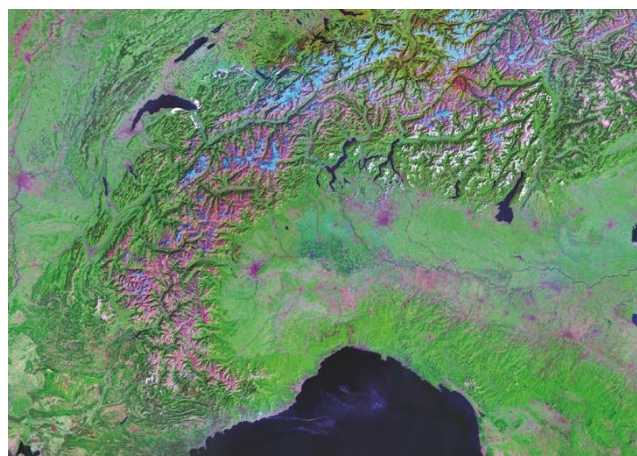


ABSTRACT

Ports are sophisticated infrastructures that have contributed to disrupting the original state of places according to a mechanism that leads from alterations to project. Port cities generate in their environments a liminal condition which usually characterizes the urban-port area that, located along and across the common administrative border, can be recognized as an urban-port *threshold*. This threshold generates a liminal space which is configured as a third state with respect to the city or the port properly understood. It is a system of linear convergence/divergence that marks the beginning and the end of the capabilities of the Port Authority. This threshold does not have a standard configuration but is shaped into different geometries and constituted by a constellation of artefacts and architectures belonging to both sides and in different state of abandonment/disposal/disuse. The geometries of the urban-port thresholds generate different governance patterns which, in the current framework, are particularly influenced by evolving global phenomena. Among these, the port clustering (effective in many European cases but introduced in Italy only in 2016) produces a complex polycentric conurbation, a *City of the Cluster*. Composed by several ports and cities, this new urban-port reality emerges to be responsible for new relational opportunities in the decades to come.



Governance Patterns on the Urban-Port Threshold. The Emergence of the *City of the Cluster*

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KEYWORDS

Port Systems; Clusters; Urban-Port Threshold; Heritage; Italy

Governance Patterns on the Urban-Port Threshold. The Emergence of the *City of the Cluster*

Introduction

A forma urbis in progress

As points of intersection between land and water, port cities are born and develop according to a dual nature: the terrestrial one linked to stability and possession, and the marine one connected, instead, to the desire of discovery, expansion and encounters across the sea.

Ports are one of the oldest urban structures whose installation, in most cases, has led to the creation of an urban settlement. To speak of a port city means to speak in a comprehensive way of the city, since – as Rinio Bruttomesso stated – port city is an interesting case of *urban synecdoche*¹. At the origins of maritime trade, and for many centuries, ports rose within the city as an *urban public architecture*: this was the era of the port emporium where the spaces of life and commerce coincided and breakwaters were nothing but the continuation of city walls in the water (Pavia and Di Venosa, 2012).

With the advent of mechanization and standardization in the commercial sector, during the twentieth century, the evolution of commercial logics and the progressive dismantling and restructuring of port areas, the concept of a port city became increasingly confused. In that period, actions that cancelled out a potential interaction by denying the port's figure within the city – even while they re-established the connection between the historical centres and the sea – spread. This approach solidified the idea that, in order to transform urban spaces near the port, was essential to replace and/or remove the port, instead of imagining a different project between the two entities (Porfyriou, Sepe, 2017).

Later, metamorphoses of global impact guided the evolution of the urban-port organism, calling into question the definition of the port identity. According to these processes, it seems now necessary to update the old dichotomy city-port outlining a new vision in which the port city is a *forma urbis* in progress, a plural, hybrid and open figure affected by the speed of changing processes and influenced by the many factors that are embodied in its territorial palimpsest.

More than other disciplines, maritime geography has addressed the evolution of port cities, recording the variety of configurations to provide a comparative tool of study and interpretation, at least in the European context².

Like all cataloguing, however, even the definition of port city is not impervious to time nor to the evolution of the relationship that binds the two parts and the two territories. In fact, between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the dynamism and uncertainty of the commercial world combined with the repercussions of the global economy profoundly changed the relationship between city and port, triggering an irreversible fracture in the development of the two poles.

The impact of these metamorphoses – some of which are still ongoing – motivates this study to question the effectiveness of the concept of the port city and, above all, to assess if the ambivalent quality that is found today in the urban-port connection is still reflected in this definition.

¹ A *synecdoche* (from ancient greek συνεκδοχή «include together») is a figure of speech. It represents a word or a phrase in which a part of something is used to refer to the whole of it.

² Reference is to the research of different maritime geographers such as James Bird, Brian S. Hoyle, Cèsar Ducruet and Rhoads Murphey.

Theoretically, the proposal of this study is to move *beyond* the port city, namely to question the possibility of a conceptual overcoming of this figure, both to measure its terminological incisiveness and to determine its value in terms of urban planning.

To do that, the first step is establishing a point of observation for the research by recognizing the existence of a specific urban-port commingling, the result of the convergence (or divergence) between the city and the port (see: The Point of Observation. *Infrastructure, landscape, borderscape*). With this in mind, the areas dedicated to port activities cannot be considered mere functional sectors, but instead are vital components of a single apparatus and constitutive parts of an evolving organism, characterized by a diverse urbanity, a sort of *portuality*³.

Consequently, the principal objective of the study is to investigate the contemporary port cities through the analysis of the different governance patterns detected on the urban-port threshold. Methodologically, a specific field of research is individuated, a recurring and universal territory placed along and across the legal limit between city and port. For this purpose, a set of interpretative maps is also elaborated (see: A Field of Research. *The Urban-Port Threshold*).

As main objective and, then, outcome, this study aims to collect new ideas by stressing the conversation especially towards the port-city-territory model arose with the advent of the port clustering process (see: Objective. *The City of the Cluster* and Conclusion. *Port Clustering and Governance Patterns. Governance and Planning. Some European (clustered) cases. The Western-Ligurian-Sea City of the Cluster*). This scenario, in fact, represents an unprecedented field of research as well as potentially crucial for the future of the contemporary port city.

The Point of Observation

Infrastructure, landscape, borderscape

Ports are sophisticated infrastructures that have contributed to unsettle the original state of places according to a mechanism that leads from alterations (i.e. territorial, environmental, economic) to the project, firstly by disrupting the territories and then bringing them back enriched with new uses and meanings. In this process, the port component adds an intermediary and structural feature to urban settlement and makes it possible to argue that the *cities with ports* are extraordinary urban infrastructures endowed with a dual identity (Figure 1).

Indisputably, ports have infrastructural characteristics: they are equipment that mediate between forces that are often antithetical and that guarantee the endurance of territories by forming an apparent unity.

Talking about the relationship between infrastructure and urbanism, Stan Allen affirmed that the concept of *infrastructural urbanism* can outline a new model which helps to understand and address spatial transformations by giving new meaning to architecture.

Issues such as mobility and transport, in general, have always been part of traditional architectural skills (before the separation of design disciplines) and, over the years, have been used to deal with problems on a large scale. According to Allen, these specialties can be claimed in the field of architecture and implemented with the new technologies available. In other words, he proposed to strategically exploit the typical characteristics of infrastructures (detailed design, standard elements, repeated structures etc.) facilitating «an architectural approach to urbanism» (Allen, 1999).

In this 'urbanistic' vision of infrastructures, port systems become complex mechanisms that, thanks to this, take possession of the typical characteristics of the infrastructures.

³ Reference is to the PhD research '*Beyond Port City. The Condition of Portuality and the Threshold's Field*' discussed by author Beatrice Moretti at Department Architecture and Design, Polytechnic School of Genoa (IT) in May 2019. Supervisors of the thesis were Full Professor Carmen Andriani (Architecture) and Manuel Gausa Navarro (Urbanism).



Figure 1. Port Infrastructure. San Francisco. Photo: Harrison Ryker (1938).
Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.

The combination between port and city generate a particular form of landscape. This operation (defining the port as a *landscape*) contributes to legitimize the idea that it is not only an operative machine or a functional sector attached to the city, but a particular and extraordinary place which becomes relevant in an economic-commercial sense but also in the definition of an urban identity. At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century, the crisis of the concept of territory led to a radical shift attributing new meanings to the notion of landscape. With the technological-digital revolution, the built spaces lost their physical connotation and became fields of relationship: at that time, there was no longer any need for the territory to meet and communicate between people, but instead the need for places to identify oneself increased outstandingly. In this context, the landscape concept was subjected to a process of semantic stress and enriched not only its definition but also its identity: it replaced architecture as a model of contemporary urban planning by becoming «both the lens through which the contemporary city is represented and the medium through which it is constructed» (Waldheim, 2006). This is particularly effective during the twentieth century when the growing urban disorder and the continuous expansion of large infrastructural complexes – such as ports or airports – keep to produce new forms of landscape. For at least two decades, these configurations have been studied by *Landscape Urbanism*, a theory of urban planning arguing that the best way to organize cities is through the design of the city's landscape, rather than the design of its buildings. In this way, landscape becomes «a medium of urbanism», an interpretation tool of spaces and interactions (Waldheim, 2016; Doherty and Waldheim, 2015).

Landscape Urbanism – especially developed by the studies of Charles Waldheim, Mohsen Mostafavi and James Corner – revolutionize the way of thinking and seeing the anthropic space and contributes to highlight unexplored themes such as, i.e., the forms of landscape generated by the complex set of traffic and logistic flows that serve territories and cities. Again, Waldheim defined these conformations *logistics landscapes*: spaces produced by the transformations that the logistics system imposed on the built environment. According to the American architect and urbanist, besides, ports are the most emblematic examples of *logistics landscapes* (Figure 2). Following this idea, port cities are systems genetically structured for hybridization in which outdated technologies give way to new logics and industrial devices become opportunities for reuse.



Figure 2. Barcelona Container Port.
Source: Flickr Image, flickr.com (2015).

Port cities generate in their environments a liminal condition which usually distinguishes most urban-port areas. This hybrid and unstable condition – which arose largely due to functional and administrative reasons – describes a recurring framework in contemporary portuality and brings to the forefront the management and legitimization of marginal spaces and institutional entities (Figure 3).

On this topic, Arjan Harbers affirmed that for the exploration of discontinuous and fragmented contexts it is necessary to discover new classifications able to reveal unexplored research fields. For this resolution, he proposed the idea of *borderscapes*, literally landscapes of the border, prioritily chosen to represent the complexity of today's territorial relationships resulting from the presence of large infrastructural clusters such as ports (Harbers, 2005).

Already from the formulation of the term *borderscape*, the use of the suffix *scape* confers not only cultural and symbolic values but – as in the case of the term *landscape* – it binds to the verb *to shape* referring to the act of literally *giving shape* to spaces.

This terminological extension opens up new narratives for the territorial borders: no longer lines on a map, but landscapes in an extended sense. With this meaning, the border becomes a *threshold*, a medium, a collector of transformation and transit, a mutable figure able to represent

both a condition and a status (Crotti, 2000). Theoretically, it can be a *limes* (an exclusive place, i.e. a limit or a demarcation) or a *limen* (a threshold that, instead of isolating, includes)⁴. In the port-city ambit, threshold is a broad and sometimes elusive concept. In the early days, it stood as a demarcation of some areas – i.e. the free or customs areas – that were legally detached from the city. From modern times, instead, the threshold marks the area owned by the Port Authority and consequently the one that instead belongs to the Municipality. Like most borders, it is a spatial alteration resulting from the application of a law, but not only. Some are of the opinion, in fact, that the urban-port threshold assumes great value also in symbolic terms, since the identity of a port city can be defined through the type of interactions detected along the shared border (Hayuth, 1982; Hoyle, 2011).



Figure 3. Newark Logistics Landscape. Port and Airport.
Source: Snyder Nigra S., Wall A. (1998).

⁴ In Latin, *limen* (*liminis*) means threshold, namely that element of the house that connects the inner with the outer space and vice versa. Instead, *limēs* (*limitis*) has another meaning: it contains a place and, at the same time, it finishes with a place.

A Field of Research

The Urban-Port Threshold

A large part of the literature focused on the so-called *border studies* agrees that the renewed interest in the topic has been affirmed, paradoxically, in conjunction with the implementation of territorial borders. The emergence of new barriers, mostly derived from «mechanisms of power» (Foucault, 1977-1978) focuses the observation back on the demarcation lines, expanding the field of investigation to different types of spatial divisions. Barriers do not answer only to legal and administrative questions, but are linked to security reasons. After 9/11 attacks, undoubtedly, many international security protocols have been changed; for this reason, also in many ports it was necessary to strengthen passive security measures by introducing new barriers.

The interest of urban studies in the multiple types of borders is mainly owed to sociologist Sharon Zukin who introduced the fundamental idea of *liminal spaces* (Zukin, 1991). She argues that liminal spaces are figures that are not only found in marginal areas of urban peripheries, but much more often they are located in the urban centre where they were formed as a result of forces that modified the structure and the spatiality of cities.

Undoubtedly, global dynamics had a strong impact on territoriality in terms of transformation and management. They have de-solidified the contemporary world and have introduced a 'de-bordered' world model. Nevertheless, in this context the theme of borders has made a forceful return to assert itself. Between the two centuries, in fact, we can notice an unprecedented explosion of various forms of borders: static or naturalized lines that mark the boundaries of authority that become lenses through which read urban systems, especially in the presence of large infrastructural ensembles, i.e., road junctions, intermodal traffic platforms, ports and airports.

However, an exploration of urban planning methods suggests a quite different picture where the issue of borders is almost non-existent: they are elusive and intangible territories for which it is difficult to formulate expansion guidelines; due to that, they literally stay on the margins.

Yet, in a few particular cases, for example, borders that formally divide cities and ports, exceptional characteristics that generate conditions of potential synergy can be observed.

With the major expansion of operative territories since the nineteenth century, the city and the port have been progressively divided by a physical and legal demarcation, which has fostered mutual development by guaranteeing functional autonomy. Often perceived as a space of separation and contention, the border between the city and the port is actually a dynamic interface capable to responsive potentialities and disposed (or better subject) to the technological changes and the structural updating.

In this sense, the urban-port border generates a liminal space, or rather a *threshold* as described before, which is configured as a third state with respect to the city or the port properly understood. The urban-port threshold is a special area of variable thickness produced by the presence of the administrative boundary: it divides, and together unifies, the territory of the city from that of the port. It is a system of linear separation that marks the beginning and the end of the capabilities of the port authority, simultaneously generating a symbolic place where the commingling of city and port is more explicit and intense⁵.

For this reason, the threshold is the prior field of a scientific research oriented to move *beyond* the port city, namely to update and overcome the contemporary idea of port city.

The urban-port threshold is a recurrent landscape and its recognition enable to study the landscape between city and port not only as a legal-fixed border but rather as an operative-dynamic border. This threshold does not have a standard configuration but is shaped into different geometries according to the varying of morphological, functional, and institutional

⁵ The notion of threshold in the urban and architectural studies is explored by different researchers and scholars. Among them reference is to the work of Sergio Crotti, Piero Zanini, Simon Unwin, Chris Rumford and Marc Schoonderbeek.

aspects. Moreover, the geometries of the urban-port thresholds – graphically returned through an *Atlas of Maps* (Figures 4, 5, 6) – generate different governance patterns which are particularly influenced by evolving global phenomena.

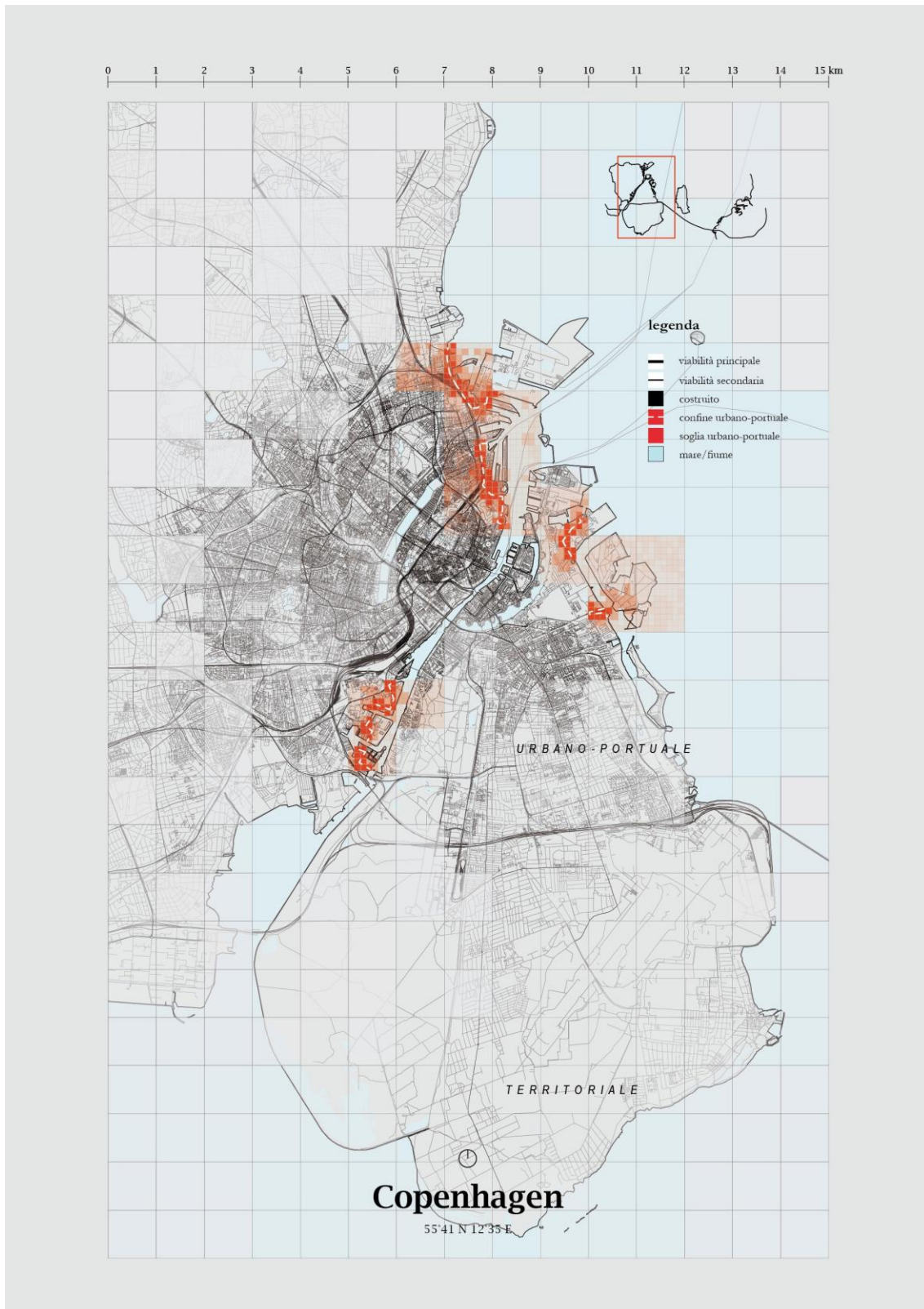


Figure 4. The Threshold Map: Copenhagen (1/6).
Source: PhD Research 'Beyond Port City' by Beatrice Moretti (2019).

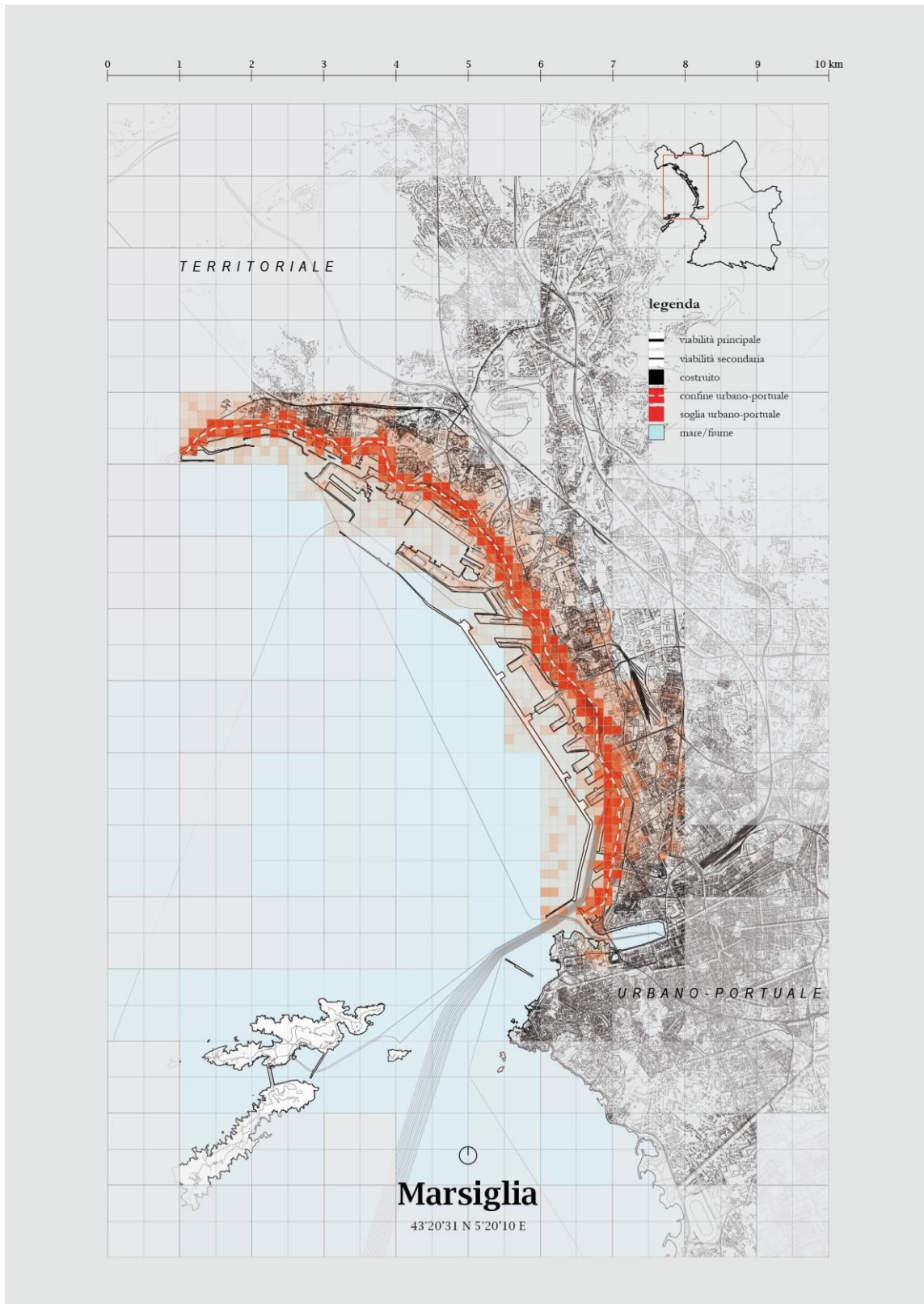


Figure 5. The Threshold Map: Marseille (2/6).

Source: PhD Research 'Beyond Port City' by Beatrice Moretti (2019).

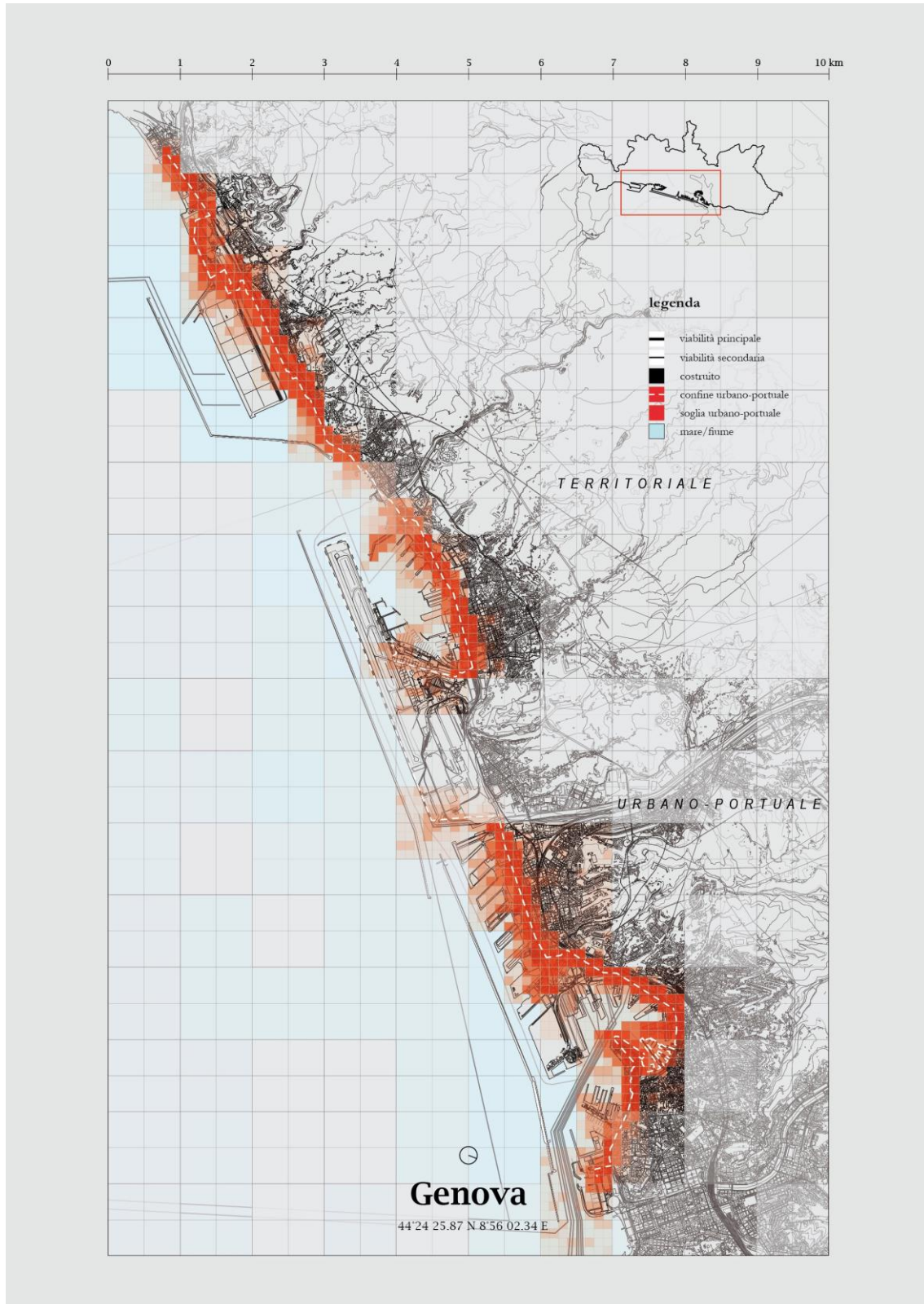


Figure 6. The Threshold Map: Genova (3/6).

Source: PhD Research 'Beyond Port City' by Beatrice Moretti (2019).

Objective

The City of the Cluster

In contemporary ports, one of the most interesting phenomenon is represented by the clustering of ports, a growing process that unify different harbours in a unique administrative and spatial figure, the cluster indeed. Port clustering is a recurrent scenario that some European realities have already experienced since the end of the twentieth century. Among the clearest examples, we can report the hub of Copenhagen and Malmö which constitute a single port authority in the Baltic region since 2000, and the alliance formed in 2012 between Paris, Rouen and Le Havre (HAROPA) which provides an Atlantic access to the logistics activities located on the Seine.

In both cases, the formalization of the new governance model anticipated spatial transformations that, in fact, require several decades to manifest.

In Italy, the concept of ports systems, together with the need to involve the hinterland territories in the overall development, were already present in the first port law published in 1994. Law 84/1994, in fact, considered the port as a system capable of affect areas outside the its state property functionally connected to maritime traffic. However, it is only with the 2016 Port Reform that the 24 Port Authorities have been finally merged into 15 Port System Authorities⁶.

One of the most relevant consequences of the port system law, i.e., was the draft of the Port Planning Strategic Planning Document (DPSSP), introduced in 2017 by the Port System Authority of the Southern Adriatic Sea⁷. The DPSSP is a first step in the composition of the Port Authority Regulatory Plan (art. 5 bis Law 84/94 and ss.mm.ii.), through which will be defined the general vision on the structure of the port system and the lines of action that, over the next few years, will concern the ports of Bari, Brindisi, Barletta, Manfredonia and Monopoli.

Port clustering in Italy is coordinated with the formalization of metropolitan cities in 2014 that annulled the figure of provinces merging more cities and territories⁸ (Figure 7, 8).

Although the consequences of the two laws are not yet tangible due to their recent approval, it is clear that they contribute to open up new scenarios not only for ports, but also (or above all) for cities involved in these changes.

Not only in Italy, though, port clustering highlights a latent potential of the heterogeneous territories included in the cluster. Pushing the reasoning further, the administrative aggregation gives implicitly rise to a new *urban-port reality* extended on the coast and towards the hinterland. This is a polycentric conurbation that we can conceptually call the *City of the Cluster*: a multi-coastal-city that, composed by different ports, cities and coasts, emerges to be responsible for new relational opportunities in the decades to come.

⁶ The Port Reform in Italy was introduced by Law 4 agosto 2016, n. 169 "Riorganizzazione, razionalizzazione e semplificazione della disciplina concernente le Autorità Portuali di cui alla legge 28 gennaio 1994, n. 84".

⁷ At present, the DPSSP has been prepared in a preliminary form, with the outline of the higher-level planning framework, a cognitive framework and a partial project framework proposition, in which different alternatives of structural adjustments and possible actions to be undertaken in the areas are identified. In parallel and always in a preliminary form, the Energy and Environmental Planning Document of the Port System (DPEASP) was also prepared as a natural complement to port planning in terms of art. 4-bis of Law 84/94 and ss.mm.ii. More here: <http://www.adspmam.it/documento-di-pianificazione-strategica-del-sistema-portuale/>

⁸ The Metropolitanization of Cities in Italy was introduced by Law 7 aprile 2014, n. 56 "Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni".

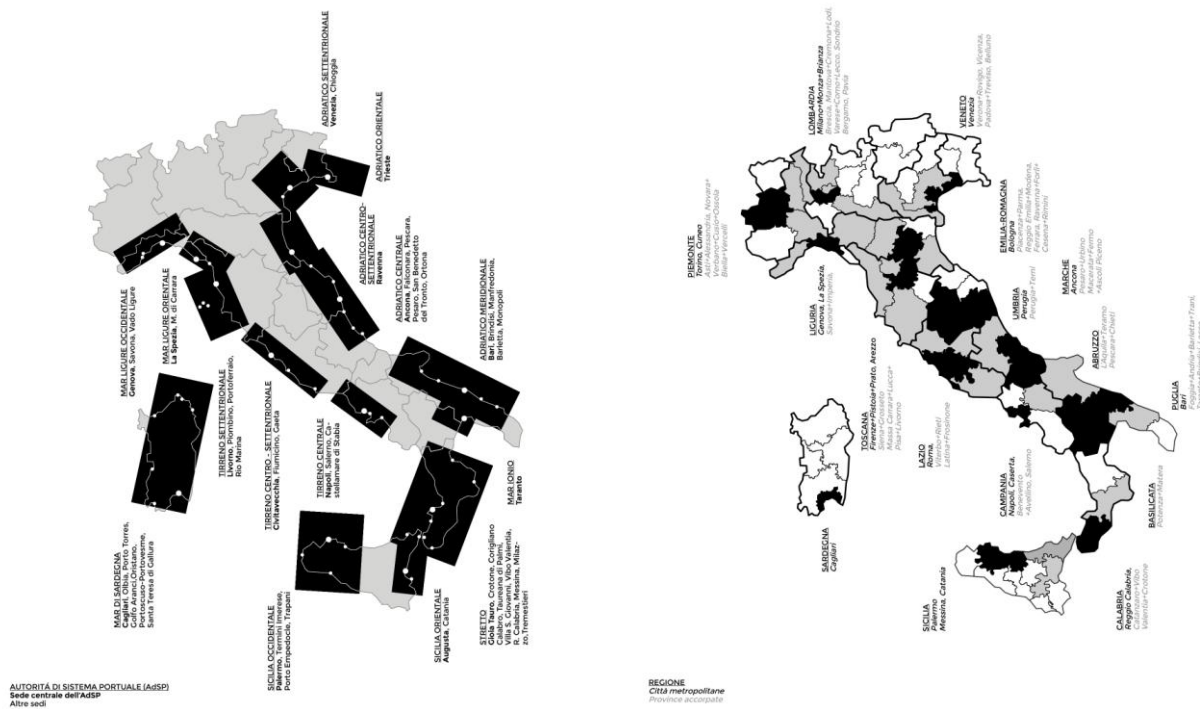


Figure 7, 8. Port Clustering in Italy (left).

D.Lgs. 4 Aug 2016, n. 169 “Riorganizzazione, razionalizzazione e semplificazione della disciplina concernente le Autorità portuali di cui alla legge 28 gennaio 1994, n. 84”.

Metropolitanization in Italy (right).

Law 7 Apr 2014, n. 56 “Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni”.

Source: PhD Research ‘Beyond Port City’ by Beatrice Moretti (2019).

Conclusion

Port Clustering and Governance Patterns

The phenomenon of port clustering is a contemporary recurrence that is correlating very distant port contexts all over the world. Processes as such increase the framework of the relational possibilities even if they are exclusively addressed to the logistic-commercial field giving very less attention to the effects derived for the city. There is no doubt, in fact, that even today the port remains often a stranger in the urban transformation: this precludes a different evaluation of the port as driver and developer of spatial transformations.

Nevertheless, the formation of port consortiums introduced new governance patterns and opens up new horizons in the field of urban-port studies. Honestly, port clustering is not a recent dynamic but can be noticed in some contexts already in the second half of the twentieth century. Depending on the period of establishment of the cluster, then, different spatial configurations and governance models were originated.

In the port city of Marseille, i.e., the polycentric configuration of the harbour was firstly conceived in the 1950s with the realization of the Fos-sur-mer infrastructure, occupied by the so-called ‘heavy port’. This sector, further developed in the following decades, is located more than 70 km to the east but has always been part of the administrative structure of the port of Marseille. This

delocalization, therefore, was a choice made *in the beginning* and not the result of a subsequent removal, disposal or reconversion.

On the contrary, in Copenhagen or in Italy, port clustering is a *sequential* phenomenon. In these contexts, in fact, the port association derives from a political decision on a national scale (supranational in the Danish case) which expected that cooperation would bring undoubted advantages in economic and productive terms. So, in these circumstances, the clustering process was a choice made *afterwards* and the bureaucratic and planning apparatus of the cluster totally replaced the existing one.

Governance and Planning. Some European (clustered) cases

Governance and planning are two closely related topics, especially along the border line between city and port. Government patterns, in fact, influence the planning actions of the public/private bodies involved in the transformation of spaces often located along the urban-port threshold, where generally the effect of planning tools is weaker and blurrier.

However, the coordination introduced by the clustered model does not seem to have immediate repercussions on the planning strategies adopted by the ports. While, in some cases, clustered ports are experimenting solutions to organize their activities in a more balanced and complementary way, in other contexts (Italy, for sure) the Port Authority Systems still live in a substantial separation dealing with the exploit of local projects.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the port of Marseille was totally included within the Gulf of Lacydon and its transformations were managed autonomously. At the end of the nineteenth century (1881) – when the infrastructures had already occupied the northern front of the Joliette – the Chamber of Commerce and Industry was appointed as exclusive port operator. Alongside with the construction of the Fos-sur-Mer harbour in the 1960s, the port became a public entity and took the name of Autonomous Port of Marseille (PAM). Finally, in 2008, the National Port Reform established the Grand Maritime Port of Marseilles (GPMM), a public body of the State responsible for operations, management and promotion. Its jurisdiction extends over two basins: the east one in Marseille and the west one composed by Martigues, Port-de-Bouc, Fos-sur-Mer and Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône.

The *Euroméditerranée* project, active since 1995, confirms the importance of managing urban-port relations through shared actions conducted in common with the institutions. Its origin is due to the public agency *Etablissement Public d'Aménagement d'Euroméditerranée* (EPAEM) which is experimenting formulas of cooperation, including regeneration of disused urban districts and implementation of logistics areas and operative docks⁹.

Practically, *Euroméditerranée* worked on the reconstruction of an ancient alignment between port and city. The redevelopment of the 400 mt of the Docks de la Joliette (2015-2016) is based on the concept of narrative sequence: with this strategy, in fact, the design of the threshold is accomplished gradually, piece by piece, increasing its wideness by intervening on spaces and artifacts as they become available for change.

Otherwise, in Copenhagen – after the passage of the ownership from the Danish Royal Family to a state administration – in the twentieth century the port was directed by the Port of Copenhagen Ltd. In 2001, the company became part of a single Port Authority formally joining the Port of Malmö. Today, Copenhagen Malmö Port - CMP manages port operations in both harbors: its origin is clearly linked to the opening of Øresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden in 2000.

CMP is a joint venture that unites two cities and two ports and, mostly, two nations: from the management point of view this makes it a unique case in the European ports panorama. Bureaucratically, CMP is a limited liability company whose ownership is divided between different

⁹ More here: www.euromediterranee.fr, www.marseille-port.fr

subjects: CPH City & Port Development Corporation (By & Havn) which owns 50%, the City of Malmö which holds 27% and private investors with the 23% of total shares. CMP does not own the land but takes over areas and artefacts from CPH City & Port Development and from City of Malmö¹⁰.

CPH arises from the fusion of two public entities: one dedicated to urban development and the other in charge of port governance. A key element of the CPH figure is its *de-politicized* nature which allows the company to operate in a position of substantial independence from national and local political interference. The company uses the political-legislative structures to finance large infrastructure projects and, at the same time, under-utilized reconversions of areas included in the perimeter of the port.

In planning terms, CPH is guiding important transformations that are influencing the morphology of the three peninsulas on which most of the port is located. This has generated different degrees of relationship and approaches to the urban-port project. If in Prøvestenen, indeed, the presence of the port is absolutely predominant, in Nordhavn, the two entities cohabit seeking an equilibrium still in definition through mixed-functions projects. Even if the port is no longer active in most areas, in Refshaleøen, though, the reconversion was based on a more modulated re-functionalization that has not removed the operative character of the district.

The Western-Ligurian-Sea City of the Cluster

The Ligurian one – and Genoese in particular – is a clear case of *logistics landscape* that, starting from the coastal edge, curves along the river banks and towards the hinterland giving rise to an *inner port* linked with the logistics platforms of Northern Italy and Europe.

There is a clear breakpoint in the Genoese port governance, a specific moment when the port ceases to be an urban affair and becomes a separate and independent territorial entity. This point is the 1903 when the Autonomous Consortium of the Port (CAP) was established as a self-sufficient body to which the State delegated part of its powers regarding the organization of port spaces.

From a legal point of view, the CAP depended on the Superior Council of Public Works, but possessed wide independence in terms of works, installations, investments, working conditions and imposition of tariffs. During its administration, CAP operated in the state-owned areas received by the State in an autonomous way and carrying out building works without the need to agree with the Municipality. However, at the planning level, the contents and the approval process of the Port Master Plan remained unclear for a long time. In parallel, the Municipal Urban Plan dealt exclusively with its own territory ignoring what happened beyond the customs barrier.

The Autonomous Consortium of the Port lasted until 1994 when law n. 84 established the Port Authority in all Italian major ports. This change outlined a new framework in which, for example, the Mayor participated in the Port Committee and contributed to the approval of projects to be carried out in port¹¹.

Law 84 provided clear indications on the delimitation process of the port area tracing the boundary line towards the city. The limits of each Port Authority were established by the Minister of Transport and Navigation and defined not only the overall structure of the port, but also the area within which the addresses of the Port Master Plan were effective. With this national law, a planning phase oriented to concertation was inaugurated: the port became a public body of legal personality responsible for port activities, but also an organism in which the city holds a considerable relevance. By participating in the Port Committee, in fact, the Municipality acquired a decision-making role from which should have descended a more shared planning.

¹⁰ More here: www.byoghavn.dk

¹¹ Port Authorities in Italy were introduced by Law 28 Jan 1994, n. 84 e successive modificazioni. “Riordino della legislazione in materia portuale”.

In 2016, the Italian institutional framework experienced a further transformation. As anticipated, the port clustering produced an administrative revolution that, in many contexts, slowed down or even blocked the urban planning processes that were in progress. Generally, the Port Reform aimed to rationalize and simplify the port national scheme by proposing the unification of contiguous harbours in port clusters.

Due to this Reform, Genoa became the main port of the Port System Authority of the Western Ligurian Sea which also includes the Savona-Vado Ligure harbours, located about 45 km further west. Although recently finalized, the new governance model has imposed a substantial (and still ongoing) internal reorganization and a new concept of territorial cooperation to overcome the previous fragmentation and sectoriality.

The cluster creates similar complications for the ports that unifies but it does not take into account the peculiarities of *the cities of these ports*, also united in a new territorial system. These cities are different in size, scale, impact on the territory, urban-port heritage, relations with the hinterland etc. The Reform doesn't give indications about the formulas through which these diverse components have to deal with each other: how their individualities have to be enriched by the system and, in particular, which role has to be attributed to mobility to encourage the cooperation. This is particularly evident in the Ligurian context, i.e., when in presence of large emergencies such as the consequences of the collapse of the Morandi Bridge in Genoa (August, 14th, 2018).

From these standpoints, the relational, social, economic and urban potential of the port cluster of western Liguria emerges. Conceived as a whole, the *Western-Ligurian-Sea City of the Cluster* has an extension of 45 km, roughly the current extension of the Port of Rotterdam calculated from the Schiedam docks to the commercial terminals of Maaslavkte II (almost completed in the North Sea). This *City of the Cluster* is the mirror of a Reform that, so far, does not seem to have the strength to put in synergy all the territories and the authorities involved (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Port City of Genoa (Italy).
Source: Diletta Nicosia (© 2017).

However, these assessments show that port clustering is a decisive element also for planning and project matters. The effects produced by this phenomenon, in fact, foresee a long trajectory committed to concretize, among others, the objective of functional optimization theorized by the laws. On this, Port System Master Plans – which have not yet been drafted – will provide an overall view of the future development projects, taking into account the peculiarities of the merged harbours.

Lastly, the unification confirms that in these polycentric coastal conurbations the project of the urban-port threshold has a crucial role. It gives value to the intermediate landscape derived from the creation of the cluster. In fact, the space between the port and the city – but furthermore the *one between one port and another* – is an *infrastructural landscape* where every single reality exists not only to share the costs, but to build a plural idea of the contemporary port, within the integrated project of the coastline.

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