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ABSTRACT

With the aim of diversifying local economies or assisting port competitiveness, policy makers in many European port cities have been implementing urban and cultural policies that mobilise maritime history and heritage. 'Maritime cultural quarters' are examples of these policies. These waterfront environments build on local maritime cultures and include restored maritime heritage assets and cultural facilities. Waterfront redevelopment (whether or not culture-led) has extensively been commented in the literature. However, the role of emerging maritime cultural quarters in port-city relationships is underexplored. This paper provides a comparative perspective on the emergence in European port cities of maritime cultural quarters, defined as assemblages of maritime heritage assets, maritime-related cultural and leisure facilities and public spaces, which are designed to provide a maritime cultural offer. We argue that maritime cultural quarters should be explored as a contingent aspect of the touristification and overtouristification of many European port cities and are distinct from other forms of waterfront regeneration. Maritime cultural quarters can contribute to the retightening of symbolic port-city relationships. However, issues of authenticity, commodification of maritime cultures, standardisation of urban environments and demaritimisation need to be addressed.

Port Cities, Heritage Cities. A comparative perspective on maritime cultural quarters

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KEYWORDS
European port cities; Maritime cultural quarters; Maritime heritage

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Introduction

Many European port cities, especially if heritage-rich, are being marketed as destinations for cultural tourism, while redeveloped urban port areas are being reshaped as sites for cultural consumption. The rationale for these policies should be sought in the willingness to diversify the local economy – developing non-port economic functions – and to contribute to port competitiveness through the provision of attractive urban environments. Since the 1980s, culture-led forms of urban regeneration (see for example Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Bailey et al., 2004; Evans and Shaw, 2004) have operated alongside, or as part of, residential- and commercial-oriented waterfront redevelopment schemes (Breen and Rigby, 1996; Schubert, 2008; Brownhill, 2013). In particular in the 1990s, large-scale and mega events (Roche, 2000; Jones, 2020) have been the catalysts for the development of mega-tertiary waterfronts (Andrade and Costa, 2020). Many of these schemes have engaged with maritime history, heritage and identity as powerful selling points.

A recent example of this trend is the emergence in many European port cities of 'maritime cultural quarters'. These are intended as assemblages – not necessarily concentrated in a given area – of maritime heritage assets (e.g. historic shipyards, boats or cranes), maritime-related cultural and leisure facilities (e.g. maritime museums) and public spaces, which are planned and/or marketed as a whole with the aim of building a coherent maritime cultural offer. Maritime cultural quarters as understood here emerged in old harbours or waterfronts, in particular in heritage-rich European port cities. These spaces appear distinct from similar environments produced through generic or culture-led waterfront redevelopment projects. To some extent, they can be understood as a 'natural' evolution of redeveloped waterfronts. Their novelty is twofold. On the one hand, these environments engage with local *maritime* culture, history and heritage and with local values and meanings attributed to ports. This is not necessarily true in the case of culture-led urban regeneration on the waterfront or in former port areas, where restored heritage assets may be combined with marine-related (e.g. aquaria, marine science centres) or generic cultural facilities (e.g. theatres) and urban amenities (e.g. bars and restaurants). On the other hand, the creation of these environments does not necessarily entail extensive physical transformation, which is instead a key feature of many waterfront redevelopment schemes (which in turn create the conditions for the establishment of maritime cultural quarters).

This paper focuses on maritime cultural quarters in European port cities, with the aim of exploring similar features and local variations across these schemes and to highlight the opportunities and threats which arise from this specific form of culture-led urban regeneration at the water's edge. Maritime cultural quarters as defined above are understood, from a comparative perspective, as repeated instances (Jacobs, 2006, in Robinson, 2016b) of a structural phenomenon of touristification of European port cities (Andrade and Costa, 2020). This phenomenon is both a factor and a consequence of the gradual transformation of European waterfronts from sites of production (port industry) into places of consumption. Maritime cultural quarters are neither interpreted merely as redeveloped waterfronts/regenerated old harbours nor as examples of museum/cultural quarters providing maritime cultural offering. Borrowing Soja's (1996) conceptualisation of 'third space', they are explored as social spaces where a range of actors (including residents and visitors, cultural institutions, heritage experts, city and port policy makers) generate collective values and meanings in relation to local maritime cultures, identities and relationships among the city, the port and the sea.

The significance of this research is threefold. Firstly, this study explores maritime cultural quarters as urban-heritage environments emerging across European port cities, yet distinct from redeveloped waterfronts. Secondly, it discusses the development of these spaces in the context of the symbolic relationships between ports and cities. Thirdly, it provides a methodology to meaningfully examine these spaces across different settings.

A retroductive, comparative approach to maritime cultural quarters

This research is part of a broader project funded by the University of Hull on cultural mega events in European port cities, which explores the mutual influence between long-term trajectories of culture-led urban regeneration and the evolution of port-city relationships. This strand about maritime cultural quarters focuses on the following research questions. How can these emerging environments shape, and be shaped by, the existing cultural ties between ports and cities? What are the opportunities and threats that they raise in relation to symbolic port-city relationships?

A critical realist ontology (Bhaskar, 2008 [1975]; Bhaskar and Lawson, 1998) shapes the research methodology. The study builds on recent debates on comparative urbanism (Ward, 2008; 2010; McFarlane and Robinson, 2012; Robinson, 2016a; 2016b) to undertake a comparative analysis of culture-led urban regeneration across four European port cities, namely Hull (UK), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), Genoa (Italy) and Valencia (Spain; see Tommarchi, 2019; Tommarchi and Cavalleri, 2020). The case studies were selected considering port cities on the North Sea and the Mediterranean and by making use of Ducruet and Lee's (2006) matrix of port-city relations based on ports' intermediacy and cities' centrality, with the aim of representing different contexts, i.e. 'urban ports' (Hull), 'gateways' (Rotterdam), 'hub port cities' (Genoa and Valencia). Other selection criteria included the overlapping with existing studies and the potential interest of the research community. The case studies share similar baseline issues, yet provide different perspectives on maritime cultural quarters as a factor influencing port-city relationships. Hull and Rotterdam show how similar patterns of waterfront redevelopment in North-western European port cities (Schubert, 2017) operate across very different demographics. Hull and Genoa illustrate how similar approaches to urban cultural policies respond to the negative impacts of port restructuring and are applied in a Northern European port city and a Mediterranean one. Genoa and Valencia allow us to explore urban cultural policies across similar demographics and characteristics, yet different industrial pasts. A bespoke comparative strategy merging elements of Tilly's (1984) variation-finding and encompassing strategies (see also Robinson, 2011) was developed to ensure commensurability across such diverse contexts. This made it possible to explore these phenomena 'retroductively' (Fletcher, 2017), by focusing on the generative mechanisms that, in combination with structural processes and local settings, produce recurrent aspects of waterfront redevelopment and port-city relationships.

Research methods included a review of relevant policy documents, press releases and online media items, with the aim of gathering background information and reconstructing the core strategies behind the schemes. Approximately 10 semi-structured interviews in each locality were undertaken with 'key informants' – namely port and city policy makers, top civil servants from city councils and port authorities, city planners, officials from port companies, cultural event promoters, experts and academics, activists – making it possible to examine the rationale of these strategies as well as their future trajectories. Finally, non-participant observations, photographs and mapping were used to explore the spatiality and social dimension of these environments. These methods worked interactively and helped formulate research hypothesis and validate the data. From a critical realist perspective, this mixed-method approach highlighted elements which would not have been detectable through any of the abovementioned methods alone.

Figure 1. Number and type of informants across the four localities.

	Hull	Rotterdam	Genoa	Valencia
City policy makers and civil servants	3	1	3	3
Port policy makers and officials	2	1	3	1
City planners	3	2	0*	1
Cultural event promoters	1	1	3	1
Experts, academics, activists	2	6	5	3
Total	11	11	14	9

* Two of the port officials who were interviewed in Genoa were formerly employed as city planners.

This research is a component of a broader project and focused on the symbolic ties between ports and cities. No additional funding was available for extensive fieldwork. Further research could focus on how these emerging environments influence port-city relationships more broadly, for example in relation to the urban pressure on the port-city interface. Anthropological accounts of maritime cultural quarters could explore how these spaces contribute to shaping local imaginaries of (and interest among the general public in) modern ports and maritime practices and the contemporary port city, for example through focus groups or go-along ethnographies (Kusenbach, 2003) involving residents and visitors.

Four examples of maritime cultural quarters

Maritime cultural quarters – at different stages of implementation – in two Northern European port cities and two Mediterranean ones are examined: Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City project, currently being implemented in Hull, the Maritiem District in Rotterdam, the Galata Open Air Museum in Genoa's Porto Antico and the proposed and not yet implemented Museu de la Mar in Valencia. These schemes appear to be local 'variegations' – shaped around local specificities, values and meanings – of a response to the growing touristification of many European port cities, especially in the case of cruise ship destinations.

Hull – Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City

Kingston upon Hull, a port city located at the connection between the River Hull and the Humber Estuary in Northern England (Figure 2), was amongst the UK's main ports in the 1930s (City of Hull Development Committee, 1937). During its 700-year history as a port, maritime activities at Hull have included trade, shipbuilding (the HMS Bounty was built on the River Hull), fishing and whaling (Wilcox, 2017). Since the 1970s, a combination of factors including deindustrialisation, port restructuring and the contraction of the local fishing industry (Byrne, 2015) led to a steady socio-economic decline. In the 1980s and 1990s, the historic Town Docks and a number of waterfront sites in proximity to the city centre were redeveloped. In the 2010s, the port of Hull began specialising on the development of renewable energies (Hull City Council, n.d.).

Hull was the second-ever UK City of Culture in 2017 and benefitted from the event in terms of projected image, development of the local cultural sector and socio-economic regeneration (Culture, Place and Policy Institute, 2018; 2019). In this context, the Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City project, initiated independently from the event, benefitted from an increased interest in the city's maritime history and heritage stimulated by the UK City of Culture 2017 (Tommarchi and Bianchini, 2020).
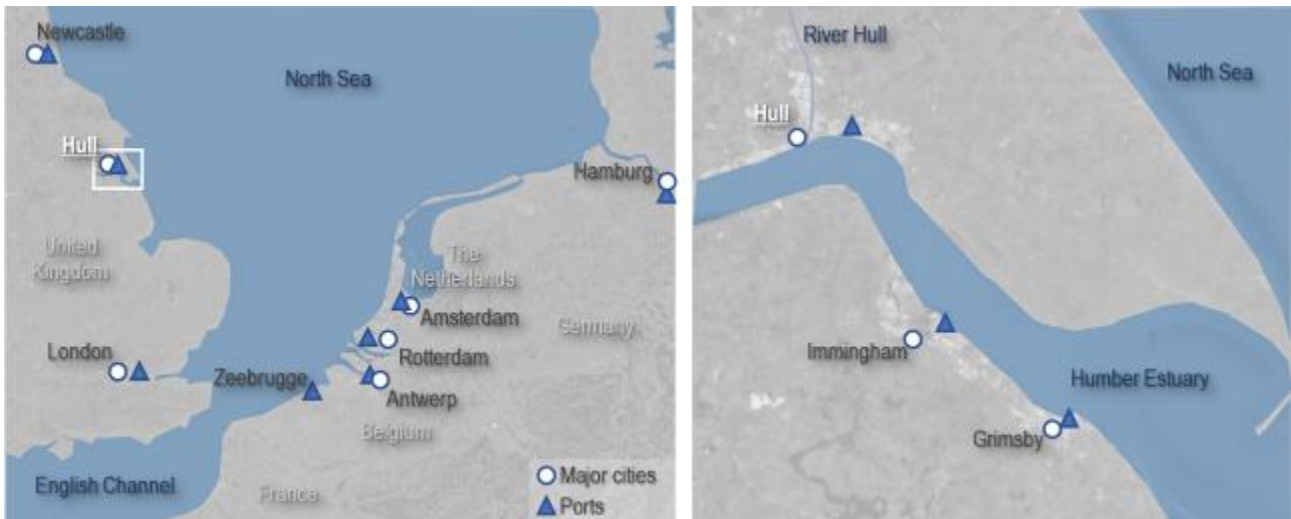
Figure 2. Hull within the system of Northern European ports (left) and of Humber ports (right).
(Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2020 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2020).

The project aims at creating a coherent maritime cultural offering and celebrating the city's maritime character. This is also perceived by policy makers as a means to intercept some of the ferry passengers travelling to Hull (from Rotterdam and Zeebrugge). Ferry passengers disembark at the eastern edge of the port of Hull, a few kilometres from the city centre. Many of them continue their journey by travelling directly to other destinations across Yorkshire and the UK. Hull City Council aims to build an off-shore cruise terminal within walking distance from the Old Town, opposite the aquarium The Deep (see for example Young, 2017), with the aim of encouraging passengers to visit the city. This is in line with the 2013 City Plan and its ambition to make Hull a "world-class visitor destination" (Hull City Council, n.d.) and is an example of the way in which processes of touristification may influence port-city relationships. Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City consists in the restoration and connection of some of the city's maritime heritage assets around the Old Town (Tommarchi and Bianchini, 2020; Figure 3). The project includes a refurbishment of the Dock Offices building, which is home to the Maritime Museum since 1974, and the Dock Office Chambers in Queen Victoria Square. The North End Shipyard on the River Hull will be restored and will permanently host a refurbished Arctic Corsair, a 1960s fishing trawler currently berthed on the River Hull, at the Museum Quarter. Finally, the Spurn Lightship, berthed at the Marina, will be restored (Figures 3 and 4).
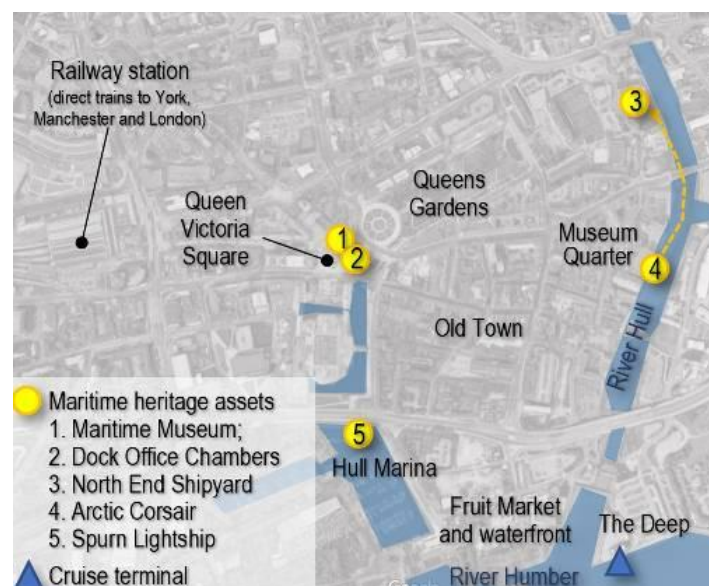

Figure 3. Heritage assets to be restored as part of the Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City project.
(Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2019 Google. Map data ©2019 Google).

Hull City Council aims to raise £27.4 million overall to implement the project, with £13.6 million already secured through a grant issued by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Hull City Council, 2019; National Lottery Heritage Fund, 2019). NLHF staff have been actively involved in shaping the project, as they also took part in the delivery of the UK City of Culture 2017 (Tommarchi and Bianchini, 2020). The project is considered as a chance to address 'unbalanced' maritime narratives produced by the UK City of Culture 2017, by exploring aspects of the city's maritime history and heritage that were not prioritised in 2017 (interview with city planner, February 2018).

Figure 4. Maritime heritage assets to be restored as part of Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City: Maritime Museum and Dock Office Chambers (top left); North End Shipyard (top right); Spurn Lightship (bottom left); Arctic Corsair (bottom right).

Rotterdam – Maritime District

Rotterdam (Figure 5) is home to Europe's main and busiest port and largest container terminal.

Since the 1990s, local policy makers have been promoting cultural policies and cultural events in order to contribute to port competitiveness: a culturally vital city was seen as a means to attract high-skilled workers, who are increasingly necessary to run a modern port.

Cultural events and mega events at the turn of the century (the city was the European Capital of Culture 2001) celebrated decades of reconstruction after the Second World War and the affirmation of the contemporary Rotterdam. A waterfront area including Leuvehaven and Oude Haven is currently being promoted as the city's Maritime District (see for example Rotterdam Partners, 2018; Figures 6, 7 and 8).

Figure 5. Rotterdam within the system of Northern European ports (left) and in the Zuid-Holland province (right). (Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2020 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2020).
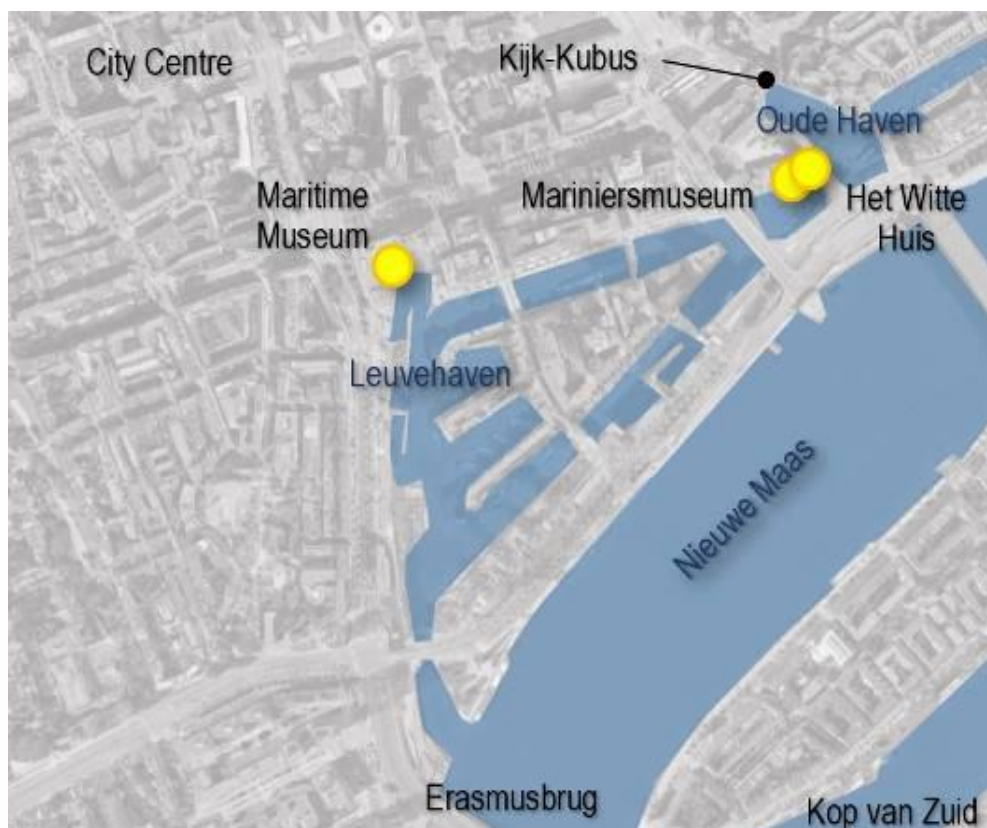

Figure 6. Developing maritime cultural cluster in Leuvehaven and Oude Haven, Rotterdam. (Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2019 Google. Map data ©2019 Google).
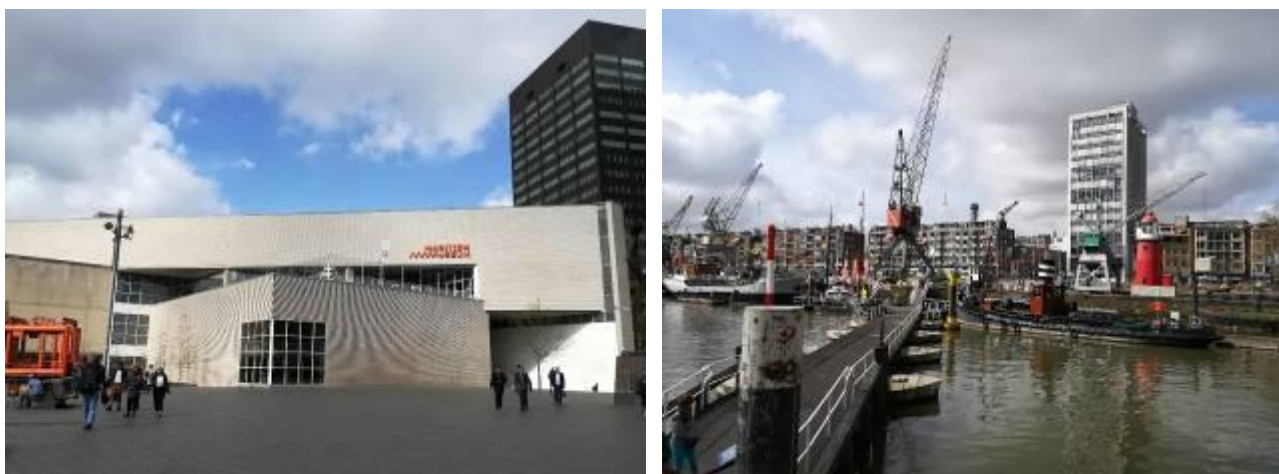
Figure 7. Maritime Museum (left) and Leuvehaven (right).

Figure 8. Het Witte Huis (left) and Oude Haven, with the Kijk-Kubus complex in the background (right).

Two maritime-related cultural facilities – which were merged in 2014 into a single cultural institution – are located in the area, namely the Maritime Museum, opened in 1986 and expanded in 2004, and the outdoor Maritime Museum Harbour, consisting of a number of historic boats and other maritime heritage assets visible in Oude Haven and Leuvehaven. The 19th century building Het Witte Huis stands as a landmark in the redeveloped Oude Haven, where maritime heritage blends with modern architecture (Kijk-Kubus complex). Next to Het Witte Huis, the Mariniersmuseum (Marines Museum) celebrates the history of the special corps of the Dutch Navy. Leuvehaven and Oude Haven are then emerging as a maritime cultural quarter (interview with policy maker, April 2018; interview with academic, April 2018).

Genoa – Galata Open Air Museum

Genoa (Figure 9) is one of the largest and busiest ports in Italy. The city was part of the Industrial Triangle, Italy's industrial core in the 19th and 20th century. However, since the 1970s, the impacts of deindustrialisation and the collapse of state-owned heavy industry encouraged local policy makers to promote the city as a cultural and heritage destination, alongside its role as a maritime gateway.

Figure 9. Genoa within the system of Western Mediterranean (left) and Ligurian Sea ports (right).
(Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2020 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2020).

The redevelopment of the abandoned old harbour (Porto Antico) was the result of a series of actions on a long-term trajectory of waterfront redevelopment (Gastaldi, 2012). Cultural mega events such as the 1992 Columbus Expo and a political event such as the 2001 G8 summit were opportunities to attract additional funding and generate visibility and interest around the reconversion of the old harbour. The area includes many of the amenities that Jauhiainen (1995) understood as common features of waterfront redevelopment schemes: an aquarium, a crane-inspired panoramic lift (Bigo), a replica of a historic ship (Galeone Neptune).

The European Capital of Culture 2004 was the opportunity to continue this process and to regenerate the Darsena Comunale. The dock was a contested space where unregulated fishing practices used to take place alongside the other activities that were emerging (interview with policy maker, June 2018). The area was chosen to locate the only cultural facility planned for the ECoC 2004, the Galata Museo del Mare (a maritime museum). Apart from the maritime museum, the Galata Open Air Museum now includes a floating structure and a submarine, which are used as venues for temporary exhibitions. This has generated a small-scale maritime cultural quarter at walking distance from the area redeveloped for the 1992 Columbus Expo (Figures 10, 11 and 12).
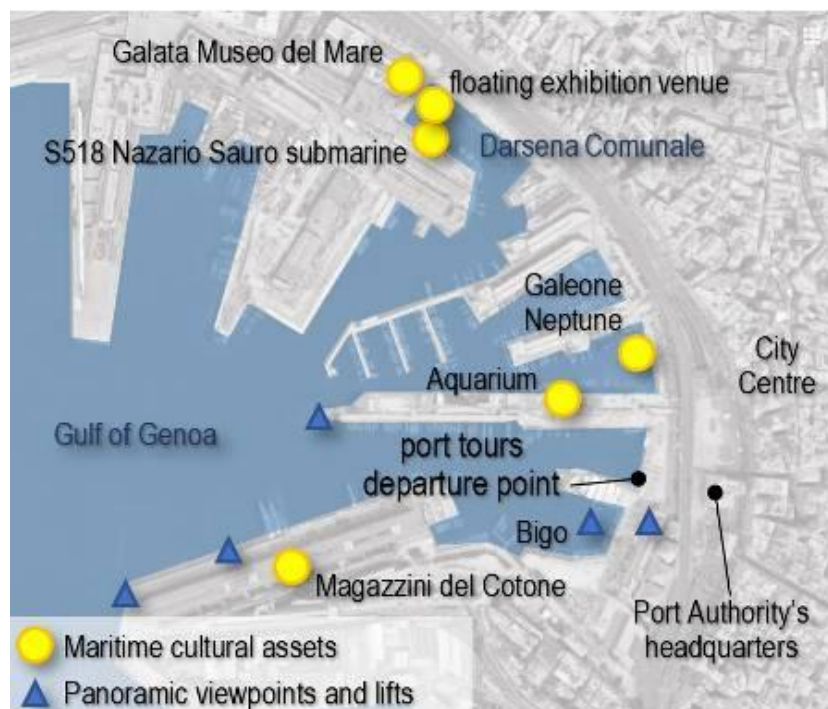

Figure 10. Maritime cultural assets in Genoa's Porto Antico and Darsena Comunale.
(Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2019 Google. Map data ©2019 Google).

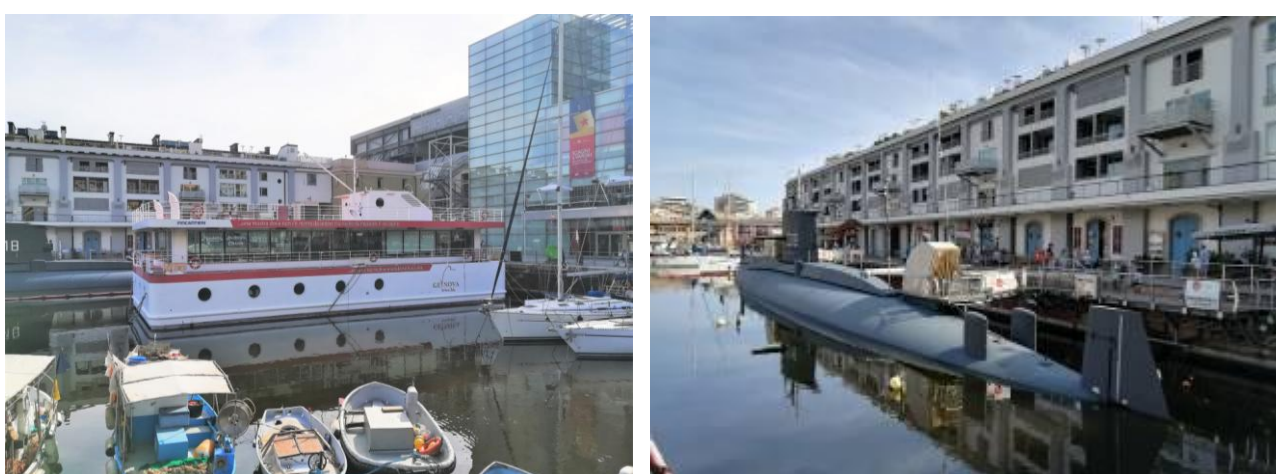*Figure 11. View of Genoa's Porto Antico (left); Galata Museo del Mare (right).*

Figure 12. Floating exhibition venue opposite the Maritime Museum (left) and S518 Nazario Sauro submarine (right).

Valencia – Museu de la Mar

The third largest city in Spain is home to one of the main and fastest-growing container ports on the Mediterranean. In Valencia (Figure 13), international sporting events such as the America's Cup (2007 and 2010) and the Formula One European Grand Prix (2008-2012) were held with the aim to project the city internationally as a global port city and tourist destination. In particular, in order to host the America's Cup, the old harbour was separated from the commercial port, through the completion of the Moll de Ponent. This ensured the needed security and safety to host the sailing contest with limited disruption to port activity. It also enabled the complete reconversion of the harbour into a permanent leisure marina, which was agreed by the City Council and the Port Authority in 1986 (Boira i Maiques, 2013). Due to the sporting nature of these events, none of them engaged extensively with the city's maritime history and heritage.

In 2016, the City Council and the Port Authority presented a project of a maritime museum involving a range of heritage assets across the maritime urban districts of Grau and El Cabanyal-El Canyamelar. The rationale behind this proposal comes from the local community's interest in maritime heritage and the political willingness to question the established narrative of Valencia as a city giving its back to the sea (interview with policy maker, May 2018). Arguably, the outcomes of the long-standing strategy of reconnection with the sea, initiated with the 1997 port-city agreement around the Balcón al Mar project, the willingness to reframe maritime narratives around local values and meanings and the lack of a similar facility in the Mediterranean city also contributed to generate momentum around this proposal.

Figure 13. Valencia within the system of Western Mediterranean ports (left) and of the ports in the Valencian region (right).
(Author's elaboration. Background map: Imagery ©2020 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2020
and Imagery ©2020 TerraMetrics, Map data ©2020 Inst. Geogr. Nacional).

Although not implemented yet, Museu de la Mar is understood as a maritime museum encompassing three venues (Navarro Castelló, 2016; interview with policy maker, May 2018). Casa dels Bous, located in the historic maritime urban district of El Cabanyal-El Canyamelar and used in the 19ᵗʰ century to shelter the animals used to bring fishing boats ashore, is the venue whose restoration plans are already defined (Devís, 2019). The proposed cluster also includes Les Drassanes, a 14ᵗʰ century shipyard located a few meters off the leisure harbour, and a 20ᵗʰ century building in the Antiguo Varadero (a dry dock). Other maritime heritage assets have been associated with the project, such as the tinglados ('sheds', used as exhibition space during the America's Cup and as pit area for Formula One events), and the Unión Naval de Levante (interview with policy maker, May 2018; Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14. Museu de la Mar proposed venues. (Author's elaboration. Background map:
Imagery ©2019 Google. Map data ©2019 Google, Inst. Geogr. Nacional).

*Figure 15. Les Drassanes (left) (Wikipedia Commons,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Drassanes_del_Grau_exterior.JPG) and tinglados (right).*

Exploring maritime cultural quarters

Maritime cultural quarters emerging in many European port cities share similar characteristics (Figure 16). As in the case of most waterfront redevelopment schemes, they share some of the features mentioned by Jauhiainen (1995) in relation to 1980s and 1990s projects, such as restored (or replicas of) historic ships, aquaria, marine science centres or themed entertainment areas. In contrast with waterfront redevelopment schemes, they display a stronger connection with the maritime nature of port cities (e.g. with local maritime history and heritage or sailing traditions). The analysed cases are also promoted through dedicated branding campaigns and clearly identified with an official name. In some cases (Hull and Genoa), these schemes have been implemented in relation to large-scale cultural events, or as part of the legacy of these events. More commonly, these environments develop in relation to structural phenomena such as tourism (in particular cruise tourism) or interurban competition. They either develop 'spontaneously', as a result of the activity of individual cultural institutions (e.g. Rotterdam and Genoa), or through ad hoc schemes promoted by city councils and port authorities (Hull and Valencia). From a spatial perspective, their facilities and refurbished spaces either concentrate in a specific area (e.g. Genoa and in part Rotterdam) or display scattered patterns across redeveloped waterfronts or maritime urban districts (Hull and Valencia).

The potential of maritime cultural quarters within port-city relationships

Maritime cultural quarters are arguably opportunities to showcase local maritime heritage and culture, as shown by the case of Hull and Valencia in particular. From a third-space perspective, this helps engage residents and visitors with the maritime nature and 'cultural exceptionalism' of port cities (Belchem, 2000; Belchem, 2006; Van Hooydonk, 2007; Bianchini and Bloomfield, 2012; Mah, 2014), especially where symbolic and psychological links with the port are weakening due to port migration, automatisation and securitisation. This helps underline, promote or restore imaginaries of the 'port city' and connect with 'port cityscapes' (Hein, 2011, 2019).

These geographical and social spaces are arenas for the retightening of political port-city relationships. Maritime-related cultural initiatives may develop or encourage partnerships and joint projects involving port and city actors, for example in the case of Valencia's Museu de la Mar. This can contribute to a 'cultural change' among port and city policy makers and can help broaden the scope and role of port authorities from 'landlord' positions to 'developer' attitudes (Vries, 2014).

Figure 16. Comparative overview of the analysed maritime cultural quarters.

	Hull	Rotterdam	Genoa	Valencia
Population (local authorities)*	259,778	650,597	574,090	801,545
Port freight traffic (million tons)**	9.8	467.0	68.1	88.1
Inner harbours Abandoned: Redeveloped: Area:	Town Docks 1970s 1980s-1990s ca 70,000 sqm	Oude Haven/ Leuvehaven 1940s 1970s-1980s ca 70,000 sqm	Porto Antico 1970s 1980s-2000s ca 160,000 sqm	Dársena Histórica 1980s 1980s-2000s ca 300,000 sqm
Maritime cultural quarter (MCQ)	Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City	Maritiem District	Galata Open Air Museum	Museu de la Mar
Status of MCQ	Implementation	Promotion	Completed	In project
Genesis of MCQ	City scheme	Spontaneous	Spontaneous	City scheme
Maritime Museum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Historic boats	Yes	Yes	Yes	In planning
Heritage assets	Historic buildings, shipyards, boats	Historic boats and buildings	20th century submarine	Historic shipyards and buildings
Generalist cultural facilities/ amenities	No	Yes	Yes	No
Existing port centre	No	Yes	Yes	No
Cruise/ferry port of call	Planned cruise terminal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Linked to cultural mega events	UKCoC 2017 (legacy project)	No	ECoC 2004	No

* Source: Hull – ONS mid-2019 estimates; Rotterdam – BRP/OBI 01/01/2020; Genoa – ISTAT, population 01/01/2020; Valencia – Padrón Municipal de Habitantes 01/01/2020.

** Source: Hull – ONS (2018), Rotterdam – Erasmus Centre for Urban, Port and Transport Economics (2018); Genoa – Nomisma Spa, Prometeia Spa, Tema Srl (2016); Valencia – APV (2019).

Although the analysed examples deal predominantly with maritime history and heritage, it can be argued that they can potentially connect with port centres and exhibition spaces (such as Genoa Port Center and Rotterdam's FutureLand) and contribute to engaging local audiences not only with maritime history but also with contemporary maritime practices. In addition, the success of a maritime cultural quarter may provide the willingness and momentum to establish a port centre where such a facility is lacking.

As mentioned, maritime cultural quarters are also opportunities to 'rebalance' maritime narratives where certain aspects of the city's maritime identity have been prioritised or emphasised through urban cultural policies. For instance, Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City aims at telling the story of local shipbuilding traditions (interview with city planner, February 2018), which was not extensively explored in 2017. In Genoa, the Museum of Migration explores the role of Genoa in the context of migration from Italy.

A perhaps less immediate aspect to consider is that maritime cultural quarters are opportunities to further improve the permeability of waterfronts without requiring considerable capital investment. Small-scale public realm improvements as in the case of Genoa and Hull act on the accessibility of these spaces and may help remove the residual constraints to permeability that remain after major waterfront redevelopment schemes are implemented. In fact, although waterfront redevelopment schemes often operate in abandoned port areas, a full permeability is seldom achieved. This is due to difficult negotiations with port authorities or the state on port land property rights, for example in the case of Genoa's Ponte Parodi (interview with academic, June 2018), a still derelict port area next to the examined cultural quarter, which was not redeveloped for the European Capital of Culture 2004 due to issues of this kind. In addition, a more pleasant public space at the water's edge as a result of small-scale public realm improvements and the provision of cultural facilities helps encourage residents and visitors to spend more time in these areas. This eventually contributes to discouraging criminal activities and improving safety, as in the case of Genoa's Darsena Comunale (interview with policy maker, June 2018).

Maritime cultural quarters, authenticity and the demaritimisation of port cities

Potential issues arise from the development of maritime cultural quarters. First, although they are usually established in redeveloped urban waterfronts, these spaces arguably encourage the permanent presence of people at the port-city interface. This may generate congestion and create tension with port activity. In particular, where maritime cultural quarters aim at intercepting cruise tourists, mobility and infrastructure issues emerge from high flows of passengers in short timeframes. This is the case of Genoa (interview with cultural event promoter, June 2018) and of the discussions between Hull City Council and Associated British Ports in relation to the planned cruise terminal and port accessibility (interview with city planner, January 2018). Eventually, they can contribute to the urban pressure on working port areas, which in turn can be a factor fuelling further port-city separation.

Second, although these environments contribute to retain, or restore, the maritime feeling at the heart of the city, e.g. the heritage of shipbuilding in Hull or traditional fishing in Valencia, the way in which they relate to local maritime culture and heritage is crucial. Musso and Bennacchio (2002) deploy the concept of demaritimisation and remaritimisation respectively to describe, on the one hand, the loss of certain consolidated maritime practices or their reduced relative economic importance in favour of other functions and, on the other hand, the introduction of new practices or a regained economic relevance of port activities. These concepts can be interpreted from a cultural perspective as well. Maritime cultural quarters may help counteract processes of cultural demaritimisation, by bringing the port back into the daily lives of port city dwellers, especially in those cities where the port is now far and 'invisible' (e.g. Rotterdam). However, they can also foster processes of remaritimisation by generating and disseminating new maritime narratives and promote new, possibly contrived ways to relate to the port and the sea. These may in turn lead to the underuse of these spaces, undermining the success of these schemes, as to some extent happened with the event-led regeneration of Valencia's inner harbour (interview with cultural event promoter, June 2016; interview with policy maker, May 2018).

Finally, cultural demaritimisation and remaritimisation (around different values and meanings) may be the results of maritime-related cultural offerings that pursue the commodification of local maritime cultures rather than authenticity. In particular where maritime cultural quarters are designed to intercept a broad, generic public (e.g. cruise tourists), forms of 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell, 1973) and Disneyfication (Zukin, 2006 [1995]), to meet visitors' expectations and preconceptions, are a risk. Similarly, the willingness to meet visitors' expectations and tastes regarding redeveloped waterfronts may lead to the production of standardised and sanitised spaces (Muñoz, 2010), where certain aspects of local distinctiveness are emphasised while other,

undesirable ones are concealed. This is visible in the marked 'post-industrial' appearance of many of these spaces (for example in Rotterdam, as a result of urban design choices combining flagship innovative architecture, lavish public spaces, amenities targeting middle and upper social groups), which arguably tend to meet visitors' expectations of 21st century urban waterfronts. Nonetheless, maritime cultural quarters are an alternative to established forms of waterfront redevelopment that tend to overlook the maritime nature of these spaces altogether.

Conclusion

Maritime cultural quarters can be understood as repeated instances of waterfront redevelopment and the touristification of European port cities as structural processes. Despite displaying similar characteristics, these environments appear to differ from the generic cultural quarters at the water's edge that feature in many waterfront redevelopment schemes, as they engage with local maritime cultures and heritage and do not necessarily entail considerable physical transformation.

The emergence of these 'urban-maritime third spaces' can contribute to the retightening of spatial, political and symbolic port-city relationships, by promoting the physical permeability of waterfronts and port-city partnerships, by bringing the maritime feeling back into city centres and by connecting with contemporary ports and maritime practices. However, this phenomenon also raises issues of tension at the port-city interface, promotion of inauthentic maritime culture, production of standardised and sanitised urban environments and, eventually, cultural demaritimisation and remaritimisation.

Exploring emerging maritime cultural quarters across European port cities has a number of research and policy implications. These spaces appear as a further step in the redevelopment of urban port areas, abandoned due to port migration, into spaces of consumption. This structural process visible in many European port cities operates in the context of a retightening of port-city relationships (Wiegmans and Louw, 2011; Daamen and Louw, 2016), as port authorities and companies are once again interested in urban port areas (e.g. for light-maritime activities, port headquarters, etc.), contributing to the complexity of these links. The study of maritime cultural quarters and their links with cruise tourism also sheds light on pre-2020 processes of touristification of European port cities and may contribute to the research on sustainable tourism patterns once the tourist industry has recovered from the COVID-19 shock. In terms of policy implications, both port and urban actors may be willing to build a connection between these emerging spaces and port centres, with the aim of communicating port culture to a broader public. From a methodological perspective, such a study shows how a reimagined comparative urbanism enables to conceive the nature of 'case' and 'scale' more dynamically, nonetheless retaining their territoriality.

At the time of writing, it is only possible to speculate about the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and the following restrictions. It is important to note that social distancing measures can potentially produce enduring changes in public attitudes towards cultural consumption, mass gatherings and the use of leisure spaces. Health measures will need to be put in place in maritime cultural quarters to encourage a broad public to access their spaces and facilities.

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