



The book *“Free Trade and Free Ports in the Mediterranean”* delves into the emergence of free trade in early-modern times, its institutional genealogy and the evolution in the time.

As regard the historical context, the book investigates how the Mediterranean region, with its distinct characteristics, produced a situation suitable for the development of free ports, contrasting this region with the others to analyses and explain for how and why free trade arose in this geographical area.

While originating in the Mediterranean, the influence of free ports extended far beyond, became a global phenomenon. The book traces their diffusion beyond the region and the related modalities, staying focused on the Mediterranean’s unique experience as regard the impact on trade, commerce, and economic interactions.

In deepening the geopolitical aspects, the book explores considers how free ports contributed to the balance of power among states and their commercial competition for hegemony during the eighteenth century, and how economic and political dynamics intersect.

The contributions in the volume also address questions about the institutional genealogy of free ports, the evolution over time, the factors that influenced their development. The role of consuls, governors, fiscal techniques, architectural aspects, and administrative practices is also explored in understanding the position of free ports.

The interplay of trade, culture, and institutions in the Mediterranean all this makes this volume of particular interest for the scholars across various disciplines (modern history, Mediterranean studies, global economics, political studies, etc.) and for their knowledge of the Mediterranean and its global interconnections as regard the free trade and free ports.

The contributions to this volume provides a thought-provoking journey on this topics, from different point of views, highlighting the Mediterranean’s pivotal role in shaping global commerce.

In their introductory article "**The history of Mediterranean free ports as the invention of free trade?**", *Koen Stapelbroek* and *Antonio Trampus* trace the development of political and economic functions performed by free ports in the Mediterranean from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The chapter discusses the 'primitive' function of the free port to attract goods and create markets in barren and depopulated territories and brings together hitherto separate historiographies into a general perspective and genealogical narrative of the 'invention' of free trade.

If "free trade" became the vehicle for the European colonisation of the world, its institutional and geographical ancestry remains uncertain. The Mediterranean Sea in the early-modern age arguably was what the world's oceans became in later times, a laboratory for what would produce the reality of global commercial and political competition. By the eighteenth century, this comparison was already made by political writers who looked into the future and saw a further mixing of private and public interests and the greed and ambition of European nations giving rise to exploitation and the submission of other territories.

Historians often locate the origins of the free port in late Renaissance Italy, largely because that is where the discourse about free ports as an object of political economy first developed. Yet all port cities, by virtue of being open to some extent to goods and merchants, may potentially be classed as free ports, since ports by definition must be open to the outside world. The chapter "**Ports and free ports in the Old World. Political economy in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean (1500-1750)**" of *Corey Tazzara*, mediates between a historical and anthropological approach to free ports by comparing the trading environment of the early-modern Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean. It provides preliminary answers to two questions: one empirical (to what extent did ports and their host states resemble one another in these two geographic contexts?) and the other theoretical (to what extent should the historical context of a term such as 'free port' govern inquiry into a topic?).

Giuglia Delogu in the chapter "**What is a free port? 'It is a maritime city that grants duty-free status on all goods it imports, whatever their origin'**" discusses the nearly five centuries of history leading up to apparently sterile definitions and highlights how free

ports have been at the centre not only of economic debates but also of political and moral ones. By analysing both legal-administrative and intellectual sources, this chapter highlights the communicative nature of the media as they shaped positive and negative images of the free port. From the very first edicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, formal declarations also had a promotional role. To ensure the success of a free port, it was not enough to build new infrastructure or to reduce duties. It was also necessary to project an image of security and prosperity. The free port, from the beginning, was as much a tangible political-economic institution as it was a powerful intangible symbol.

In the next chapter, *Giulio Ongaro* analyses the role played by “**Free ports in a controlled market. Ancona, Livorno, Genoa, and Trieste in the eighteenth-century Italian grain trade**”. Trade in grain was strictly controlled by the public authorities in the pre-unitary Italian states, to guarantee the provisioning of the citizenry and the earnings of landowners. However, this apparently ‘closed’ system could survive only thanks to the presence of ‘exceptional’ areas that were instruments for regulating the in- and outflow of essential goods. In times of food scarcity, it was imperative that the urban Annone be supplied through the free ports, whose privileges enabled them to attract huge amounts of grain. These dynamics between free ports and public subsistence provision inspired further debate on free grain trade in which supporters of ‘deregulation’ claimed that favourable excise policies and a degree of commercial freedom could guarantee continuous food provisioning from areas with surplus production, and at the same time preserve the earnings of merchants and landowners.

In the chapter “**Territorial control, economic provision, and republican order. The free port of Genoa from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century**”, the author *Paolo Calcagno* reconstructs the history of the free port of the Republic of Genoa, from the edict of 1590 - the first one issued in the Mediterranean area - until the end of the ancien regime. The Genoese policy changed constantly in order for custom revenues to cover public-debt payments and maintain fiscal balance. Acceptance of foreign merchants and other religions was sporadic, limited to situations when the city needed to recover from supply or health crises or the damage of warfare. The dilemma of the Genovese elites was between promoting imports and maximising revenues, within the limited territory of the port. Another restraining element was that the local merchant class was disinclined to share economic opportunities. From around the mid-eighteenth century, it became more generally accepted that liberalising trade was necessary for participation in global trade.

The history of the free ports of Genoa and Livorno has often been written as dominated by

mutual hostility and rivalry. Yet, the two ports, precisely due to their proximity, developed not only as competitors but also formed a naturally integrated commercial system which allowed them to coexist and survive alongside one another. To better understand the different appeals that the two ports had for Great Britain, as the dominant economic power in the Mediterranean, *Danilo Pedemonte* compares the commercial practices of English communities in Genoa and Livorno in the eighteenth century, in the chapter **“English perspectives on Genova and Livorno. Rivalry and complementarity between two eighteenth-century free ports”**. In Livorno, with its openness to transnational trade and its policy of hospitality to rich foreign merchant communities, the British Factory created a closed community that was properly interconnected within the boundaries of the equally enclosed city. In Genoa, the capital of a trade republic with widespread maritime knowledge, seafaring history, and skill resources, the big merchant houses stepped back to allow shipping companies, small ship-owners, and sailors to mix with local society.

The history of the free port of Nice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a striking example of the political use of the institution of the free port. Unlike other known cases in the Mediterranean, the port of Nice was an ‘interstitial’ port-emporium, geographically located in the middle of one of the world’s busiest maritime routes which connected the southern Tyrrhenian and therefore the Levant with the western Mediterranean. While the prominent ports of Genoa and Marseille became French ports in the same period, Nice was the outlet of the small Italian state of Savoy which had had no maritime history until then. During the seventeenth century, in the wake of what the Medici had already done with Livorno with the famous Livornina of 1593, the Duke of Savoy entered the political fray through strengthening the Nice-Villefranche port, hoping to turn it into a rival to Genoa or Marseille. In the chapter **“The free port of Nice-Villefranche and Savoy maritime politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”**, *Luca Lo Basso* reconstructs the various attempts to shape the maritime policy of the Savoy dynasty between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the institution of the free port.

Francesca Savoldi charts the establishment and transformation of the free ports of Tangier and Gibraltar during seventeenth- to eighteenth-century British rule, outlining the particular social and economic junctures that prevented their prosperity. The colony of Tangier was proclaimed a free port by the Crown of England in 1662. Taking inspiration from the models of Livorno and Genoa, it was intended to be an international free-trade environment for all merchants. However, Tangier was never successful as a Mediterranean free port, with the colonial project abandoned in 1684. The lack of a safe port in the strait led the British to

occupy Gibraltar in 1704. This marked the beginning of its conversion into a free port and an international commercial enclave, integrated into the British economy, and providing it with a base for its navy. These two cases are compared in the chapter “**‘Dire straits’. The free ports of Tangier and Gibraltar in the English Mediterranean**” to illustrate how neither designated free-port status nor strategic location was sufficient for generating prosperity. Instead, their incompatibility with the political economy of the emerging British Empire, orientation towards defensive and expansionistic goals, and local resistance prevented the enclaves from flourishing as Mediterranean free ports.

Focusing on Gibraltar, a white colony which was neither rich in raw materials nor had sufficient land to attract settlers, *Antonella Alimento* in the chapter “**The British debate on Mediterranean free ports. Livorno, Gibraltar, and Port Mahon (1712-1783)**” analyses the Mediterranean’s central role in England’s imperial strategy. After having played an eminently political role by preventing the union of the French and Spanish Fleets, in the 1730s the English planned to use Gibraltar as a warehouse from which the entire Mediterranean could stock up with sugar, tobacco, and rice produced in their Atlantic colonies. A central role in reconsidering Gibraltar as a free port was played by the Quaker merchant Joshua Gee, who wanted to turn Gibraltar into a new Livorno and thus rejected the idea of endowing it with a civil government with members chosen on the basis of their Protestant affiliation. Although he did not share the vision of a ‘self-consciously Protestant British Empire’, he did help to outline the contours of the ‘predatory’ empire that underpinned the creation of free ports in the British Antilles. In effect, the decision to establish these ports was taken in the late 1760s in response to similar initiatives implemented by the French government to render its colonies increasingly dependent on the motherland.

The debates about establishment of a Neapolitan free port from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries are reconstructed by *Antonio Iodice* in the chapter “**A ‘source of gold and prosperity’? The Neapolitan free-port debate from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century**”. The city was a ‘free port of call’ already from 1633, following the requests made by the local parliament to the Spanish sovereign. However, not even contemporaries understood clearly the difference between a ‘free port of call’ and proper ‘free port’, and which privileged administrative and fiscal status was effectively in place. Alongside intermittent attempts to establish a proper Neapolitan free port, a heated theoretical debate took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both culminating in Napoleon’s decision to reintroduce the ‘free port of call’ in 1809. Neapolitan

economists and politicians discussed at length the advantages and disadvantages of free ports, using various European, American, and Asian ports as their models. According to some of authors, the city of Naples, placed in the centre of the Mediterranean, had been naturally destined to become an international emporium, and failure to seize this opportunity was emblematic of the state of Neapolitan political history.

In the early-modern age the free port of Messina, established in Sicily in 1695 under the Spanish Viceroyalty, and then reformed over the next 120 years under Savoy, Habsburg, and Bourbon rule, was the only free port of the Italian peninsula south of Civitavecchia. The chapter **“The free port of Messina in the ancien régime. Spaces, institutions, and practices”** focuses on the spaces of the free port. The authors *Ida Fazio* and *Rita Foti* reflects on the customs regime between the two kingdoms of Sicily and Naples, subject to the same crown while maintaining separated fiscal systems in order to safeguard incomes of private tax contractors and protect local manufacturers; on the ensuing contraband of goods, like oil and silk; on procedures relating to mobility, the status of foreigners, and the conditions and limits of civil and religious tolerance and the concept of citizenship; and on the justice system, the status of foreigners before the courts, summary procedure, and mercantile law. Along with the administrative reforms of the post-Napoleonic Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and especially the customs law of 1826, the age of free trade superseded the early-modern free port, based on privileges and exemptions, foreshadowing its abolition after the unification of Italy.

The response on the Spanish Crown’s to the emergence of free ports in early-modern Europe appears clear in the chapter **“Free trade and the ghost story of the Bourbon alliance. Spain, free ports, and the Mediterranean Sea (1648-1765)”** by *Edward Jones Corredera*. In the seventeenth century, rival European powers capitalised on and gradually replaced Spain’s careful balancing act of dynastic and commercial interests in the Mediterranean Sea. Following the Peace of Utrecht, Spanish officials sought to harness novel ideas of perpetual peace to improve the Crown’s standing in Europe. This chapter focuses on how eighteenth-century inter-imperial disputes over free ports in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans informed Anglo-Spanish negotiations on neutrality and arbitration. The start of the Seven Years’ War disrupted diplomatic efforts to reconcile Anglo-Spanish commercial interests and led to the reaffirmation of the Bourbon alliance. French expansionist ambitions, however, soon encouraged Spanish ministers to establish free ports throughout the empire. By drawing attention to the proposals of the Spanish prime minister Ricardo Wall and his network of officials, this chapter suggests that the growth of free ports in the

Spanish Empire responded to debates about the prospect of an Anglo-Spanish balance of power in Europe and sought to undermine the establishment of an equilibrium that would turn Spain into a French province.

Marcella Aglietti discusses a manuscript by the Spanish economist Manuel Maria Gutiérrez (1775–1850), which provides a comparative overview of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century free ports. The purpose of the manuscript was to filter through the existing models to select the appropriate foundations for the establishment of Cádiz as a free port and amplify its positions as an international trading hub. Intriguingly, in his voluminous manuscript, Gutiérrez attempted to turn the different manifestations of free-port policies, regulations, and characteristics into a ‘system of free ports’, a methodical framework in which the multitude of European free ports and the specificities of the functioning of different free ports within different states could be reduced to ‘one law’. In addition to reconstructing the overall picture offered by the manuscript, the chapter **“The evils of ‘beguiling Liberty’. A comparative perspective on free ports in a manuscript by Manuel María Gutiérrez (1830)”** focuses on some critical observations about paradigmatic free ports and Gutiérrez’s conclusions for the role that Cádiz could develop in its relationship with trade networks in Asia and America. Gutiérrez was inspired by the classical political economy of his time and developed his manuscript in response to the predicament of Spain conditioned by its history in global trade.

David Do Paço challenges local historiographical perspectives and the self-centred focus of the history of Mediterranean free ports. It offers a decentralised history of the Habsburg Empire and introduces the concept of ‘portchain’ as a dynamic polynuclear and asymmetrical system. Based on local initiatives, the Habsburg portchain connected the polynuclear interfaces in the Low Countries, Adriatic, western Mediterranean, and the Danube. It articulated state-related and private trade companies and exemplified a synergy between public and private interests. ‘Oracles’ contributed to the circulation of information and skills. They strengthened the interdependence of the different Habsburg interfaces and their connection to other economic systems worldwide. This chapter **“The Habsburg portchain. A decentralised empire in the eighteenth century”** advances a global history of the Habsburg Empire. It highlights its Mediterranean dimension and delivers a way to go beyond the trade diaspora history, especially focusing on informal trades and traders. It also advocates for a Habsburg history free from national and ethnic obsessions and a decentralised history of free ports in the Mediterranean and beyond. The argument puts the recent development of the blockchain-based digital economy in a historical

perspective.

For a long time, the construction of the Trieste free port was considered the result of a modernisation programme by Emperor Charles VI of Habsburg. This original myth has often been used to explain the subsequent history of the port of Trieste. Instead, it is more accurate to tone down the idea of personal vision and initiative and to recognise the complex interplay between many actors and interests. In this way, through the interaction between local figures and the larger Imperial constellation, one can explain the material constitution, political significance, and the commercial functioning of the Trieste free port. In this chapter on **“The evolution of the free port of Trieste from 1717 to the present”**, the author *Daniele Andreozzi* analyses the history and role of the free port of Trieste from its inception until the twenty-first century, highlighting changes in the spatial context and functions in relation to global economic and geopolitical changes. It focuses on some fundamental aspects, such as the construction of Imperial Trieste and its transformation at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the crisis of 1830-1840, the competition between the different poles of the Habsburg Empire, and the abolition of the free port and creation of free points at the end of the nineteenth century.

El libro *“Free Trade and Free Ports in the Mediterranean”* profundiza en el surgimiento del libre comercio en la época moderna, su genealogía institucional y la evolución en el tiempo.

En cuanto al contexto histórico, el libro investiga cómo la región mediterránea, con sus distintas características, produjo una situación propicia para el desarrollo de puertos libres, contrastando esta región con las demás para analizar y explicar cómo y por qué surgió el libre comercio en esta zona geográfica área.

Si bien se originó en el Mediterráneo, la influencia de los puertos libres se extendió mucho más allá y se convirtió en un fenómeno global. El libro rastrea su difusión más allá de la región y las modalidades relacionadas, centrándose en la experiencia única del Mediterráneo en lo que respecta al impacto en el comercio y las interacciones económicas.

Al profundizar en los aspectos geopolíticos, el libro explora cómo los puertos libres contribuyeron al equilibrio de poder entre los estados y su competencia comercial por la hegemonía durante el siglo XVIII, y cómo se cruzan las dinámicas económicas y políticas.

Las contribuciones del volumen también abordan cuestiones sobre la genealogía institucional de los puertos libres, la evolución en el tiempo, los factores que influyeron en

su desarrollo. También se explora el papel de los cónsules, gobernadores, técnicas fiscales, aspectos arquitectónicos y prácticas administrativas para comprender la posición de los puertos libres.

La interacción del comercio, la cultura y las instituciones en el Mediterráneo hace que este volumen sea de particular interés para los académicos de diversas disciplinas (historia moderna, estudios mediterráneos, economía global, estudios políticos, etc.) y para su conocimiento del Mediterráneo y sus interconexiones globales en materia de libre comercio y puertos libres.

Las contribuciones a este volumen ofrecen un viaje que invita a la reflexión sobre estos temas, desde diferentes puntos de vista, destacando el papel fundamental del Mediterráneo en la configuración del comercio global.

César Ducruet e Theo Notteboom nel capitolo **“A systematic and critical review of port system research”** indagano come i sistemi portuali sono stati studiati fin dai lavori pionieristici degli anni '60, a partire da un concetto di sistema portuale rimasto relativamente vago e mal definito, che spazia da un'area geografica o amministrativa contenente due o più porti verso un insieme interconnesso di nodi portuali in una determinata rete. Nuovi concetti stanno emergendo negli studi sui sistemi portuali, che sottolineano la presenza di diversi modelli e processi spaziali, la crescente importanza della connettività marittima - dopo decenni di modelli terrestri dominanti e concentrati sull'entroterra - così come l'ampliamento dell'attenzione dal nazionale al transnazionale e globale.

Jason Monios e Gordon Wilmsmeier individuano nel loro capitolo, dedicato all'**“Evolutionary spatial models of port system development”**, alcuni trend chiave, come la concentrazione e la deconcentrazione, il ruolo degli hub di transshipment, i cambiamenti nella governance portuale e nella concorrenza portuale, illustrati anche mediante esempi provenienti da diverse esperienze del sistema portuale latinoamericano e caraibico.

Il capitolo successivo fornisce una panoramica dei molti modi in cui gli studiosi hanno tentato di comprendere i sistemi urbani attraverso approcci basati sulle reti. Benjamin J. Preis fornisce nel suo contributo **“Winding paths through urban systems and urban networks”** un approccio alle sfide comuni associate all’uso di metodi di rete per studiare i sistemi urbani, inclusa la confusione che circonda la definizione di nodi e bordi, mostrando inoltre i numerosi diversi tipi di nodi e bordi che può comprendere una rete urbana. Nel tentativo di promuovere altre teorie, gli autori raccomandano di rendere lo studio delle reti urbane maggiormente applicabile alle sfide dei policy maker urbani e più concrete le sfide.

Il porto crocieristico internazionale di Wusongkou in Cina è utilizzato da James J. Wang, Adolf K.Y. Ng e Joseph Lau come caso studio nel capitolo **“The implications of duality of trans(port) systems”**. Gli autori forniscono nel contributo discussioni generali, informazioni utili e idee concettuali rilevanti su questo argomento significativo nella geografia dei trasporti, discutendo l’agenda di ricerca chiave e le relative lacune.

Con l’obiettivo di studiare **“The European ports’ size dynamics and hierarchies”**, Rania Tassadit Dial, Gabriel Figueiredo De Oliveira e Alexandra Schaffar propongono un’esplorazione originale basata su modelli di rango e catena di Markov. Nel loro lavoro, le matrici di Markov consentono infatti di osservare possibili cambiamenti nella gerarchia portuale e nelle permutazioni di rango tra determinati porti, costruendo un modello di dimensione del rango che consente di caratterizzare le gerarchie portuali e la loro evoluzione nel tempo, e di studiare la crescita relativa dei porti all’interno della distribuzione di rango.

I porti moderni generalmente si sono sviluppati lontano dalle strutture obsolete vicine al nucleo urbano verso luoghi meno urbani con un ampio spazio e una migliore accessibilità nautica, delocalizzando le infrastrutture e/o il traffico da un luogo all’altro, o verso altre località multiple entro un determinato periodo di tempo. Tali processi di migrazione portuale possono comportare lo sviluppo di un nuovo porto o di un nuovo terminal in prossimità delle strutture esistenti (ad esempio, una nuova area portuale sviluppata su un sito greenfield, lontano da un’area portuale più antica esistente) o a media e lunga distanza. In diversi casi, la migrazione portuale può modificare le caratteristiche fisiche e spaziali del porto, ad esempio un porto fluviale può convertirsi in un porto di estuario o costiero. Nel loro studio sui **“Port migration patterns in the global port system since the 1950s”**, César Ducruet, Theo Notteboom e Brian Slack propongono una panoramica della migrazione portuale a livello internazionale da una prospettiva qualitativa e quantitativa, concludendo con una tipologia delle traiettorie di migrazione portuale nel mondo.

L'analisi della concorrenza portuale da una prospettiva dell'hinterland proposta da David Guerrero e Jean-Claude Thill si concentra su un insieme di paesi per i quali non esiste un chiaro vantaggio geografico di un porto rispetto ad un altro. Queste aree dell'entroterra in concorrenza sembrano particolarmente rilevanti per valutare i fattori a favore di determinate alternative portuali, minimizzando gli effetti della distanza. Con l'espansione dell'Unione Europea verso est e il conseguente sviluppo dei collegamenti di trasporto est-ovest, come il canale Reno-Meno-Danubio, è prevedibile una maggiore concorrenza tra i porti. In questo lavoro **“Port competition in contestable hinterlands: The case of preferential relationships and barrier effects in Central Europe”**, contrariamente alle aspettative, appare in modo chiaro la dipendenza del percorso nell'organizzazione Nord-Sud dell'hinterland, con una persistente divisione tra la Svizzera, orientata per lo più verso Rotterdam e Anversa, e gli altri paesi dell'Europa centrale, storicamente legati ai porti tedeschi.

Il capitolo **“Global cities and global logistics”** mostra che un piccolo numero di città a livello internazionale (che hanno sia terminal container che aeroporti) rappresentano una quota elevata del trasporto merci globale. Le grandi richieste locali di territorio per i terminal container e gli aeroporti appaiono inconsistenti rispetto al costo dei terreni e alla congestione associati alle città globali e alle loro regioni. La comprensione della geografia dell'attività del trasporto merci si arricchisce nella ricerca di Kevin O'Connor esplorando le funzioni del settore produttivo e dei servizi delle città globali, e quindi le concentrazioni di attività produttive altamente qualificate e di servizi logistici di alto livello, insieme alle competenze tecniche e alle capacità di gestione urbana delle istituzioni di queste regioni urbane.

Nel capitolo **“Port authority mergers in port systems: The path to ‘North Sea Port’ and ‘Port of Antwerp-Bruges’ in Flanders”**, Theo Notteboom analizza il percorso verso fusioni portuali su larga scala e l'esperienza che coinvolge le autorità portuali del sistema portuale del delta del Reno-Schelda, compresi i porti dei Paesi Bassi e la regione delle Fiandre in Belgio. Negli ultimi anni molti sistemi portuali nel contesto internazionale hanno assistito, infatti, al passaggio dalla gestione di porti individuali alla gestione di sistemi multiportuali. Nella più importante regione gateway multiportuale d'Europa, le fusioni sono il risultato di un processo decennale di creazione di percorsi caratterizzato da tentativi di matchmaking e iniziative governative e dell'industria portuale che coinvolgono diversi attori e porti vicini. È il caso della creazione del North Sea Port nel 2018 (la fusione tra Zeeland Seaports nei Paesi Bassi e il Port of Ghent nelle Fiandre) e il Port of Antwerp-Bruges nel

2022, fusioni che hanno coinvolto diversi attori e porti limitrofi.

Con il capitolo **“Cooperation and competition between container shipping networks and their impact on container hub ports in Southeast Asia”**, Wei Yim Yap presenta una ricerca incentrata sul sistema portuale regionale dei porti di trasbordo che comprende i tre principali porti hub per container di Singapore, Port Klang e Tanjung Pelepas, offrendo importanti implicazioni gestionali e politiche riguardanti gli aspetti della concorrenza portuale, delle reti di alleanze marittime e dei terminali di joint venture. La più recente ondata di fusioni e acquisizioni, così come la riorganizzazione di alleanze nel settore del trasporto marittimo di container, forniscono infatti il contesto per indagare e comprendere l’impatto delle dinamiche interportuali create dall’evoluzione della cooperazione e della concorrenza tra le reti di trasporto marittimo di container.

Dedicato alla **“Port collaboration in the Greater Bay Area: reality, challenge and opportunity”**, il lavoro di Dong Yang, Yang Chen e Qiang Zhang esplora uno degli strumenti più importanti per la governance strategica dei porti. Questo capitolo discute in particolare la collaborazione portuale nella Greater Bay Area (GBA) indagando il suo schema di collaborazione, la modalità di business e il modello operativo, nonché l’evoluzione, le sfide e le opportunità future. Nel 2021, la GBA ospiterà il quarto, il quinto e il nono porto per container più grandi del mondo, creando la zona logistica più ampia del mondo con oltre 60 milioni di TEU di volume di traffico. La maggior parte delle province costiere della Cina continentale hanno infatti dato una risposta sostanziale alla collaborazione/integrazione portuale, che è stata riconosciuta a livello globale come una strategia per facilitare lo sviluppo portuale regionale.

Karel Van den Berghe, Antoine Peris e Wouter Jacobs applicano nel loro capitolo **“The emergence of polycentric port regions. The case of ARA and the US Gulf Coast”** il concetto di regione portuale policentrica - che ha origine dagli studi urbani - alle regioni gateway multiportali. Con un focus sulla regione portuale europea di Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Anversa (ARA) e sulla regione portuale statunitense del Golfo US, lo studio analizza le tre dimensioni morfologica, funzionale e istituzionale con una prospettiva orientata a far emergere specializzazione e complementarità. I risultati empirici, basati sui dati della rete marittima del Automatic Identification System (AIS), sulla mappatura geografica e sulle analisi storiche istituzionali, mostrano come entrambe le regioni portuali siano policentriche e caratterizzate da importanti relazioni tra loro.

A causa della natura dinamica del trasporto marittimo, il metodo più affidabile per ottenere

informazioni sulle caratteristiche dei collegamenti portuali è lo studio del movimento delle navi. **“Discovering shipping networks from raw vessel movement”** è un approccio proposto da Alexandros-Nikolaos Troupiotis-Kapeliaris, Giannis Spiliopoulous, Marios Vodas e Dimitris Zisis in grado di produrre conoscenze a partire dai riguardanti il movimento delle navi e le tendenze del trasporto marittimo. Attraverso l’Automatic Identification System (AIS) e l’elaborazione di una grande quantità di dati sulla mobilità disponibili quotidianamente, il metodo proposto produce mappe di densità attraverso una metrica innovativa, che considera gli attributi di spedizione delle navi in viaggio e rileva la capacità e l’importanza delle rotte marittime.

La pandemia di COVID-19, che negli ultimi due anni ha avuto un impatto senza precedenti sulle reti della catena di fornitura globale e sul commercio internazionale, ha suscitato particolare preoccupazione e interesse in quanto fenomeno complesso, che colpisce i porti e le reti marittime, incidendo sulla connettività internazionale con diversi gradi di severità. Lo studio **“Ocean container network dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic”** utilizza la posizione delle imbarcazioni e altri dati specifici delle navi, mostrando che le interruzioni derivanti dalla pandemia si sono propagate, indagando inoltre i comportamenti degli operatori in difficoltà. Se le reti marittime globali hanno mostrato un notevole grado di resilienza che ha garantito la continuità del commercio internazionale, le dinamiche della rete dovrebbero essere ulteriormente indagate per rispondere meglio alle crisi future.

Attraverso una revisione sistematica e critica, nel capitolo **“Shipping network analysis: state-of-the-art and application to the global financial crisis”** César Ducruet rileva un recente incremento di interesse da parte degli studiosi per le reti marittime, con studi focalizzati in particolare sulla topologia, da una prospettiva di rete complessa, sebbene estremamente diversificata in termini di background disciplinari, temi di ricerca e metodi analitici. Nonostante l’importante quota di riviste legate alla geografia, all’economia e al management, l’analisi delle reti marittime rimane isolata dalle principali questioni ambientali, territoriali e industriali.

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