German ports such as Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, Kiel and Rostock have a long history, which is reflected in maritime traditions, heritage and many historic buildings. The later newly established seaward upstream ports such as Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven and Cuxhaven are similarly characterized by their port history, as well as riverports like Duisburg, Cologne, Dusseldorf and Berlin. Rather, each port has is very specific features that give its own individual look and history. Preserving buildings and infrastructures, some of which are listed, means opening to a unique potential to link and merge past, present and future.

As diverse as the size and history of the port cities are, similar are the local projects of historical monuments, the reuse and new use of buildings, the free space planning and the re-integration of waterfront zones in the cityscape. The range of projects cannot be reduced to the same, reproducible types, but has differences and peculiarities, each of which refers to specific local conditions and traditions. Especially projects that have unique selling points and are based on local references have a special charm and are attractive for the local population as well as a destination for tourists.

Storage played an important role for import and export in German ports, before the container-revolution changed the way of cargo handling. Every port city was looking for tailor-made solutions for the special port requirements. As in all other European ports, packing and storage buildings were built along the river along a bank-parallel street at right angles to the shore.

Often warehouses had been designed for the storage of special goods. Artificially constructed quay walls with (semi-portal) cranes made it possible to moor even larger ships and the rapid transfer to railway and wagons. In transit sheds the goods were stored and sorted at short notice. This is followed on the quay by another road with crane installations, with room for railways and wagons and finally with storage facilities for the long-term storage of goods. The transformation of these warehouses offered opportunities for new uses like offices, hotels, housing and cultural facilities. These historical buildings often formed the starting point and the “first generation” for the transformation of the harbor and riparian zones. They

were subsequently integrated into more complex plans (such as the HafenCity in Hamburg or the Überseestadt in Bremen) and became catalysts of revitalization.

Meanwhile, they are supplemented by a variety of other projects. Not only landmarked buildings, but for sheds and other premises that seem less attractive at first, creative new uses are being found. They often aim at end solutions, but open up temporary, flexible temporary uses. Especially since rents are (still) relatively cheap, they open up opportunities for groups such as students, designers, artists, architects and the IT industry. The importance of this form of heritage and its "discovery" and development by "pioneers" and "truffle pigs of urban development" should not be underestimated. They often form the first anchors of preservation, reuse and revaluation, before they later often have to give way to the following gentrification and unification.

Notes

Associations – Institutions responsible for heritage defense and legal regulations

Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen: https://www.hamburg.de/speicherstadt/

HafenCity Hamburg: https://www.hafencity.com/

HPA Hamburg Port Authority: https://www.hamburg-port-authority.de/,

http://hhla-immobilien.html

Denkmalschutzamt: https://www.hamburg.de/bkm/denkmalschutzamt/

HHLA – Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG: https://hhla.de

Head Image: Warehouse used for storage at the end of the 19th century in the Hamburg Port. (Landesbildstelle Hamburg)