



BEATRICE MORETTI

LANDSCAPES OF THE CLUSTER – A SPATIAL APPROACH TO PORTS



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Port spaces are complex and dynamic environments shaped by the need to reconcile often conflicting interests related to the economy, ecology, security, accessibility, and social inclusion. At the same time, contemporary ports are undergoing a profound transition that demands constant adaptability, positioning them as spaces for experimentation in addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, migration, sustainability, and technological innovation. Their impact is undoubtedly significant for the cities in which they are located, yet their influence extends far beyond them, often encompassing entire regions. This expanded spatial dimension constitutes the central theme of the monograph *Landscapes of the Cluster – A Spatial Approach to Ports* by Beatrice Moretti, an architect and assistant professor in the Department of Architecture and Design at the University of Genoa.

Contemporary ports are increasingly organised into clusters, denoting the administrative aggregation of two or more ports. Such governance decisions create new spatial typologies of ports, new zones of influence, and new spatial networks. The introduction of the concept of “port cluster landscapes” recognises the importance of architecture, urbanism, and strategic planning in the development of these areas. To adequately address the issue of port clusters, the monograph establishes new lexical categories, mappings, and strategies that enable the observation, understanding, and future planning of this spatial phenomenon.

The monograph is the result of the two-year research project PULSE, conducted between 2022 and 2024. The project focuses on establishing a dialogue between academia and the institutional sector, emphasising the role of space as a tool for understanding and designing contemporary ports, as well as highlighting the role of architecture and urbanism in designing operational zones, port clusters, and coastal settlements.

The monograph opens with a *Foreword* by Carmen Andriani, who highlights the importance of researching infrastructure as an innovative and adaptable structure, as well as

the necessity of interdisciplinary perspectives crucial for achieving a radical transformation within complex systems.

Before the main chapters, the author presents, through the text *Foundation*, the basis of the problem, the aims of the research, the methodology, and the achieved results.

The monograph is structured into three main chapters that gradually introduce the reader to the topic and provide tools for understanding, analysing, and planning the complex spaces of port clusters. The first chapter establishes the foundations for understanding and further research. Subchapter 1.1 explains the concept of port clusterisation through the case of Italy, where a legislative reorganisation of ports has been implemented. Subchapter 1.2 establishes a system of spatial indicators used to determine the spatial impact of port clusterisation. This system is based on a literature review and further validated and refined through questionnaires involving the Italian Port System Authorities (PSAs), whose professional insights enable an interdisciplinary understanding of space. Subchapter 1.3 presents a *Glossary* that forms a methodological toolkit for researching and describing the phenomenon of port clusterisation.

The second chapter deals with the interpretation of data. In subchapter 2.1, the PSAs qualitatively evaluated the previously established spatial indicators using examples from their own port clusters. Mapping was also conducted within two selected Italian port city territories, where an early stage of clusterisation can be observed. Subchapter 2.2 establishes a mapping methodology used as an operational instrument for monitoring, controlling, forecasting, and planning port clusters. Subchapter 2.3 focuses on the visualisation and graphic reinterpretation of data, enabling the comprehension and comparison of different. This forms the beginning of an *Atlas of Maps*.

The third chapter presents the conclusions of the research. Subchapter 3.1 provides insight into the methodology through which the most relevant spatial indicators from the pre-

vious chapters are transformed into six design strategies. The following subchapter 3.2 consists of the *Catalogue of Six Strategies*, in which these strategies are elaborated in detail to support the conceptualisation and planning of port clusters, aiming to address both the spatial problems and potentials arising from the specific spatial conditions of port clusters. Although these strategies serve primarily as a guide for the landscapes of clusters in Italy, they also hold the potential to influence other European and global port clusters.

Between each main chapter, contributions by port city experts – Karel Van den Berghe, Yvonne van Mil, Carola Hein, Marc-Antoine Faure, and César Ducruet – are inserted in the form of three guest essays. These are followed by three interludes: *Networks*, *Transfers*, and *Figures*. The *Networks* interlude is the result of collaboration during the research project and contributions collected through a Call for Contributions. The following interlude, *Transfers*, presents the outcomes of work developed through teaching activities. The final interlude, *Figures*, consists of a series of photographs exploring the spatiality of port areas.

The monograph concludes with an *Afterword* by Jeffrey S. Nesbit, who reminds us of the complexity of ports, port cities, and port landscapes, which must function as threshold landscapes where the idea of betweenness is manifested – spaces in which the irreconcilable is reconciled.

Overall, *Landscapes of the Cluster – A Spatial Approach to Ports* represents a valuable contribution to contemporary research on ports and port territories. Through its interdisciplinary and multiscale approach, the monograph establishes a methodological and conceptual framework for understanding the spatial implications of port clusterisation, while simultaneously bridging the gap between academic research, institutional practice, and spatial planning – a necessary step both for understanding the complexity of cluster landscapes and for guiding their future development.