

nucleus, correctly interpreting the need, mentioned earlier, for urban design plans and projects for reconnecting relationships or establishing new ones with other parts of the urban structure.

The formation of “models” of waterfront development, which took place on the basis of several successful cases which are now the focus of international literature, led to the spread of examples world-wide, and it is now appropriate to refer to a “globalization” of the waterfront themes. The “dangers,” or rather the risks, of this are clear and are reminiscent of what happened in the field of shopping center construction, which experienced a revolution in the final period of the twentieth century; it ultimately led to uniformization on an international scale, not only of some construction standards but also of organizational methods, spatial typologies, and architectural forms, thus generating a monotonous sense of *déjà vu*, that makes places and structures impossible to distinguish. Because the waterfront is a part of the city and not a shopping center, suitable instruments for the analysis of the site to be redeveloped must be produced. This deserves to be emphasized, for although many waterfronts were areas of importance for ports in the past, they have not necessarily become urban zones in the meantime. In evaluating them, the traditional “tools of the trade” of the sector analysts (economists, urban planners, sociologists, etc.) should be avoided, at least in part, and an attempt made to “invent” and calibrate new methods for defining constraints on and the potential of waterfront projects.

It is important to remember that the theme of waterfront recovery isn’t restricted to large cities. There are many medium and small urban centers which have areas adjacent to waterfronts, some being completely abandoned, others still involved in activities relating to fishing; the need for modernization and upgrading is pressing in these centers too. While the initial 25–30 years of work on waterfronts have mostly involved the large centers, there is no doubt that the great challenge will be played out over the coming decade in the thousands and thousands of towns and cities of more modest dimensions, all over the world, that will require greater attention and detailed study of their needs and development aims.

Waterfronts: models to be imitated or reference points to be studied?

In the way of thinking developing in many countries – namely, that of laying the foundations for the development of waterfronts in medium- and minor-sized towns – the issues of which path to take and which example to single out have become essential for the definition of a winning strategy for the projects to be effected. In this sense international literature, the countless conventions and the completed examples provide a broad and articulate picture of “approaches” and specific “solutions.” Of these, following the initial US experiments in Baltimore and Boston, the complex and often innovative work at Vancouver and Sydney stand out. They have already received much in the way of comment, but deserve further study so that a full understanding of the outcomes is possible.

Three aspects of the Vancouver development are particularly worthy of evaluation: that of Granville Island and False Creek, Canada Place and the