

**The Port City  
of the XX1st Century**  
New Challenges  
in the Relationship  
between Port and City



## *PRESENTATION*

# All cities are different, as are their ports

Teófila Martínez, President of RETE

The greatest diversity and complexity occurs in those cities that have ports, generally associated with the historical evolution of human settlements in coastal or river areas.

Therefore, there are no common solutions for cities and ports as a whole issue. The variety of problems and conditions makes it impossible.

There are no single rules to make them converge, in a uniform way, in the same strategy and temporality that generates value in their environments, be engines of development, preserve the environment, order urban spaces or dialogue between the institutions that govern the respective governance of cities and ports.

What to do in each specific case, at each moment, to promote port and city integration, depends to a large extent on the characteristics of the affected enclave, its current conditioning factors but also its historical ones; or the political and social relations of each city.

The "what" is different in each case, but the "how" can be the subject of a global analysis to, through the experiences of successful integration of port cities, learn work and planning methodologies that help to mark the way to those territories that begin their journey or must renew strategies of the past.

*"Good judgment is born of good intelligence and good intelligence derives from reason, extracted from good rules; and good rules are sons of good experience: common mother of all sciences and arts"* reads Leonardo Da Vinci's phrase.

Experiences. Sum of practical knowledge. Learning, through the successes and mistakes of those who have already embarked on a path. This is the reason why from RETE we have decided to reissue, 10 years later, this excellent work dedicated to the challenges in the relations between port and city.

We thought it appropriate to make available, in online format, this complete volume coordinated and edited by Joan Alemany and Rinio Bruttomesso, prominent members of our organization, together with a valuable group of collaborators.

About thirty specialists, academics and professionals, contribute in this book an interdisciplinary and collective look, experiences -in short- that explain how the evolution of the most important port cities in the world has occurred, how their integration into the urban fabric has been solved, how they have grown and developed, cities and ports, in parallel, taking advantage of synergies. The objective of RETE is, precisely, to provide a scientific vision that marks the institutions the roadmap of a balanced development of the social fabric of cities and port entities around the world.

Different visions, different rhythms and a variety of concepts.

I invite from these lines, not only to have this work as a reference manual, but to complement it through our permanent publications, the specialized magazines "Portus" and "PortusPlus", and our website [www.retedigital.org](http://www.retedigital.org), as well as the numerous activities and conferences that we carry out or in which we participate internationally.

Definitely, I do agree with Leonardo Da Vinci's quote: "good rules are sons of good experience: common mother of all sciences and art".

Cadiz, May 2022

# The XXIst Century Port City Ten Years after the 2011 edition

Joan Alemany  
Rinio Bruttomesso

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*Editors of the 2011 and 2022 editions*

## Digital edition with open and universal access

When only a few printed copies of this book remain, the Governing Board of RETE decided to release this online edition. Now, it is available for consultation and can be downloaded from the website worldwide. This decision follows one of the main goals of the Association: to offer open access resources that inform and analyse broad and complex port city relationship. The *Portus* and *Portusplus* magazines and now, this book, constitute the widest set of currently existing literature on the contemporary port city that scholars, decision makers at public bodies and private organizations can openly consult. Undoubtedly, this is a relevant contribution of RETE partners that disseminates relevant studies, analyses and experiences. This book presents an in-depth understanding of significant spatial and social dynamics and, therefore, contributes to improving planning and management in port cities.

## RETE and Portus in perspective

The Association and *Portus* magazine were launched in Lisbon in June 2001 under the initiative of three professionals from Italy, Portugal and Spain who were studying port cities from three different disciplines (architecture and urban planning, geography and economics). Immediately, other interested Italian, Portuguese and Spanish organizations and researchers that study the interrelationships between ports and cities/regions joined.

The creation of the Association and its magazine and its rapid development into a vast network of partners (consolidated as an International Association in Venice in 2004) filled a considerable gap.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was no organized entity that reflected on southern European and Latin American port-cities —its main, but not only,

focus of attention. In fact, in those years, two decades had passed since the first significant actions took place in relatively small port areas —concerning the total surface of the cities and their ports— that were very attractive to residents and visitors but also very sensitive. It was also a time when essential discussions, theoretical contributions and, above all, projects and specific experiences in port-cities relational spaces were taking place. By then, international organizations started to deal with port city issues without devoting enough attention to southern Europe and its historic cultural relationship with Latin America. In this context, RETE and Portus were born. In this sense, the work of the Association complements the work of other international organizations. Since its origins, RETE's vocation has been promoting studies and analysis that offer theoretical concepts, reflections and document projects and experiences that contribute to improving collaboration between ports and cities. The main objective is studying, producing and disseminating knowledge that allows the development of better port city projects. This, thereby, contributes to a more organized, better planned, inclusive and sustainable development of the port city. In short, RETE aims to promote higher quality spaces for all citizens.

The afore-mentioned objectives required setting up a highly decentralized organization that established, since the beginning, Local Nodes and, later, Advanced Nodes. The Association's activities include holding two general meetings a year to discuss current issues (members' assembly and specific seminar) and launching the biannual issue of the *Portus* magazine. The Association did not organize large congresses but a plethora of study and discussion meetings.

## The celebration of the 10th anniversary of RETE: a book of study and reflection

In 2011 the Governing Board proposed publishing a book to celebrate the Association's 10th anniversary. This initiative aimed to study, reflect, analyse and disseminate theoretical concepts and practical achievements in port cities' relational spaces. The contents of the book were divided into three parts. The first part introduced the theoretical framework from different disciplines meanwhile, in the second part, the RETE partners disseminated practical experiences. Finally, the third part described the main activities carried out during a decade by the Association.

The evolution of the Association for a decade culminated in the publication of this book; RETE celebrated its anniversary by releasing a broad theoretical reflection and practical approach to the experiences fulfilled by its members. The first and second parts collected the writings of outstanding scholars, practitioners and administrators specialized in different topics. Those contributions, organized in various sections, assured the high quality of the publication. The edited volume was the

most comprehensive set of theoretical and practical resources released until then.

### **New digital strategies for dissemination**

Since then, the book has been welcomed by port and city practitioners, researchers and decision makers. It was cited in numerous articles, theses, and books. Although it was not sold in bookstores, the publication has been broadly distributed. Nowadays, this led to an increasing demand that is difficult to serve within the current shipping costs—which sometimes exceed the price per book. Under these conditions, the Governing Board of the Association decided to create an open access digital edition. Once again, this decision was made coherently according to the trajectory of the Association throughout its history.

The first part, devoted to the theoretical framework on port city relational spaces in 2011, remains entirely valid. Recent studies released in the last ten years do not invalidate any published sections, but rather extend or complement them. In any case, all the published contributions continue to be extensively helpful to have a global vision of the problems of the contemporary port city. Therefore, there has been no questioning of its comprehensive publication.

The second part, on the practical experiences of the RETE partners, has been superseded by numerous new projects and achievements. In many cases, the port cities' relational spaces have considerably changed, and the problems and projects are different from those of 2011. In the last 11 years, there have been two international crises—the great recession of 2008-2015 and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2022. Both had a considerable impact on ports. Also, there have been other relevant changes in maritime transport, logistics, the environment, digitization, etc. Many of these issues had already been identified in 2011. The present situation is remarkably different and requires different solutions. Accordingly, this part of the publication has been the main subject of discussion. However, the Governing Board decided to keep this section as it was since it contains precise and valuable information about the situation ten years ago. It facilitates the analysis of similarities and differences between 2011 and 2022, which can be the subject of stimulating future research. In this sense, the second part is always relevant for this purpose.

Lastly, the third part also remains intact. Since 2011, all the activities of the Association and its magazines are available on its website (<https://retedigital.org>). A large part of the work done by the Association can be found in Portus articles and published news. A ten-year commitment that has decisively contributed to understanding port cities.

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