

Interreg

South Baltic



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Creating new Maritime Experience Points &
marketing narratives for land tourists to
renew the maritime destination profile of
the South Baltic area

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Transforming small harbours into inclusive “Maritime Experience Points” for land tourists – How to create authentic “new harbour life” that is appealing to both visitors & locals?



Background: point of departure & potential

- The **South Baltic area** is a coastal tourism hotspot with more than **350 smaller harbours**
- **Maritime experiences** in the harbours are **essential parts** of the (holiday) stays & a main motivation to visit the region
- Land tourists visit the harbours at different occasions, e.g.
 - in the evenings
 - during bike trips
 - when the weather is bad
 - as „recovery“ from beach life etc.
 - ...

Background: Main hypothesis

Authenticity of the harbour life **matters** for visitors!

- **Nice** maritime **experiences** in harbours are e.g.
 - **Boards / exhibitions** showing & explaining **historical** harbour life
 - Visiting a **museum vessel** that is moored for good
 - **But even nicer: Recent, still ongoing** maritime **activities**, e.g.:
 - **Fishermen at work** (e.g. unloading, repairing nets, selling fish)
 - **Vessels** being repaired or docked out at a **shipyard**
 - **Larger cargo or passenger ships** leaving the port
 - **Sailors entering** the harbour **after a demanding trip**
 - Of course: „**Harbour cinema**“ (= little dramas while mooring)
- > Such situations **immediately lead to crowds** that are watching...

Background : Challenge & opportunities

Where can visitors find **appealing & authentic harbour life**?

- So far: **Generated „en passant“** by ongoing coastal fishery, short sea shipping & traditional commercial activities in the harbours
 - > But **these activities are vanishing** from smaller ports in the SBA!
- Future: **Transformation > new activities & protagonists**, e.g.
 - **Marinas** for leisure boaters in former fishing harbours
 - **Restaurants** or flats directly at the quay
 - **Art events** or concerts using the harbour as appealing scenery
 - **Saunas** for guests & locals **with a harbour view**
 - **Diving** platforms & swimming pools **for local youngsters**
 - ...
- > Such new **activities** may be appealing for visitors, too!

Background: Risks

But: The **transformation** (aka: waterfront redevelopment) **implies** also potential **conflicts & challenges** in terms of **authenticity**, i.e.:

- Using ports as „**appealing sceneries**“ (e.g. restaurants, flats, art) **vs.** maintaining port-specific, **waterborne activities** (e.g. marina, SUP)
 - **Opening** to the harbour to land-site visitors **vs. safeguarding** (protected) **space for** genuine, sea-side users (e.g. pilots, boaters)
 - **Exogenous** & faster transition (driven e.g. real estate company) **vs. endogenous** & slower transformation (driven by local inhabitants)
 - Maximising **tourism effects** **vs.** keeping harbour as **focal point for local community life** (e.g. diving platform for local youngsters)
 - Harbour as „**history museum**“ **vs.** participation **ongoing local life**
- > **Proper balance is crucial** for durable attractiveness & local support

Background: Arising questions

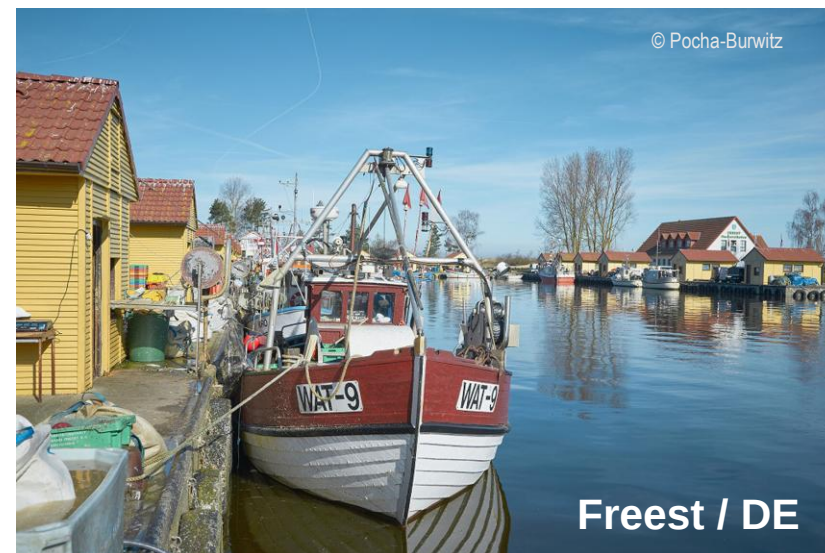
Issues to be addressed in order to find the way forward, e.g.:

- **Which way to take** in the development of small harbours & the future profiling of the South Baltic area as maritime destination?
- **What** kind & extent of **waterfront redevelopment** is possible **without loosing authenticity & support** of the local inhabitants?
- **What creates** the **stronger selling point**?
 - **Harbours** that are **specifically tailored to land tourists** (only)?
 - **Or: Harbours** allowing to observe **genuine waterborne activities & become part of authentic local life** also in the future?
- **Can** the emerging „**new harbour life**“ generate effective narratives & help to **reinforce** the **maritime destination profile** of the SBA?
- ...

Background: It's a "fine line"...

What is still
authentic?

What is
already too
much?



Background: It's a "fine line"...

What can be a „new authenticity“?

What would be too much?



Abandoned fishery
harbour in Hörte / SE

© Pocha-Burwitz

Overall goal & approach

Overall goal: To **renew** the **maritime destination profile** of the **South Baltic area** in the face of the decline of the traditional economic activities in the ports by:

- Turning smaller harbours into **inclusive „Maritime Experience Points“** with proper balance between the interests & demands of genuine (new & old) water users, land tourists & inhabitants
 - Developing & launching a **novel marketing approach** around inclusive & authentic **„new harbour life“** that is emerging
- ... in order to **maintain & reinforce** the **attractiveness of the region** for land-side visitors & (holiday) guests

In other words...

To find the **new harbour life**:

- activities that may **replace fishery** and fill the “empty space”
- fill the harbours with new **authentic, genuinely harbour-borne attractions** that are carried by “real”, **local harbour users**
- create **alternative** to turning harbours into „museum-like” places while keeping their **martime atmosphere**

New harbour life

- It is not a single activity, but a **melting pot**. A vibrant mix of:
 - Traditional and modern **maritime uses**
 - **Community** gatherings and daily life
 - Business, recreation, art
- It is **layered** and **ongoing** – develops over time, not all at once

New harbour life

- Authentic **new harbour life** cannot be simply planned back into the harbour > but we can shape **conditions** for it to emerge
- To **coordinate** the transformation of the harbour, stakeholder cooperation is necessary:
 - To support and facilitate cooperation between **companies, authorities, and local community**, find synergies & lower bureaucratic barriers where possible
 - To initiate dialogue and balance the perspectives into a coherent development vision > walking the fine line between **organic, bottom-up activities** and **strategic, long-term vision**
- Harbours need **keyholders**, and not **gatekeepers!**

Maritime uses

- There is more to **maritime bussines** than fishery:
 - building and maintenance of offshore wind farms, cable laying vessels, towing services, marine construction, dredging, environmental response boats, marine rescue, survey and inspection vessels, aquaculture maintenance...
- The presence of **recreational boats** also does not go unnoticed: sailing boats, motor boats, private, charter...
- Both **working** and **leisure boats** are **genuine** users of the harbours – and hustle they bring about is no less appealing to watch than fishing boats

Traditional vessels are a living proof of maritime heritage. Some of them may be moored for museum-like display, but those that are still operating create a bridge between the traditional crafts and modern boating.

Holbæk harbour hosts around 20 historic vessels



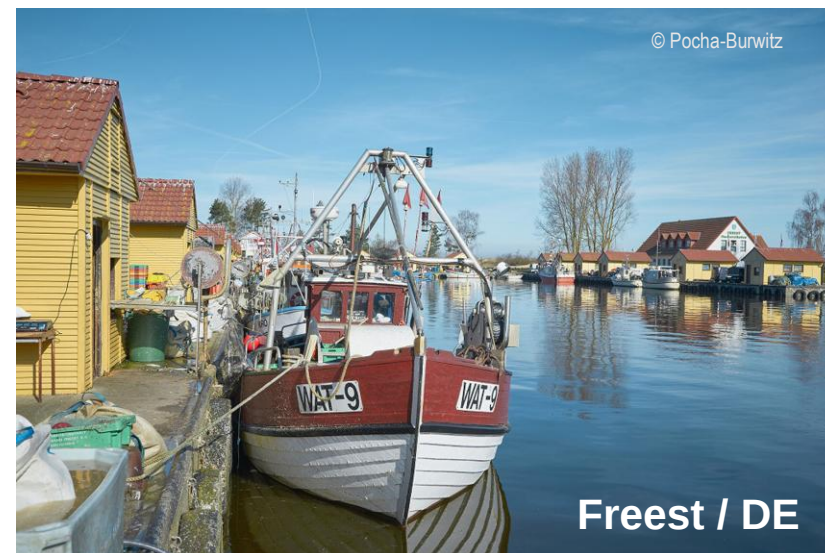
On **sail training vessels**, trainee crews bring about specific commotion of activities related to more traditional shipping hierarchy and “romantic” sense of adventure. These ships often offer possibility to visit. There is always something going on there: bosun’s works on deck, and trainees keeping harbour watches 24/7.



It's a "fine line"...

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Water sports centre



Watersports club in Rødvig harbour

Basic facilities for water activities: kayaking, SUP, surfing... A place that serves as equipment storage, changing room, and gathering point. First of all a club for local community, if relevant can serve as a basis for equipment rental.



SUP in Sønderborg

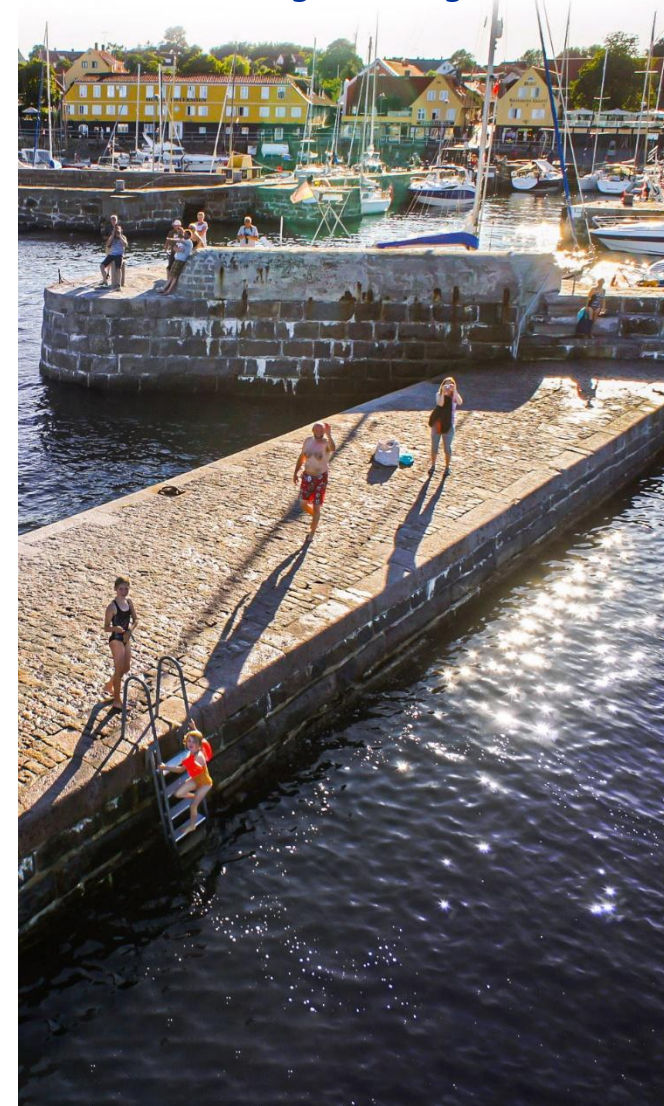
Harbour swimming



Havnebadet, the harbour bath in Aarhus



Swimming & diving in Svaneke



Accommodation



Food & drinks

Gastronomy in the new harbour life isn't about haute cuisine or curated menus—it's about honest meals made locally, spiced with the unique harbour vibe.



Anni'kage & café: local café with a view in Kalvehave harbour



Restaurant "Dreverna"

Open harbour

- **Operational harbour spaces** (maritime services, boatyards, and workshops) can be blended with **recreation, culture and community-oriented elements** by using smart design and integrated planning:
 - Designated walking and cycling paths separated from traffic
 - Street furniture and landscaping for guiding pedestrian flow
- To allow locals & tourists to still be around without interrupting the work or interfering with **no-go zones**

Temporary spaces

- Transformation takes time. And during that process, empty spaces and unused buildings can create a negative impression.
- That's why **temporary uses** are so important:
 - Pop-up markets or cafés
 - Outdoor exhibitions or art installations
 - Community events or workshops
- Short-term activations keep the harbour lively, visible, and inviting — and they can even test ideas for long-term offers.

Harbour aesthetics

It is **not only design** and architecture – but how the space feels & invites people in

- **How we want to see the harbour:** *vivid, layered, textured, tangled,, perfectly imperfect, real, raw,, place shaped by time, frayed, charm in clutter, patchwork of past, present and future, organic, cosy...*
- **As opposed to:** *state-of-the-art, sterile, curated, orchestrated, artificial, museum-like, sanitized, polished...*

Design approach

- Site-specific for particular location: responds and harmonizes with the surroundings. Focused on what is already there. Prioritizes fitting in over standing out.
- „Meant to be there“, reusing or adapting existing materials or features.
- Integrated – effortless, as if it was always there

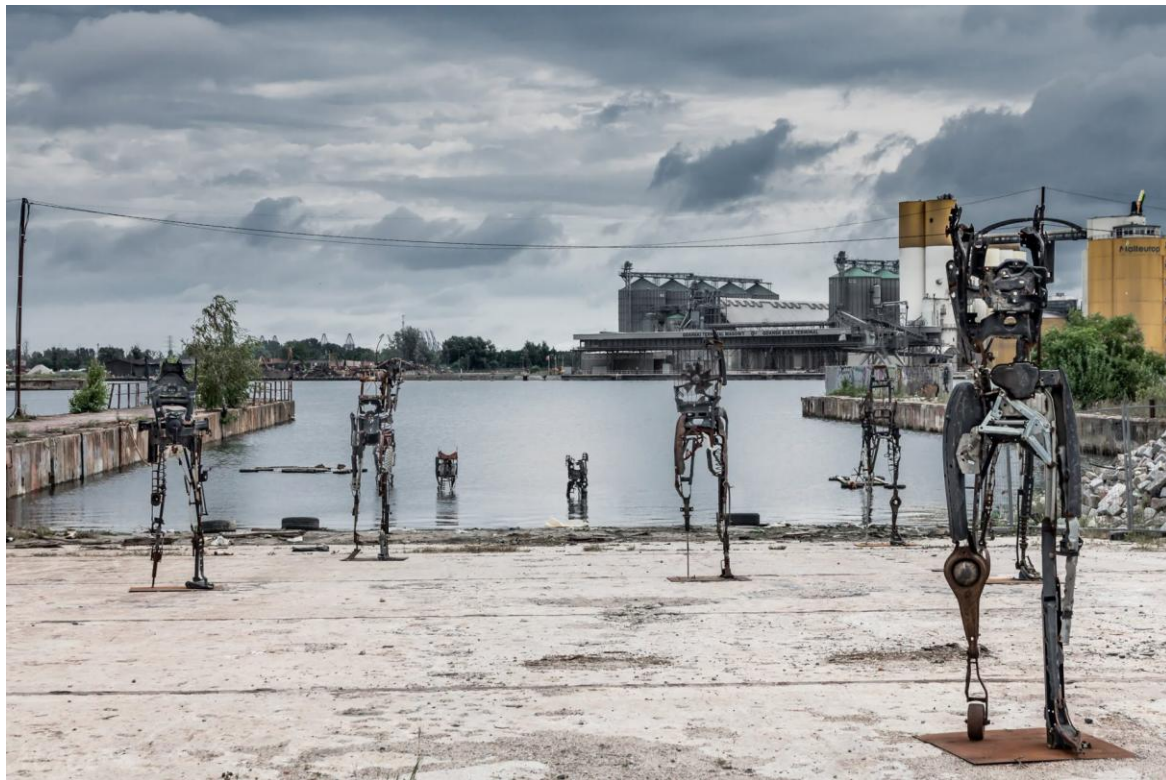
**Reused
Upcycled
Weathered
Second-hand
Function>form**



100cznia, Gdańsk

- Apart from the old buildings where the shipyard workshops were located, there is no permanent construction. The facilities are located in cargo containers.
- The tables and planters are upcycled IBC totes.

Art space



Summary & conclusion

- **New harbour life** is not something we can simply plan or design into existence - it's a **living mix** of traditional and modern uses, work and leisure, locals and visitors
- There is a **thin line** between **authenticity** and **staging**. It doesn't have to be perfect — it has to be **real**
- Transformation doesn't happen through a **single masterplan**, but through smaller, **modular changes** - grounded in cooperation, dialogue, and testing. It is about **balance, authenticity, and participation**.
- ...



Questions & comments



Thank you!