

## **The contribution of [AIVP](#), the Worldwide Network of Port Cities, to the INTA Initiative for Habitat 3**

### **Climate change, a double challenge for the future of port cities**

At the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to be held in Quito, Ecuador on 17 to 21 October 2016 it will be essential to highlight the challenges of climate change for port cities, and how this problem constitutes a break in the way in which the sustainable development of port cities must be viewed.

Port cities are of course particularly worried by climate change, and for several years have regularly been expressing these concerns in strong terms through the international work organised by AIVP. This topic was on the Agenda of our world conference in Buenos Aires in 2010.

The already appreciable rise in sea levels and the increased number and intensity of extreme weather events recorded in recent years are evidence of an issue which is a major worry both for those involved in urban development and for their partners in the economic and port worlds, even though the possible consequences in concrete terms are not yet clearly understood. One of the big difficulties with this problem is to match the "geological time" in which this phenomenon is played out with the "political time" of ports and port cities! It is difficult to commit public funds to a phenomenon which today is perceptible barely or not at all in many parts of the world, but is expected to endure for decades or centuries, while there is an ever-increasing number of hot economic and social issues to address. It is likewise difficult to commit to expensive preventive actions while strong uncertainties persist on the intensity of the phenomenon and its expected effects on coastal zones.

The first challenge for port cities is, however, to anticipate the consequences of climate change. Following the earlier work of COP 21 held in Paris in 2015, Habitat III is also a marvellous opportunity for international exchanges on the best strategies to adopt to develop resilience strategies in our port cities and surrounding regions. This is a key moment for bringing it home to the many players involved in local development that it is time to act and, what is more, it is time to act in close collaboration between local partners. Genuinely sustainable local development can only be achieved if local organisations work together with port and economic players on a common strategy. We need to develop a common vision of the future of the port city, with its expectations in terms of economic and environmental performance, jobs, urban development, quality of life, etc., without delay. For very many port

cities this means a change in the way they are governed, since the city will now have to learn to negotiate its strategic objectives with the port. Prior agreement on development projects – both in the city and the port – will become the keystone of this new port-city governance, which has to a large degree yet to be invented.

Does this mean starting to raise the level of existing infrastructures now to protect both the city and the port, as recommended by experts in the University of California, Berkeley, whom we asked to study the question? Must we anticipate, as Rotterdam has done by raising the new Maasvlakte port zone built on reclaimed land by 2 metres? How can we limit the effects of flooding, hurricanes and other cyclones (do not forget how Katrina and Sandy flooded New Orleans and New York!) and increase the resilience of increasingly urbanised coastal zones? The job of an association like AIVP on this issue is to spread warning messages among local players. Experts speak regularly on this subject to update us on developments. We also seek to value innovative experiences in the construction of sustainable port city projects – Singapore for example – which include the climate dimension. And let us not forget that AIVP is an international organisation and that we must always consider the wide diversity of technical and financial situations in different countries. Once again, the poorer countries of the southern hemisphere are those most exposed to the risks. There is therefore a moral obligation of international solidarity. Many of these maritime countries of the southern hemisphere take part in our work, and it is our responsibility as an association to facilitate as far as we can their access to the knowledge and the experience which will enable them to develop their own strategies.

If it is indispensable for port cities to anticipate the consequences of global warming, taking an active part in keeping it below the now famous limit of 2°, adopted as an international objective, is a duty. Initiatives are multiplying all over the world, and it is in this context that we identify the second challenge of climate change for the future of our port cities.

The fight against Greenhouse Gases (GHG) requires the gradual elimination of the fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – which have played a very important role in the economy of many port cities since the middle of the last century. This paradigm shift in the world's industries is already affecting many ports as they anticipate a steady reduction in the volumes shipped and therefore in port revenues and jobs. This is the case with many of the world's biggest ports, from Hamburg to Marseilles and from Durban to Sydney. The dependence on these commodities of the big port-industrial zones of the 60s and 70s will have to evolve, with a huge impact on the surrounding territories. The current energy revolution poses many problems for port-industrial zones, but it also presents a great opportunity for port cities to

reinvent themselves within the new logic of sustainable development. At AIVP we are following closely the development of new industries in renewable marine energies (RME), such as off-shore wind power, tidal power, wave power, etc. Port cities like [Esbjerg](#) in Denmark, [Bremerhaven](#) in Germany and more recently [Nantes–Saint Nazaire](#) in France have pursued this option to position themselves in the market. EMR and hydrogen, two new power sectors which are expanding today, are creating new direct and indirect jobs, and therefore wealth for port cities. Due to their position by rivers or the sea, their existing infrastructure and their competences, port cities are particularly well-prepared to welcome new industrial development. Once again, however, one condition must always be respected: the drafting of common strategies by the organisations, ports and industries involved.

The fight against GHG may also develop in directions which are especially interesting for the formation of new port-city links. The restoration of natural environments along the coast or river banks can help to attenuate the effects of river and tidal flooding. It is also an opportunity to return new leisure spaces to the local people, as has been done for example in [Toronto](#) in Canada and [Nijmegen](#) in The Netherlands, and will be shortly in [New York](#). In tropical regions, mangroves are protected and replanted. Of course, a change in ships' fuels and the development of onshore power supplies fed by the electricity mains will eliminate an important part of the nuisance and encourage urban developments with "port-views". As at [Stockholm](#), [Vancouver](#) and [Los Angeles](#), peace can return to port-city relations. There is also an increase in collaboration between industrial players in port territories. The port of [Gothenburg](#) in Sweden, for example, announced last year that it was carbon neutral, having installed renewable energy and drastically reduced its emissions. Circular economy projects are being introduced everywhere in [ports which are acting as privileged catalysts of these initiatives](#). Regional circular economy projects are being drawn up e.g. in [Brussels](#), which they may soon serve as a valuable example. Public housing and infrastructure also benefit from the heat networks which grow out of port-industrial activities. Amsterdam, Marseilles, San Francisco, initiatives are cropping up everywhere and naturally we are following these developments with great interest. The fight against GHG also presents port cities with a great opportunity to take a new approach to their territories. These new challenges, these new sustainable development strategies, in a break with the logic of "each to his own", are an opportunity for port city players to find new ways of cooperating for the good of the local community and our great global community. Let us innovate and exchange our experiences! [AIVP](#) is proud to be part of this challenge.

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