

realization. These projects, however, are born out of a process, one that involves all levels of government, significant sources of capital, various organizations and individuals that may all have competitive agendas. In the consideration of waterfront projects, one must understand the peculiarities of the contexts and their relationship to international frameworks. Only in this way can understandings from one situation be applicable as lessons to another.

The factors that have led to these waterfront opportunities are well known. These have combined to create sites of abandonment. These sites, being adjacent to water, now offer us unique opportunities. However, as Malone points out, neither the factors that have created the opportunities for redevelopment nor the processes of renewal fall outside the common frameworks for urban development. The urban waterfront is, simply stated, a new frontier for conventional development process (Malone, 1996: 2). Both the types of development and the forms of capital on the contemporary waterfront are common to other parts of the city. What makes the contemporary urban waterfront interesting is the high visibility of this form of development. The high profile of their locations means that waterfront projects are magnified intersections of a number of urban forces. Simply, the economic and political stakes (and hence the design stakes) are higher on the urban waterfront. Indeed, through changes in technology and economics and the shifting of industrial occupancies, the waterfront has become a tremendous opportunity to create environments that reflect contemporary ideas of the city, society and culture.

In October 1999, a group of political leaders, mayors, city councilors, heads of planning, architects, planners, and financiers, from eight international cities, met with faculty from the Harvard Graduate School of Design for a three-day conference entitled, "Waterfronts in Post Industrial Cities." The participating cities were Amsterdam, Bilbao, Genoa, Havana, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Shanghai, Sydney, and Vancouver. The aim of the conference was twofold: to explore the challenges faced by these cities in dealing with development on their waterfronts, and to place those considerations into a larger understanding of contemporary urbanism.

Most books on waterfronts deal with a relatively narrow collection of cities and projects – London, New York, Toronto, Barcelona, etc. One might describe them as the "top ten list" of waterfront revitalization stories. Boston and Baltimore, for example, are now the stuff of waterfront redevelopment legend. Our aim in developing the conference was to explore two types of "waterfront city." The first type of city can be found in other publications. Our aim, however, was to retell their stories to understand not only the successes but also the challenges faced by these cities – Amsterdam, Genoa, Sydney and Vancouver – in their revitalization efforts. The second type of city was much harder to determine and does not, or minimally, appear in the waterfront literature. Our aim in selecting these cities was to find contemporary examples that represent the emerging contexts for waterfront revitalization efforts – these include Bilbao, Havana, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Shanghai. Our intention was to move beyond the glamour of these revitalization efforts to evaluate their success, understand the challenges that were overcome, and reflect on the longer-term sustainability of the projects in social and economic terms. Our