



My Top 10 Observations - @AIVP Global Port-City Conference, Quebec City, Canada, 12-15 June 2018 #quebecAIVP

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I had the honour and great pleasure to be a 'rapporteur' at [AIVP's 16th World Conference Cities & Ports – 'Next Generation'](#) in Quebec City, Canada. I led on theme 2 – “**Healthier, greener: my port city environment, Next Generation**” – with Marie-Ève Lemieux, Environment Compliance Coordinator, Port of Québec. In listening to inspirational presentations in parallel sessions, memorable site visits and the extensive networking with high-calibre influencers working in the port-city dynamic, here are my top ten takeaways from the phenomenal week of learning, interaction and experiences.

1. **Younger generation – expectations of ports are high.** In interviews with Millennials, Gen Z and schoolchildren asking for their perspectives of ports, there's talk of needing better access, recreation (e.g. swimming), being a source of future jobs and clean vessels. Not many ports are ready for these, although a few are already engaging with schools, colleges and academic institutions.
2. **Monitoring data is vital.** Even one cargo handling accident or weather incident can destroy decades of goodwill and trust between a port and its neighbours. Holding a

comprehensive set of accurate environmental baseline data – for instance ambient air quality and water quality – linked to time-based details of port activities, should provide a quantified and robust body of historical evidence. Verification of data and transparency (e.g. data sharing online) equals trust. Can your port deliver on all those adjectives above? Only a handful of UK ports regularly measure air quality, yet Port of Québec has a programme including 11 permanent monitoring stations for dust and particulates. From my experience, that's 'world class'.

3. Inspiration from the Americas. We heard superb case studies showcasing port-led achievements in marrying enhanced biodiversity and public access (e.g. New Brighton Park Shoreline Habitat Restoration Project, Port of Vancouver) while San Antonio Port in Chile is planning for a multitude of port-city interfaces including a new 14ha Bio-Park and playing an active role in solving the erosion problems at the local beach. Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires, Argentina, is a long-term city-led programme reuniting city and port by regenerating a derelict strategic corridor. These flagship schemes clearly rely on very strong leadership, crystal clear vision, drive and ambition. These projects also 'evolve' so in all cases, early and ongoing stakeholder engagement is key to success.

4. There's a 'quick win' to improve Quality of Life. Many cities have been developing living areas and commercial zones facing away from ports and urban arenas for years. By providing new opportunities for the public to access port areas and witness maritime activities via boardwalks, cycle paths, piers and viewing platforms, people can feel engaged and connected to this sometimes-mysterious sector. Such infrastructure solutions tend to be relatively inexpensive but are always beneficial for the mobility, amenity and even mental health of residents, citizens, workers and tourists. I witnessed at first hand a selection of healthier and greener port environments at Quebec City, Les Trois Rivières and Montréal that evoke the feelgood factor.

5. Nature always enhances a port-city. 'Working with nature' solutions seem to have been viewed as unnecessary, uncommercial or even uncool. However, where they are a success – for example the shoreside nesting area for swallows at Beauport or the Northern Pond Conservation Plan at San Antonio – people are impressed, understand the motives and welcome the initiatives. To see species thriving within a port environment gives me hope. Who wouldn't want that? The adoption of biodiversity 'net gain' principles by many countries should make this symbiosis more commonplace.

6. Cruise ships are coming. The compound annual growth rate in cruise passenger numbers is at 7% globally. Over 50M North Americans want to take a deep-sea cruise (>2 days) in the next three years. While containers and general cargo remain static, many are excited about the economic boost cruises bring to a city from direct spend, and the need to enhance infrastructure. Watch out though because cruise ships are getting bigger. Symphony of the Seas can carry up to 6,680 while others are under construction with capacity for up to 9,500 passengers! I'm worried about a fire disaster at sea, invasive species in ballast water, air pollution nearshore and along the city frontage and potential backlash from local residents. There's plenty of reasons right there for ports and city authorities to be proactively collaborating.

7. **Where are the supply chain partners?** While it is refreshing to see port and city organisations coming together, the interests and opinions of shipping lines, and indeed retailers, container operators and logistics companies are rarely represented at such gatherings. Usefully, one global bank was present. The maritime industry urgently needs to break down the barriers posed by tight concession agreements and reasons of commercial confidentiality, and acknowledge responsibilities to emerge from silo-thinking on a wide range of topics. The port-city realm is fertile ground for new contributions and perhaps a target for more relevant CSR initiatives from those throughout the supply chain.

8. **Head in the sand on climate change?** Environmental awareness in port-cities is good. We heard about ingenious water quality transformations allowing recreation in the port areas of Marseille and Bastia, Corsica, France. At Puerto Veracruz, Mexico, the translocation of 400,000 coral colonies was made possible using 200 local fishermen who had been retained in skills of marine ecology, adding social enterprise. Surprisingly, the immediate need for climate adaptation in ports and along waterfronts was rarely mentioned here. Yet expensive physical solutions to sea level rise, wave overtopping, and increased flooding and sedimentation will be another interest competing for space. You can add to that the strain on budgets, resources and the demand for collaboration and communication with the public. Port-cities have only one chance to get the balance right. Many of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals are directly relevant for port-city initiatives so do provide a superb foundation to initiate conversations, anchor collective objectives and map and monitor progress.

9. **The kicker - there's a huge disparity.** Like the traditional gaps between north and south, and rich and poor, a huge number of port-cities have neither been able to communicate nor progress initiatives to enhance their surroundings. In more mature markets, there seems the will – and critically, better access to funding – to make projects happen. At WSP, we help clients and projects to be '[Future Ready](#)' by embracing resilience, and an improved understanding of digitisation, decarbonisation and automation. Countries, regions and port-cities requiring a gear change in economic investment will be encouraged to jump straight into a technologically advanced future and this can occur with the right support and applying the knowledge and lessons learned from established case studies.

10. **A unique manifesto.** The AIVP "Agenda 2030" is a declaration for the next generation. It will strongly promote port-city dialogue with a renewed governance. It also reflects the passionate discussions about investment in human capital, i.e., inhabitants, young talent and entrepreneurs. As is the case at the Ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam in providing space and incentives for start-ups, and in Oslo, Norway, and Halifax, Canada, in respect of assisting new businesses focusing on ocean research, we must help the next generation to embrace the vast sustainable opportunities in the blue economy. Ultimately, there needs to be a direct connection to education. The willingness of port executives to 'co-create' valuable port-city opportunities for the next generation was a defining theme throughout the conference. Stimulating and exciting times lie ahead.