Originally published in 1978. Josef Konvitz provides a broad comparative study of European port cities since the Renaissance by examining how they were built and rebuilt in the context of urban industrialization. Konvitz argues that as seafaring became more critical to Western civilization, intellectuals and rulers placed more importance on urban planning. Planning looked different, of course, in various European cities. In Paris, riverside planning was patched into the existing frame of the city, whereas Scandinavian towns on the Baltic were over-designed to accommodate a degree of maritime trade unsustainable for large cities. In the eighteenth century, city planning fell out of vogue, and new solutions were introduced to help solve the problems created by urban development.

Divided in three parts, the book focuses on how European port cities are organized, spatially, and how efficient shipping could be and what environmental and social costs port operations could have, using spatial factors and topographic maps in studying urban development. Konvitz's book is an important source for urban historians of early modern Europe and an essential background to contemporary challenges and clues to their resolution.

**The word to the Author**

**Gaia Daldanise** – *Starting from the concept of "maritime culture", we've noted that you talked also about "urban maritime culture". Could you define this new concept and the new trend about port-city planning collaborative approaches?*

**Josef W. Konvitz** – When the largest cities were coastal, and when shipping was the most visible commercial activity, ships, quays and piers and warehouses etc. represented a major share of the most valuable, prominent space. Because port cities could grow larger than other cities not served by waterborne traffic, large parts of the port city could expand away from the waterfront, often responding to different environmental and social preferences. The management of the city centre and the waterfront however remained subordinate to the imperatives imposed by shipping and the interface with the rest of the city. What I called "maritime culture" was the framework of ideas, sentiments and knowledge that framed decision-making and political/economic preferences – especially when conflicts had to be resolved. Maritime culture infused the larger culture through painting (Normandy

painters in France), literature (New England writers like Melville, Dana), etc., acculturating people who had nothing to do with seafaring to the maritime world.

In the 20th century, with the expansion of industrial ports and the increase in the size (and number) of ships, ports could be detached from city centres, and operated as gigantic factory sites with a watery edge. By the 1960s and certainly since people wanted to reclaim the waterfront in the city centre, some for public use and some for cultural activities, we are back to competing claims to a limited space, with the risk that one use will exclude another. Collaborative? Why not? But this takes a certain kind of political climate, visionary local leaders (who are more often conservative, not progressive), imaginative financing, and flexible regulations.

The main driver in the future is likely to be coastal zone management with a view toward 1) reducing the severity of storms, floods, etc., 2) adaptation to rising sea levels. The frightening (negative) image of destructive storms and high tides – New York, Venice – has to be translated into a creative vision to make the waterfront safer and more attractive. If there then is to be public-private co-operation, what benefits will be granted to the private sector if it shares more of the risk?

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**Authors Biography**

**Josef W. Konvitz**

Before he joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1992, Josef Konvitz was a professor of history at Michigan State University with an extensive experience on the history of cities, infrastructure and the urban economy, the history of cartography, and international relations in an urban dimension. Since 2011 Konvitz is Honorary Professor, Education, University of Glasgow and he also served as a visiting professor at King's College London. He is the author of Cities and Crisis and of Cartography in France, 1660–1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft.

Since 2012 he is Chair of the PASCAL International Observatory, a global network of universities that brings academics and practitioners together on projects to develop sustainable and learning cities.

As Head of the OECD's Regulatory Policy Division from 2003 to 2011, Konvitz designed and implemented a strategic, multi-disciplinary and cross-sectorial several programs to strengthen regulatory quality and regulatory reform.