



19th World Conference Cities and Ports

Lisbon, Portugal
27-30 November 2024

Open Piers

Steering flows between people, planet, and port cities

Piers are the ultimate interface between land and water. They are the connection between port cities and the planet. Their accessibility has been a key indicator for the evolution of the port-city relationship. They changed from being accessible in the past, to gradually becoming off-limits. Fortunately, there is an ongoing tendency to reopen the piers, establishing a new kind of port-city relationship. How permeable are these relationships today? What flows are shaping these interactions? How are port cities presenting local answers to global trends? How do they fit together? And how are ports reopening their piers?

Climate change is modifying how society relates to rivers, coasts, and seas. Geopolitical tensions affect cargo flows, with consequences on port activities and their surrounding territories. Demographic pressure in coastal areas is increasing¹. Biodiversity loss is a serious threat. Port cities are pivotal in accelerating certain transitions but also striking a balance, between the flows of freight, ideas, capital, energy, information, and knowledge.

Port city stakeholders must get through this period of uncertainty while also listening to their citizens. The development of new technologies must integrate social commitments. The inhabitants of port cities must be able to embrace the port as an integral part of their identity. They need to feel that their quality of life is an absolute priority. Otherwise, any attempts to achieve real change will have no impact.

All these issues and challenges are shaping new relationships and flows between the people, the planet, and port cities. In Lisbon, from the 27th to the 29th of November 2024, we will dig deeper into the opportunities that a renewed mindset towards the port-city relationship is bringing. We will discuss the resolutions taken in global fora, such as the 29th COP of the UNFCCC, the UN Ocean Conference or the G20 meetings, and the impacts they have on creating a healthier environment in port cities.

We will analyze the impact and technologies that the energy transition will have on port operations and the port city landscape. We will learn about the opportunities linked to the blue economy and how it is redefining the role of ports and port authorities. We will examine innovative solutions and norms to protect the environment. We will talk about new forms of port city governance and the socio-cultural integration of ports. We will certainly analyze the new configurations of port city interfaces, in rivers and seaports, responding to climate change and we will learn how activities generating important flows, such as cruises, can be integrated into port cities.

Let's gather in the Portuguese capital to open our piers!

¹ [Coastal zone management | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)