

DERELICTED SPACES AND FORMS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE CANARIAN PORTS

Carmen Rosa Delgado Acosta

Carmen Gloria Calero Martín

Luz Marina García Herrera

Departamento de Geografía. Universidad de La Laguna

INTRODUCTION

Throughout its evolution the restructuring of port areas, and by extension of urban waterfronts, has prompted the expansion of cities at the same time that in port areas. But the transformation of these areas has also involved the appearance of devalorised spaces, lacking function and environmentally degraded; together with certain parts of the urban surrounding characterized by traits of marginalization and social exclusion.

At present, urban revitalization oftentimes has brought about devalorization and social exclusion generated within or nearby the ports. Changes in world maritime trade, associated to economic liberalization, have led to the proliferation of ships sailing under flags of convenience; these ships cause new forms and locations of social exclusion linked to abandonment of ships and their crews in ports.

II. GENERAL TRENDS AND LOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF CITY-PORT RELATIONSHIPS: FROM ITS ORIGINS TO THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Through history, a large number of coastal and river cities have had their origin in port trade. The term 'city-port' has been coined as an expression of the symbiotic linkages between the city and the port. Hoyle (1998) identified five stages in the city-port relation for Western Europe, which correspond to different spatial and functional restructuring.

During the first stage, in between the High Middle Ages and the nineteenth century, it takes place a close functional and spatial association between city and port. Then, there is a port expansion, driven by a fast industrial and commercial growth that requires, from the nineteenth century to early twentieth, a spatial development beyond the urban boundaries by linear quays and industries. The third stage is characterized by the separation and spatial expansion of the port from the city that reaches until mid-twentieth century, a separation

due to industrial growth (especially the coastal location of oil refineries), the introduction of the roll on-roll off ships, and container services for its requirement in larger areas. During the period 1960-1980 there is a split between city and port driven by changes in shipping technology that induces the growth of separate maritime areas dedicated to industrial use. The fifth phase, which began in the eighties of last century, is identified with the urban redevelopment of the fluvial and waterfronts. In it, at the same time that the port consumes large areas of land and water space, it begins renovation of the historical centre. The successive restructuring of port areas have been linked to the several rounds of capital accumulation and investment, at the same time that brings in the appearance of devaloured or obsolete parts, with specific effects on nearby urban areas.

With the support provided by the different general phases mentioned before, although adapted in their traits and chronology to local specificity, we explore the historical effects of the two main Canarian ports in the shaping of devalued and socially excluded urban spaces.

1. Functional and spatial association between the city and the harbour: military uses and devalued spaces in Canarian ports

The initial phase of association runs from the origin of the city until mid-nineteenth century when the port is precisely the fundamental economic activity of the city, establishing then, a dialectic between the urban rise or decline and the ups and downs of port traffic.

The search for safety in the two major Canarian ports marked, during the first centuries, the principal coastal uses, therefore, one of the first occupations on the coast was the military which from the beginning, builds a system of castles, batteries and defensive walls along the coast. Once the unsafe phase is over, much of the military construction becomes obsolete and is abandoned causing a progressive ruin and, later, its demolition and replacement by new urban uses. Infirmaries were also located on the coast to isolate goods as well as passengers from infected ships. Other activities such as lime kilns, shipyards, and grounds for salted fish characterized the coastal areas.

These activities were gradually replaced by others and finally disappeared. However, their spatial traces in many cases remained whole for a long time. The proximity of port activities gave rise to land use segregation, thus some coastal neighbourhoods became devalued areas inhabited by workers and marginal population.

2. Growth and distance between the city and the harbour: coal docks, industries and new neighbourhoods in the canary port areas

The consequences of industrialization were felt from the second half of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth in the expansion of urban areas and ports. Ports had a cosmopolitan ambience, especially in the nineteenth century, because of the exchange of goods and ideas. But the manufacturing development of cities also transformed the port areas into industrial ones with cheap housing neighbourhoods in their surroundings, where the most vulnerable social groups concentrated for a long time.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century the Canarian ports of Santa Cruz and Las Palmas became coal docks, related to the geographical location of the Archipelago in the main Atlantic maritime routes. This new role was prompted by the Free Trade Law of 1852.

At the beginnings of the twentieth century there were nine coal deposits in Canary Islands, the main part in Las Palmas port which became the main supplier of coal in the Islands. With the passage of time and the change that resulted in the appearance of liquid fuels, these installations which included the old coal docks, lost functionality and while some were reused for other activities, many of them became part of a degraded landscape ruined by the pass of time and lack of use. At the same time, in the coast of Santa Cruz is located a set of different industrial activities that made the port areas and its surrounding undervalued places, with the consequent displacement of residential areas inland: the municipal slaughterhouse, the ice factory, gas works and electricity, and later the oil refinery and some chemical industries. On the coast of the city of Las Palmas the main manufacturing activities were fishing and shipyard, located next to the historical centre; however, since 1890, industries moved to the new port in La Luz which became the economic core of the city and of the whole island.

Later on some of these activities changed or were converted. The transition was slow and the port landscape degraded by the presence of large abandoned areas, ruined and empty buildings. During this period some port-linked neighbourhoods kept growing such as El Cabo and Los Llanos in Santa Cruz while new ones appeared as La Isleta in Las Palmas.

3. Expansion and separation of the port in respect to the city: modernization of port facilities and degradation of the urban landscape

During the second half of the twentieth century, port structures grew autonomously from the urban structure. Therefore, port areas emerged as an isolated compound from the city, materialized in many cases by fences and hedges, which also made its spatial and functional separation.

Since the late seventies, the industrial decline affected most of the big cities of the developed world. These transformations generated new undervalued spaces caused by the industrial and ports decline which brought about the appearance of extensive degraded areas where you could previously find productive activities.

However, the port areas of the two Canarian harbours continued to grow, incorporating new docks and facilities. In Santa Cruz of Tenerife, port line of vision' separation from the city happened since the 1960s; port growth absorbed obsolete spaces, it made disappeared some traditional activities and wiped out the main urban beach. At the same time the closure of the island garbage, upon eighteenth century infirmary site, generated a very large environmentally contaminated area. Port expansion had also differential impacts on the cities; Santa Cruz was kept away from the shore, a different situation from Las Palmas where some districts were built next to the sea.

III. URBAN REVITALIZATION AND NEW FORMS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION WITHIN PORT BOUNDS

In the last decades of the twentieth century, we assist to a profound geographical reorganization of the economic system that has led to the dispersion and fragmentation of production; a global economy characterized among other by processes of generalized trade liberalization, deregulation and privatization of economic activities, and a weaker position of the national state against the multinationals that control the global networks of production-distribution. The industrial relocation in the advanced countries has altered the role of ports in global supply chains of production-distribution, and consequently has caused a radical redefinition of economic relations between the city and port, encouraging the approach and integration of both. The extensive areas liberated by the old factories, warehouses and port areas have become a priority for revitalization policy. But globalization trends have also driven to a dramatic increase in competition among countries and regions and also between carriers in world maritime trade (Lee et al., 2008: 373). Effects of this competitiveness are the proliferation of vessels under flags of convenience or the existence of 'second record' of vessels, instruments that coupled with the deregulation of labour, are leading to the emergence of spaces of social exclusion within the port areas.

1. Ports in globalization: new port functions and urban change

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, the ports start a process of transformation and regeneration which aims to revitalize the port area. These actions are part of a revitalization strategy oriented to introduce, besides new commercial, tourism, sports, leisure or cultural uses, a great potential for real estate development and shaping, ultimately, new core areas that substitute the old factories, warehouses, depots and, in general, waste economic activity. But this intense renewal takes place in a context of economic globalization where liberalization, deregulation and privatization determine the relations of both production and distribution, so that improvement projects of the waterfronts, are accompanied by changes in traffic conditions, responsible for the emergence of new spaces of social exclusion that affect the major ports.

2. Flags of convenience and abandonment of ships in ports

The process of globalization and economic liberalization has sheltered since three decades ago, the emergence of unorthodox practices in the shipping industry with very negative consequences on the fulfillment of safety regulations, which affect both navigation and the labour and social conditions of sailors.

The search for higher profits by reducing costs in wages and maintenance of ships, has caused the increase of ships sailing under flags of convenience (BDC) located in developing countries, and 'second registers' in the developed world which permit to enforce more 'relaxed' practices of existing legislation.

The flag of convenience and the arbitrariness, with which shipping companies operate, have resulted in increasing numbers of abandoned ships in ports; especially those ports who, relying

on competitiveness, are more permissive to existing regulations. One of the most bleeding consequences of abandonment of ships is the state of helplessness in the remaining sailors. The main ports of all countries (Table 1) and especially those found in the main maritime trade routes have experienced a greater or lesser extent, the abandonment of ships and the serious consequences that this entails, both for the port itself and for seafarers concerned. In all cases the same pattern is repeated, vessels are being held in port because of its many shortcomings or debts that are abandoned by their owners and by the flag state.

3. The dark side of the port areas: helplessness and exclusion of crew

As in the rest of the world, the main Spanish ports have also been affected by this phenomenon (Table 2). Of all the Spanish ports, the Las Palmas is the one who is in a worst situation; between 2000 and 2007, about eighteen ships were abandoned on their sites, representing an average of more than two per year, thirteen of whom also did so with their crews. The Port Authority admitted that in November 2008 there were a total of 40 boats abandoned at Queen Sofia Pier who were occupying 4,000 meters of the berthing line, unfit for its use and therefore under used. However, it did not recognize the existence of abandoned crews. Anyway, some inspections of the ITF and the Apostleship of the Sea assured that an unspecified number of sailors were badly living on these boats.

While the long administrative and judicial process that determined the final destination of the ship was culminating, the crew, which is often owed with the wages of several months, or by all the campaign on the fishing boats case, were the most affected. During the holding time, the ship becomes for many of these sailors their residence, resulting in a real «dock shanty,» composed of vessels that get deteriorated with the passage of time and lack of the minimum services as they are water and electricity. In short, the proliferation of boats with BDC in the port of La Luz and Las Palmas and the helplessness of sailors once they are abandoned, have resulted in the emergence of marginal spaces in their docks, where the crew barely survive in unhealthy conditions and with a great risk of social exclusion. The local administration of the city in which the port is located lacks authority about the problem.

The attempts to alleviate this problem through the reform of maritime law and the appearance in February 2006 of the Revised Convention of the Sea, which includes among other things, the creation of the Welfare Commission, do not seem to be effective, as long as the factors responsible for this problematic situation, namely the records of flags of convenience and ineffective legislation for its breach, keep on existing.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between the city and the port has evolved over time in parallel with the transformation of productive activities and transport requirements. The urban waterfronts and port areas have suffered successive conversions through change processes, on some occasions, or devaluation, in others. Thus, in addition to new core areas, marginal and devalued places have existed side by side; the latter often have been associated with low income groups marked by poverty and social exclusion.

Canarian ports show also this dynamic. Segregation trends of various types, generated in the own port territory and the city-port interface, have been happening over time.

Today, despite the intensive interventions, especially in devalorised or neglected areas, which have converted the waterfronts in new revalorized core areas, the marginal spaces remain under new forms. The liberalization of maritime transport and the appearance of vessels with flags of convenience have brought about in the Canarian ports, as well as in many port of the world, new forms of spatial devaluation and social exclusion related to the abandonment of ships and their crews.