

OPEN CALL

Urban Tides:

Waterfront Cities on the
Road to Climate Neutrality

Deadline for Abstracts
15th April



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NTNU

Within the framework of the Horizon Europe project Re-Value, Revaluing urban quality & climate neutrality in European Waterfront Cities, the Cultural Heritage Studies programme of UNG, jointly with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, invites contributions from experts, project partners, universities, and associated institutions that address waterfront and port city contexts.

Submissions are invited to address the challenges contemporary urban waterfronts are facing on their road to climate neutrality, such as restrictive regulatory frameworks and governance conditions, efficiency of mobility and accessibility, social and cultural activation and the transition toward circular and resource-conscious urban systems.

Contributions focusing on the waterfront of our Re-Value project partner, the City of Rijeka, as a key case study, are particularly welcome.

Selected papers will be published in a peer-reviewed volume edited jointly by UNG and NTNU. The publication is open-access and has no article processes charges.

On the Waterfront

The term waterfront describes a specific urban condition, a city, visually and functionally impacted by a large body of water. And yet, for most of urban history, this label would have proved redundant. In fact, historic cities were by definition waterfront. Proximity to water was a necessity, as first settlements emerged where water was available for drinking, fishing, washing, irrigation, transport, defense and ritual. Water was not considered a lifestyle asset but a fundamental sine qua non of survival. Water was sacred, strategic, productive and deadly, only sometime (but rarely) romantic.

Over time, the relationship of the city's inhabitants with its waterfront fundamentally changed. Rivers were straightened, embanked and expedited, wetlands drained for agriculture, floodplains turned into food production areas, while industry colonized the water bank. The 19th and 20th centuries turned many urban waterfronts into logistical backyards, spaces of extraction, heavy industry and pollution.

In the wake of nature's destruction and the diminished necessity for water proximity, the notion of the waterfront could assume meaning within a distinctly urban context. Post-industrial decline opened vast tracts of harbors and docklands to redevelopment. Former shipyards were converted into promenades, cultural quarters and real estate frontiers. The waterfront re-emerged the urban consciousness as a social and scenic amenity.

In a time when climate neutrality is both political mandate and planetary necessity, the waterfront resurfaces as a site of urgency. It is branded as resilience corridor, blue-green infrastructure, carbon sink and leisure landscape. The proliferation of coastal and riverside settlements from spaces of intensive productivity to tourist destinations has the social dimensions of our urban water systems.

Re-Value

[Re-Value](#) is a Horizon Europe research project focused on water-shaped urban territories, that are undergoing systemic transformations as environmental, social, and economic pressures increase. Nine European waterfront cities have committed to exploring how to balance climate neutrality and urban quality by rethinking their relationship with water.

Waterfronts have long been shaped by shifting conditions of administration, production, and ownership. Over time, these transformations have resulted produced in complex urban landscapes in which governance and regulation, public access, economic activity, and ecological resilience are deeply intertwined. As cities renegotiate their relationship with water, these edges become sites where competing priorities must be continuously balanced and redefined.

Recognizing the complexity of these urban environments, Re-Value places particular emphasis on the role of local knowledge, lived experience, and collective imagination in shaping future trajectories for urban transformation. Meaningful transition requires participatory processes that bring together citizens, practitioners, researchers, and public institutions.

Within the project, the University of Nova Gorica, through its Cultural Heritage Studies Department, is committed to developing and supporting these approaches. This call for papers emerges from that commitment, inviting a diverse range of experts and organizations to contribute to an open exploration of the waterfront and its possible futures.

Rijeka: A Case Study

Rijeka, located at the northern Adriatic coast, has historically been shaped by logistics rather than spectacle. Unlike the region's tourist towns such as Opatija, with their boutique beaches and quiet, walkable streets, Rijeka grew as an industrial powerhouse.

Positioned between the Adriatic Sea and steep terrain, cut by major transport corridors, it has historically served as a hub for people, goods and ideas. The regulation of its port, the river mouth of Rječina, and coastal infrastructures have shaped the relationships between water and land. Today Rijeka's waterfront is at a turning point. With projects like the Žabica bus terminal, the sports marina in Sušačka Luka, and the Delta park already underway, the coast is being redefined in terms of use, access, and public life. The city is planning for the future of the Rječina River, the Dead Channel, and a port that are inaccessible to public, while simultaneously managing an extensive fund of industrial heritage, transforming worn out warehouses and factories into spaces for cultural, social, and ecological purposes. Public access and leisure along the coast are constrained by car congestion, built-up edges, and heavily engineered waterways. However, there are new possibilities for parks, promenades, beaches, and recreational spaces. Mobility, both on land and water, remains a pressing concern, as does the need to adapt to environmental challenges and climate risks.

Alongside official projects, smaller civic initiatives are active but operate with limited means. Local associations and informal groups organize clean-ups along the Rječina, temporary uses of vacant industrial buildings, public discussions on port development, and small-scale cultural programs that open parts of the waterfront to residents, even

if only briefly. Tourism and cultural events continue to shape the character of the waterfront, highlighting the needs of local permanent life and seasonal activities.

In this critical moment we welcome researchers, practitioners, and students to join the conversation and contribute to shaping the future of waterfronts.

Key Topics

The theme Urban Tides invites contributions that investigate the complex, layered, and continually changing condition of our relationship with water in urban spaces. Contributors are invited (but not limited) to address the suggested topics.

Urban Solarium

Recalling the importance of urban beaches as spaces for locals and tourists, highlighted though potential frictions and social cohesion bonds. The waterfront is not only a site of industry or ecology, it is a powerful social condenser. The “Urban Solarium” theme reclaims the fundamental human need for sun, light, air, and proximity to water. It focuses on the constructed or reclaimed urban beach from the lidos of the early 20th century to the temporary “beach bars” of today, as a microcosm of broader urban dynamics.

Artificial Grounds

Reflecting on the meaning of soil and ground cover in artificial landscapes. This theme probes the very substance of the post-industrial waterfront. Much of Europe’s port and industrial heritage is built on land that is not “natural” but rather “made”—a palimpsest of dredged sediment, demolition rubble, and industrial waste.

Tragic Industry

Thoughts on the vacancy of industrial complexes and infrastructures in the contemporary waterfronts. The monumental cranes, warehouses, and silos of Europe’s

waterfronts stand as silent witnesses to a lost era of production. While often framed as a “tragedy” of economic decline, this vacancy also presents a unique opportunity. This theme moves beyond simple preservation to explore the adaptive reuse and re-programming of these infrastructures.

Uphill Battle

Notes on dynamic terrains and capillary tissues of the “historic” towns and challenges of mobility, also through the urban blue surfaces. Many European waterfront cities are defined by a dramatic topography, where the historic center perches on a hill and the waterfront lies at its feet. The connection between these two parts is often a critical threshold. This theme explores the vertical and horizontal tissues that link the “historic town” to the water.

Boiling Water

Investigating the history and current ecosystem reality of water bodies. This theme shifts the focus from the land to the water itself. It calls for a deep investigation into the water bodies that define the waterfront: rivers, seas, canals, and basins. This is not just about water as a visual amenity, but as a complex, living ecosystem with a history of pollution and a future of potential recovery through design with nature.

Disobeying Heroes

Reference to legislation frameworks in the context of alternative governance models. Large-scale waterfront redevelopment is often stifled by rigid, sectoral legislation (e.g., separate laws for ports, environment, and urban planning). This theme explores instances where designers, communities, or local authorities have “disobeyed”, creatively reinterpreted or reformed these frameworks to achieve more holistic and sustainable outcomes. These are the “heroes” who challenge the status quo.

Submission guidelines

Paper length

Full paper length of approximately 20.000 - 30.000 characters with spaces (including footnotes and references).

Graphic and Visual Material

Diagrams, maps, photographs, drawings or other visual content are strongly encouraged where relevant. Visual material should be appropriately captioned and referenced. Text authors are responsible for securing image rights where applicable.

Abstract

An abstract of 300 words, clearly outlining the contribution to the theme.

Referencing style

All submissions should follow the Chicago Manual of Style.

Previously published work

Papers that build upon or critically rework prior research, projects or case studies are welcome, provided they offer a clearly articulated new perspective within the framework of this call.

Disciplinary scope

The call is open to students, scholars and practitioners on the fields of architecture, urban studies, cultural heritage, environmental studies, history, planning and related fields. We particularly welcome submissions that not only present rigorous research but also leverage the power of visual communication through maps, diagrams, photographs, and design proposals, to convey complex ideas about the evolving relationship between cities and their water edges.

Submission format

All materials should be submitted in digital format. Every author must submit:

a text file (.doc or .rtf) which must include a title, name and surname of the author(s), Department/School, name of the institution/affiliation, country and e-mail address, the abstract, 4-5 key words used for indexing and the full paper, including captions of the figures with credits;

a folder containing all the images (.jpg or .png).

Contributors are invited to use the provided template for the submission of abstracts and full papers.

Publication Timeline

Call for Paper Launch:

11th March 2026

Abstract Submission Deadline:

15th April 2026

Abstract Review and Notification:

until 29th May 2026

Full Paper Submission Deadline (First Draft):

31st July 2026

Peer Review of Full Papers:

31st July - 5th September 2026

Submission of Revised Paper Deadline (Final Version):

30th September 2026

For the submission of abstract and papers, as well as any further questions regarding the call, contributors are kindly invited to contact urbantides@ung.si.



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Be part of the conversation.

