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# Governing the European port–city interface: institutional impacts on spatial projects between city and port

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainability agendas are challenging port authorities around the world to find ways to use port assets more efficiently and productively in economic, social, as well as environmental terms. To this end, one of the most strategic port assets is the port–city interface – waterfront zones in which the geography of the port and its city meet each other. In this paper, we explore the relationship between the institutions and governance processes behind spatial projects currently taking place in the interface of four European port cities: Marseille, Barcelona, Hamburg, and Rotterdam. Results show that laws and regulations dominate the spatial outcomes of governance processes between city and port, and that these tend to frustrate experimental efforts towards truly sustainable results. In addition, development orientations that foresee an on-going port migration process away from the urban core are still common among urban planning and policy makers, which impedes on the joint governance processes needed for building renewed, sustainable port–city relations and spatial projects. Contours of such a joint governance process have only been found in the Rotterdam case.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, the quest of European seaport authorities (hereafter: port authorities) for strategies that secure their competitiveness and 'license to operate' has become increasingly complex. Sustainability agendas are challenging port authorities around the world to find ways to use port assets more efficiently and productively in economic, social, as well as environmental terms (Van Hooijdonk, 2007; Hayuth, 2007; Verhoeven, 2009; Notteboom, 2010). One of the most strategic of these port assets is the so-called 'port–city interface': waterfront zones in which the geography of the port and its city meet each other.

Since the 1960s, European ports have seen a rational migration away from their traditional urban cores, to deeper and less regulated waters (e.g. Hoyle and Pinder, 1984). However, after the subsequent urban revitalization of historical docks and quays (Hoyle and Pinder, 1992), many large ports continue to find their older installations located close to – or completely surrounded by – their respective cities. Today, housing and other residential functions in these urban areas are subject to strict environmental regulations which, in turn, tend to constrain nearby port–industrial

activities. From a business perspective, the geographical vicinity of housing districts and other urban functions limit the economic potential of locations and growth possibilities of companies inside the port–city interface. European port authorities, who often act as a 'landlord' for these locations and companies, logically have a very protective attitude towards these areas, particularly when it comes to the 'environmental space' that allows companies to freely run and expand their business. However, while their primary concern may be to protect the business interests of existing and potential port customers and investors, the authorities governing ports have become pressed to take local as well as much wider socio-economic and political changes into account (Hoyle, 1999).

Wiegmans and Louw (2010) recently argued in the *Journal of Transport Geography* that planning and sustainability paradigms are fuelling local forces that push the city into existing, still functioning port areas. In conceptual terms, the scholars conclude that earlier academic characterizations of the port–city interface as a zone of conflict are still accurate and up-to-date, except that today, the conflict is not about *how* but *whether* the urban takeover of the still active port should take place. In this paper, we will expand on this conclusion by zooming in on some of these zones of conflict and explore their present scene. Based on a benchmark that distinguishes 'business as usual' from governance efforts that strive for sustainable outcomes, we will draw out the dominant forces shaping the spatial and functional changes in the interface between four European ports and cities – Marseille, Barcelona, Hamburg, and Rotterdam – and evaluate the role of port authorities therein.

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## 2. Towards sustainable port–city relations

The current era in the evolution of port–cities is widely considered one in which port–city associations are being renewed. Contemporary urban redevelopment schemes are even thought to enhance port–city integration, something that has not been seen since the time industrial and commercial growth started to drive ports and cities apart (Hoyle, 1998, 2000). Since the early 1960s, changes in maritime technology, the restructuring of (initially western) economies, and the emergence of globally organized systems of production and transportation represent some of the major trends that have found some of their most famous material expression on historic port waterfront zones. After some commercially successful projects in the United States, urban planners and designers soon came to consider old, often centrally located waterfront areas as the ‘abandoned doorstep’ waiting to be rediscovered and reclaimed by the city (e.g. Brutto-messo, 1993; Breen and Rigby, 1996; Meyer, 1999; ULI, 2004).

When the enormous potential of waterfront development projects for port cities became clear in economic, architectural, and (later) in political terms, pressures on waterfront sites within cities with still operating port functions started to build. The port–city interface, a concept first coined by Hayuth (1982), became known as ‘a zone of conflict and co-operation’ (cf. Hoyle, 1989) as existing land-uses of the port were increasingly measured up against alternative urban functions. As soon as the latter proved not only socially and environmentally desirable, but also extremely rewarding in economic and political terms, port activities tended to be pushed out of the older parts of the harbor. By the turn of the millennium, it was thus concluded that the motive for waterfront development initiatives could more likely be found in the sphere of urban planning and post-modern consumerism than in an on-going migration process fuelled by progress in maritime technology (Norcliffe et al., 1996). Since then, academics from diverse fields of research have tested and criticized the governance process around waterfront transformation projects because local interests tended to be drowned out by global market tendencies (Bassett et al., 2002; Garcia, 2008; Desfor and Jørgensen, 2004).

Today, the push and pull of forces that drive the port–city interface further away from the old urban core has arrived in a new phase. The area currently signifying the boundary between city and port is the frontier of considerable debate among all those concerned with the destiny of ports and port cities (e.g. Merckx et al., 2004; Van Hooijdonk, 2007; Hayuth, 2007). On a global level, much of this has to do with questions about the destiny of ports and port cities in a world that seems to move towards another round of fundamental economic restructuring – a restructuring based on growth under the condition of sustainability (Hall et al., 2006; Hall and Clark, 2011). Within this challenging context, local questions about the destiny of areas ‘between city and port’ are extremely pertinent today. In fact, many agree that an adequate answer to this question demands a fundamentally different view on what the port–city interface is or could be (IACP, 1997). This point is well-illustrated by the latest ‘code of conduct’ issued by the authoritative European Sea Ports Organization (ESPO, 2010, p. 27), which calls upon all responsible authorities to change ‘the waterfront development paradigm’ in order to come up with ‘a sustainable blending of uses’ that reinforce rather than weaken port–city relations. Not only does this imply governance processes that actively seek to balance and integrate often conflicting economic, social, and environmental values.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This view on the governance work behind sustainable spatial development initiatives resonates well with the *European Perspective on Spatial Development*, drawn up by the responsible European Committee and published by the European Commission in 1999. See Healey (2010), who refers to Faludi and Waterhout (2002) and Faludi (2003) for more information on how this brief has affected planning practices in different countries.

It also implies that a truly sustainable development of the European port–city interface will accommodate a mix of port–urban functions that reinforce instead of hinder each other.

Apart from the more general effects of the latest economic recession, the call for stronger and more sustainable European port–city relations comes at a demanding time. Many port authorities have only recently been released from direct government control through a process of corporatization (see Verhoeven, 2006), often strengthening the authority’s legal power over port land and other assets. Today, the primary challenge of these renewed organizations is to advance the port’s competitive position as a link in a global network of ‘supply chains’ (Wang et al., 2007). Meanwhile, European port managers also need to retain the support of local politicians and the wider community for the necessary port investments and projects (e.g. Van Gils and Klijn, 2007).

All of the above has raised the strategic significance of the port–city interface for both ports and cities. For port managers, they represent opportunities to improve their public image and implement the social strategies that secure the port’s overall ‘licence to operate’ inside its contemporary (older and recently constructed) territory. Among urban planners and politicians, waterfront zones are widely understood as to provide ample opportunities for creating the attractive living and working environments that give the city an edge over its competitors. Hence, the port–city interface is well-known to become the place where the struggle between a variety of port–urban forces are played out and take physical shape (Malone, 1996; Marshall, 2001). Which of these forces become dominant, and to what extent they obstruct or support the win–win solutions vied for on a European level, are important governance questions. If fostering renewed, more sustainable port–city relations is the ultimate challenge, insight into the governance process that could shape such relations seems important and useful for all those involved.

## 3. Theoretical approach, aims and methods

This paper draws from the results of two research projects focusing on the governance process around concrete spatial projects in the contemporary interface of European port–cities. In this section, we will define our understanding of the ‘forces’ introduced above, and explain our analytical approach and methodology. We combine insights and concepts from fields of economic and transport geography to those from political sciences, urban governance, and spatial planning. In doing so, we aim to contribute to an emerging academic effort that seeks to advance our understanding of the spatial changes in contemporary seaport cities, and the complex governance processes that shape those changes.

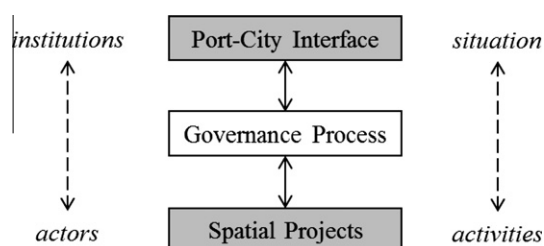
### 3.1. Institutions and port governance research

In recent publications, it has been argued that the forces at work in both ports and cities should be perceived as *institutions* (cf. Jacobs and Hall, 2007; Gonz ales and Healey, 2005). These institutions consist both of formal rules (e.g. constitutions, laws, and property rights) and informal rules (e.g. customs, traditions, or codes of conduct) that shape the actions of individuals, organizations, groups or other *actors*. Theories of institutionalism are based on the sociological argument that such actors cannot be assumed to act freely based on their given or acquired abilities (Giddens, 1984). Rather, their behavior can be understood as being influenced by the ‘rules of the game’ in a particular time and place. In daily life, many of these formal and informal rules

are taken for granted and may be regarded near-to universal, while others are specific to the *situation* at hand (see Buitelaar et al., 2007 for an insightful discussion). To institutional theorists, these rules are understood as both constraints and enablers of purposeful human (inter)action. In other words, they can be oppressive as well as generative in collective human endeavors, such as the governance processes that aim to ‘steer’ the development and quality of our built environment (Healey, 1997/2006, 2007).

Sociological institutionalism has only recently been introduced in port governance research. For example, Ng and Pallis (2010) have used the concepts and tools of institutionalism to analyse the impact of formal governance structures on local port relations and investments, and Jacobs (2007) has used them to assess the way institutions affect the competitive strategies of and between port authorities. We aim to contribute to this institutionalist effort in port research. Following arguments made by leading scholars in the field (Olivier and Slack, 2006; Wang et al., 2007), we do this while conceiving of today’s port – and thus the port–city interface – as a place with a pluralistic community of actors. This means that a port authority is perceived as one of many actors with a variety of interests in the development trajectory of the port, including its areas close to the city.

Within an institutionalist framework, the governance process focused on in our research is understood as the array of *activities* performed by actors involved in the on-going spatial changes inside today’s port–city interface. This implies that the *activities* of port authorities are seen as part and parcel of all the governance work focused on these complex areas. Such activities influence the actual spatial changes being realized there, though they do not fully determine them. In practice, much depends on the capacity of the port authority to enforce its spatial development decisions onto the other actors involved in the port–urban governance process. Institutions shape that capacity, but the governance activities performed are also understood to shape institutions. This ‘dialectic’ between institutions and actors, i.e. between a governance situation and the spatial development activities taking place there, is depicted in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1.** Conceptualizing governance processes within the dialectic between actors and institutions.

### 3.2. Focus on spatial projects

The relationship between institutions and governance processes cannot be analyzed in a holistic, determinant manner. In his framework of actor-centered institutionalism, Scharpf (1997) explains that it would, for example, be a life’s work to account for all the legal rules that influence the outcome of a particular governance process. Even if the meaning and mechanisms of those legal rules would stay universal and stable over time, research results might still prove insignificant for understanding the actual activities observed. This calls upon a more pragmatic research approach, one that recognizes that human knowledge and rationality is bounded, and accepts the context-dependent nature of collective human action (ibid.). In this paper, we follow this pragmatist epistemology, and follow Scharpf’s notion that governance activities are based on orientations derived from the knowledge shared in a particular governance situation. Hence, we hypothesize that the governance activities of port authorities are guided by particular, widely accepted development orientations for the port–city interface. By focusing on the spatial strategies for these areas, and the projects taking place inside them, we will be able to evaluate to what extent the present scene in port–cities reflects the ‘paradigm-shift’ promoted on a European level in order to foster sustainable port–city relations. In analytical terms, we thus treat the spatial strategies and projects respectively as the stated and revealed outcomes of the governance processes studied – i.e. as the tangible results of the forces at work between city and port.

In Table 1 below, we list the institutions we expect to recognize in the spatial plans and projects in the contemporary European port–city interface. Based on the literature referred to above, we make an analytical distinction between formal rules (governance structure, laws and regulations) and informal rules (common development orientations) likely to be encountered. Taking ESPO’s (2010) code of conduct as a benchmark, we will assess the projects and plans that reflect resistance to these institutions as evidence of successful governance processes, indicating institutional change (Buitelaar et al., 2007). In contrast, governance processes that conform to the rules defined are considered ‘business as usual’, obstructing the possibility of sustainable relations and tangible results. The role of the port authorities in the governance processes are also evaluated.

### 3.3. Methodology

Because the conceptual framework presented in Fig. 1 is clearly applicable to many different types of governance situations, it is important to note why it is methodologically interesting to focus specifically on spatial development activities inside the European port–city interface. The reason is that these places are widely accepted as one of the most complex in contemporary spatial governance and planning. As explained in Section 2, it is precisely all the attention urbanized waterfronts have received since the 1960s – both in science and practice – that adds to this complexity. This makes these European port–urban situations ‘extreme’ cases

**Table 1**

Institutions likely to shape the governance process around projects in the European port–city interface.

Class	Type	Hypothesis
Formal rules	Governance structure Laws and regulations	Port authority corporatisation makes interaction between port and urban authorities more distant, especially with state-controlled ports Property rights, environment (sound, air) and safety regulations promote port–urban division and spatial separation of functions
Informal rules	Development orientations	Urban takeover of port areas closest to the city center, as urban planning authorities anticipate on-going port migration process

**Table 2**  
General figures (2010) of the four port cities investigated.

Port city	Population <sup>a</sup>	Port area (ha)	Reservations for port expansion until 2020 (ha)	Throughput in million tonnes (2010) <sup>b</sup>	Cruise passengers (2010)	Employment of port (direct/regional)
Marseille	851,000	3300	2600	86.0	700,000	21,000/40,000
Barcelona	1,620,000	585	700	48.1	2,400,000	15,000/82,500
Hamburg	1,770,000	7200	800	121.2	246,000	150,000 <sup>c</sup>
Rotterdam	610,000	10,000	2500	429.9	50,000	45,000/90,000

<sup>a</sup> [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de).

<sup>b</sup> Port of Rotterdam, Port Statistics 2010.

<sup>c</sup> Hamburg city–state total.

among a wider population of governance assignments, which gives them a high potential for producing insights with a more general relevance.<sup>2</sup>

This paper combines the results of two related research projects into the governance and planning processes behind spatial projects inside the European port–city interface (Daamen, 2010; Vries, 2010). Empirical work included reviewing and coding documents (policy briefs, spatial plans and visions, news articles, and related research reports and publications) and conducting open, semi-structured interviews with representatives of involved port authorities and government bodies (at least three persons per case). Some analyses were shared and discussed with key respondents. All case descriptions and interpretations have been reflected upon by academic peers and other experts.

#### 4. Spatial projects in the European port–city interface

The four cases investigated are all situated in the port–city interface of major European port cities: Marseille, Barcelona, Hamburg and Rotterdam (see Table 2 for some general figures). These port cities were all known to have new plans and spatial projects for the port–city interface underway. In addition, the areas featuring the cases are all managed by so-called ‘landlord’ ports. This means that the port authorities focused upon all have an autonomous responsibility for the management, development, and control of the port area, including its nautical access and infrastructure (Van der Lugt and De Langen, 2007). Based on annual cargo throughput, the ports focused upon are all among the top ten of major European seaports. Although Rotterdam has the smallest population, it is currently the only European port among the global top 10.<sup>3</sup> Major projects for port expansion are already under construction in the ports of Rotterdam (Maasvlakte 2), Barcelona (Prat Terminal) and Marseille (Fos 2 XL). In this section, we will introduce the projects investigated by outlining their historical, geographical and functional features.

##### 4.1. Cité de la Méditerranée in Marseille

The striking revitalization of downtown Marseille is in no small part due to the role played by the Euroméditerranée Project (in short: Euromed, one of the city’s three major strategic projects), which was launched in 1995 and covers 480 ha of port–urban land. Part of Euromed is the area known as Cité de la Méditerranée (Fig. 2), which starts in the old Vieux Port close to the city center and extends along a three mile waterfront zone known as the Bassins-Est. Marseille has not yet seen any large-scale urban waterfront transformations. The urban fabric is still largely separated from the port by Marseille’s major infrastructural arteries. A major investment in Cité de la Méditerranée, covering up to 60 ha, is thus

<sup>2</sup> See Flyvbjerg (2004) for an elaboration on case studies, and Daamen (2010) for further discussion on the ‘extreme’ nature and theoretical relevance of spatial governance and planning assignments in today’s European port-city interface.

<sup>3</sup> [www.portofrotterdam.com](http://www.portofrotterdam.com).

the jointly planned underground rerouting of motorways, abolishing the physical and psychological barrier between the city and its seaport. Marseille’s port authority, the Grand Port Maritime de Marseille (GPMM), recognizes the importance of an improved port–city interface (ESPO, 2009). But removing existing port functions has not become part of Euromed plans, because GPMM considers these port areas essential for Marseilles regional markets. In fact, the terminals of Bassins-Est – beset by cruise and ferry terminals, general cargo and containers – are retained for the port, and will even remain fenced-off. Instead, in the area of Cité de la Méditerranée, new public space will be created above the motorway tunnels and over the terminals, as a second ground-level. This includes the project Terrasses du Port, a large departure terminal for cruise-ships consisting of more than 50,000 square meters of public amenities (shops, restaurants and cafe, leisure), and Silo d’Arenç: the restoration of cultural heritage buildings that will, in part, provide space for offices and a concert hall. In sum, only a small part of land in Bassins-Est – 2.6 ha – has been allocated for an exclusively urban project, which aims to create a new National Museum at the foot of the old fort Saint Jean at the port’s southern tip.

##### 4.2. Port Vell and Nova Bocana in Barcelona

In the 1980s, the port authority of Barcelona – Autoritat Portuària de Barcelona (APB) – redeveloped the area of Port Vell, the oldest port area situated next to the historic city center. This is a well-known European waterfront development project dating from that time, materializing during the city’s preparation for the 1992 Olympic Games. The functional focus of the redevelopment was tourism, retail and leisure. Recently, Port Vell was extended with the area called Nova Bocana, which combines a new harbor entrance for yachts with a 16 ha project situated on land reclaimed from the sea. The area has a strong link with Barcelona’s cruise port, which ranks 4th in the world.<sup>4</sup> Though Port Vell was considered an economic and financial success, its social contribution to surrounding areas and the city as a whole has been publicly criticized (Jauhiainen, 1994; Meyer, 1999; Garcia, 2008). In addition, APB’s latest strategic vision shows that visitor numbers are falling (Port de Barcelona, 2010), and that some functions in Port Vell are surely due for revision. Although industrial port activities have been removed from the area, there is still a clear co-existence between leisure-oriented port and urban functions in Barcelona’s port–city interface. The spatial connection between the cruise and ferry terminals and the amenities in Port Vell is also evident. The Nova Bocana area has become the host of an iconic hotel, a business center, shops and a marina (Fig. 3).

##### 4.3. Reiherstieg and Kleiner Grasbrook in Hamburg

With Hafencity, the ambitious transformation of a historic port area adjacent to the city center still underway, Hamburg is already

<sup>4</sup> Port de Barcelona Annual Report 2008.





Fig. 2. Marseille's Euroméditerranée Project ([www.euromediterranee.fr](http://www.euromediterranee.fr)).



Fig. 3. Barcelona's Nova Bocana and the Hotel W landmark (photograph by Isabelle Vries, May 2010).

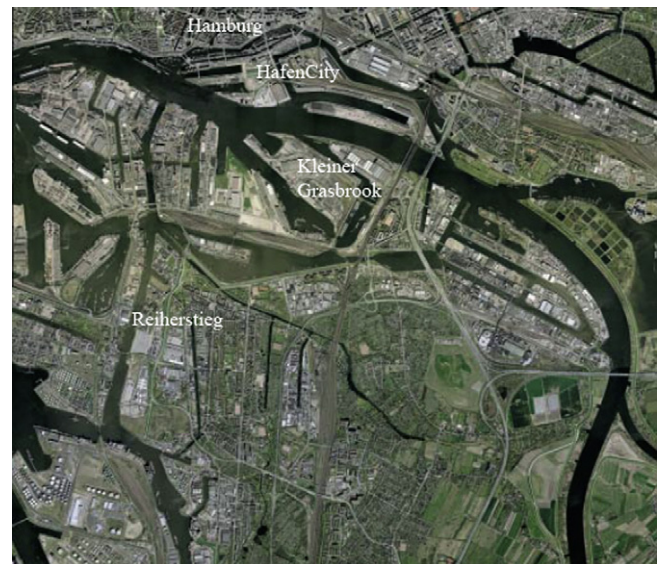


Fig. 4. Hamburg's Reierstieg and Kleiner Grasbrook on the large Elbe Island ([www.iba-hamburg.de](http://www.iba-hamburg.de)).

looking out for next steps. The attention of urban planners and policy makers have chosen to make the city 'jump' across the river Elbe, to the Elbe Island.<sup>5</sup> The 3600 ha large island has become the terrain of the German International Building and Garden Exhibitions (IBA and IGS), to be held here in 2013. The Elbe Island has a completely different appearance compared to the rich urban districts north of the river. Today, it accommodates a mixture of heavily used infrastructures, port areas Reihertstieg and Kleiner Grassbrook (Fig. 4), poorly maintained green spaces, a few villages, and run-down social neighborhoods built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Municipal plans for the Elbe Island aim to produce a coherent spatial network with a diversity of attractive but affordable living environments (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, 2005). Within the framework drawn-up for the IBA, port areas Reihertstieg and Kleiner Grassbrook are designated for urban transformation. However, the Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) does not have any formal plans for these areas, as they are beset by terminals and industrial businesses. But if it were up to the IBA organization managing the development (IBA Hamburg GmbH), Kleiner Grassbrook will be turned into a second HafenCity, with a university campus as its main function. Reihertstieg would become a mixed business district with public space, functioning as a high-quality buffer zone between residential communities and heavy port activities.

#### 4.4. Stadshavens in Rotterdam

The largest inner-city development in Europe after London Gateway is called Stadshavens (hereafter: CityPorts) Rotterdam. It covers 1600 ha of land and harbor basins (Fig. 5). The port areas involved are the only ones still situated inside Rotterdam's highway rim, and are in function, providing jobs to more than 20,000 people. However, many public spaces and buildings in the CityPorts are in bad shape. Almost the whole area is surrounded by dikes, heavy rail infrastructure, and social-class neighborhoods. In the Structure Vision for CityPorts (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2011), the formal long term plan, the whole area is divided into four different districts with each its own existing profile and development trajectory. Firstly, the southern Waal-Eemhaven area will be kept under the scrutiny of the port's management. According to the Vision prepared jointly with the Rotterdam Port Authority, the Waal-Eemhaven area remains a working harbor, which will be renewed in phases for maritime services and port-based economic functions, combined with improvements of public-space and amenities. Secondly, the historical Rotterdam Dry Dock (RDM) area, which connects the garden village of Heijplaat to the riverfront, has already been renewed into a campus with a cluster of innovative business and educational institutes. Finally, the remaining two parts of the CityPorts area (Maas-Rijnhaven and Merwe-Vierhavens) are designated to be transformed into attractive, urban areas with low-dense residential and business districts for new economic clusters, with a focus on sustainability.

### 5. Institutional impacts

In this section, we discuss the governance structures, laws and regulations, and common development orientations apparent in our case studies. Each subsection consists of a comparative analysis of the evidence found in our four cases, supported by structured overviews in Tables 3–5.

#### 5.1. Governance structures

GPMM, the state owned and corporatized port authority of Marseille, is cooperating intensively with the Euroméditerranée devel-

opment agency<sup>6</sup> to improve the physical relationship between city and port. However, the GPMM is not a formal partner in this development agency. Respondents explained that the GPMM, which has representatives of municipal and regional in its supervisory board, has felt political pressure to invest in an improved port–city interface. The GPMM has chosen to manage the development of the projects Terrasses du Port and Silo d'Arenc itself, retaining legal control over the port's terminals, while municipal bodies control the necessary project approvals.

Today, Barcelona's state-owned port authority APB involves municipal bodies in the development of Port Vell and Nova Bocana through a special purpose agency called Gerencia Urbanística Port 2000 (in short: Port 2000), which also operates the area. The history of Port Vell is one of long debates between the local planning bodies and the APB, and the development of Nova Bocana is no less controversial. According to representatives, the municipality preferred to have the development of Nova Bocana focus on indigenous Barcelona residents instead of on an iconic hotel that only attracts tourists and business travellers. However, urban authorities do not have any formal control over Port Vell or Nova Bocana, as 'Madrid' has always considered these waterfront sites of strategic significance (see also next section). In order to get plans approved, Port 2000 organized the general communication process, as well as planning debates between port, regional and municipal bodies, and the commercial developers and users of Nova Bocana's locations. Land preparations were under management of the APB.

The plans of the Internationale Bau Ausstellung (IBA) for the fragmented and desolate residential areas on the Elbe Island in Hamburg are not the result of a joint port–urban planning effort. In fact, representatives of the City–State owned Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) declare that the HPA is hardly involved in the plans for the southern banks. At the time of our inquiry, it did not yet assume a clear position in the area's continued development. For years, urban and port bodies made plans for the port–city interface without much regard for each other, because before 2002, urban planning schemes have always been oriented in all directions but the south side of the river.<sup>7</sup> According to the respondents, the HPA has thus been stuck in a 'passive' planning attitude for too long. If it would persist in that attitude, the transfer of control over the older port areas to Hamburg's City–State are said to become likely.

In Rotterdam, there is a tradition of joint planning between port and urban bodies, but that does not mean that there are no fierce discussions about the future of the port–city interface. For the CityPorts project, the municipality and the corporatized Port of Rotterdam (PoR) jointly installed a small project organization that coordinates the planning and funding procedures and monitors government (state, provincial, regional) support. The responsibility for the development and operation of the four districts within the CityPorts area rests with the Rotterdam Port Authority, which formally controls all port land. Property rights of some plots in the Maas-Rijnhaven and the Vierhavens-Merwehaven area have been transferred back to the municipality. The joint administrative support for all the plans and projects in the CityPorts area is guaranteed by a steering committee, in which several of the cities' aldermen and the CEO of the Rotterdam Port Authority participate.

<sup>6</sup> This agency is called the *Etablissement Public d'Aménagement Euroméditerranée*, in which national, regional, and local public bodies are represented.

<sup>7</sup> In 2002, the Hamburg Senate launched the 'Hamburg – Growing City' concept that designated the Elbe Island as a strategic area for the future development of the city. Before that, flooding disasters had made the marshlands on the island unattractive for urban plans and investments.

<sup>5</sup> The *Sprung über the Elbe* [Leap across the Elbe] is one of five major projects defined in Hamburg's *Raumliche Leitbild 2020* [Spatial Vision 2020] published in 2007.





Fig. 5. Rotterdam CityPorts and its four districts ([www.stadshavensrotterdam.nl](http://www.stadshavensrotterdam.nl)).

## 5.2. Laws and regulations

The impact of laws and regulations on the planning and execution of projects inside today's port–city interface is apparent in all four cases. In Marseille, security regulations dominate the development plans, which do not allow for a port–urban integration on the terminals of Cité de la Méditerranée. Projects Terrasses du Port (lease agreement) and Silo d'Arcenc (GPM owned) are designed in such a way that public space and amenities are elevated above port operations so that security regulations on the terminals below can be met. Interestingly, regulations concerning sound pollution do not seem to play a dominant role in the plans. In Marseille, the congestion caused by motorized traffic – which will be put underground – is of greater concern.

In Barcelona, municipal representatives explained that attempts to transfer the land in Port Vell to the city have failed due to a law in Spain that aims to keep strategic coastal zones under state control. In addition, the law also prevents housing in these strategic areas. According to the respondents, this is the main reason that the port authority still manages and operates the area of Port Vell and Nova Bocana. In addition, security issues recently led to fencing off some parts of the leisure port.

The plans for the IBA project in Hamburg, which are still in progress, are strongly influenced by noise and security regulations. This, for example, is why the port authority designated the area of Reiherstieg as a buffer-zone with light industrial activities between the residential areas on the Elbe Island and heavy port functions. In order to make the waterfront on the Elbe Island more accessible, regulations had to be lifted before the fencing of the custom-free zone of the port could be opened up. Moreover, Port Law also prevents non-port functions inside Freeport territory. In HafenCity, apartment buildings close to the riverfront needed special sound-reducing measures to allow construction. In turn, port companies opposite to the HafenCity area have seen their 'environmental space' become reduced by the developments – something which still remains to be tested in court. HafenCity land was

originally released from port control in order to secure public investments and political support for the expansion at the nearby village of Altenwerder.

The CityPorts project was part of a political deal in 2003 that secured the corporatisation of the port authority and the financing of the Maasvlakte 2 expansion plan. Recently, local urban authorities, surrounding municipalities, the port authority and representatives of the port's business community jointly agreed on the formalization of a spatial *Structuurplan* for the CityPorts area and its surroundings. The plan paves the way for new legal land-use plans, and opens up possibilities for the port authority to intensify port land-uses together with the realization of residential areas in certain zones of the CityPorts area. In addition, a new Dutch State Law – which features CityPorts as a pilot project – allows for the realization housing within still functioning industrial zones if the migration of polluting port activities can be planned for. However, the workability of the new Law still has to be tested in practice.

## 5.3. Development orientations

According to the authorities involved in Euromed in Marseille, one of the aims of the project is to open up the waterfront and improve the interface between the city and its port. However, while the port expands at Fos, the port authority perceives the terminals at Bassins-Est as part of a regional Mediterranean market focused on leisure, tourism and culture, and port business activities such as fruit and vegetable trading. Investments are being made accordingly inside the port while European, state, and local funds (€0.5 billion) are allocated for the more urban parts of the Euromed area. The interaction jointly organized between city and port predominantly has a spatial dimension, by abolishing infrastructural barriers and stacking urban functions on top of the port's terminals.

In Barcelona, the port authority often communicates that it is 'more than a landlord', because it acts as a 'business promoter'. This general orientation resounds in its development orientations for the Port Vell and Nova Bocana areas, as land-uses are targeted

**Table 3**  
Comparison of governance structures in the European port–city interface.

Governance structures	Marseille	Barcelona	Hamburg	Rotterdam
Port authority control	Corporatized. State owned. Regional and municipal bodies are members of supervisory board ('Conseil de Surveillance') <sup>a</sup>	Corporatized. State owned. Regional and municipal bodies are member of management board ('Consejo de Administración')	Corporatized. City–state owned with political supervision (State Ministry of Economy)	Corporatized. Combined ownership municipality (2/3) and state (1/3) with non-political supervisory board
Government support for interface project	State, regional and municipal agreement on joint plans	Regional and municipal agreement on port authority plans	No agreement (competing visions of port authority and city–state)	State, provincial, regional, and municipal agreement on joint plans
Interface land control	Grand Port Maritime de Marseille	Autoritat Portuaria de Barcelona	Hamburg Port Authority	Port of Rotterdam
Interface project management	Port authority manages interface development. Collaboration agreement with Euroméditerranée development agency (public body)	Port authority manages development process. Port 2000 manages daily operations and communication	IBA Project Organization manages visioning process. Ministry control (Spatial Planning)	Stadshavens Project Bureau manages process. Joint port–municipal control (50/50)

<sup>a</sup> This supervisory body formally exercises permanent control over GPPM management.

**Table 4**  
Influence of regulations and laws on the development of port city interface.

Laws and regulations	Marseille	Barcelona	Hamburg	Rotterdam
Property rights	Only small amount of land control transferred. Terrasses du Port leased to third party. Bottom floors of Silo d'Arcenc leased out: top floors are let	State Law prevents transfer of land control from state owned port authority to municipalit	Transfer of land control in Hafencity area for port expansion at Altenwerder	Transfer of land control planned as part of an agreement for port expansion into the North Sea (Maasvlakte 2)
Environment (sound, air) and safety	Security regulations dominate the plans for the terminal	Security issues partly obstruct public accessibility of leisure port	Noise regulations cause problems between port and residential functions. Security regulations prevent penetrating custom-free zones	Noise and safety regulations have important impact on planning and phasing of the four parts of city ports. Experiments with new regulations <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Because the enormous CityPorts area in Rotterdam does not exclusively consist of port terminals, international security regulations play a less dominant role here than in the other cases.

**Table 5**  
Comparison of development orientations in the European port–city interface.

Development orientations	Marseille	Barcelona	Hamburg	Rotterdam
Market orientation	Leisure, tourism, culture, and continued port business activities. Predominantly focused on cruise and ferry. No housing	Upmarket leisure, tourism, culture, and urban business activities. Landmark hotel. No housing	Yet unclear. Possible combination of business locations (Reiherstieg), university campus and housing (Kleiner Grasbrook)	Creative activities and education cluster, port and urban servicing companies combined with intensification of existing terminals. Housing only in selected areas
Spatial orientation	Creation of second ground-level (stacked). Opening up waterfront, improvement public space and heritage conservation	Port–urban division. New waterfront zone provided by land reclamation and new port entrance. High quality public space	Port–urban division. Possible creation of buffer-zone (Reiherstieg) and transformation area (Kleiner Grasbrook). Opening up the waterfront for public	Careful port–urban mix. Opening up non-terminal waterfronts, improvement public space and heritage conservation
Financial orientation	Value creation by double land-use and urban leisure and retail programming	Value creation by land-use intensification and (renewed) diversified urban leisure, retail, and tourism programming	–	Value creation by land-use intensification and diversified programming

at upmarket leisure, tourism, culture, and urban-oriented business activities. This has proven a profitable development strategy, as many of the approximately 2 million annual cruise passengers pass through Port Vell shortly after they disembark. This fact increases land-values, and the port authority has gained experience in extracting this value through the development of its property. Port 2000 tries to balance the social needs of the city with the commercial interests of the port by organizing public events and programming the Port Vell area.

The orientations apparent in the Hamburg case differ between port and urban authorities. Spatially, orientations uttered by port

planners are still focused on a clear port–urban division, with the possible creation of a buffer-zone in order to shield vulnerable residents from nearby heavy port industry. Nevertheless, new joint orientations seem in the offing in Hamburg, given the plans and ideas generated for the Elbe Island, and the success of small interventions that have made the port more accessible to the general public.

Finally, all the authorities involved are struggling to find solutions for Rotterdam's ambition to create an area in which port and urban functions are integrated. This is partly due to the fact that the CityPorts area has historically come to accommodate all



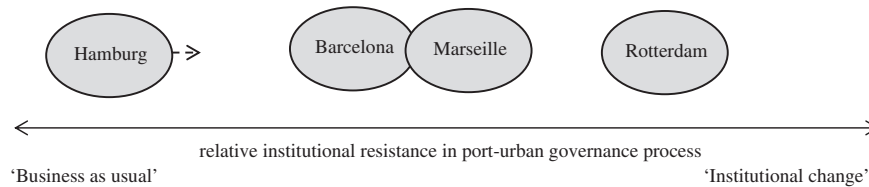


Fig. 6. Depiction of the institutional resistance found in the four cases.

these functions, from heavy transshipment activities to garden village living. While it was agreed that new housing will only be allowed in selected areas, orientations are still locked onto finding the 'mix' that will allow for more open waterfronts, general improvement of public space, and the conservation of cultural heritage. Realized clusters of creative business activities and educational facilities have improved the area's image, but remain fragile experiments in need of constant attendance of those responsible for future spatial developments.

## 6. Conclusions

'The perception of urban policy makers is that Bassins-Est is a declining port, which is not the case'

– Marseille Port Authority Official.

In this paper, we set out to investigate the impact of institutions on the complex spatial governance and planning processes going on in the interface of four European port cities: Marseille, Barcelona, Hamburg, and Rotterdam. It is our contention this has substantiated some of the forces at work in areas between city and port. In general, our cases confirm the notion that the debate is not centered around *how* an urban transformation of these areas should take place, but rather *whether* an urban takeover should be pursued (Wiegman and Louw, 2010). However, the theoretical approach adopted in this paper also demands some more precise conclusions.

### 6.1. Institutions between city and port

In section three, we formulated three hypotheses based on the literature referred to in this paper. However, contrary to what was expected, the evidence found in our four case studies does not support the notion that the interaction between port and urban authorities has become more distant due to corporatization processes on the part of the port. Even in the Mediterranean cases featuring state owned port authorities, there are different ways – e.g. supervisory boards, political committees – through which dialogs and collaborations are organized and, sometimes, politically imposed.

The second hypothesis has shown to be valid, as property rights, environmental (sound, air) and safety regulations do play a dominant role in keeping the general public away from port activities, and preventing the integration of port and urban functions. This is why in Rotterdam, those involved in the CityPorts project have offered it as a pilot for regulatory experimentation. In Hamburg, HafenCity residents have given up their right to complain about port-produced nuisances, while port companies seem to have accepted a limitation of their operational hours even though laws and regulations allow otherwise. In addition, it also has to be noted that port authorities understand the power position provided to them through the legal control over interface docklands, and the role these could play in improving the public image of the port. Moreover, giving up such control proves politically and/or legally impossible in Marseille and Barcelona, while transfers in Rotterdam and Hamburg have been agreed upon only after enforcing political and financial commitment to new port expansions.

Finally, in line with the general conclusion above, our third hypothesis proves to be too simple for the complex scene in today's European port-city interface. Urban planning authorities do still employ the notion of an on-going port migration process, as the above quotation taken from an interview in Marseille illustrates. However, at least in Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Marseille, the migration of port users to other areas is usually a very costly result of complicated negotiations between a wide variety of powerful actors, something that tends to be overlooked by urban planners and policy makers. We will return to this point below.

### 6.2. Institutional resistance

Fig. 6 depicts a continuum that characterizes the governance processes explored in this paper between two ends: 'business as usual' and 'institutional change'. It visualizes our conclusion that in Hamburg, no real resistance to common institutions between city and port has been observed. The arrow indicates that those involved, particularly port planners, are explicitly aware that new ways of working need to be explored in order to resist an urban takeover of certain port districts.

In Barcelona and Marseille, cruise and ferry activities provide for a logical synergy between port and urban functions based on leisure and tourism. Such a port-urban mix hardly seems possible in port areas dominated by transhipment and industrial business functions. The only example of a mixed zone in a cargo port was found in Rotterdam, where the RDM Campus is realized within an area signified by heavy port industry. If reaching the 'paradigm shift' prescribed by port-related interest organizations like ESPO and the IACP is to take place, our research results indicate that this seems most likely in the governance process behind the CityPorts project. However, as was already mentioned, much of this has to do with the diverse functions that already characterized the CityPorts area at its conception in 2003.

### 6.3. The role of the port authority

The port authorities in all the cases investigated seek to develop projects that improve the port's image, and strengthen its spatial and socio-economic relations with the city. Still, conflicting interests between port and urban authorities remain, as urban planners and politicians make spatial claims within a territory that is signified by strong, often historically grown political interests and regulatory puzzles. This makes the achievement of win-win solutions in older port areas an enormous challenge, and sets considerable conditions to the hybrid, sustainable uses often desired by those more distant to the actual situation.

Except for Hamburg, all projects focused upon in our cases are executed by the port authorities, and approved (Marseille, Barcelona) or supported (Rotterdam) by their respective municipal administrations. But when hearing urban and port representatives talk about these projects, one can easily identify the critical remarks on each other's plans. A separate organization with a joint port-urban steering committee for the development of the port-city interface has yet only been set up in Rotterdam. This is also

the only case where substantial land control is being transferred, though to the municipality – not to a joint development agency. Such an agency could mitigate the forces that come together in today's port–city interface, and lead the institutional changes needed for the sustainable solutions so desired.

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