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Maritime and coastal cultural heritage

Challenges and opportunities for development and planning

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Abstract for PLANNORD symposium in Norway 21st-23rd August 2019

Track 3: Integrated Coastal Development and Planning – future challenges for Nordic countries

Title: Maritime and coastal cultural heritage – challenges and opportunities for development and planning

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Cultural heritage (CH) is frequently included in spatial development discussions and spatial policy and planning activities. Traditionally, a strong emphasis has been given to the protection of mostly tangible CH artifacts when faced with pressures of specific development proposals and activities. As such, debates over CH aspects have often been associated with reactive planning approaches aiming at protection of certain CH values. However, CH is increasingly also integrated into more strategic and proactive development and planning discussions. This has opened up the opportunity to discuss how CH may also be considered a ‘development driver’ in some situations. For instance, in maritime and coastal areas with little attention from mainstream city-centered socio-economic mechanisms, however also in urban areas, such as ports, in transition away from an industrial past.

Maritime and coastal cultural heritage provides a sense of place, identity, unity, and belonging to residents of maritime and coastal regions. CH, rooted in both tangible and intangible aspects such as specific landscapes, seascapes, buildings, stories, traditions, language, and cultural practices, is a fundamental part of every society. It connects people to each other and to the past and helps guide the future. It is based on the past, but it is also living—constantly changing and adapting—as all culture is. Yet, CH is also at risk through diverse drivers, such as climate change, non-CH sensitive economic and spatial development, and demographic change. With strong calls for Blue Growth from the European Union and in different economic sectors, it is important to make explicit connections to the values of CH, the risks it faces and to the benefits to preserving and safeguarding CH for current and future generations. With due consideration, CH can be both preserved and sustainably utilized.

With sustainable utilization of maritime and coastal CH as an ultimate goal, this article presents our understanding of maritime cultural heritage based upon a theoretical framework of three pillars: space, place, and identity; resilience and adaptation; and deliberative and participatory governance. Combining these three theoretical pillars brings insights for the sustainable usage and governance of maritime and coastal CH for the benefits of society. Only once the importance of coastal spaces and places and how they form identities are known; how cultures and society are vulnerable or resilient and can adapt; and how good governance takes place, can CH be used sustainably—to the benefit of society and enabling Blue Growth.