

Waterfront heritage and waterfront renewal

Conference in Malmö, Sweden May 19-20 2022

Call for paper – deadline November 30

It is our pleasure to announce a two-day conference on *Waterfront heritage and waterfront renewal*, to be held in Malmö, Sweden, on May 19-20 2022. The conference is organized by Lund University, Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences; Malmö University, Department of Urban Studies; and Institute for Studies in Malmö's history, and is funded by the Swedish National Heritage Board. The conference will be hybrid with the possibility of participating both digitally and face-to-face.

The conference aims to advance the knowledge and understanding of challenges related to heritage as well as renewal strategies in urban waterfront environments. The ambition is to bring together perspectives from several different fields of academic research, as well as experiences from heritage practices, planners, architects, and other professionals.

Waterfront and harbour areas in coastal cities have been subject to radical transformation during the last decades in many parts of the world. The large-scale conversion of dock areas started in the 1970s, and this trend became more notable during the 1990s. Urban districts that had been characterized by warehouses, shipyards, factories and heavy infrastructure were targeted for city renewal for a number of reasons. The structures of industrial production shifted, shipyards employing thousands closed down, factories moved to new locations. The logistics of trade and shipping also changed, with goods no longer transported in the way they were during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

Seaside settings, proximity to city centres, and favourable situations with regard to public transportation have made waterfront areas attractive for housing, usually on an upper economic scale. This has also raised challenges related to questions of heritage. These environments reflect in many cases the very epitome of the 20th-century industrial society and the infrastructure connected to it. It is therefore a challenge to develop strategies in these urban waterfront areas that allow city renewal as well as the integration of elements reflecting the past, both from older and modern times.

A number of sessions are presented below, and we encourage you to connect to the themes suggested in those. However, feel free to suggest papers aiming answering other relevant questions within the broad scope of the conference, such as: What types of memory cultures are conveyed through urban waterfront heritage? What happens in the clash between heritages related to business as well as working class histories, and creation of new housing aimed for high income levels? Who are invited to participate in the planning processes? What economic, social and artistic activities develop in these areas in connection to the older settings? How can problems connected to the large scales of the historical structures, as well as building materials in these zones be handled?

In order to reflect ongoing urban transformations that affect waterfront areas, we also invite Scandinavian speaking culture heritage practitioners, academics, teachers, planners and architects to present their work and both ongoing and planned projects in workshops during the conference.

Please send a title and short description of no more than 2000 characters about your paper or presentation, and whether you think it would fit with one of the existing sessions. Please also state your name, address, academic degree, and institutional affiliation. The proposals are to be sent by e-mail to imh@mau.se.

Deadline for submissions is November 30.



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Sessions

1) Memories in motion: Addressing waterfront heritage and renewal from a landscape perspective

Disused harbour areas have been undergoing transformation since the late 20th century all over the world in harbour cities. Dominating tendencies are tabula-rasa and museification approaches, often polarising between the clearance of the industrial remains and replacement by commercial programmes (luxury housing, offices, shopping and leisure facilities) and heritage conservation procedures, that ignore the sea shore as a biologically heritage landscape type, aimed only at freezing single objects and moments (a historic crane, pier, warehouse). This session wants to mobilise the understanding of transforming harbour areas and their urban environments as landscapes, an aesthetic concept and a socio-cultural and spatial practice. Opposing the lay understanding of landscape as a static scenery made from vegetation, the applicants for this session rely on the definition given by the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) which describes landscape as being a physical space and a societal construct in constant motion, realised by forces of nature and human actors, materially and immaterially. Participants of all knowledge fields will be invited to reflect upon the consequences of introducing landscape as a lens to look at urban waterfront settings, which are more commonly addressed from other vantage points and research interests (economic, ecological, technological, infrastructural, media-oriented, history-based). The aim of this session is to elucidate how the landscape perspective can bring urban memory cultures and green heritage speculations into waterfront heritage and waterfront renewal discourses, and how this approach can help spur novel practices.

Contact: Caroline Dahl, PhD in Landscape Architecture, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, caroline.dahl@slu.se

Maria Goula, PhD, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture Department, CALS, Cornell University, USA, mg987@cornell.edu

2) Navigating waterfront boundaries

Waterfront developments take up vast zones of many post-industrial port cities, bringing together utility and amenity values while building on diverse types of tangible and intangible heritage. In the Nordic region and beyond, urban developers often emphasize accessibility in their attempts to regenerate post-industrial sites, opening them up to commercial enterprises, cultural institutions, as well as public and domestic life.

This multifunctionality produces peculiar blends of public and private space, where conflicts of interest bring about constant negotiation, leading to questions about who actually benefits from access to these waterfront spaces, how access plays out in everyday life beyond the intentions of city planners, and with what consequences.

In this session, we wish to explore the tensions that inevitably arise from such spaces and zoom in on the boundaries—whether material, non-material, social, or temporal—through which life at the waterfront is negotiated. We envisage papers grappling with these boundaries from a range of potential angles, addressing the perspectives of e.g. locals, designers, cultural institutions, commercial enterprises, and tourists.

Some of the questions to potentially be addressed through this session are: How are boundaries and transition zones designed, constructed, and negotiated materially at waterfronts? How do people experience and manage these boundaries? What is the role of atmospheres; how are borders staged and felt through the ambient? What roles do memory and visions of the future play in relation to boundary-making processes? Finally, in a broader sense, how might we understand the tensions between boundedness and openness through waterfront development projects?

Contact: Siri Schwabe, Assistant Professor, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Denmark, schwabe@ruc.dk

3) How can the city be used in teaching and learning history?

Taking a walk by the waterfront of a city can tell a lot about how a city has developed, the history of its inhabitants and events that has occurred in the past. This session invites to a discussion on the possibilities of using city walks, audio walks and other practices as a tool of dialogues about history in urban spaces. By using the city waterfront and showing the cultural heritage in both buildings, public spaces and combining it with archive documents or oral sources, it is possible to create learning opportunities with school pupils and university students, or dialogues about history with the general public. In order to be able to create such dialogues and learning situations, many different resources can be used. What practices are used today? What resources are available? How should these resources be used to best support a critical dialogue on history, heritage and waterfront renewal? How can such critical dialogues form the basis of teaching and learning history?

Contact: Roger Johansson, professor in history and the director of the Institute for studies in Malmö's history, Malmö University, roger.johansson@mau.se

4) Waterfront: From attraction to resilience

The 1980's and 90's are, in economical terms, a turbulent time for many industrial cities in Europe. In the wake of the dismantling of old industrial structures these cities are hit by urban crises in the form of high unemployment and social unrest. New ways of dealing with these crises are launched in cities like Malmö where a new university is inaugurated in 1998, the Öresund connection is opened in 2000 and a new water-front development, Västra Hamnen (The Western Harbour), is being built. Other European cities have similar processes where water front developments are part of transformation processes.

From the political view these processes are woven into overarching stories of transformation from rundown industrial cities into attractive post-industrial knowledge hubs. The notion of "attractivity" was established in the 2000's with an increasing focus on branding and competition between cities.

What is obvious now in the 2020's is a shift from the notion of attractivity and branding to risk management and resilience and what we want to focus in this session is the character of this shift: What is left behind and what is gained and what issues have been suppressed altogether during this shift?

Contact: Per-Markku Ristilammi, professor in Ethnology at the department of Urban studies, Malmö University, per-markku.ristilammi@mau.se