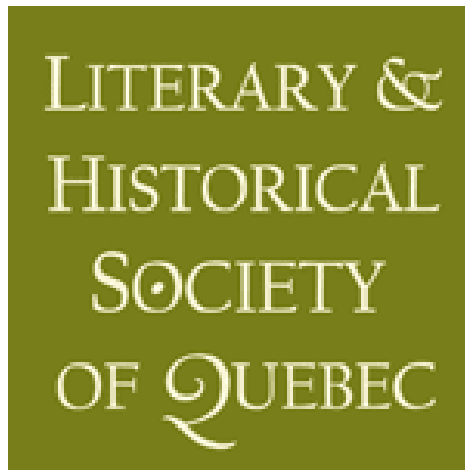


FROM EUROPEAN TO AMERICAN:
THE WATERFRONT OF OLD QUEBEC

Léonce Naud, Geographer

Advisor

St. Lawrence Development Secretariat
Government of Québec



Presented in the Library of the
Literary and Historical Society of Quebec
Québec, Canada, May 8th, 1997

FROM EUROPEAN TO AMERICAN: THE WATERFRONT OF OLD QUEBEC

"The impression made upon the visitor by this Gibraltar of America - its giddy heights; its citadel suspended, as it were, in the air; its picturesque steep streets and frowning gateways; and the splendid views which burst upon the eye at every turn - is at once unique and lasting.

It is a place not to be forgotten or mixed up in the mind with other places. It is mainly in the prospect from the site of the Old Government House, and from the Citadel, that its surpassing beauty lies."

Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*
Piccadilly, England, MDCCCL

"A maritime city founded on a wide estuary and a safe promontory. An ocean city: when the seas are high and the water smashes furiously against the quays of Lower Town the saline breeze coming from the distant ocean can sometimes be felt, like a call from ancestral Brittany."

Jean Cimon

QUEBEC, PORT CITY (1608-1970)

Quebec, fortified port city, whose strategic position used to command access to North-East America, was founded on a narrowing stretch of the Saint Lawrence River almost four hundred years ago by a French geographer, Samuel de Champlain (1567-1635), a native of Brouages in the Charente-Maritime region of France. In the beginning, Quebec was simply a fortified colonial outpost situated right on the waterfront. At that time, the river bank followed the contours of an imposing cliff, Diamond Cape, at the top of which a citadel is now perched. As was the case elsewhere, this type of architecture attracted invasion; up until the present time, our ramparts have successfully withstood the assaults of tourists. The extension of *terra firma* in front of Old Quebec is the result, therefore, of successive land reclamation projects and seawalls built over the course of the last four hundred years, with the aim of enlarging the land base of the lower town as well as increasing the

capacity of its port facilities. There were geographical and commercial reasons, of course, but also military ones: the first quays were used as platforms for cannons (Royal and Dauphine batteries).

In 1760, Québec suddenly changed its corporate banner: England's taking of the city marked its sovereignty over the New World. Relieved of the French threat, the Anglo-American settlers, hitherto discontented, became insurrectionary: 1776 marked the birth of the Republic under the Star-Spangled Banner. The Duke of Choiseul, showing more astuteness than His Majesty's ministers, had predicted this outcome exactly.¹ From that moment on, Quebec's architectural evolution – and that of her port – was to share the fortunes and setbacks of the British Empire.

During the nineteenth century, the port and quays of Quebec were, fortunately, expanded considerably... thanks to Napoleon. In fact, England, deprived by the Continental System of its habitual sources of carpentry wood from the Baltic, turned towards Canada which subsequently became the country's biggest supplier. In 1830, the port of Quebec was the third most important in North America. The Empire had some good! During the navigation season, the city lived in the tumult usual in port cities... and the quays expanded in all directions. In fact, the area of the port spread into the River and the Saint Charles estuary with urban development close on its heels.

In about 1875, while the port was undergoing the initial throes of a protracted commercial decline, the Harbour Commission nevertheless carried out some enormous construction projects for the building of infrastructures: docks, quays, locks and warehouses. Princess Louise of England inaugurated these new constructions in 1881 and gave her name to a new basin which became over the years the *Louise Basin*.

At the beginning of the present century, there were some who seriously entertained the notion of tearing down the Place Royale – today an important tourist attraction and architectural monument – to replace it with a rail yard, then they considered expropriating and demolishing the district of Cap-Blanc, a "village a mile and a half long by thirty-five feet wide" to allow railway access to the central part of the port. However, it was eventually decided that this site was somewhat too narrow...²

During the first half of the twentieth century, the export of cereals from Canada maintained some activity on the wharves in front of Old Quebec. This did not prevent general trans-shipment activities from gradually shifting downstream or upstream from the Old City.

¹ "Choiseul upheld that, if the English ministers had had the wisdom that one attributed to them, they would have chosen to pay the French king a subsidy to keep Canada rather than grabbing it from him at great expense". In André Duval, *Québec romantique*, Montréal, Boréal Express, 1978, p. 72.

² Albert Faucher, *Québec en Amérique au XIXème siècle*, Montréal, Fides, 1973, p. 89.

In fact, in the city centre close to the river, Québec does not have wide stretches of land or the flat surfaces necessary for transport activities. The site is certainly attractive, but almost completely built up and unsuitable for wholesale storage depots or trans-shipment activities. It represents, furthermore, a *cul-de-sac* for road transport. Towards the Fifties, the traditional port sector became, therefore, an almost deserted area: old railway lines and disused warehouses, buildings abandoned and in disrepair and docks half filled in. The area, hardly ever frequented, was to all intents and purposes abandoned.³

DREAMS AND REALITY (1970-1990)

"Another example, that of the Old Port: this is a city neighbourhood and no one had anything to say about it. It was left to outsiders to decide what was going to happen in a neighbourhood of the city. There was no rhyme or reason to it."

Jean Pelletier, Mayor of Québec, 16 March 1985

Briefly, the contemporary history of the port sector in Québec can be summed up in the attempt to convert the place into an urban area, punctuated with studies and projects, most of which were never followed up, while others regularly led their promoters into bankruptcy.⁴ Much money and effort was invested and this had beneficial effects. Nevertheless, it would be useful to examine here the fundamental philosophy and methods adopted for these projects.⁵

In Canada, management of port lands is the responsibility of the Federal government and not of the Provinces, the municipalities or the private sector. This is the case in Québec. At the beginning of the Seventies, in a programme that in retrospect looks extremely avant-garde, the Canadian government – coming to grips with abandoned waterside areas and/or disused port sites – undertook ambitious projects for urban development in several cities throughout the country, in particular in Toronto, Montréal and Québec. A new Federal Ministry for Urban Affairs, now defunct, made known its intention to assume from that time on a leadership in matters of urban development, a domain which had hitherto been the responsibility of the Provinces. The government of Québec, the municipalities, the Port authorities, the maritime milieu and the general public were to all intents and purposes excluded from the basic planning and subsequently from the reconstruction of the historical port sector of Québec.

³ Québec Chamber of Commerce, "*Mémoire sur le Port de Québec*", To the Honorable Minister of Transport, Québec, 1951, 45 p.

⁴ "*Tomorrow? Report of the Advisory Committee on the Future of Pointe-à-Carcy*". Public Works Canada, Government of Canada, Québec, September 1989, p. 29.

⁵ Pierre Larochelle, "*Morphologie urbaine et aménagement des espaces riverains : le cas de l'arrondissement historique de Québec*", Communication, 4th International Conference of Cities and Ports, Montréal, October 1993, 13 p.

How did this come about? In 1981, in order to attain its objectives, the Canadian government created a new type of state organization in charge of local management, a *Corporation for Urban Development*. Thirty-three hectares of port lands were removed from the jurisdiction of the Port and handed over to the new organization which, in Québec, took the name of *Canada Lands Corporation – Old Port of Quebec*. Suddenly declared *old*, in the sense of outdated or obsolete, the historical port sector was in for an interesting urban experience.

Just like in England

In an eloquent testimonial to the always existing high level of cooperation between England and the former *Dominion of Canada*, i.e. between London and Ottawa, the mandate of the Land Corporation set up in Québec was similar to that of the same organizations created contemporaneously in Great Britain by the Thatcher government, they themselves being inspired by American experiences.

The similarity of behaviour and of the results obtained is startling to anyone familiar with the recent history of the redevelopment of Québec's old port. I am taking my lead here from the excellent portrait of the situation provided by Emmanuelle Patte in an article about the lessons to be learned from the redevelopment of the London Docklands in Great Britain.

"In order to carry out their mission effectively, these urban development corporations were conceived as single-minded organizations, striving towards a single goal, that of regenerating these problematical urban areas, abandoned port sites and disused industrial zones.

"Priority was given to the physical revamping of the sites, with a view to increasing their commercial value, and to the building of those infrastructures necessary to accommodate such a change in function, rather than to social criteria. These measures were aimed at attracting investors and developers to the sites. The Conservative government decided to forge ahead bravely, and even to accelerate the change of function on the sites, brooking no procrastination due to nostalgic scruples.

"The main aim of the corporations was to revitalize desolate neighbourhoods, to regenerate their economy, but also to prove the validity of the Conservative Party's ideals and of the nascent 'Thatcherism': free enterprise and 'organic' growth linked to a market economy. (...)

"There was no question of delaying work to consult the local authorities or the inhabitants – why else would the corporation have been formed? The way in which this was done was indeed questionable – the lack of consideration for the local community, for social and environmental problems, for city planning or the function of the port – but it was done, nevertheless." ⁶

⁶ Emmanuelle Patte, "*Réaménagement des anciens docks : leçons britanniques*", in *Le patrimoine portuaire, Actes du colloque Le Port et la Ville*, p. 20. A.I.V.P. et Plan Construction et Architecture, Ministère de

The author notes that, in the case of London, disposing of £1.3bn of subsidies, "*no new building of any importance with a social or civic function was built*". This philosophy of intervention, so correctly described by Emmanuelle Patte to have been the case in the case of London Docklands, describes exactly what happened to the old waterfront of Québec, in Canada. This is surely an interesting case of post-colonial influence!

In the beginning, there was much excitement and a feeling of adventure over the space and power suddenly entrusted to the new team, just as there had been in London. In a "*purified modernism tinted with history*", one could see "*beyond the vacant lots and the few historical landmarks, a site meant for construction*." Real estate development of the old section of Quebec's port became nothing less than "*the guarantor of all architectural philosophy in the twilight of the twentieth century*", according to an official document issued by the Canadian government.⁷

In the presence of such lyricism, connoisseurs will recognize the unmistakable odour: that of fresh cement. Ten years later, the same site evoked for the visitor an "*abandoned launching pad... futuristic delirium of interblock addicts... a landing runway for real estate developers... luxury condominiums which only lack the plastic plants and palms*", in fact, "*Daytona Beach right next door to a World Heritage Site*".⁸ In the meantime, tens of millions of dollars had vanished into thin air in projects such as a *Festival Market Place*, that met with the same fate as many other similar ventures in North America.⁹

François Grether, in *Fluvial Ports and Urban Transformation*, remarks that "*located at the junction of two essential public resources, the banks cannot be built up, and therefore privatized, as was done in London or in the same way as the marinas, without alienating them from the use of the general public*" (Pré-Actes, p. 85).

Québec and Dubrovnik

This type of real estate development was carried out on a site situated between the old city and the river, rather as if, in Dubrovnik, it had been decided to enclose the old fortified city by an esplanade supporting high-tech buildings between the ancient citadel and the Adriatic. Frequently the cities extend their built-up areas at the expense of their adjacent waters. Québec, a historical city recognized as such by UNESCO, had been doing

l'Équipement, du Logement et des Transports, Paris, 1992. See also Brian Edwards, "*Deconstructing the City – The Experience of the London Docklands*", in *The Planner*, United Kingdom, February 1993.

⁷ *Official Federal Government publicity*, Canada Lands Corporation (Old Port of Quebec), in *Le Soleil*, Québec, June 23, 1997.

⁸ Jean-Simon Gagné, "Mer immonde", *Voir Québec*, 18-24 novembre 1993. Denis Angers, "Rénovation du Vieux-Port : avant tout un trip d'architecte", in *Le Soleil*, Québec, December 3, 1983.

⁹ Robert Guskind and Neal R. Peirce, "Faltering Festivals", *National Journal*, Washington DC, September 17, 1988. See also Jonathan Walters, "After the festival is over", in *Governing*, Washington DC, August 1990.

this for centuries. However, one wonders whether erecting a curtain of 'international' style buildings between the old city and the river is desirable nowadays, even from the point of view of economic advantage in the short term. The present geography of the area, in fact, allows for the docking of modern cruise ships of ever more imposing dimensions less than seventy-five metres from the ancient city dwellings, and the historic city is definitely the main attraction of the cruise circuits between New York and Montréal.

As early as 1970, an important study, the *General Concept of Redevelopment of Old Québec*, stated that "*the charm of the city comes above all from its proximity with the waterfront that, since time immemorial, has made of the lower city a maritime neighbourhood. It is essential to re-establish physical contact with the river.*" (Article 4.2)

European and American influence on the Québec waterfront

The historian André Duval, in his work *Québec romantique*, analysed with perspicacity the evolution of urban development in Québec in this latter half of the twentieth century. His remarks are important for anyone wishing to understand the philosophical and ethical foundations that have underlain the evolution of Québec's waterfront:

"Québec is a city different from all others. Or, rather, let us say that it was a city different from all others. Because, at the end of the twentieth century, circumstances moving in the direction of standardization are leading willy-nilly not only towards a form of urban development that takes its cue from the rest of America regarding its expansion, but also towards a type of urban personality that makes its previous one feel definitely archaic. In the year 2000, these traces of a European character will no longer be in evidence in the city... It will have completely abandoned Europe and will have definitely passed over to the American camp".¹⁰

An American-Style waterfront?

Have we foisted a standardised American-style waterfront onto the old French city on the banks of the Saint Lawrence over the last twenty years? The answer to that question may well come from...Italy.

The President of the Autonomous Port of Genoa, Mr. Rinaldo Enea Magnani, distinguishes two distinct schools of thought in worldwide projects for the reconversion of waterfronts:

"The case of London and of Marseille well illustrates two extremes of urban-economic concepts of the work to be done when confronted with a similar problem. We can almost say that these two European cases (which are not the only ones, and are only used as examples here) allow us to identify two schools of thought: the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental-European. The Anglo-Saxon school calls any aquatic bank – river, lake or sea – a waterfront and, considering the

¹⁰ André Duval, op. cit., p. 13.

scanty urban and architectural heritage they usually have to protect (this is particularly true in the United States and in Canada), tends to propose solutions for the regeneration of the waterfronts that are almost exclusively based on real estate development (...).

"It is certain that the pragmatic-economic approach of the Anglo-Saxons, coupled with a stronger sense of individualism and of a business world partly estranged from the world of Latin origin, plays an important role here. With the exception of certain cases where the ports have retained some vestiges of their historical background, the North American solutions only propose built-up areas for residential purposes, office premises, restaurants, yachting marinas etc.(...) An American solution cannot be applied in a European context; the historical port only exists in Europe." ¹¹

Did a historical port exist in Québec up until the beginning of the Eighties? In 1978, according to the Canadian government: "*The sector of the Old Port, an artificial extension of the lower city, is creeping over the historical neighbourhood of Old Quebec. It envelops part of it, in fact... This particularity confers on the sector of the Old Port an important role of protection and cooperation, subordinating its rehabilitation to historical norms.*" (Parks-Canada. "Le Vieux-Port de Québec" 1978, p. 3.)

Before UNESCO declared the historical neighbourhood of Québec a World Heritage Site (December 30th, 1985), the international organization ICOMOS stated that "*the historical neighbourhood of Quebec, a coherent urban conglomeration including the Citadel, the Upper City defended by a bastioned enclosure, the Lower City, its port and its ancient neighbourhoods, offers an outstanding example – easily the most complete in North America – of a fortified colonial city.*"¹²

Was it conceivable to protect as such the quays and port facilities that had made the exploitation and utilization of the River possible in the past? Their state of disuse as facilities carried the germ of their disappearance. Furthermore, it is startling to note that, fifteen years after having been reconstructed identically, some quays now in disuse around the Louise Basin are rather preventing the general public from having access to the water for purposes such as swimming or the renting of modest craft for pleasure boating.

Although the *Commission des biens culturels* noted in 1983 that "*in the case of the restoration and enhancement of certain ports by the government... it seems that no organization has shown any respect for maritime heritage during the carrying out of these operations*"¹³, I suggest that the heritage that should have been preserved and developed

¹¹ Rinaldo Enea Magnani, "The Autonomous Port of Genoa", in GB Projetti, Supplement 8/9, Genoa, Italia, November 1991, pp. 16-17. (Translated from the Italian).

¹² International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), World Heritage List No. 300, "Bien proposé : arrondissement historique de Québec", Paris, France, July 1985.

¹³ Commission des biens culturels du Québec. *Le patrimoine maritime au Québec*, Québec, 1983, p. 9.

was not primarily the structures in wood or stone as such, but the maritime and port vocation of the site. Real estate remains a stranger to the ceaselessly changing and mobile character of a living port, where everything and everyone are in a state of constant evolution.

A RETURN TO THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER OF THE SITE (1990-1994)

"The Port of Quebec was at the origin of this neighbourhood, it contributed to its development and intends to remain a privileged party in its future development".

Port of Québec (1991)

In around 1988, the whole future of the waterfront of Old Quebec seemed to have already been cast in concrete: privatization of the site, construction of condominiums on the quays, restriction of public access to the sole right of being able to stroll along under the balconies of some high-rise housing. In fact, a total estrangement from the normal character and purposes of a fluvial port. In 1989, after repeated public demands – mainly through a *Coalition for the protection of the Old Port* comprising some seventy-five groups or organizations – the Canadian government set up an Advisory Committee tasked with assessing the potential of the area and making its findings public.

A Landmark Report

The report of the Advisory Committee took exactly the opposite view to the basic philosophy hitherto promulgated in Québec by the Old Port Land Corporation. It matched the public sentiment admirably as was consistent as well with the point of view of several independent experts. Six guiding principles were retained:

- 1- The area must remain accessible to the public.
- 2- The area is a maritime port and this function must prevail.
- 3- Any restoration work must respect the historical character of the site and enhance its architectural heritage.
- 4- The freedom of visual field in the direction of the river and of the city must be protected.
- 5- Any new project must harmonize with the pre-existing natural and urban environment.
- 6- The economic profitability of the site relies on a number of factors that cannot always be simply reduced to its market or tax value ."¹⁴

¹⁴ "Tomorrow? Report of the Consultative Committee ", op. cit., pp. 48, 51.

The Committee expressly recommended not doing anything that could obstruct or interfere with the port's activities, render the site less accessible to the public or detract from the site's heritage buildings. Above all it was necessary to avoid obstructing the unique panorama that casual strollers could enjoy. In a fundamental remark, the Committee deplored the fact that in Quebec, on the waterfront, "*it is as if the real estate lobby has hijacked the very notion of development and no other concepts of land use exist.*"

It is only gradually and at the price of constant efforts on the part of groups of citizens and natural regional leaders that these new concepts are influencing decisions concerning the waterfront.¹⁵ A very tangible reality, however, provokes reflection: the return of maritime commerce in front of the Old City.

The return of shipping in front of the Old City

On the occasion of the third International Conference on Cities and Ports that took place in Genoa in 1991, Professor Jacques Charlier, from the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, developed a very interesting point:

"The thesis I am going to develop runs counter to the most widespread current thinking that envisages the old docks of past centuries, or in fact of the beginning of this century, as a new urban frontier. I wish to stress that the decline in these port facilities, inherited from an often prestigious past, is not necessarily ineluctable and that, before adopting the extreme and irreversible measure of turning them into *Fishneylands* or dockominiums, it should be considered whether it would not be possible to give them a new breath of port oxygen. The urban requalification of an ancient port infrastructure should only intervene after all possibilities of regenerating the maritime functions have been exhausted".¹⁶

Otherwise, adds Professor Charlier, "*the interests of the port are sacrificed to those of the city, which only too often is translated to mean that private interests prevail over those of the community.*"

¹⁵ Cf. the Open letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, by Tomas Feininger, President, Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, April 6, 1994. – According to Ms. Jane Jacobs – the celebrated author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the ten most important urban projects in Toronto have to be attributed squarely to citizen's groups or associations: "...intellectually lively non-planners, usually politicians or grassroots activists. First of all, our official planning departments seem to be braindead in the sense that we cannot depend on them in any way, shape or form for providing intellectual leadership in addressing urgent problems involving the physical future of the city".

In *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, Canada, September 3, 1993. In the matter of waterfront reconversion, we emphasize the role played by such leaders as David Crombie in Toronto and Jean Garon in Québec City, the latter having been instrumental in setting up the Coalition for the Preservation of the Old Port.

¹⁶ Jacques Charlier, Professor, Institute of Geography, University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (*Personal correspondence*)

In Québec, after an urban interval of about twenty years, we are now witnessing a return of the maritime character to the historical city centre. The waterfront bordering the old city, having submitted prematurely to an effort at urban requalification during the Seventies, is today on the right road towards a gradual *remaritimization*. Normal port functions that were believed to have disappeared for ever are being rediscovered. The site is no longer an *old* port (meaning a *dead* port) but a normal, living port.

Already, annually, more than a million passengers from either micro-cruises excursions or international cruises embark or disembark in front of Old Québec, in that exiguous space located between the Place Royale and the Louise basin. Several Québec ship owners are looking closely at a new tourist product: excursion cruises whose economic importance is still relatively unknown, but which probably already surpasses that of the international cruises.

The North American cruise industry is tripling in volume every three years. In Québec, there is also a regional fluvial tourism that is increasing rapidly, thanks to the enterprising spirit of our ship owners and of the quality of a panorama internationally recognized and appreciated.

The long-lasting as well as phenomenal flourishing of all sorts of cruises in North America, the beauty of the fluvial landscape, the European cachet of Québec and the renewal of interest in fishing cruises to add to the others already offered, makes the exploitation of a new and important tourist niche possible, provided that the port infrastructures are adapted to the new needs of this industry and that the urban development of the city gives priority to the maritime users of the port.

In essence if not by definition, the maritime ports are part of those human activities subjected to a strong constraint of place. It is the permanence of the *transport* function (maritime or fluvial), or more generally of the port's vocation, that constitutes the fundamental criterion of management. Utilization and redevelopment of the port lands must be subordinated to this in the hope of preserving their full utilizable value for the community. The very existence of the ports, whose installation can only be effected at great expense in suitably propitious sites that exist in limited number, presupposes that they have been sufficiently protected by their nature against investments of circumstance. (Giraud)

The case of Québec proves that it is presumptuous to expect, after only a few years of observation, to make a definitive judgement on the uselessness of some or other port space. Already, in front of the Old City, certain port or maritime activities are finding themselves short of space or will certainly be prevented from developing, handicapped as they are by the lack of suitable quays too hastily dismissed as being superfluous.

Evolution of the quays

If the evolution of the quays bordering Québec over the last hundred years is examined closely, it can be seen that, gradually, the small and medium commercial vessels have but inexorably lost their docking facilities in front of the city, while the population in general has lost any meaningful access to the St. Lawrence River, which it still enjoyed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Recently, a vast esplanade was built over the river, in front of the city, with the aim of accommodating cinemas, museums, condominiums, offices and multi-storey parking lots. All of this real estate development shares a common denominator, that of not having any port or maritime function. Moreover, the unique basin existing on the site, the *Customs Wharf*, was filled in to become so-called agoras.

The ship-owners who own vessels of modest size find no advantage in these quays, which were designed more for providing an amenity for an urban development than for the docking of cruise ships. In spite of the fact that the port's present infrastructures were not conceived or designed for this type of maritime commerce and are, in fact, rather an obstacle to its development, the cruise and boat excursion industry is already generating millions of dollars of annual turnover directly or indirectly, and this economic activity impacts the whole region. The expansion of this new industry must be favoured by more appropriate port installations and an aggressive marketing strategy.¹⁷

Any redevelopment plan for Québec's waterfront should first examine certain issues.

- Are the present quays adapted to the present needs, and above all to the future needs, of a cruise industry in constant expansion?
- What about road and pedestrian access to the quays, traffic circulation and parking facilities, bearing in mind the constant increase in passenger traffic?
- In the critical moment of arrival in Québec after a long voyage, do the visitors have visual and physical access to Old Québec, the objective of their voyage?
- Are our cruise boats – that are themselves their own best advertising billboards – hidden from the public's view or dissimulated in the eyes of potential customers by buildings without any visual connection with the port, quays that are too high, or the absence of floating pontoons of adequate dimensions, like in Antwerp?
- What would the economic implications be if a large maritime basin is reconstructed right in front of the old city?
- Do the vehicles that transport passengers or merchandise to the boats have easy access to the quays?
- Would our ship operators see their businesses prosper more if their boats could operate in full view, in a basin accessible on all sides by efficient means of transport as well as by the general public? The number one rule in advertising is to show the product.

¹⁷ See reports "Cruise Passenger Terminal Assessment" and "Cruise Industry Marketing Plan", Port of San Francisco, Cruise Industry Task Force, 1988-1990.

- Should port planning take into consideration the likelihood some day of fishing operations on the River?
- Is the form and shape of our quays well suited to the crowds that are found at the place, from an aesthetic point of view and also from that of security, access to and from the river (access ramps, low tide quays, wide steps)?
- Are there at least basic services for the general public on the site (shelters, toilets, tables, benches, light refreshments)?
- How about illuminating at night the quays or the port infrastructures themselves, for example the elevators or even the walls of the Citadel nearby?

It surely would be in our best interest to ask ourselves whether our quays as they are shaped at the present time favour or inhibit the new maritime commerce that is trying to become established in front of the old city, in order to prepare for the necessary evolution of our port facilities to respond to the regular growth of local and regional maritime tourism, both fluvial and oceanic. This question should be debated before consideration of any other project whatever, in order to avoid the repetition of an error such as the building of the Naval Reserve School where a commercial quay was deprived from its normal functions, which was that of the transport of merchandise or passengers, to be given over to military ends.

Conclusion

Since a generation, the old European-style city founded almost four hundred years ago by the Frenchman Samuel de Champlain has seen its urban seaboard evolve in a sense that finds its philosophical and ethical source in certain North American examples of rather questionable, and often questioned, waterfronts.

However, America is large and other examples – this time admirable – could have served as inspiration. For more than a hundred years, the State of Illinois has jealously protected the urban shores of Chicago, a city that does not lack, however, entrepreneurs capable of exploiting for private use the vast waterfront areas which the population is now able to enjoy.¹⁸ Also, the extraordinary effort expended in Toronto, Canada, to improve the city's coastal areas, safeguarding them for the public's use and enjoyment, could act as inspiration for Quebec, capital of a neighbouring province.¹⁹ Finally, the Canadian government is applying in Montréal, in the same province of Québec, principles

¹⁸ Neil R. Fulton and Daniel A. Injerd, "*Lake Michigan and the Public Trust : its History and Application in Illinois*", Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Water Resources, Chicago, Illinois, 1984, 36 p.

¹⁹ For the Final Report of the Toronto Waterfront Regeneration Trust and all related information about the regeneration of Toronto's waterfront, please contact Ms. Charity Landon, Waterfront Regeneration Trust, 207 Queens Quay West, Suite 580, Box 129, Toronto, Ontario, M5J 1A7.

diametrically opposed to those it apparently finds suitable for Old Québec's waterfront, of which it is practically the sole owner and manager.²⁰

What about the future? The history of Québec abounds in curious twists. A little more than a hundred years ago, the city underwent a first *progress crisis* (Duval). The gates that gave access to the fortified city were demolished, some ancient city walls were destroyed, Krupp cannons being capable of reducing all that mineral architecture (including its residents) to smithereens by then. A breath of fresh air was finally penetrating in the Old City! Such developments, however, conjured up resolute opponents.

When public opinion, initially astonished, then mollified, changed its tack and disowned the theory of pure and hard commercial progress, the Middle Ages invaded the city: diagonal ribs, crenellations, machicolations, barbicanes and a whole range of hardware that had never existed before in Québec, now appeared. The author Faucher de Saint Maurice protested: "*In passing along these ramparts, one no longer dreams of the Count of Frontenac and of General Montcalm. One dreams of Bayard and Du Guesclin!*"

The great wisdom of Jacques Derrida

If the past can suggest to us ideas for the future, it is difficult not to give credence to Jacques Derrida in *Généralions d'une ville*: "*The catastrophe for a city plan is to want to resolve all the problems exhaustively in the span of one generation without allowing any time or space to future generations, precisely because 'those in the know', the architects and urban planners, believe they possess advance knowledge of how tomorrow's would should be...*"²¹



²⁰ Pierre Émond, President and Director General, Old Port of Montréal Corporation, "*Public consultation : a key role in the redevelopment of the Old Port of Montréal*", AIVP International Conference, Montréal, October 1993, pp. 7-8.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, « *Généralions d'une ville* », in *Lettre internationale*, Paris, France, Summer 1992, p. 25.