

## Capsule professionnelle 10

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# Port Center: to develop a renewed port-city relationship by improving a shared port culture

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## Biography

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Committee of the following university masters: "Governance and urban planning", "Ports, Transports and Territory", "Planning and Management of Transportation and Logistic Systems". Author, co-author or editor of several scientific international publications, since 2009 she is member of the Genoa Port Center Board (Port of Genoa Exhibition & Education Center). He was a speaker/session chairman at nearly 20 scientific and professional conferences.

**Philippe Demoulin** is the general manager of the Havencentrum in Antwerp, Belgium, a position he assumed in 2006. He holds a master's degree in Management (KU Leuven) and a diploma in International relations (SAIS, Johns Hopkins University). He started his career with Alcatel as their permanent representative in Tanzania, sales coordinator for Russia, and business development manager for investment projects. He subsequently was Vice-President Global Business Development for the call center service provider Sitel, and deputy managing director for VW. His main interests in business are in stakeholder management and promoting sustainability for the port and related sectors. Philippe Demoulin is a laureate of the Prince Albert Fund, and a member of the Development Committee of the Antwerp International School. He is co-author of the book "The province of Antwerp, a world of logistics" (published by Garant, 2010).

After a Bachelor in spatial planning at the French Institute of Geoarchitecture and a Master degree in Urban Studies at University from Quebec in Montreal, **Greta Marini** joined in 2002 the International Association Cities and Ports as a Project Manager. In this position, she contributed to the development of the network and especially to the exchanges with port cities of Italy and Germany. She took part in several European projects and was responsible for the thematic implementation of international workshops and conferences. She assisted as a scientific contributor to the problems and challenges of the port city interface and participated as a speaker/chairman in several international conferences. In 2008, she coordinated the realization of the book entitled "PortCities 13.28 GMT" in which are developed various illustrative chapters on the environment in the ports, the waterfronts, the cruising, the maritime transport etc. Today, Greta Marini is leading the thematic group "Port Center Network", an initiative relating to the social integration of the ports, launched in 2009 within the AIVP.

## Introduction

Globalization, free trade, internationalization and integration of enterprises, growth in world trade, and exchanges of technological, human, production and information resources between neighboring or distant geographical areas have had an explosive effect on transport and logistics, sectors which are currently the key factors for the development and accomplishment of these closely interconnected processes.

In the context of a growing demand for maritime transport services, epoch-making transformations have taken place, such as cargo unitization (arrival of the container in the 1960ies) and the consequent development of the complex intermodal transport cycle specialization of vessels and handling systems, the increase in the tonnage of ships, the growing strategic importance of logistics – intended as the efficient and effective management of the goods and information flows for the entire production cycle.

These innovations have generated a number of consequences in the relationships between the port and the economic-territorial system it belongs to. All these changes – namely certain technical-organizational innovations, such as the gigantism of port terminals that subtracts more and more space from other economic and social activities, and their increasing automation which reduces the direct employment impact of port activities; as well as the increase in environmental awareness over the past two or three decades – have heightened the public and political perception of a serious incompatibility between port functions and urban communities.

The break between port and city originates at some point in time and grows over the years as ignorance of maritime and port activities increases among the population. The «technical and structural revolution» generally goes on outside the city, although it is sometimes very close at hand in the case of ports located in the heart of the urban space. It is accompanied by ever stricter safety and security measures applied by the port authorities, who must comply with ever more demanding environmental regulations. The added value is not clearly perceived by the city's inhabitants.

### *Environmental commitment and the birth of Community Outreach in American ports*

Since the first decade of this century, it has become essential – in the context of big structural works including port territories – to take environmental compensation, biodiversity preservation and nuisance reduction into account.

In 2006 the American ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles launched their Clean

Air Action Program to reduce air pollution. Not only has this programme enabled them to achieve a 90% reduction in air pollution from truck traffic in the port zone, it has actually allowed the ports to continue to operate. The pressure from interest groups and environmental associations had reached such a pitch that it threatened to hold up all port extension projects necessary to keep the Californian port complex competitive on a world scale.

This stage was accompanied by active communications with nearby communities: Community Outreach. This involved informing the community of the actions and investments planned by the port which would have a positive impact on their quality of life, and especially showing a proactive attitude and more responsible commitment. Today, the Community Outreach communication channel is fully integrated into American ports, which in many cases have an individual or a department responsible for this function.

### *The Concept of the Port Center*

Community Outreach is in any case a feature of corporate social responsibility which has little effect on the deep break in city-port relations or on the perception of incompatibility and incomprehension which exists between the city inhabitant and the city's port. The object of the Port Center is to remedy this break by opening up a process of rediscovery of port activity and developing a universally shared maritime and port culture.

The Port Center is a space devoted to understanding and discovery, a tool allowing the inhabitant to reassume ownership of his port. By presenting the diversity of port activities, their economic benefits for the territory and the potential in terms of jobs for young people, the role of the Port Center is to explain, to educate the port community and the city's inhabitants, and to give them a sense of shared interests.

By pursuing this goal of creating awareness and appreciation of port activity, the Port Center offers the public, whether informed or not, the possibility of a better understanding of contemporary port activity through an exhibition in a fixed home. The Port Center is necessarily more than just an exhibition room. It offers suitable site visits led by a trained, experienced guide. These visits offer a chance to meet companies which work on the port and get an inside view of port life. The Port Center works with the professionals and authorities involved to guarantee that group visits can take place in perfect safety. This combination of an exhibition in a fixed home and site visits allows the city inhabitant to reassume ownership of his port.

Some of the oldest Port Centers are the Havencentrum Lillo at Antwerp and EIC Rotterdam, both located in the heart of the port-industrial zone, dozens of kilometres away from the city centre. They specifically target schoolchildren with

the object of preparing future generations of port workers. Little considered by young people as sources of employment, shipping, port activities and logistics companies today are having difficulty in recruiting young people and in finding applicants with suitable profiles. Careers in the port and logistics sector today demand ever more specialised technical skills, which only distantly resemble the image held by young people and city inhabitants.

Rotterdam and Antwerp continue to address this essential question of employment. In the case study of Havencentrum Lillo, we will see that the Port Center continues to target young people first and foremost. Indirectly, it also reaches an audience of families who see the port as a possible future employer of their children.

As a result of the values and positive benefits of the images disseminated by a Port Center, many other port cities are now thinking of investing in such an instrument. In Europe, Genoa, Le Havre and Leghorn have already opened their doors. The Port of Ashdod created its structure in 2010, and Melbourne has been running school visits through its Educational Centre since 2006. Obviously, every port city is different and demands a specific definition of the types of visitor targeted. Nevertheless, the Port Center today can often be a useful tool for reaching the general public, not just schoolchildren.

In the study of the second example of a Port Center, Genoa, we will see that the Port Center is considerably more than a tool for raising awareness about port careers in young people. It allows a more sensitive and less serious approach to the port. Organising simple events like running competition through the port allows people to discover an area which is normally inaccessible in an entertaining way, giving them a different perspective. Shows related with the arts and culture, through new partnerships, stimulate creativity and trigger a change of image, for which the Port Center can be the starting point.

The Port Center also represents the port community in all its diversity: private companies and public services (customs, veterinary service, etc.). Without their active cooperation, the port/city/inhabitant network cannot be formed. Thus the community must adopt the tool in order to communicate with itself and its inhabitants. This coherence favours the building of essential bridges with the world of universities and education – it allows the port world to talk to the city's inhabitants.

**Figure 1 :** Proof of a will to construct sustainable development,



### *Case study: Havencentrum Lillo*

The port of Antwerp<sup>1</sup> covers an area of about 120 km<sup>2</sup>, hosting a range of interlinked economic sectors, from the maritime over the logistics to the (mainly chemical) industry. Over 60,000 people are employed directly in the port of Antwerp, and another 85.000 indirectly. A recent survey by the Chamber of Commerce concluded that over a period of 2 years over 4,400 new recruits will be needed.

**Table 1 :** Employment in the port of Antwerp, 2012<sup>2</sup>

<b>Direct employment</b>	<b>60,873</b>
<i>Maritime cluster, including:</i>	27,609
Cargo handling	14,161
Shipping agents and forwarders	7,064
Public sector	1,802
Port Authority	1,697
Port construction and dredging	1,245
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<sup>1</sup> [www.portofantwerp.com](http://www.portofantwerp.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/wp/wp260En.pdf](http://www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/wp/wp260En.pdf)

Non-maritime cluster, including:	33,264
Industry	22,561
Land transport	4,380
Other logistic services	3,716
trade	2,607
<b>Indirect employment</b>	<b>85,392</b>
<b>Total employment</b>	<b>146,265</b>

The Port Center (Havencentrum<sup>3</sup>) was the first centre of its kind when it was established in 1988 the province of Antwerp. It now has a wide range of services, an annual budget of about 1.1 million euros, 12 permanent staff members and a team of 75 port guides.

The core activity is the organization of guided tours, by ship or by bus, to the port area. In 2013 48,656 persons in about 1,200 groups participated in a visit which typically takes half or a full day. With the Antwerp Port Authority we have a clear arrangement that delegations of economic or political importance will be hosted by them, whereas we take charge of the visitors with a more general background. Two thirds of our visitors are students, ten percent of the visitors come from abroad.

Given our role we are seen as the “ambassadors of the port of Antwerp”, and we are regularly called upon for our detailed field knowledge of the port area. Keeping this knowledge up to date requires constant attention, since every day changes occur at the level of the port companies or port infrastructure. We use our knowledge to support our team of guides and to develop other projects. For example, in 2010 we collaborated with the Institute of Maritime Management and Transport<sup>4</sup> (University of Antwerp), resulting in a book for the general public on international logistics and the role of the port.

## Governance

Until the end of 2013 the board of directors consisted solely of members of the province council. There was no structural link with the port community which proved to be a disadvantage. As from 2014 the board includes three representatives of the port community, respectively for the Antwerp Port Authority, the logistics sector and the industrial sector (these two last ones through their respective coordinator at the local chamber of commerce). This structural involvement of the port community will provide a strong support for the Havencentrum in all areas – potentially more financial means, addressing the constant challenge of securing the access to company premises, and most of all a closer collaboration in bringing the port closer to potential employees. Through the chamber of

<sup>3</sup> [www.havencentrum.be](http://www.havencentrum.be)

<sup>4</sup> [www.itmma.com](http://www.itmma.com)

commerce<sup>5</sup> we have also set up periodic meetings with two working groups of companies representing respectively the logistics and the maritime sector. At a strategic level, it is important to remember that the added value created in the port of Antwerp represents about 4.6% of the GDP of the Flemish region, and we therefore operate in an area with important economic interests. This involvement of the economic actors with the Havencentrum is crucial in maintaining the constructive relationship.

## A new mission for the Havencentrum

In 2013 we conducted a strategy review together with our main stakeholders, to update the mission and vision for the Havencentrum in the coming years.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unique proposition of access to port companies</li> <li>Unique offering of tailor-made visits to companies</li> <li>Knowledge about the port</li> <li>Neutrality – no vested interests</li> <li>Flexible pool of port guides</li> <li>Collaboration with a large number of partners</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location at 20 km from the city center, not reachable by public transport</li> <li>Depending on only one partner for its structural financing</li> <li>Depending on free lance port guides, with risks relating to their availability and service quality</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>growing interest in sustainability</li> <li>Employment in the port sectors</li> <li>Technological innovation</li> <li>Transparency and communication</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The economic and financial crisis</li> <li>Competing initiatives</li> <li>Aging</li> </ul>

Our new mission is “to generate awareness and enthusiasm and reinforce the public image of the port (industry, maritime and logistics). Special interest is given to youngsters to generate their interest and show them relevant job opportunities”.

This is in line with the previous mission and has this added focus on young people as potential employees of the port. Up to 2013 our offering could be described as consisting of three types - excursions based on school programs, secondly those promoting the public image of the port, and finally those explicitly aiming at generating interest with the young visitors for a job in the port. As from 2014 we will give priority to this last aspect, i.e. bringing the port in the picture when youngsters choose the next step in their studies or start looking for a job. Job promotion will be the recurring theme in all types of excursions, and we see the school trips now more as a leverage to bring youngsters in large numbers to the port.

<sup>5</sup> [www.voka.be/antwerpen-waasland](http://www.voka.be/antwerpen-waasland)

## Some challenges

The challenge for our “edu-tainment” is therefore twofold. On the one hand we aim to convince teachers to bring their class by offering them a well-documented and well-structured excursion based on the compulsory school curriculum. We are for example currently developing an excursion about sustainability in the port which links clearly into the classes of economics and geography. On the other hand we need to bring our information in a way that is attractive to young people, and it is a challenge to do this with youngsters who are so tuned into short video clips, virtual games, and 140 character messages.



*Youngsters and the result of their creative thinking about a the layout of a port © Havencentrum Lillo*

The accessibility to the company premises also requires constant attention. The company visits organized by the Havencentrum are unique because up to 4 companies will be visited in one day, and visitors will gain a good overview of the cargo, the activities and the work in the port. This is our unique selling proposal but at the same time our Achilles heel. There are multiple reasons why access for visitors to the quays and warehouses has become far more difficult over the past ten years, and this trend will not reverse:

- the ISPS code and other security regulation
- the evolution from local to international ownership and management, making it difficult to communicate and obtain preferential access
- reasons of confidentiality and reputation management, e.g. in the fashion logistics

- risk of food contamination, e.g. in the mineral water distribution centre
- reasons of personal and labour safety, e.g. in the chemical industry

We work with the Antwerp port companies to remind them that they need to reconcile these concerns with the need for an open image. We are also working with the industry on a new type of program involving the visit of one company instead of the usual four, therefore allowing sufficient time for all the safety measures. Our credo was that there is no better way to discover a port than seeing it on the spot, but we will clearly need to supplement our excursions with other forms. New multimedia and communication technology might bring the solution, certainly since it is the youngsters who are our target group.

Two way communication is an interesting topic to consider in the coming years. We bring our information about the port to our visitors, and do so in a customized way. But this of course remains largely a form of one way communication. Every year we have face to face contact with nearly 50,000 people coming to the port – this actually is a unique opportunity to learn about their expectations, opinion and view relating to the port. This however requires a well-organized process flow to ensure that the information obtained is collected, formatted, and sent to the right party, be it the potential employers or the port authorities.

## Conclusion

The Havencentrum is in the midst of a change process, driven by its new mission and by external forces. The three challenges described above are interlinked, and the solutions will shape the new Havencentrum. The necessary expertise and inspiration is coming from other sectors such as the science centres sector<sup>6</sup> and certainly also from the exchange with our colleagues through the Port Center Network<sup>7</sup>. At the governance level, the larger involvement of the economic actors in the governance of the organization will also enable the change and guarantee the continuation of the Havencentrum.

## *Case study: The Genoa Port Center Experience*

The weakening of the relationship between the production system based on the port and the socio-economic system of the territory (city or region) hosting the port can generate the loss of the maritime character and “production culture” of an economic system, in which the vocation for international traffic, maritime trade and control of the transport activities connected with or related to it, is progressively disappearing. The direct consequence is that a cumulative process

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<sup>6</sup> [www.scws2014.org](http://www.scws2014.org)

<sup>7</sup> [www.portcenternetwork.org](http://www.portcenternetwork.org)

is generated in these ports and regions where the loss of “awareness” of or “vocation” for the sea leads to an impoverishment of the maritime-port industry, lower investments, lower interest and the loss of political priority for the maritime sector.

Inevitably, the resources/factors of the local system are redeployed towards other sectors that, rightly or wrongly, are considered as more strategic for regional development. Where, on the contrary, in other port regions – with a process that, in the presence of the same technological and organizational transformations of the port industry, transport and logistics, could be defined as *remaritimisation* – not only are traffic and investments concentrated, but the control of the transport cycles and industrial logistics increases.

In this general framework, ever since 2000 Genoa is developing innovative actions to support port city identity. A new structure, called “Port Center”, opened in October 2009 to promote awareness about employment and the economic role of ports and the shipping industry. The docks, warehouses, ships, shipyards, ship owners’ offices, shipping agencies, become spaces to help discover the port, to understand the various historical, contemporary and future economics of the port and how they fit into the more general strategies of the country and the European Union.

The Genoa Port Center is first and foremost a service oriented to a large audience, to introduce and lead people to visit the port (permanent teaching and exhibition facilities, visits (land and sea) to the port, installations and information in public areas facing the port, publications, website, networking with other European Port Centers). Inside the permanent exhibition real-time links with the port informative channels have been implemented and allows the visitors to have a live experience of the port’s activities.

The Port Center also serves as an educational service addressed to students, teachers and parents (projects, guided tours, didactic technologies, data and in depth studies, labs and educational material). And finally, it could become a service for businesses/firms/companies (stands, meetings, visits, company profile, merchandise). Based on these three main objectives, it represents a pioneer experience in the area of maritime port cluster policies in Italy.

Genoa is a city that stretches for 18 km along the Ligurian coast. Of these 18 km two thirds are occupied by port facilities, which constitute the primary source of identity, wealth and employment. In Genoa, the city and the port are two pages of the same book open one in front of the other, but while the city remains a public area the port is a place of work and an international border that remains accessible only to the personnel. From the Old Port and from the tourist boats, from ferries, terraces and hills that surround Genoa, residents and tourists can enjoy the charm of the port’s ships and peers but they cannot experience it directly. Genoa Port Center has

opened the port to the city and offers to the public the possibility of discovering the reasons of its appeal, known until now only by those who work there.

The promoters of the project «Genoa Port Center» are: the Genoa Port Authority (*Dominus*), the Province of Genoa (*Financing, fund raising, community*), the University of Genoa/Department of Economics (*Scientific partner: R&D, benchmarking, networking*), the Military Maritime Authority (*Co-dominus*), the Porto Antico S.p.A. (*Commercial developer: marketing, incoming*). But, in order to implement the project, the whole port community has been involved and each exhibit may be associated to a different player of Genoa port community.

The following ideas concerning the port, together with the concept of *maritimization*, have supported the project and have been shared among the promoters and the partners:

- the port portrayed live, while it operates, and with the people that operate it;
- the port as a non conventional, non postcard-like, non stereotyped, non commonplace spot;
- the port as a productive organization, a social universe, a labour market, technological innovation, and eco system;
- the port as a place to learn new economical, technical and social settings.
- the port as professional horizon.
- the port as it is today and will be tomorrow, the port that communicates with the society and confronts with the public opinion.

### The future challenges

In order to communicate the port at the local level, it is necessary to focus on its economic benefits and the local added value, the latter now being considered as a true indicator of the long lasting success of a port.

The concept of the maritime port cluster – as a geographically concentrated population of businesses, associations, public and private organizations which are intrinsically connected around a primary/specialist economic activity – help to assess these effects, going beyond the individual “measurement” of outputs such as port throughput or the industrial activities located in the area.

It is therefore very important for the Genoa Port Center to communicate the effects of the port in terms of terminal and port industry, but also as the effect on employment generated by the many activities that can still benefit from being located in a port, considering that the spatial relationship between the port and its surroundings is essential, as is the capacity of planning the territory not just according to the performance of modal interchange activities in the strictest sense of the term, but increasingly taking into account the logistics activities that can be functionally connected to the transit of goods through the port hub.

The new localization strategies and the potential conflicts arising from the use of

the territory have generated new threats and new opportunities for port areas. Naturally, this takes place, now and in the future, in the context of localization strategies that no longer allow privileged positions (limited to very few activities at the most, the employment potential of which, by the way, is rapidly decreasing) and which, instead, enter the more generalized competition between territorial economic systems for the attraction of economic activities.

The crucial point today and the future challenge of the Genoa Port Center communication activity is that the maritime centre must maintain control of the management functions of the production activities that it is responsible for, and continue to be a centre of production, offering a higher level of services. On the contrary, the possible drain of companies from the port city generates a drop in added value and employment.

### **The Italian context**

The Genoa Port Plan ongoing is envisaging the development of a port macro-region, involving many Italian regions. In such a context the port of Genoa aims to maintain its leadership in knowledge-intensive activities (organization of the logistics cycle, forwarding, brokerage, trade, telecommunications, marketing, promotion, research, governance) that highlight a culture of transport and logistics and the consequent research and development activities, learning capacities and/or the introduction of innovative processes, rather than the mere performance of operative procedures which are now highly standardized, even though highly specialized and capital intensive.

This gives the idea of a port whose function is to orchestrate a series of transport activities that it does not necessarily physically host. These considerations offer indications for policies that prevalently affect the sectors of territorial planning and land use.

The attention shifts towards the competition between ports, their capacity to attract businesses and settlements and the “accessory conditions” of company localization choices. At the same time, the issue of the environmental costs of economic development is also closely connected to the localization choices, because they determine both the concentration or the dispersion of the positive economic effects of the production system, and of the negative environmental effects, at least some of them.

Generally speaking, therefore, the localization behavior of economic subjects is now the main issue in the vast framework of political and economic objectives involved in defining the economic development of ports. As a result, what a port city is able to produce best in relation to its resources and strong points becomes an important factor. Not just a legacy of infrastructure and services, but a spatial concentration of characteristic, as horizontal and vertical relations between enterprises, widespread skills, design capacity, elevated level of internal

competition though heterogeneous as regards sector, size and international outlook.

The new economic outlook of ports highlights new challenges for port cities, strongly focused on the regional identity of ports understood specifically as the relationship between the port industry and the economic system it refers to, between port and territory.

In such a context the attention is focused on employment and how to convince young and skilled people to work in and with the port. In this perspective one of the main objective of the Genoa Port Center is to highlight that the port economy is a knowledge economy and when people ask the question “will there be jobs in the port?”, that is not the same as the question of “will there be jobs on the docks?”. Here the role of the Genoa Port Center in supporting the port image and the port related jobs understanding and promotion in the Italian context, because: *“how we communicate the port today, will have an effect on the port of tomorrow”*.