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ITALY

PORTUALITY XXI

Logistics Landscapes and Active Heritage of the Urban-Port Dynamic Threshold Coexistence Strategies for Planning the City with the Port

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*«The city displays one face to the traveler arriving overland
and a different one to him who arrives by sea [...].
Each city receives its form from the desert it opposes;
and so the camel driver and the sailor see Despina,
a border city between two deserts»
(Calvino, 1977, *The Invisible Cities*)*

1. Portuality, concept and condition

In today's world, most of the global freight moves by sea on large ships, confirming that ports continue to be a fundamental element of the economic chain worldwide and a major local resource of employment and production.

As points of intersection between land and water, ports have played an important role in socio-economic development of territories over the history of human civilization. From the Medieval period, urban form and identity included the port, designed as “a body”¹ within the urban fabric as one of the city's public building. Indeed, e.g. in Halicarnassus's port portrayed by Cesare Cesariano², the nature of the port city is translated into a unitarian organism, almost a system of semi-circular cavea-like wharves, where the breakwaters are nothing but the continuation of the walls in the water³. During the Renaissance, the ideal city was imagined through a symmetrical configuration vitalized by an active and dynamic port represented by the vanishing point in the center of the composition⁴.

'Portuality' is - in the opinion of the writer - a *concept* rooted in some urban centers from the very early on. A *territorial condition* or *quality* which specifically denotes those cities born and developed through strong historic/symbolic and economic/functional relationship with its own port. So, 'portuality' is a *landscape requirement*, a *constitutive specificity* of some territories, quoting an idea of Bernardo Secchi regarding the Mediterranean cities⁵

¹ Pavia R. (2005), *Le Paure dell'Urbanistica*, Meltemi Editore, Roma.

² Vitruvio, *De Architettura*. Translated and raffigured by Cesare Cesariano, Milano, il Polifilo, 1981, (rist. anast. Ed. 152), p. XLII.

³ Pavia R., Di Venosa M. (2012), *I porti delle città*, in *Waterfront, dal conflitto all'integrazione*, BABEL design.

⁴ Francesco di Giorgio Martini. (attributed to, 1480 ca), *Tavola di Berlino*, studies for the ideal city.

⁵ Secchi B. (2011), *Città del Mediterraneo*, in Gausa M., Ricci M. (autori), Canessa N., Marengo M., Nan E. (curated by), *MED.NET.REP.0.1* Report Convegno med.net.it.



IMAGE 1 / Tavola di Berlino, Studies for the Ideal City
 Francesco di Giorgio Martini (attributed to, 1480 ca)

According to this approach it is possible to update the old dichotomy 'city-port' outlining a new vision in which the port city is a *forma urbis in progress*, a composite, plural and open figure affected by the speed of changing processes and influenced by the many factors that every day are embodied in its territorial palimpsest⁶.

Similarly, various studies considered that «port cities had sufficient particularities to form a distinct urban category, implicitly claiming that every port city is governed by identical mechanisms» (Broeze, 1997; Ducruet, 2011).

Following this assumption, today there is a new interest in considering 'portuality' as a *planning principle*, a strategic paradigm for management and development of territories. However, in the actual planning this rarely happens and, in short, 'the city with port' is designed indistinctly by 'the city without port'. Port itself is planned separately and its presence seems to affect minimally or only harmfully the land use transformations. It is clear that this approach cannot express the economic and symbolic role that still a port holds for its own city.

⁶The concept of 'palimpsest' is used here as a metaphor through which one reads the reinscription of multiple layers of the built environment or territory vis-à-vis the widespread changes repeated over time. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2427.12132/abstract>

Or, in other words 'every landscape is overwritten on a former site – whether primal, secondary, or tertiary - and is informed by the various physicalities of the place. Even when scraped away by a bulldozer, there would be traces and experiences' (Doherty G.; Waldheim C., 2015).

The evolution of the complex relationship between a city and its port is well described by the International Maritime Geography models⁷, thanks to which it is possible to understand steps and reasons that led to the contemporary condition of contrast and marginality.

In short, as described by the geographer Brian S. Hoyle, in the first phase, lasting about fourteen centuries, city and port lived in a symbiotic, spatial and functional integration.

From the beginning of the 19th century, the growth of maritime traffic and the advent of the industrial age caused the first strong separation of the two organisms. The complexity and automation of port mechanisms accelerated the exodus of ports from the center to the suburbs. Furthermore, this phenomenon is increased when containerized trade spread worldwide, together with a gradual but steady evolution of the fleet size (naval gigantism). At this time, the first ports consortiums are set up as independent administrative realities and new laws impose specific restrictions between operative spaces and inner city. The new port territory generated and developed throughout the 19th century in Europe was conceptually closer to a support mechanism than to a district of the city. The shape of this support, indeed, was designed in a strictly functional relationship with the dynamics of movement.

In the last decades of the 20th century the final separation takes place: ports became national gateway while cities became centers of local and regional dynamics. For these reasons, the original port core is abandoned due to new portual dynamics: indeed, the last phase described the renewal of the waterfront and the reactivation of material and immaterial connections between coastal areas and historical inner city.

The actual framework has greatly changed from Hoyle's models: today the evolution of the 'portuality' paradigm demands the development of flexible and advanced tools capable of improving the receptivity and resilience of the most sensitive and changeable territories. Contemporary portuality shows that ports have increasingly spread over the centuries but, since the beginning of the 21st century and still going on today, European policies and global trends have led to an increase in maritime ocean traffic and, the resumption of *pendulum* routes across the Mediterranean Sea has resulted in a growing interest in ports and Motorways of the Sea.

The phenomenon of port regionalization has greatly affected current port conditions and has generated the 'port-city-territory' model: a global network of material and immaterial pathways that underlines the relationship between logistics and land use validating the urban-port concept as the main field of exploration and scientific research⁸.

⁷ Hoyle B.S. (1988), Aree portuali e trasformazioni urbane. Le dimensioni internazionali della ristrutturazione del waterfront, Ugo Mursia Editore, Collana Biblioteca del Mare, sez. Scientifica, pag.24.

⁸ Notteboom T., Rodrigue J.P. (2006), Port Regionalization: Towards a New Phase in Port Development, Maritime Policy and Management, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 297-313.

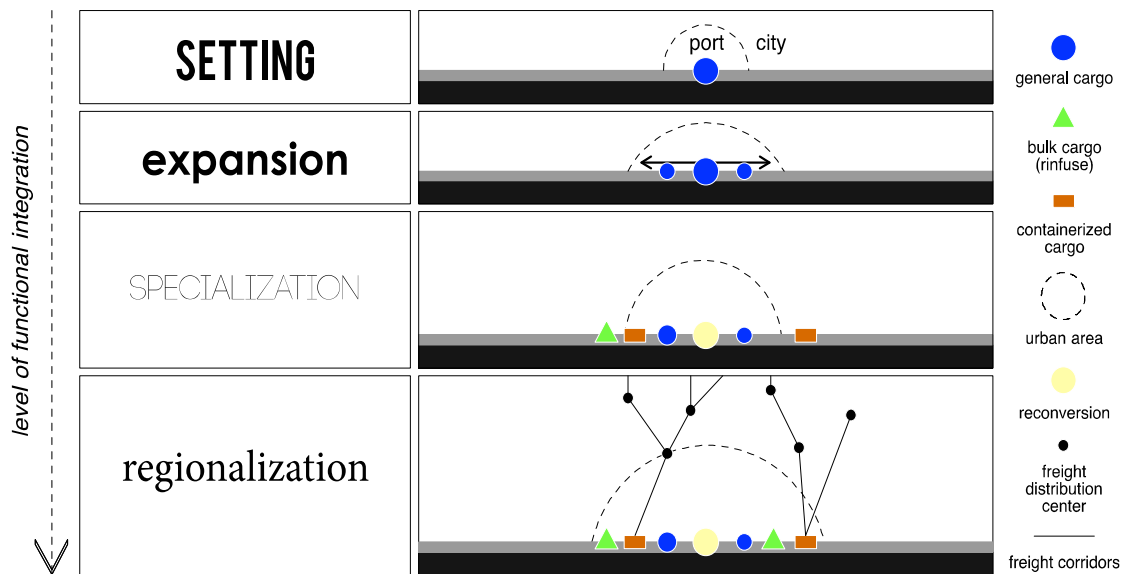


IMAGE 2 / The Port Regionalization

Source: Notteboom T., Rodrigue J-P. *Port Regionalization: Towards a New Phase in Port Development*.

Date: 2005, graphic rielaboration: B. Moretti.

2. The Urban-Port Threshold

Today's ports are sophisticated and open frameworks featuring innovative processes and increasing freedom in the localization of activities. Ports are infrastructures that first separate and then connect, defining new interacting spaces, inspiring landscape and, through new projects, creating new identities.

In this scenario, which underscores the strong bonds between ports and inner territories, a persistent conflict between operating spaces and urban fabrics is evident, encouraged by approaches that consider ports as independent and often harmful frameworks for the city. Nevertheless, the interventions that have taken place in the second half of the 20th century in Europe, like expropriation processes decentralizing the port to include urban functions, can be motivated. Although these interventions redevelop abandoned areas, one of their drawbacks is to remove the problem by denying port landscape and identity. This separation is further increased by conflicting laws relative to the two areas, which are often planned with conflicting tools and divided by a physical and legal limit. The areas bordering public land are the major fields where the perception of marginality is more evident.

Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that today the identity of the port city is an idea defined by the intensity and the typologies of interactions and dependencies detected along the shared interface, where universal problems and specific issues of individual contexts are both compared.

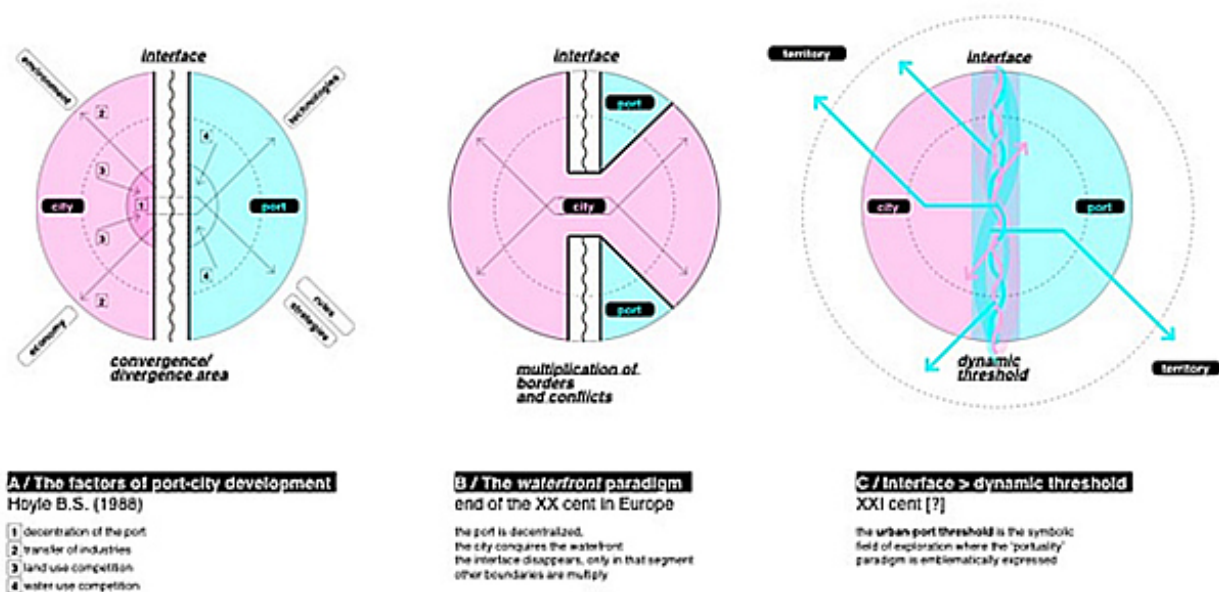


IMAGE 3 / Graphics about the origin of the urban-port dynamic threshold

Date: 2016, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti

Contrasts between a city and its port, however, are not always present; instead, the thesis argues about the existence of entire portions of potential connections running along and across the border state property⁹. Thanks to this, the hybrid interface is not only an 'abandoned threshold' (Hoyle, 1988), but more an intermediate area full of potential, a complementary and logistics landscape that both separates and unites.

Threshold is a strategic concept to be explored in a wider perspective. In fact, the concept of threshold calls to mind other paradigms, such as boundary, barrier, frontier, from which it derives¹⁰.

To fully appreciate the concept of threshold, though without grasping its subtleties, we can imagine a flexible, and dynamic system, a 'filter space': precarious, discontinuous, fragmented into parts where the juxtapositions take sufficient shape to acquire a dimension and be recognizable.

The boundary becomes an element of separation and going beyond it does not mean denying it, but realizing its momentary transformation into an *open* and *crossing space*¹¹. Moreover, the limit becomes *another space*, a sort of *border organism*, such as Despina, one of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. «The city displays one face to the traveler arriving overland and a different one to him who arrives by sea [...]. Each city receives its form from the desert it opposes; and so the camel driver and the sailor see Despina, a border city between two deserts» (Calvino, 1977). Is not this nothing more than a

⁹ Daamen T., Vries I. (2012). Governing the European port–city interface: institutional impacts on spatial projects between city and port. *Journal of Transport Geography*, ELSEVIER; Hayuth Y. (1982), The Port-Urban Interface: An Area in Transition. *Area*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1982), pp. 219-224. The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) Stable.

¹⁰ Zanini P. (2000). *Significati del confine. I limiti naturali, storici, mentali*. Bruno Mondadori Editore.

¹¹ Dalzero S. (2016), *Terre Miraggio*. XIX Conferenza della Società degli Urbanisti – SIU- “Cambiamenti”.

description of a port city? A continuously changing system depending on where the traveler is coming from, thus the actual proof of the territorial complexity that varies, rests on one's background as well as one's observation point.

It has become evident now that the focus of research is the border space, or rather the border as a space, an uncertain place with variable size, intensity and thickness. A rough area where everything mingles and mixes. This new space is called *threshold*: «inhabit it or cross it means recognizing a third place where the strict rule of the border is no longer valid» (Zanini, 2000).

The urban-port threshold materializes in the complex space along the margin between the two authorities, in that 'recurring landscape' in which the city and the port are side by side. This heterogeneous but unique system is subjected to continuous hybridizations and becomes a *medium*, an accumulator of change and transit. The urban-port threshold has not a standard typology but different configurations that vary according to spatial, institutional and functional factors.

From these standpoints, the thesis supports the recognition of 'portuality' as a specific character and a condition of some territories and, together, believes that the urban-port threshold, - in its various shapes and patterns -, could emerge as the main symbolic field of exploration where the '*portuality paradigm*' is expressed also as a planning principle for coexistence strategies between port and city.

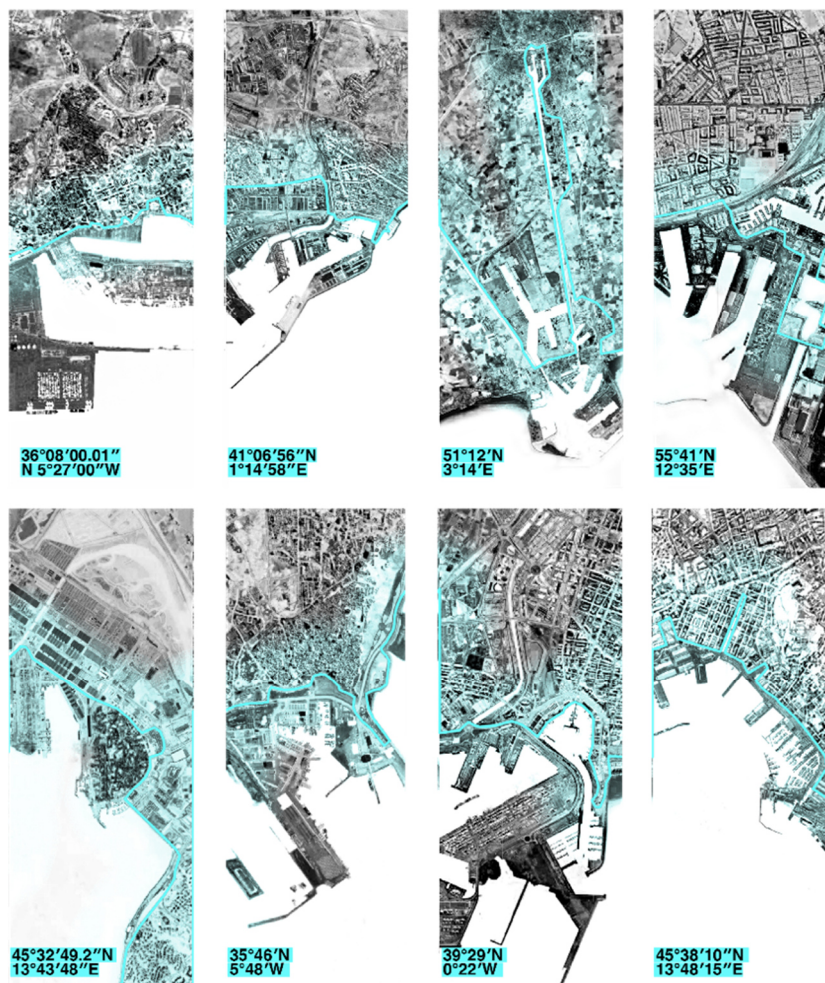


IMAGE 4 / The urban-port dynamic threshold

Source: Port-City Territories (Algeciras, Barcelona, Brugge - Zebrugge, Copenhagen, Koper, Tangier, Valencia, Trieste).
Date: 2016,
graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

3. Strategies for the Active Heritage of the Urban-Port Threshold

The urban-port threshold is a liminal symbol of union and separation at the same time, «a field of competition, as well as a powerful and imperfect space of relations» (di Venosa, 2005).

Today these thoughts are supported by new paradigms inferred from global portuality; in fact, the growing opinion is that now it is no longer sufficient to investigate ways of regaining urban spaces abandoned by port activities, rather it has become necessary to explore the variety of design approaches enabling a port to both survive and coexist with a city.

This is a new approach already publicized by different territorial realities in the European context: e.g. ESPO that in 2010 pointed to overcome 'the waterfront development paradigm' in order to come up with a 'sustainable blend of mixed uses'¹² and AIVP that in 2015 proposed the inspiring ideal of 'planning the city with the port'¹³.

Moreover, a strategic objective for the contemporary approach on the urban-port threshold is the 'coexistence' paradigm (Bruttomesso, 2011), which means an existence in common, a fair sharing not only of space but of development strategies, growth policies with particular attention to the common border¹⁴. 'Coexistence', as planning principle for the interface between city and port, results from the need to overcome the concept of 'integration'. In fact, there is no doubt that the management of port and transportation processes must now be considered at least on a regional level and that the approach of the development of port activities largely transcends both interest and growth requirements of individual cities. From this point of view, it seems obsolete to keep talking about the 'integration' between port and city, perhaps even inappropriate, if not counterproductive. This is not just a matter of terminology: 'coexistence' rather than 'integration' is actually a profound act of awareness that involves an incisive change in perspective, a loyal sharing of commitments, a leap to the next level.

Combining the approach outlined by Rinio Bruttomesso and the current assumption of ESPO and AIVP, it seems real to recognize the 'portuality' concept and the strategic nature of threshold. No longer a shape dividing line, rather a mixture of hybrid functions and heterogeneous flows, a dynamic zone with changeable intensity and thickness.

A system of resilient territories and operative patterns gathers on the threshold landscape. The proposed innovation of this research recognizes the 'threshold active heritage'¹⁵ as 'common category' or 'universal landscape' in the port city plot. In many port-cities, in fact, we can detect a grip along the legal limit, but also codify a real system of resilient territories, often belonging to both sides, such as in-between and on-hold areas, former silos or disposal power plants, whose transformation can contribute to a new coordinated cultural development.

¹² European Sea Ports Organisation - ESPO (2010). Code of Practice on Societal Integration of Ports, pp.27.

¹³ AIVP (2015) - Le Réseau Mondial des Villes Portuaires. Plan the City with the Port. Guide of good practices.

¹⁴ Bruttomesso, R. (2011), Port and City: from integration to coexistence, in Alemany J., Bruttomesso R. (ed.), *The Port City of the XXIst Century. New Challenges in the Relationship Between Port and City*, RETE - Association for the collaboration between ports and cities.

¹⁵ Andriani C. (2010), Ritorno al futuro in *Il patrimonio e l'abitare*, Donzelli, Roma.

4. Port Clusterization in Italy, an additional scenario

Coastal areas have always been affected by evolving dynamics that transform their form and functionality. On this topic, the actual framework that in Italy provides an interesting scenario. The recently proposed Harbours and Logistics Reform, drafted by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, aims to revolutionize the governance system by combining the actual seaports in territorial clusters. As an update of the national law n. 84/1994, the objective is to build a systematic approach where different size ports unite in territorial clusters; the importance of the territorial scale and the already mentioned 'port-city-territory' model it is now clear.

These changes open new perspectives for this research: for example, with the new asset, the thesis questions about the emergence of a new urban-port reality, that we like to call 'the city of clusters', originated by the reorganization. The objective of this investigation is to understand how the gradual process of clusterization affects its urban-port territories in the light of the present and similar process of metropolization that instead is affecting the city¹⁶.

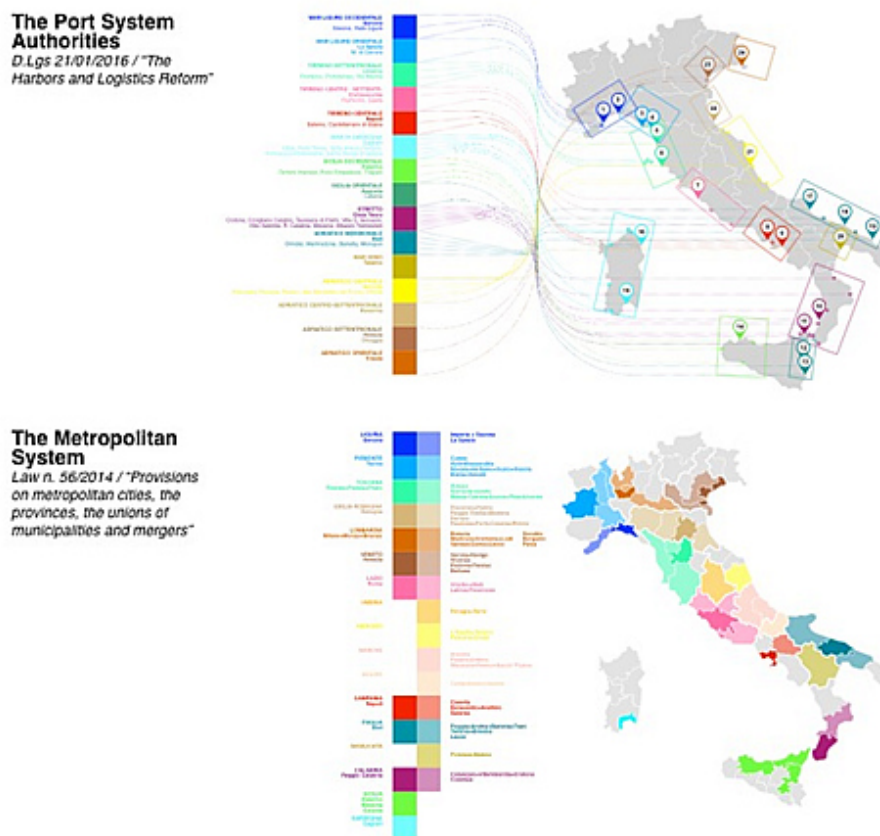


IMAGE 5 / The Port System Authorities and The Metropolitan System

Source: D.Lgs 21/01/2016, "The Italian Harbors and Logistics Reform" and Law n. 56/2014, "Provisions on metropolitan cities, the provinces, the unions of municipalities and mergers".

Date: 2016, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

¹⁶ Reference is to the Italian law n. 56/2014 regarding the "Provisions on metropolitan cities, the provinces, the unions of municipalities and mergers", and establishes the birth of the metropolitan city, so going to redraw the borders and local administration skills.

<http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2014-04-07:56>

5. Research Methodology, structure and first findings

Here are the goals and the three phases of this research:

1. OBSERVING/MAPPING: exploring the condition of 'portuality' of some territories and setting up new territorial visions by investigating the inspiring ideal of 'planning the city with the port', so as to develop a different kind of port-city cooperation. This study plans to draw up an **Atlas of threshold configurations** in selected European port cities (10 main case studies + 20 secondary case studies), using a **matrix** of factors/models as the main tool of study;
2. INTERPRETING/DEDUCING: developing an **Abacus of related coexistence strategies** for the various **threshold configurations**, where strong divergence/convergence and multiform geometry of the border are evident. The actual purpose is to comprehend if the spatial and functional interdependence of port and city are adequately supported by cooperative planning and to provide institutions with cross-functional planning principles for the hybrid city-port interface. **Interviews** are an important tool and refer to a series of real meetings with institutions (Port Authorities) and researchers;
3. FOCUSING/FORESEEING: recognizing and mapping the urban-port **threshold active heritage** detected along and across the physical and legal limit between city and port in an Italian port city (**case study**); considering the actual framework in Italy and foreseeing perspectives and advanced strategies for the new urban-port reality in Italy.

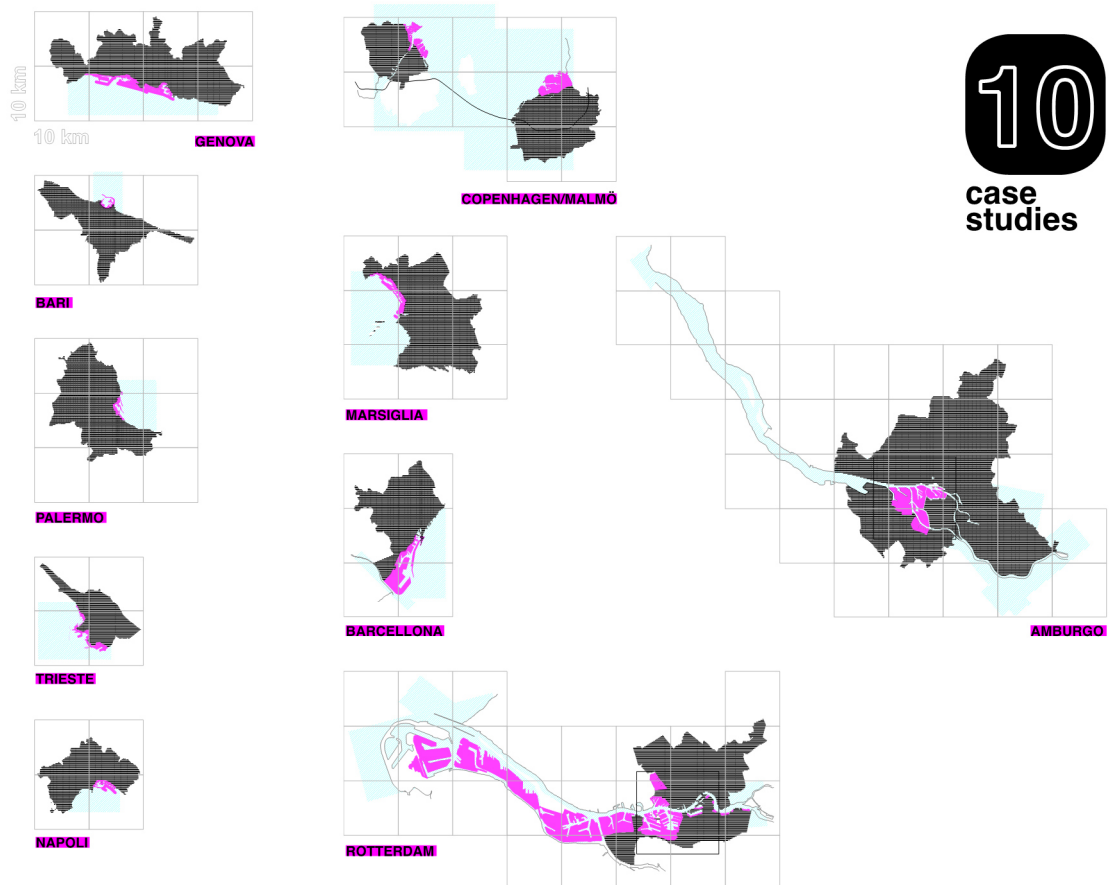


IMAGE 6 / The 10 main Case Studies of the research

Date: 2016, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

The first findings of the research are about the interviews with institutions and researchers in specific port contexts analyzed so far within the ten main case studies (particularly, the port cities of Genova, Palermo, Marsiglia and Rotterdam).

Out of the interviews with Port Authorities, the need for a concrete overcoming of 'waterfront paradigm' has emerged. Cities have to be planned together with their ports, it is no longer sufficient to simply agree within the borders, but new types of tools and transversal agreements have to be outlined to interpret better the paradigm of 'portuality', the «fluid physiognomy of the port city» (Carta, 2012). Such as, a new attitude that can express the 'coastal fluidity', a powerful category of contemporaneity that also spreads in the more distant urban plots¹⁷.

The interviews with experts in urban port planning have highlighted the need to align the metropolitan planning guidelines to port ones. Both processes, indeed, are inspired by the same paradigm: a wider and more strategic vision that does not deny the administrative boundaries, but rather tries to establish a new spatial system that is complex and sensitive to transformation.

So far, the urban-port threshold has been considered of great interest by all respondents. In particular, all the experts agree with the transversal approach of the research which aims to comprehend the potential of an invisible line that is instead a space intensely crossed and lived. Moreover, they generally recommend to categorize the urban-port thresholds through appropriate types and models capable of adjectivise and qualify its hybrid and changing nature.

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Legend Images

1. Tavola di Berlino, Studies for the Ideal City.

Francesco di Giorgio Martini (attributed to, 1480 ca).

2. The Port Regionalization.

Source: Theo Notteboom, Jean-Paul Rodrigue. *Port Regionalization: Towards a New Phase in Port Development, Maritime Policy and Management*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 297-313.

Date: 2005, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

3. Graphics about the origin of the urban-port dynamic Threshold.

Date: 2016, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

4. The urban-port dynamic Threshold.

Source: Port-City Territories (Algeciras, Barcelona, Brugge - Zebrugge, Copenhagen, Koper, Tanger, Valencia, Trieste). Date: 2016, graphic elaboration: B. Moretti.

5. The Port System Authorities and The Metropolitan System.

Source: D.Lgs 21/01/2016, "The Italian Harbors and Logistics Reform" and Law n. 56/2014, "Provisions on metropolitan cities, the provinces, the unions of municipalities and mergers".

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6. The 10 main Case Studies of the research.

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