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**Port City Cultures, Values,
or Maritime Mindsets:
How to define and
assess what makes
port cities special**

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The background of the right side of the cover is a photograph of a port at night. Several large cranes are visible, silhouetted against a dark sky. The water is dark, and some lights from the port are visible. The overall tone is dark and industrial.

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Port City Cultures, Values, or Maritime Mindsets: How to define and assess what makes port cities special

Many scholars agree that port cities are a particular type of cities. They point to their location at the border of land and sea, their global connections, their particular port related infrastructure, or their often cosmopolitan lifestyles. Yet, there is no clear understanding whether these port-cities also have a particular port city culture, how to define it, how to measure it or even how to attach names to it. Multiple words exist to identify this particular state of port city culture in different disciplines. The maritime archaeologist Christer Westerdahl introduced the notion of “maritime cultural landscape” (Westerdahl 1992). The historians Jerry Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen have coined the term seascapes (2007). The planning historian Carola Hein has proposed the concept of port cityscapes, arguing that the reach of the port into its neighboring city and region merits comprehensive investigation (2011; 2016). Other planners and landscape architects have explored issues of design, water, and heritage: the work on hydro-biographies stands as an example (maybe) (J.W. Bosch, C. Soree 2016). Beatrice Moretti employs the notion of “portuality” (Moretti 2019).

The study of port city culture(s) or values invites researchers to reconceptualize concepts such as ‘culture’. Historically, culture has been associated with bounded communities and systems of thought. Social scientists have started to conceptualize the particular character and the self-logic of cities (Löv 2016), offering new approaches.

Port cities provide a particularly challenging terrain for innovative approaches. As (scar) localized hubs defined by their global connections, heterogeneous networks with shared interests in branding port-cities’ distinctiveness (Warsewa 2011), and super-diversity (van de Laar and van der Schoor 2019), port cities prompt questions concerning sense of community, tensions between processes of closure and opening up, as well as multiple value orientations and value realizations (Geschiere 2009; Tsing 2011; Graeber 2013). And, given the spatial and infrastructural characteristics of port cities, scholars opt to stretch the concept of ‘infrastructure’ to include social, regulatory and technological features and analyse their interrelations (Larkin 2013).

These diverse terms reflect particular approaches and have yet to be put into conversation and developed for use in future planning. Port city actors have declared that culture is a key theme in for their work (**AIVP Agenda 2030**, <https://www.aivpagenda2030.com/>). Many politicians and practitioners agree that to (re)-anchor the port in its larger physical context, the port needs to engage again with local social and regional practices. There is a clear need not only to measure the economic or infrastructural impact of the port, but also its presence in the societal and cultural context of its larger region, including from the perspective of identities. Such engagement is important both to train the port workers of the



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future (human capital) and to engage with the business community as well as professional actors, but also to interact with the population at large and to create a maritime mindset, where the creativity of the larger population engages with maritime practices, and contributes to long-term port city **resilience**. Beyond short-term marketing efforts, what is needed is long-term engagement with local publics through education, spatial integration, **social investment**, cultural engagement and questions about how lifestyles and culture can contribute to (re)building **shared values of port**, city and region.

To contribute both to historical and contemporary analysis and future design and planning this special issue invites contributions that conceptualize the particular state of port cities, propose methodologies to better understand them, and discuss concrete case studies that highlight both the historic dimension of port city culture and the contemporary importance. It also invites authors to provide insight into the scales and temporalities of the discussion on port city cultures. Contributions can address a wide range of topics from architecture and planning, to port city music, literature, or games.



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Contributions will combine conceptual analysis with concrete case studies. They will explore (but will not be limited to) the following topics.

Terms and Concepts

How can we capture the particular characteristics of port cities focusing on their spatial, social and cultural particularities? What terms can we use to describe the palimpsest of space, society and practices in port cities? Which disciplinary approaches and concepts can be used to conceptualize them?

Theories and Methodologies

What are the theories and methodologies that can be used to understand the particular interactions of sea and land, of global and local, of space, society and culture in port cities? How can novel approaches help us redevelop the sea-land continuum in general and port cities in particular?

Path dependencies and resilience

Do institutions in port cities follow particular development paths that make the port city as a system more resilient? Are there examples of historical transitions that can help us prepare for and address contemporary transition challenges (energy, data, migration)? The port function stays even as institutions evolve, raising the question: How have maritime spaces and practices supported port city development?

Port city culture for economic development

Economic development has long used port city culture for branding, but also more profoundly, to build bridges among diverse port city actors. What are the traditional intersections between economy and culture? What are potential links between business culture and port city culture, notably through localizing the global? How can a maritime awareness increase economic opportunities for businesses and the general public?

Port city heritage

Historic buildings and spaces, but also films, literature or paintings can make important contributions to the development of port city culture. What structures do we need to consider? How can we assess their impact through quantitative and qualitative measures?



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PHOTO BY GYORGY SZEMOK

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