THE ACTOR-RELATIONAL PORT CITY INTERFACES

Following the consecutive industrial revolutions, port cities have changed dramatically. During the last sixty years, ports around the world excelled. At the same time, ports moved out of the urban areas. Consequently, the former closely tightened port city interfaces have been split up in multi-dimensional ways: (i) socio-economic, (ii) cultural and most recently (iii) institutional.

Nevertheless, the recent crises of 2008 and onwards, show the limitations of the ongoing economies of scale and functional zoning which characterized the port developments around the world. There is a need to achieve a global competitive edge in particular by the preservation and expansion of the high quality functions that ensure long-term viability. Following this rationale, the OECD (2013) called to find or renew the synergies between port and city. However, before we can find new synergies, we first need to understand the current situation.

RESEARCH ON PORT CITY SYNERGIES IN GHENT

In this research, we examine the port city of Ghent (Figure 2). Ghent is an interesting case in the Dutch-Belgian region (OECD, 2013), because it has a more industrial profile than the other ports nearby. The hypothesis is that the port city interfaces in Ghent are still more intense and not grown apart in a same way then in comparison with the other port cities nearby.

To answer this question, first we need to understand the socio-economic situation. The port city of Ghent has a diverse socio-economic profile. But of this overview, the most interesting sectors and clusters to look into detail are direct value added:

- The car manufacturing sector (port: 33%)
- The metalworking sector (port: 21%)
- The bio-economy sector (port: 15%)
- The government, education and health care sector (urban: 32%)
- R&D and advanced producer service (e.g. IT, insurance)
- Membership of an association
- R&D firms doing research on metal processes. Most of these firms are situated in the Ghent University Technology Park (Figure 2 E). Arcelor Mittal is clearly the leader firm, but is a standalone firm. The car manufacturing cluster is in many ways the opposite of this. Around the Volvo Car Belgium firm, a large supplier network exist. This cluster, however, lacks urban R&D firms. The bio-economy cluster is diversified. The cluster has a strong port industrial network, as well as an urban knowledge network.

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RESULTS

The visualization of the three different clusters is twofold. Figure 2 shows the location of the actors involved in the different clusters. Figure 3 shows how these actors are connected and informs us as if the actor is situated in the administrative urban or part Ghent or in another city, as well the firm size.

Policy has to find the right port city governance model, capable of facilitating the dynamic port city synergies.

Location of the actors forming the AR networks in the Port City of Ghent

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

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RESEARCH ON PORT CITY SYNERGIES IN GHENT

The main goal of this research is to visualize the port city interfaces. Hence, we use the dynamic and multi-scalar Actor Relational Approach, this instead of conceptualizing the port city interface as a geographical area, or as the built up waterfront. This point of view fits well with the location of the actors involved in the different clusters. Figure 3 shows how these actors are connected and informs us as if the actor is situated in the urban knowledge network. The visualization of the three different clusters is twofold. Figure 2 shows the location of the actors involved in the different clusters. Figure 3 shows how these actors are connected and informs us as if the actor is situated in the administrative urban or part Ghent or in another city, as well the firm size.

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