city or regional institution³ (Figure 3).

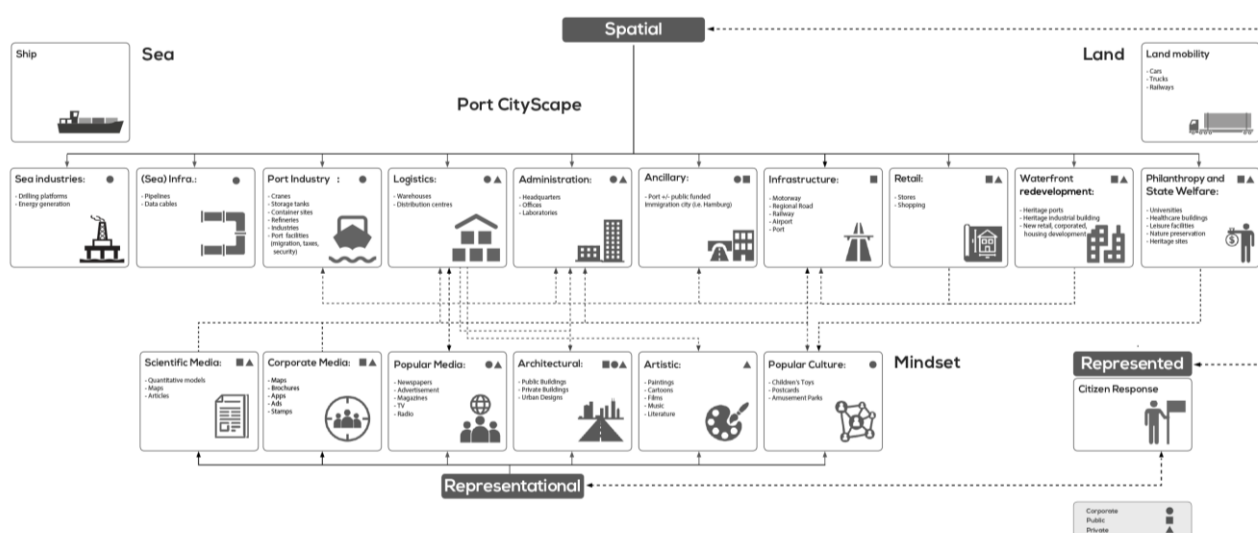


Figure 2. Port Cityscape (Carola Hein).

Port city regions consist of a global foreland and a deep hinterland. The collective governance of these extensive landscapes and the logistics of the multiple flows and the multi-layered use of space in these regions require careful analysis and development. The spaces of port functions - and spaces related to port functions - are thus entangled with and sometimes shared with those that the city uses. Port city regions are characterized by large bodies of water and intensive investments in port infrastructure. They are often also large consumer hubs where actors pursue many non-maritime or non-port oriented economic, ecological, socio-cultural and spatial goals. At times and in places where all these interests are aligned, port city regions emerge as strong economic, political and cultural centers that facilitate trade and travel. Port expansion and river dredging, but also different types of waterfront renewal, depend on complex governance systems

² HEIN, C. 2015. Cities (and regions) within a city: subnational representations and the creation of European imaginaries in Brussels. *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, 1-15.

³ HEIN, C. 2016b. Writing Port Cities: PORTUS: the online magazine of RETE, n. 31 June 2016 <http://portusonline.org/writing-port-cities/>.

involving a diverse group of stakeholders. Contrasting needs and visions among the various stakeholders in port city regions at a time of multiple transitions require careful assessment and new solutions to overcome barriers and align the goals of all partners. The importance of improved port-city-region relations has been emphasized by various scholars and organizations (e.g. OECD, AIVP, RETE⁴).

As the multiple problems of an institutional, planning and legal vacuum become evident, some national governments have taken (partial) action. The effects of fragmentation and of the current absence of institutional, legal, and planning frameworks can be seen in port city regions around the world. The current situation is perhaps most beneficial for private interests, for logistics companies and investors, who can pitch one locality against another. To facilitate the function of the ports, national governments in several countries, such as Japan and Italy, have put in place regional port governance systems to improve both the competitive position of the ports and to provide them with a better capacity to negotiate their position in complex territories. The Chinese government similarly considers port city regions as a spatial entity. Often, these interventions are geared primarily at economic development with less consideration for urban, social and cultural issues.

This new territorial and institutional scale needs to be theorized and studied in a methodological manner with a focus on governance systems that can contribute to a redefinition of port-city-region relationships. Such a reconceptualization is urgently needed as port city regions around the world today face a number of complex problems that require integrated spatial and social planning and design measures for the use of this limited space so that the port and city (and region) can jointly evolve. Buy-in from local stakeholders is necessary to facilitate the construction of hard infrastructures necessary for the functioning of the port, for acceptance of the side effects of ports (noise, security, emissions), but also to develop the skillsets and technologies needed for the port and port city of the future. Each city is different in terms of geography, spatial form and function, history and culture and the way its government responds will be linked to long-term path dependencies that impact future development.

These responses must go beyond technological solutions. The OECD claims that any vision for the port should be “imaginative rather than technocratic”⁵. Their research hints at the need for a stronger connection between spatial, governance and cultural networks. Port cities must reinvent themselves for the future and they need creative forces in their cities to prepare the ports and their surrounding regions for coming challenges. The (re-)creation of citizen support is a key element. Re-establishing port city cultures is an important part also of the AIVP port city future agenda⁶. Re-established linkages will not only be determined by economic desiderata or port-competition criteria, which until now have dominated port city infrastructural and planning decisions.

In line with Henri Lefebvre’s analysis of complex systems of physical space, its representation and lived-in experience⁷, we argue that spatial practices and their representation need to be closely connected to the everyday practices of local inhabitants and their representation - particularly because daily port operations have become partly invisible. That means that to support the functioning of the port we need to construct an everyday culture anchored in social networks, spatial systems and everyday language and imagery. Such an integrated approach will help animate the creative forces within the city and connect local imaginaries with those of the port.

⁴ AIVP (Association Internationale Ville Port <http://www.aivp.org/en/>), RETE (Association for the Collaboration of Ports and Cities, <http://retedigital.com/en/>); AIVP Agenda 2030.

⁵ (OECD, 2014, p.83).

⁶ (<https://www.aivpagenda2030.com/>)

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, 1991 LEFEBVRE, H. 1991. The Production of Space, Blackwell. 26-27.

This approach is in line with Van Hooydonk's (2007) *Soft Values of Seaports*, that calls for a stronger engagement with social and cultural realities⁸.

Today port city regions are under pressure to accommodate both the needs of the port and those of growing city regions. New designs and approaches are needed that build upon historical developments and respond to the shifting and overlapping needs of ports and cities. In order to find creative solutions, port city regions need to develop shared values. Port cities are resilient not only as a result of technological innovation, but because they have been able to adapt their spaces and institutions creatively and collectively to changing global conditions. Co-creation practices are needed to resolve conflicts between stakeholders with opposing interests in using space⁹. Historically, the main actors in ports and cities have engaged major transformations in interconnected ways, building on shared values. Over time they have established practices, legal structures and buildings that are the result of purposeful collaboration and collective responses to global challenges. Over the last one hundred years, the economic dimension of the port has come to the fore, and visual links between port and city have been dissolved. The articulation of shared values may help to resolve spatial development questions generated by competing interests of a diverse group of actors, including port authorities, municipalities, corporations, cultural institutions, and citizens. To demonstrate the opportunities and need for such an approach, we have collaborated with Delft Design for Values (DDFV) and participated in a pilot value deliberation on the topic¹⁰.



Figure 3. Regional collaboration between competition and collaboration.
A visualization from Flatland made during the PortCityFutures Conference in Rotterdam 17-19.12.2018.

The 12 articles included in this special issue together provide insight into the multiple spatial, institutional, social and cultural dimensions of the challenges and opportunities for port city regions. They raise questions about governance, law, and scale and about competing interests over the same territory (economic development for some, environmental risk for others). They ask questions about who benefits and who bears the risk, addressing themes of spatial, social and

⁸ Van Hooydonk.

⁹ Dooms, Verbeke and Haezendonck 2013; Hall, O'Brien, and Woudsma 2013; De Langen and Haezendonck 2012; Galvao et al. 2016.

¹⁰ More info: <https://mood.tbm.tudelft.nl/portcityfutures/>

environmental justice. Scholars from diverse disciplines and geographical backgrounds investigate changing, often asymmetrical, governance constellations in port city regions and their evolution over time. Their individual contributions provide clues to the many components still missing, starting with a clear definition of the spaces of port city regions. Are we talking about a networked space, a region, a cluster . . . or a commons, as defined by Garrett Hardin in 1968, discussed by Elinor Ostrom in 1990 and explored in the context of port cities by Na'ama Teschner in 2019¹¹? (Figure 1)

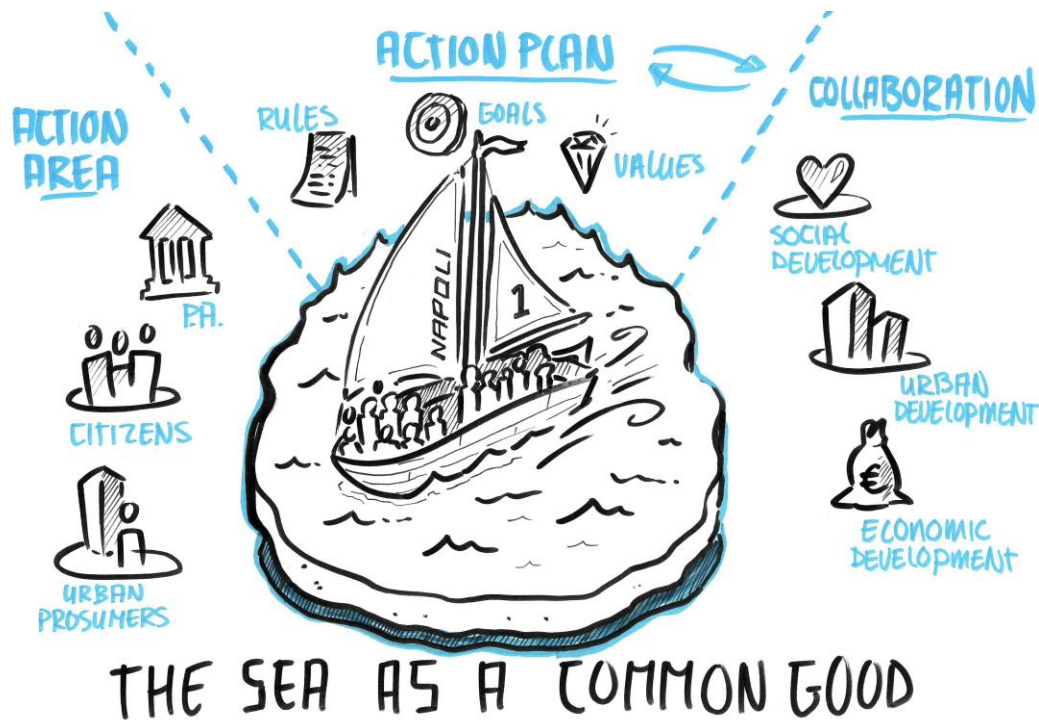


Figure 4. The concept of the common. A visualization from Flatland made during the PortCityFutures Conference in Rotterdam 17-19.12.2018.

Overview

The papers are grouped into three parts. The **first part** explores theoretical, methodological and thematic approaches towards port city regions. It includes a conceptual framing of governance patterns on the urban-port threshold by Beatrice Moretti, who notably aims “to move *beyond* the port city,” and who proposes the term *portuality*¹². Carola Hein and Yvonne van Mil aim to get a better grip on the scales and form of port city regions through a mapping methodology that analyses the changing spatial and governance dimensions of three North Sea port city regions and provides the foundation for further examination of port city spaces. Stephan Ramos explores the port of Savannah through the lens of port “mismatch” involving economic benefits for the traders and environmental degradation suffered by the locals. He considers potential ways to strengthen port governance structures through policy measures. Han Meyer also takes a comparative and spatial approach calling for a new planning paradigm that looks at port city regions holistically, combining attention to spatial and governance elements.

¹¹ HARDIN, G. 1968. “Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science*; OSTROM, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. TESCHNER, N. 2019. “The Battle over the Commons in Port Cities,” *Journal Urban Geography* 40, no. 7, 918-937.

¹² See the PhD research ‘Beyond Port City. The Condition of Portuality and the Threshold’s Field’ by author Beatrice Moretti at Department Architecture and Design, Polytechnic School of Genoa (IT), May 2019. Supervisors Full Professor Carmen Andriani (Architecture) and Manuel Gausa Navarro (Urbanism).

The **second part** takes a case study approach to illustrate the challenges for port city regions through national and local examples. These case studies come from different parts of the world and are considered through diverse disciplinary perspectives. Questions of governance, planning tools and legal instruments are discussed for spaces in Egypt, China, Slovenia and France and the papers feature different methods of studying port city regions. Rana Garib demonstrates how social mobility and the development of coastal holiday resorts coincided with the Egyptian government's attempt at decentralization and urban expansion. The result was a fragmentation of governance in the city and on the waterfront in the absence of a single authority. The absence of an intermedial planning entity is also evident in the case of China. Penglin Zhu shows how local authorities used the national decision to insert national oil reserves in Dalian and other port cities for their own economic and political benefit, instead of addressing environmental and security issues as required by the nation. Lucija Azman explores the actors responsible for the governance of the Port of Koper and for the development of spatial plans after 1954. Stephan Hauser, focusing on the city of Dunkirk, concludes the section by focusing on the messiness of governance and legal instruments in France and the ways in which the government aims to strike a balance between economic and environmental goals.

The **third part** investigates questions of governance through the lens of tourism, focusing on regions, cruise shipping and waterfront revitalization. Sara Carciotti, Alessandra Marin, and Walter Ukovich propose a new framework for decision-making in the context of cruise shipping. Acknowledging that governance in port city regions is a complex problem, due partly to the increasing number of people and institutions involved in cruise shipping, they propose a Decision Support System (DSS) so that stakeholders can address policies, infrastructure and management from a sound and well-informed background. Machiko Yamamoto and Carolin Funck add a perspective from Japan. They investigate the role of recently amended immigration and port laws in relation to cruise ships and port management. Jose Sanchez considers the question of port city governance through the case of Lisbon's cruise terminals. There, conflicting interests between an economic-led approach for a new terminal and the acknowledgement of citizen demands ultimately led to innovative solutions. The final piece by Xiaolin Zang, Bouke van Gorp and Hans Renes adds to the question of waterfront rehabilitation and tourism through a careful analysis of four Asian port cities - Macao, Hong Kong, Qingdao and Taipei - where the conservation of port heritage offers a means to narrate the history of port-city relationships, to improve the ports' relationships with citizens and to increase participation in the design of port city regions.

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