In many cases, the redeveloped waterfront acts as a driver for the re-launch of the entire economy of a city, often re-locating it in an international context. For this reason, many cities, even of a small and medium size, are adopting the recovery of their waterfront or of their former port areas in light of economical benefits and of a higher quality of life.

The waterfront regeneration phenomena

The process of waterfront areas transformation can be understood as a extraordinary laboratory for the analysis of the complexity in the relationship between built and natural environment, for comparing experiences in a context of complexity (aims and parties involved), of uncertainty (institutional and financial nature, involving activities and markets) and of importance of urban landscape.

Changes about port management and logistics have generated large void spaces. They became new important urban facts. An environment rich in economic, social, environmental potentials, but vulnerable on many fronts. New opportunities and new needs are creating new approaches to this issue in modern times, within new cultural and economic frameworks.

The spreading of regeneration projects on the coast makes possible to restore the symbolic importance of the dialogue between urban building and the nearby water. Each place is defined by a different geography and morphology of the surrounding coast, and this multiplicity witnesses the various possible links between land and sea, and the many differences in ways of living at urban scale and managing of waterfront areas.

In this regard, it becomes necessary to learn from different experiences in order to be aware of advantages and risks and to reach a successful goal in the most direct and simple way. International exchanges and comparisons are indispensable means of knowledge. Furthermore investigate the ‘state of the art’ in terms of identification of “best practices” at national, European and International levels, is strategic for proposing and promoting tools, methods and guidelines for training the

responsible bodies and decision makers on the choices to be made.

The WARE project

In this context and with these purposes has been developed the WaRe project, financed by the European Commission through the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, within the Grundtvig sectoral programme.

The WaRe, Waterfront Regeneration project, is a Partnership that brings together organizations and players that are interested in weigh in the XXI century generation of waterfront redevelopment projects. The Partnership, which involved associated partners at local, national and international levels, created an international platform for the exchange of experiences, expertise, ideas and working methodology, comparing approaches, models and tools used for redeveloping urban waterfronts in order to identify, in the different experiences, the most useful instruments for dealing effectively in actual and future cases of waterfront area revitalisation.

The Partnership was able to collect experiences and information through 5 workshops / conferences / seminars exploring the specific and local situation of each partner in relation to the urban development and economic planning, preservation of the heritage and scale of interventions, winning process and outputs (flexibility, interaction and creativity), etc.

The analysed experiences of waterfront regeneration have been compared, verified, collected and organised in order to create a comparison matrix and a final practical tool referred to the selected case-studies, able to give useful information and suggestion for all those involved at different level in the field of urban transformation. The chosen approach was in fact a comparative one, identifying the most successful aspects taken from each case study and proposing, out of the best practices, a strategic plan of actions (key words).

During the final meeting have been developed the outcomes of this research also through the implementation of a practical guideline to all those interested in the operations of redevelopment and regenerations of urban waterfront areas, referred

to the analysed case studies but also valid for future interventions.

The case studies

The cities selected as case studies represent an heterogeneous sample of urban settlements that have undergone waterfront/riverfront regeneration: Bratislava, Parnu, Venice, Viana do Castelo, Izola. The focus areas vary from 12 km (Bratislava and Viana riverfronts and Venice seafront) to 1,7 km for the Izola waterfront, with Parnu's riverfront (7 km) and seafront (10 km).

In all the project areas, the waterfront displays a remarkable functional diversity – residential, commercial, leisure, cultural, educational, sports, production and infrastructural activities.

All focus areas feature a combination of urban uses and green spaces. As for the environment, in all the focus areas there is a mix of cultural heritage – buildings or remains of historical value – and natural reserves with specific characteristics that deserve protection.

All partner contributions have taken into account not only the specific waterfront area but also the context around it, strategic for the comprehension of the value of each experience.

The waterfront case studies are very different in terms of dimensions, former activities, state of conservation, degree of misuse, and economic, historical, administrative aspects, but all are strategic for the strengthening of the identity of a site and for its rehabilitation.

The research presented serves as an incentive for future study because it shows how the topic of waterfronts is open to creativity and a range of possible solutions, depending on context. The case studies suggest that it is possible to achieve a new value in urban structure and be actively involved in conservation measures while achieving economic viability for a project at the same time.

Findings and conclusions

The project understood waterfront regeneration as a highly complex process that requires the mobilization of endogenous potentials capable of reacting to the ever-changing context. Specific attention was given to the assessment of potential and risks of regeneration policies and to the discussion of the roles of key actors in the regeneration process. Based on the experience from the case study places, we confirm that the key actor responsible for sustainable and balanced urban development is the public sector, especially on the local city level. Its main role is to reconcile the need for attracting businesses that goes in hand with the local adjustment to their requirements with the protection, support and enhancement of local values and citizens.

The spatial planning and the coherence of the planning instruments informing/supporting the case studies are elements of great importance for determining the development of each contest and their completion, and to produce an articulation between the entire urban area and some of its parts; there is the need for spatial planning instruments that effectively comprise a coherent system of intervention in the development process, and are horizontally shared.

Waterfront redevelopment can play a significant role in the overall development strategy for city and its region reflecting gateway functions of waterfronts. The regeneration process is a multifaceted process, which includes spatial, social, environmental, physical, functional and economic aspects. The imperative of sustainable development requires mutually interconnected and synchronized actions of the development and reflect thus the key principles defined in the strategy of EU 2020, that emphasize the mutual interrelationships of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

More information:

https://predmet.fa.uni-lj.si/ware

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Bratislava – Izola – Pärnu – Venice – Viana do Castelo

WaRe Waterfront Redevelopment.

Learning from European best practices for a sustainable urban life



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