



# Making it Collaborative

## CASE # 12.4

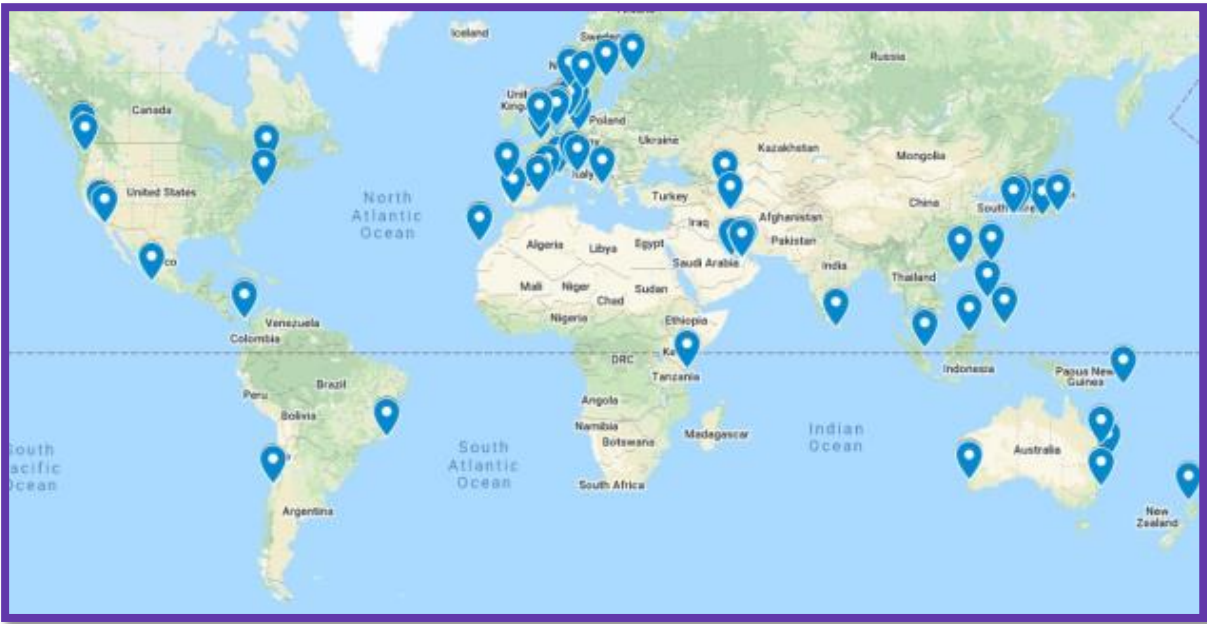
### CREATING ECOSYSTEMS FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT – THE WORLD PORTS SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM (WPSP)



#### THE CASE – AN SDG CHARTER

On 14 March 2018, the World Ports Sustainability Program (WPSP) Charter was signed by the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), the International Association of Cities and Ports (AIVP) and the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure (PIANC), representing 1,500 ports worldwide (see map). In line with the UN Sustainability Agenda and guided by the 17 SDGs, the WPSP was initiated in the shared ambition to enhance and coordinate future sustainability efforts of port community actors worldwide, and to foster international cooperation with partners in the supply chain, governments and societal stakeholders. The WPSP aims “to demonstrate global leadership of ports in contributing to the SDGs” by empowering “port community actors worldwide to engage with business, governmental and societal stakeholders in creating sustainable added value for the local communities and wider regions in which their ports are embedded.” The platform thereby serves as a “think-tank and breeding ground” that is to foster and support new collaborative projects.

The approach epitomizes a typical partnership approach based on an ecosystem (level 4) angle (see section 8.4.4 under [a]). The logic for this approach and the reason for embracing the SDGs was formulated as follows: “Ports are nodal points in global supply chains. At the same time, they are embedded in local and regional communities. As a result, ports must respond to worldwide, regional and local challenges, such as climate change, mobility, digitalization, migration and social integration, whilst adding value to international supply chains.” The WPSP acknowledges the importance of developing a ‘resilient infrastructure’, for which the SDGs are deemed to provide vital guidance.



**ECOSYSTEM PORT DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES AND THE USE OF SDGs**

A port-city ecosystem lives by the well-being of its inhabitants and is based on the premise that prosperity flows from the stocks of tangible and intangible capital which the ecosystem provides: natural capital, industrial (working) capital, human capital, social capital, cultural capital and creative capital (Jansen, 2020). The invisibility of ecosystems as global public goods – oceans, air, land, forests – has led to ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, and negative impacts on human livability. For this reason, ecosystems need to be at the core of any approach to achieving the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals (TEEB, 2010). Ecosystems, as embedded in the SDG framework, distinguish three layers: ‘the economy’ is built upon ‘the society’, while society is built on ‘the biosphere’ (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2020). One of the significant challenges for ports is how to co-exist with their societies while preserving the natural ecosystem. Therefore, SDG-targets should not be considered separately, but instead be looked at from a systems perspective. A nexus approach aims to enhance the resilience of coastal communities by inducing companies to pursue a portfolio of activities that does not consider the SDGs separately, but rather as intertwined sets of targets.

The role of **Port Development Companies (PDCs)** as ‘orchestrators’ of the local ecosystem – including partnerships – in the port is crucial in that regard. PDCs are in a pivotal position

when it comes to sustainable development ambitions, for various reasons: [1] their physical location in coastal ecosystems has a direct impact on the entire ecosystem (economic, ecological, and social); [2] their (meso-level) institutional position bridging policy formulation on a macro-level and company strategies on the micro-level; [3] port construction projects directly impact the ecosystem. Many PDCs are making efforts to move from ‘conflict’ to ‘collaboration’ with their societal stakeholders so as to build up more resilient ecosystems, and depart from their ‘reactive’ attitude towards issues. Many ports are searching for new hybrid governance constellations locally and globally – alongside one another and together. The SDG agenda helps in that regard, as it provides a common set of global goals as well as a shared common language.

**WHAT DO THE FIRST EFFORTS SHOW (2018 – 2022)?**

Two years after the initial launch of the WPSP, the Platform counted a portfolio of 120 port-related sustainability projects from 71 ports, covering 38 countries and five continents, with climate, energy, community outreach and port-city dialogue on top of ports’ agendas (WPSP, 2020). More recently, the program has been focusing on the design and implementation of technical installations, infrastructures, information systems and monitoring systems in order to become ‘cleaner’, more energy efficient and to make steps towards decarbonization (‘net zero’ ambition), with an increasing emphasis on developing a hydrogen infrastructure in ports. From the port infrastructure engineering projects, we can draw the conclusions that port authorities who have pledged to contribute to the SDGs, are increasingly applying ‘build with nature’-engineering practices, thereby making an effort to restore or conserve the coastal ecosystem.

Research into the first phase of implementation of the SDG agenda (Jansen, 2020b) shows that PDCs have been primarily engaged in those SDGs that contribute to the economic layer of the port city ecosystem (Table 1). A considerable number of projects focus on *internally actionable* ‘do no harm’ engagement to the SDGs (see section 10.5.2 and Tool #10.1), for which ‘in-house’ engineering capabilities are of particular relevance. Additionally, PDCs are starting to engage in *externally actionable* ‘do no harm’ projects which aim to nudge their direct stakeholders in the right direction. In those projects, PDCs are exerting their ‘license to influence’ to other companies on the execution level. On the ‘do good’ side, certain projects show that PDCs are increasingly taking responsibility for restoring the relationship with their coastal ecosystems: habitat restoration, coral reef and wetlands conservation and building inclusive partnerships with (indigenous) communities.

**Table 1: Exemplary SDG projects initiated within the WPSP database (2020)**

Strategic intention of project	Ecosystems value	Actionability	SDG-targets		
			Economy	Society	Ecology/ biosphere
■ On-shore supply for ships	Air quality	<i>Do no harm</i>	9.1	12.6; 3.9	13.1
■ Protecting the coral reef while	Habitat for species	<i>Do no harm</i>	9.1	8.1	14.5; 15.9

constructing new port infrastructure					
■ Ecological recovery project	Habitat for species	<i>Do no harm</i>	9.1	12.7	13.1; 15.9
■ Environmental monitoring for cleaner ships	Climate regulation	<i>Do no harm</i>	9.1	7.3; 3.9; 12.6	13.1;
■ Route optimization systems & software	Route for transportation	<i>Do no harm</i>	9.1	3.9	13.1
■ Hydrogen installations	Energy provision	<i>Do good</i>	9.1	12.6	13.1
■ Empowerment of native communities	Educational values	<i>Do good</i>	8.5	12.4 16.7	15.9
■ Cruise terminal construction	Recreational values	<i>Do good</i>	9.1 8.9	7.2	
■ Community outreach program	Recreational values	<i>Do good</i>	8.3	12.7; 4.7	14.5
■ Community benefits commitment	Cultural heritage values	<i>Do good</i>	8.5	12.4	16.7

Sources: Jansen, 2020b; WPSP database

## CASE QUESTIONS:

- What is the ambition of the World Port Sustainability Program? To what extent are Port Development Companies (PDCs) in a position to contribute to the SDGs?
- Business model: Why is it essential for a PDC – as a facilitator of trade and transport and as a favorable location for heavy industry – to comprehend an ecosystems approach and develop a related business model, if it wants to make an effort to contribute to the SDGs?
- Partnering: What do you think is the reason why partnerships and strategic stakeholder dialogue are integral components for the success of projects that address one or multiple SDGs?
- Who are the primary partners of the PDCs?
- Leadership: In networks of PDCs around the world, one of the strategies of leading PDCs is to establish ‘consortiums of the willing’. Why do you think PDCs choose to cooperate rather than to compete on matters relating to the SDGs?
- What possible ‘areas of tension’ and conflicts of interest do you see when PDCs try to realize a ‘double objective’ of contributing both to economic as well as societal objectives? Is that even feasible in a business where international trade and multinationals dominate?

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## FURTHER READING

WPSP (2018). *World Ports Sustainability Program Charter*, <https://sustainableworldports.org/wp-content/uploads/wpssp-declaration.pdf>.

WPSP (2020). *World Ports Sustainability Report 2020*. <https://sustainableworldports.org/wp-content/uploads/WORLD-PORTS-SUSTAINABILITY-REPORT-2020-FIN.pdf>.

World Ports Projects database: <https://sustainableworldports.org/portfolio/type/port-projects/>

Jansen, M. (2020). “Port innovation ecosystem, a symbiosis of capital; a case study of Rotterdam”, IAME Conference 'Sustainable Development of Shipping and Trade', Hong Kong.

Jansen, M. (2020b). “Ports and the Sustainable Development Goals: an ecosystems approach – initial version”, International SDG Research Symposium, Utrecht. [https://globalgoalsproject.eu/globalgoals2020/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GlobalGoals2020\\_Jansen.pdf](https://globalgoalsproject.eu/globalgoals2020/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GlobalGoals2020_Jansen.pdf)

Jansen, M. (forthcoming). Ports and the Sustainable Development Goals: an ecosystems approach.

Jansen, M., Van Tulder, R. & Afrianto, R. (2018). “Exploring the conditions for inclusive port development: the case of Indonesia”, *Maritime Policy & Management*, 45(7): 924-943. DOI: 10.1080/03088839.2018.1472824.

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