Chapter 2
Freight Village as Dry Port:
An Ongoing Italian Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The authors intend to suggest an interpretation of dry ports as functional organs of a larger facility, known in Italy as "interporto," with reference to an Italian reality. This research fills a gap in literature as to the authors' knowledge. There is lack of research on the dry port concept, and this is the first chapter presenting this concept in an interpretation "functional" to the co-modality model of an "interporto." The chapter firstly aims at contributing to finding possible contact points between what has up to now been defined as "dry port" and the concept of "co-modality." The following section briefly defines the characteristics of a facility such as "interporto." Then the connections between recent developments in shipping and in terminal business and the increased role of dry ports in the value chain are explored. Finally, the authors suggest challenges and opportunities for further study and draw their conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

The considerable growth of maritime container trade in the last twenty years has given shipping companies a great impulse to increase their hold cargo capacity, by the use of larger ships (mega-ships), which on the one side provide economies of scale and on the other enable to keep competitive fees.

Such evolution had to be accompanied by a greater throughput capacity of the port gateway, with a propensity of the latter to develop more adequate and specialized equipment, plants, technologies and an "Information & Communication System".

Because of such accelerated evolution coming from outside, ports faced radical changes, not only in dimensions but also operatively. The pressure for fast and efficient handling and, most of all, the reduc-

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tion of turnaround time in ports led to a revision of logic connections with the hinterland, by the Port Authorities' governance as well as by the numerous other actors at play.

These transformations contributed to the development of facilities known as "inland terminals", which enable to increase the quays' capacity, and at the same time to having a better connection to the hinterland, thus becoming a competitive market lever for distribution and a storage point for freight to be exported.

So, the "inland terminal", as in the double star theory **(1)**, is, with the port, an essential part of a dyad, further link to a complex transport chain, where the use of intermodality, surpassing simple positioning of maritime containers, finds full implementation in many modal exchanges, useful to connect origin and destination points which are frequently rather far apart.

The expression "inland terminal" is mostly used in a geographical approach rather than in a transport-oriented one, the reason being that it is consistent with different spatial and infrastructural contexts, specific to the different economic aims it is involved in.

The main objective of this chapter may be summarized as follows: by analyzing the literature in the aforementioned areas it intends to suggest, because of the obvious contact points with the intermodal - or in other words "co-modal" - topic, an interpretation of dry ports as functional organs of a larger facility, known in Italy as "*interporto*".

This research fills a gap in literature: to the Authors' knowledge, there is lack of research on the dry port concept and this is the first chapter presenting the concept of dry port in an interpretation "functional" to the co-modality model of an "*interporto*".

Finally, the Authors of this chapter deliberately chose to refrain from adopting and presenting any mathematical or economic model; instead, they build on direct field experience and they have in mind to analyse an Italian study case as their next step.

The sequel of this chapter is organized as follows. Section "Backgrounds" aims at contributing to finding possible contact points between what has up to now been defined as "dry port" and the concept of "co-modality", as expressed by the EU Commission. The intention is furthermore to deepen the literature debate on the role a "dry port" can play within a transport chain (port-to-door, port-to-market), coming back to what makes the distinction: greater or smaller closeness to the port. Section "Main focus of the chapter" briefly defines the characteristics of a facility such as "*interporto*", then attempts to closely verify its propensity, mainly in the Italian case, to carry out the functions, typical for a dry port, which the examined literature generically allocates to an inland terminal, thus bringing it into the context of a logistic-transport system of a maritime kind. It also pursues the objective of marking a difference, of functional and substantial nature rather than semantic nature, between the concept of inland terminal and the concept of "*interporto*". In Section "Solutions and Recommendations", this chapter aims at exploring connections between recent developments in shipping and in terminal business, with the increased role of dry ports in the value chain. Section "Future research direction" suggests opportunities for further study, while conclusions are drawn in the last Section.

BACKGROUND: "CO-MODALITY" AND DRY PORTS

The Concept of "Co-Modality"

The United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (2001) has certainly offered an important contribution to the definition of the expression "co-modality": «*A number of major facility projects will help to*