THE IMPORTANCE OF MARITIME MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE TO PRESENT-DAY PORT POLICY

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PORT LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES (1)
– Athenian Stranger. And are there harbours on the seaboard?– Cleinias. Excellent harbours, Stranger; there could not be better.– Athenian Stranger. Alas! what a prospect! (Plato, Laws, Book IV)

PORT LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES (2)
• The giant bustle, the coal-heavers, the bargemen, the black buildings, the ten thousand times ten thousand sounds and movements of that monstrous harbour formed the grandest object I had ever witnessed. One man seems as a drop in the ocean; you feel annihilated in the immensity of that heart of all the Earth. (Thomas Carlyle on the port of London in a letter to his wife of 23 June 1824)

PORT LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES (3)
• In a wintry haze, behind us, lies the port area with its neon lights and chimney flares, constantly flickering like an obscene pinball machine. [...] Gigantic container vessels were on their way! And mega consortia of shipping companies! Everything mega and giga! [...] Big, obscure powers stand against us (C. de Stoop on the construction of Deurganck Dock, 2000)

The Negative Image of Seaports
1. Havens of sin, poverty, crime, disease, etc.
2. Centres of moral decay and political corruption
3. Cultural wastelands governed by Mammon
4. Hotbeds of maritime Mafia business
5. Battlefields of irrational competition
6. Ugly industrial areas
7. Destroyers of the natural environment
8. Cesspools of pollution and disaster areas
9. Dehumanised islands drifting away from society
From Anyport…

- Bird’s Anyport Model: a gradual relocation due to the changing needs in port development and operations

…to Banished Port

- An abrupt, drastic, all-embracing and revolutionary relocation due to external, societal objections

A Europe-wide trend

- Bird’s Anyport Model: a gradual relocation due to the changing needs in port development and operations
An abrupt, drastic, all-embracing and revolutionary relocation due to external, societal objections.

Complications in the port:
- A greenfield relocation far away from the city centre provokes new objections from residents and environmentalists.
- Port relocation or expansion project are often controversial.
- Legal uncertainty over EU environmental law.
- Massive delays.

Complications in the city:
- A relocation of city centre port operations endangers or destroys:
  - the living portscape
  - the built port heritage
  - the tourist appeal of port cities
  - the port city atmosphere
  - the port city inhabitant’s awareness of, identification with, and support for the port (‘Out of sight, out of mind’).

Ports are more than money-making machines.
Ports should manage and exploit their non-socio-economic values and functions on the basis of a comprehensive, coordinated approach.

Soft values of seaports = port history, port and shipping heritage, port art, waterfront redevelopment, cruise tourism, port tourism, port ecology...

Soft Values Management can yield a threefold return:
- restoration of public support
- contribution to commercial port promotion
- instrument for city marketing and tourist promotion

A positive seaport and seaport city identity
- ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ of port authorities.
• O quays, O ports, O trains, O cranes, O tugs!
  (Fernando Pessoa, *Triumphal Ode*, 1914)

• Good management of soft values should support an ambition to maintain or gain international port icon status
• A SWOT analysis of the port icon status of port cities
• A comparison with other iconic port cities and international best practices
• An international ranking based on a port icon comparator
Concrete recommendations

- Resting on four pillars
  - The rebuilding of the port city
  - conserving and exploiting the genius loci of port city centres
  - The telling of the port story
  - exploiting and promoting port heritage and culture
  - Breaking through the port boundaries
  - inviting people to experience the active port area
  - The broadening of the port community’s perspective
  - convincing the public and private port sector to cooperate and to support initiatives
SOFT VALUES OF SEAPORTS AND PORT HERITAGE: THE CASE OF FLANDERS

WORLD-CLASS PORT CITY HERITAGE: BRUGES

WORLD-CLASS PORT CITY HERITAGE: GHENT

WORLD-CLASS PORT CITY HERITAGE: ANTWERP

BRAND NEW MUSEUM PROJECTS: BAASRODE

BRAND NEW MUSEUM PROJECTS: OSTEND
BRAND NEW MUSEUM PROJECTS: ANTWERP (1)

CONSERVATION PROJECTS: BELGICA (1)

CONSERVATION PROJECTS: MERCATOR

CONSERVATION PROJECTS: ASKOY II
REPLICA PROJECTS:  
BELGICA (2)

FLANDERS WATER HERITAGE

- Flemish umbrella organisation for water heritage
  - Wet water heritage
  - Dry water heritage
  - Immaterial water heritage
- Established end 2008 as ‘Watergebonden Erfgoed’, chaired by Dirk Ramakers
- Positive response from associations and authorities
- More info on www.watererfgoed.be

MISSION AND VISION

- Flanders Water Heritage
  - is the unique Flemish umbrella organisation for dry and wet water heritage
  - unites and defends all actors, associations, projects, owners, managers, service providers, researchers and enthusiasts in the field of shipping, port and other water heritage
  - works for the conservation and valorisation of all water heritage in Flanders, for a strengthening of the water awareness of the Flemings and for the international aura of Flanders as a beacon of shipping and port culture
- is the independent, professional and constructive partner of the authorities at local, Flemish, Belgian, European and international level, and supports projects and initiatives
- contributes to the opening up of Flemish water heritage for tourism and recreation
- promotes contacts and cooperation among water heritage actors
- unites and diffuses practical know-how and scientific knowledge in the field of water heritage
- stimulates and supports new water heritage-related initiatives

CURRENT MEMBERS

- Associations
  - Archonaat (Traditional Shipyard)
  - Belgian Marine Painters
  - Buitengoed (Eastern Bank Ostend)
  - De Steenschuit
  - Koninklijke Vereniging voor Natuur- en Stedenschoon (KVNS) (Royal Association for the Natural and Urban Landscapes)
  - Monumentenwacht Varend Erfgoed (Monument Watch for Heritage Ships)
  - National Fisheries Museum Oostduinkerke
  - Oostende voor Anker
  - Rhine and Inland Shipping Museum Antwerp
  - Ruimschoots (shipping heritage magazine)
- Individual members

BOARD MEMBERS AND ADVISORS

- Board of Directors
  - Prof. Dr. Eric Van Hooydonk
    Professor of Law, University of Antwerp and advocate
  - Dirk Ramakers
    Chairman of Flemish Association for the Conservation of Historic Vessels
  - Pita De Waale
    Individual heritage ship owner
  - Wim Barck
    Secretary of Tolerant (Association for the conservation of authentic ships from Flanders and Zeeland)
  - Jan Amtenraete
    Chairman of the Shipping Museum at Baasrode
  - Pd De Jonge
    Manager of the Ship to Shore, communication and press contacts for water events and projects
  - Willem Mantelee
    Coordinator of the shipping heritage magazine Ruimschoots
- Advisors
  - Scientific, policy, nautical, culture, media, pr and events advisors

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

- Presentation and stand at the Belgian Boat Show, Ghent 2009
- Active contributions to events and seminars at Ostend, Moel, Ghent, Las Palmas, Flensburg, Rome…
- Website www.watererfgoed.be
- Newsletter Getijden
- Policy Paper for the Flemish elections 2009
- Stand at the maritime event ‘Oostende voor Anker’, 29 May – 1 June 2009
- Flemish Water Heritage Guide
CONCLUSIONS

Maritime museums are more relevant than ever

• The future of ports and port cities lies in a good management of their shipping and port heritage
• The story of ports and port cities is more relevant than ever
• Shipping and port activities disappear from daily life and cityscapes
• Maritime awareness and public support for ports are weakening
• Maritime museums should help keep the shipping and port stories alive and the port city’s identity visible

A higher ambition for maritime museums

• Managing shipping and port heritage is more than an objective in itself
• It is vital to tourism, urban planning and port policy
• This opens up new opportunities
• Maritime museums should redefine their function and ambition
  – Maritime and/or port and/or city museum?
  – International, national, local scope?
  – General or specializes maritime or port museum?
  – Museum harbour or harbour museum?

Developing new partnerships

• City authorities and scientific institutions
• Port authorities
• Commercial port operators and shipping companies
• Port education centres
• National or regional umbrella organisations for shipping and port heritage

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