An european benchmark of stakeholders strategies in medium size port cities

Lilian Loubet, Arnaud Serry

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AN EUROPEAN BENCHMARK OF STAKEHOLDERS' STRATEGIES IN MEDIUM SIZE PORT CITIES

Lilian Loubet, D.Sc.
Arnaud Serry, D.Sc.

University Le Havre Normandie
25 rue Philippe Lebon, Le Havre, France
lilian.loubet@univ-lehavre.fr, serryarnaud@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Facing a phase of liberalization and deregulation, the relation between cities and ports has been thoroughly analyzed from different perspective in the last 50 years. Beyond simple coexistence, the issue is the creation of synergies benefiting to both entities. These movements have an impact on the new trajectories of governance and partnerships between public and private actors. So port governance is marked by a new level of complexity which has caused a reshaping of the system of actors involved in the organization of ports. Consequently, the paper aims to provide some insights into this question by presenting the first results of a research project focusing on the relationship between ports and territories which are numerous.
Likewise, the paper also seeks to identify the characteristics, constraints and dynamics of the relationship between ports and cities and to study their potential impacts on spatial planning and territorial development. It specifically focuses on an intermediate scale of port-cities.
The methodology of this paper is primarily qualitative and based in part on interviews conducted among key actors and field studies. It mainly emphases on interrogations about the institutional status of the ports, the issues and consequences of the choices or the role of each category of actors in port and/or city governance. This analysis of decision-making processes will allow to describe and explain the dynamics of cooperation, but also conflictual logics.

Keywords: port-city, Europe, actors, port, governance.

1 INTRODUCTION

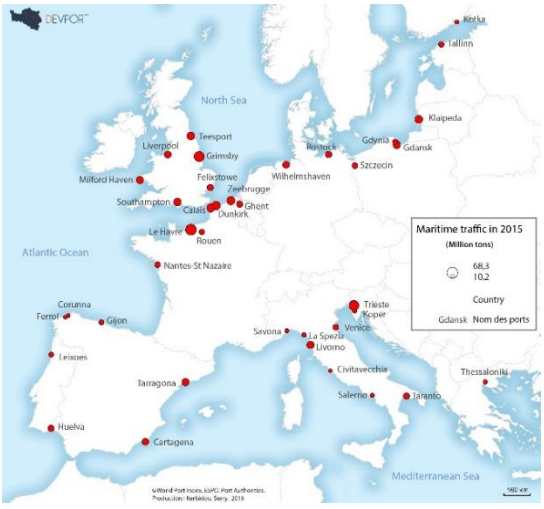
Port city, which serves as a link between local territories and the global economy, is an interaction of both urban and port systems, giving rise to its complex and dynamic nature (Xiao & Lam, 2017).

In the cotemporary globalization, managing port cities is a key issue. Historical links between ports and towns are clear. Moreover, during the last decades, these specific spaces have undergone major changes which have had consequences on their social and territorial dynamics. Today, port authorities, territorial communities and all the port city's stakeholders have to find modes of partnership in order to permit a better territorial development. Despite standardization of the modalities of governance according to the landlord port model (Verhoeven, 2010)

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the interactions between the stakeholders who shape port dynamics by considering them as challenges in the development of the wider territory. Our study is reinforced by a European benchmark of medium-sized port-cities.

We have definite medium-sized port cities by means of this twofold component, population and traffic. The medium-sized port cities taken into consideration in this paper are therefore the following (Figure 1):

- Cities between 100 000 and 250 000 inhabitants with maritime traffic of over 10 million tons.
- And cities of over 20 000 inhabitants and fewer than 500 000 inhabitants with a port traffic of be-tween 10 and 50 million tons.



Source: Made by the Authors, 2020.

Figure 1: Medium-sized port cities in Europe

The present paper is presenting the cases of Le Havre (France), Klaipeda (Lithuania) and Kotka (Finland).

Therefore, we conducted a campaign of semi-directive interviews (around 25) with key players in port governance (elected councilors, chamber of commerce and industry directors, ports representatives, private companies…), enabling us as of now to identify some results and lines of thought. The aim of these interviews is to analyze the city-port relations and their impact on urban or port development. Once these interviews were recorded, they were integrated into two text analytics software (NVIVO and ALCESTE). So, the paper is organized according to a geographical organization in which each part is dedicated to one port city.

2 GOVERNANCE OF THE LE HAVRE PORT COMMUNITY

The governance of the Greater Maritime Port of Le Havre (GPMH) is the result of the general model following the 2008 port reform. Port Authority is a public body, performing sovereign functions as well as the development. A Management Board supervises the port and is responsible for its management. The Supervisory Board implements the strategic plans and exercises permanent control of its management. It is completed by a consultative body: the development council. The decision-making organization and leadership structure is clearly stated by the results from some ten interviews realized from April to September 2017 with different stakeholders from Le Havre. The State seems to be the most significant stakeholder. The economic importance of the port of Le Havre explains the particular attention paid to the development of this port community. The State ensures its control by means of senior civil representatives in all the decision-making bodies and especially the chairman of the port's management board (Loubet & Serry, 2019).

"At the GPMH, decisions are taken by the management board... They're presented to a supervisory board which validates them, apart from budget matters since it's under Bercy's administrative (ministry of economy) supervision". A stevedoring company director.

According to many interviewed actors, entrusting the port's management to nominated officials is a handicap to territorial and port development.

"One of the main problems with port management in France is that representatives of the State are senior officials who come to the supervisory board with no genuine political mandate … so they see to the management. There's no real vision, just management". A councillor of Le Havre.

In this context, the dual ministerial supervision (Transport Ministry, Economy and Finance Ministry) would complicate the management dimension and this would be to the detriment of more ambitious policies. With regard to the urban side, it appears to be in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, the urban community of Le Havre seems to have limited power:

"The city isn't a stakeholder with strong decision making powers […] We aren't the ones who make the decisions, we're simply invited to the discussions… you have to realize that the governance of a port like Le Havre is largely out of the hands of the local elected officials". A councilor of Le Havre.

"As an organizing body, the City Council and the CODAH have no impact on us in our business proper". A stevedoring company director.

On the other hand, strong informal relations between the president of the GPMH board and the mayor enable the latter to have a significant impact on the main directions involving the port. These dynamics are strengthened in view of the closeness that exists between the present mayor and his predecessor, today the Prime Minister. Mechanisms of fairly classic "cross regulation" can be observed where central and decentralized powers are interwoven (Crozier & Thoenig, 1975).

"If you have a mayor of one town who has a certain power nationally and a mayor of another town who has no power nationally, you don't have the same type of relationship… And the political factor carries tremendous weight; it's clear that the quality of an institution like ours facing the Region…". A GPMH representative.

So, one informal and powerful decision-making body (acknowledged by all) has constructive cooperation between state officials (namely the director of the port) and the mayor: "the quadripartite".

"The Quadripartite, a meeting which takes place three or four times a year and brings together the mayor of Le Havre, the president of the CODAH, who is in fact one and the same, the president of the CCI and the president of the port board of directors. This is a powerful, yet totally informal, decision-making body. […] On sensitive questions, where a choice has to be made between several scenarios, where arbitration is absolutely essential, that's what it's there for. Sometimes… it's just city and port". A councilor of Le Havre.

The municipal officials can also benefit from more leadership thanks to the role they play as mediators in the event of social conflicts. The municipality hovers between a form of neutrality and a mission of appeasement between the trades unions and the port management. The unions also emerge as influential players after the State and the municipality, especially in light of their ability to block agreements. This leadership appears as a very important component for representatives of port companies.

"If a decision issuing from the State doesn't go down well, you've got a month of strikes, a month with no work and several million euros lost... so as for me, I'd have said, the operating force: that means, the unions first". A UMEP representative.

In this context, private sector stakeholders (operators, logisticians, handlers, etc.) do not appear to have much influence in decision-making bodies.

"The share of the private sector should be increased in these decision-making groups. Sovereign power is clearly indisputable, but I think that the voice of the people on the ground should be heard, those who are involved". A UMEP representative.

Other stakeholders who could appear as key players in the system are mentioned last in our interviews or else are not cited. In order of importance, shipping companies are poorly represented in GPMH decision-making bodies, they exercise considerable influence. Their strategies, the size of their ships…, condition the directions and development of ports. As such, they influence economic models and port infrastructures

"Here is a very important player yet one who is rather infrequently to be seen in governing bodies. He is represented all the same, but there's no need, he dictates, in fact. He's not even represented on the port supervisory board". A councilor of Le Havre.

The regional level is virtually absent from our interviews. At a time when the regionalization of ports is under discussion, the regional council is not mentioned as an important player in Normandy's port system. The lack of clarity in the distribution of roles, skills and missions seems to disadvantage identification of this echelon:

"There is the big question of the respective place the State and the region should have in these governing bodies, since the Region is increasingly called upon to co-finance infrastructural projects and the place of the Region in the governance has not yet been determined". A councilor of Le Havre.

There is no citation from HAROPA which purpose is to coordinate the strategy of port development of the three ports on the Seine axis (Le Havre, Rouen, Paris) by promoting a pooling of strategic functions. It endorses the difficulty arising from the emergence of midway scales between the local (municipality and port community) and the national. It is clear that this structure does not appear, in the eyes of the stakeholders, as an echelon of reference in the development of a port like Le Havre's.

"HAROPA is better than nothing. But it's not enough. There must be much stronger integration in all the decision-making processes concerned with the Seine axis". A stevedoring company director.

Consequently, while the role of the region concerning port development, the creation of bodies of enhanced cooperation, or even mergers, seem to be under discussion, the major stakeholders remain the State (and its deconcentrated representatives), the municipal tiers (in relation to its political legitimacy) and the particularly powerful intermediary bodies (the Dockers' unions, for instance). In addition to this governance, ship-owners play a relatively solitary role. Contrary to the Klaipeda case, the workers' unions (such as Dockers') are often mentioned and they appear to carry a great deal of influence. Similarly, the intermediary territorial scales (the region, for example) seem hardly to be acknowledged (as is the case in Klaipeda).

3 DECISION-MAKING ORGANIZATION IN KLAIPEDA

The functions and the organization of the port of Klaipeda are defined by the 1996 law. Under the direct regulation of the Lithuanian ministry of transport, the main missions of the port authority (Klaipeda State Seaport Authority) are to manage the territory, ensure safety and security, build infrastructure and achieve strategic development plans. The port general director is appointed by the minister of transport.

The port development board formulates the development strategy and coordinates relations between the port and the municipal authority and governmental institutions. It is composed of representatives from the transport and finances ministries, the region, the Klaipeda municipality, representatives from the academic world, the port and its users. The port council, comprising representatives from almost the same bodies as those seen in the port development board does not have any supervisory functions. It prepares the development plans (Loubet & Serry, 2019).

The result of around ten interviews conducted in April 2017 with different actors in Klaipeda allow to analyze the decision-making organization in Klaipeda.

The institutional management of the port of Klaipeda, is based on great presence of central government.

Using the NVIVO software, we created a cloud of the most frequently used words by the urban-port actors surveyed which shows that the State[1] enjoys a very strong leadership:

"We are a state-run business and were set up by the ministry of transport. We are like a subsidiary of the ministry of transport". A manager of Klaipeda's port authority.

The institutional management of the port of Klaipeda, therefore, partly resembles that which was presented in the case of Le Havre. In this context, the city council finds it difficult to direct the port development in line with municipal policies:

"If I said that we have no impact on the port, this would almost be the truth. Lithuania only has one port. It's a state-run port and the municipality has no rights over it; other than the fact that we are convened to two advisory councils. The port council in which we don't have the right to vote. There's also the council for development in which we have four seats out of 23 and in which nobody pays any attention to us." The deputy mayor of Klaipeda.

So, local and central governments can face (over real-estate management, for example) in an environment where the municipality is not recognized by the port

[1] In French "L'état" means "State".

authority as a port stakeholder: "There's no problem [in finding an agreement], but the discussions with the municipality; but it isn't a port stakeholder". A manager of Klaipeda's port authority.

Concerning private sector stakeholders, they are important partners and are present in the majority of decision-making instances. These companies participate actively in port management by means of their associations for the defense of their interests:

"We represent our industry in parliament, in the Lithuanian government and we help it to take the right decisions … At the same time, we also discuss issues with the city council. We represent our members' interests with the city". A stevedoring company director, a manager of LJKKA.

"Our aim is to develop the port of Klaipeda together with state institutions, the port authority of Klaipeda... There are practices, such as: no direct face to face contact between the state institutions and businessmen. But generally, it's preferable to go along and negotiate with the government or ministries or the Lithuanian parliament as members of associations, for example for the port or for maritime activities". A stevedoring company director, also a manager of LJKKA.

Companies negotiate and cooperate with the government, building coalitions which result in the municipality being marginalized in issues relating to the development of the port community. The city council, on the other hand, appears to communicate more on the defense of inhabitants faced with the negative externalities of industrial port activities. Thus, positions are adopted which illustrate fairly classic land settlement where economic development (promoted by businesses and the State) seems to be in contradiction with the living environment and wellbeing of the residents (prioritized by the municipality). These tensions become exacerbated during the various electoral campaigns, be they local or national.

In such context, the lack of dialogue and the imbalance between the port authority and the municipality in their ability to wield influence (reported by a large number of port stakeholders) encourage the municipality to adopt a defensive attitude (perhaps to the detriment of the development of the port):

"I think that the city councilors should be part of the port council at the same level [as that of the port], but if the city wants to be part of the decision-making process, it should also contribute to port activities. As it stands, the city wants to take but doesn't like to give." A manager of the maritime academy of Lithuania.

Therefore, the State, the port authority, the businesses replaced by their associations, the municipality, have been described as major stakeholders. The workers' unions are not mentioned, as well as the intermediary territorial tiers (the region, for example).

4 GOVERNANCE OF THE HAMINA-KOTKA PORT COMMUNITY

Our third case study is also located in the Baltic Sea Region but the configuration is fundamentally different from the situations observed in the Baltic States. The Kotka and Hamina terminals are the most eastern in Finland and are thus an integral part of the eastern Baltic port range in close proximity to Russia.

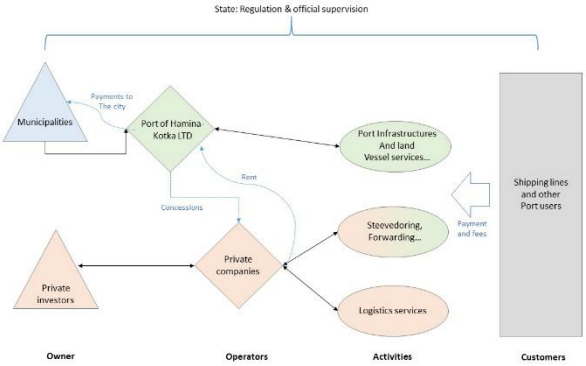
Before merging the two ports in 2011, these ports were two the first in Finland to be administered by municipal companies, commercial enterprises without societal obligations, unlike municipal companies that manage many Finnish ports. They received no financial support and were able to make profit and offer a reasonable return to the municipality (Finnila & al., 2011).

"We are owned by the municipality, of course we provide it some revenues". A port authority representative, December 2018.

Since the merger, the ports are a limited company, Port of HaminaKotka LTD, which is 60% owned by the municipality of Kotka and 40% by the municipality of Hamina. The company organizes and rules the port activities in both cities. It leases warehouses, offices and land in the port area.

"The port is a limited company owned by the city but operates independently. It has its own director, its own administration. The city is in charge of territorial planning." A Kotka city official, December 2018.

The role of the Finnish state in the governance of the port of Kotka-Hamina is minimal (Figure 2). It is also the only port in our study that does not define itself exclusively as a landlord port, in particular because of its action in port services and in financing of certain facilities.



Source: Made by the authors, according to Finnila & al., 2011.

Figure 2: Relationship system in the port of Hamina-Kotka

Thus, the governance of the port place of Kotka is structured with at its head, on one side the port's CEO and his team, and local elected officials on the other side. These two groups of stakeholders seem to be shaping a model that values regular cooperation and exchanges (formal and informal).

"The interactions are going well; the port regularly gives information about its operations". A Kotka city official, December 2018.

"Of course, the CEO and the mayor meet frequently with the influent people in the port". A Kotka city official, December 2018.

The port's CEO and his collaborators enjoy a significant leadership. They have a strong decision-making power in the realization of strategic and operational affairs. Also, although the port is owned by the municipality, it is a company that totally subscribes to the rules of liberalism.

"The port is a business company like any other one, even if we are owned by the municipality, that doesn't mean we don't work like a normal business entity. We work like any other company". A port authority representative, December 2018.

In this system "the port's customer base" is according to the leaders of the port company, the first decision-maker. It influences the development of the port and, according to that situation, would be a major player in urban-port governance.

"Customers need to be placed first. This must be so, otherwise there would be no business. For me, it's the clientele first. But if you ask anyone from our management or our team, they will tell you the same thing, because without the customers there is nothing, we would have no work and therefore no income". A port authority representative, December 2018.

However, municipal power remains strong, if not pervasive when it comes to strategic issues involving the territory, such as the merger of the ports of Kotka and Hamina.

"I think the most difficult decision was to merge the ports. [. . .] In the city [in Kotka], everyone was in favour of the merger. In Hamina, it was more difficult because they felt their independence threatened by the merger. They had to vote for the merger. But in Kotka, the merger was decided unanimously by the city council". A Kotka city official, December 2018.

As mentioned above, the power of the Finnish state within the port territory remains very weak. In addition, according to the interviewed actors, the port/state relationship subscribes to a comprehensive Finnish model that values "peaceful" relations and "cooperation".

"We are an independent company; it really means that we are independent. So we make our own decisions, we don't have to ask for state authorization. [...] We follow the market and that's it. It's not like in France, we don't have yellow vests, that's not working like this. Finland is a fairly peaceful society. People may be unhappy with something, but it is questionable and agreed, and it is the same with the state, we have constant meetings and discussions with the state and that is how we move forward". A port authority representative, December 2018

Finally, the main stakeholders, elected representatives or managers of the port authority seem particularly satisfied with the nature of cooperation and established governance.

"It's a small town so the decision-making is quite simple. [. . .] I think it's fine to be honest, we have a board of directors, we have a CEO and that's how it works. It's pretty simple. We do not have these different government agencies, which would constantly influence decision-making. It's not like that because we're a separate, independent and private company". A port authority representative, December 2018

5 COOPERATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PORT PLACE

Mutations in international trade have forced ports to transform and generally move away from the city even if interactions between urban and port system persist. Nowadays, in order to be competitive, ports must effectively interact within their own territory. This contains building infrastructures, coordinating actors and cargo flows, creating long-term relationships with private entrepreneurs and public parties… (Debrie, Lavaud-Letilleul, Parola, 2013). So, it can be more difficult for municipal representatives, for instance, to understand what are the current trends in the maritime industry and the need for port development of any magnitude in order to remain competitive. There is a rising separation of the city from the port, fuelled by institutional and organizational rationales peculiar to each stakeholder and territory.

Consequently, despite standardisation of the modalities of governance according to the landlord port model (Verhoeven, 2010), there is no single archetype. For that matter, this model already distinguishes the hanseatic configuration. This model describes a "governance of proximity", striking the right balance between private port and Latin pattern (in which the port is under the influence of the State) (Tourret, 2014). Furthermore, each port is exposed on a variable basis to political bodies of the different institutional levels (municipal, regional, provincial, national, international). Associated to this is the impact of the mechanisms for delivering goods, which are decisions taken by the private sector. This variety of scales and the growing number of stakeholders make up the general framework in which the modes of governance of world seaport systems fit (Comtois, 2014).

In this context, the organization of the urban project and port project, spatial planning or the drafting of urban planning documents reveal the nature of relations between stakeholders as they represent the fundamental issues of territorial development. The geopolitics of urban-port development is based on conflicts of practices and is expressed fairly classically. National, regional or municipal interests are often at odds with each other (Brooks, Cullinane, Pallis, 2017). On this occasion, the imperatives concerning the environment, the economy,

the well-being of inhabitants, fishing, logistics and industrial activities, etc., may raise objections to port development. In the case of Klaipeda, for example, the development of tourism and protection of living conditions, promoted by the municipality, encounter negative externalities and land requirements for port activity. In the case of Le Havre, the particular interests of the port authority (duplicated by its land management mission) might lead it to rein in the economic and industrial development of the territory. In Kotka, it seems that decentralized management (without strong state intervention) through municipal companies promotes cooperation between the municipal political power and the port enterprise.

Consequently, the ability of stakeholders to set up regulatory areas, formal and informal arenas likely to reconcile the different projects, is fundamental. At Le Havre, the alignment of port and urban projects benefits from the "quadripartite" regulation. Strong local government (municipal and intercommunal) guarantees that there is mutual recognition between stakeholders. In the Lithuanian case, the "interlocking/interconnecting" of projects seems to suffer from a form of manipulation of the port issue driven by the mayor in order to express his inclinations to resist in the face of central government. The lack of reciprocal recognition culminates in a development which would benefit from more reconciliation. In the Finnish case, "customer" demand appears to be the principal factor in decision-making. According to the interviewed stakeholders, this approach would encourage the search for consensus.

In both first cases, this unstable governance, where leadership of the local, central and port authorities is endlessly under discussion, accentuates the areas of uncertainty for economic stakeholders who require institutional stability.

The partisan dimension (political parties) also characterizes local governance des deux premiers cas. Depending on the context, it can have an impact on the dynamics of territorial development. In the case of Klaipeda, for example, national bipartite oppositions can be seen at local level in the port sector.

The drafting of territorial planning documents is therefore a considerable political issue. In the French and Lithuanian cases, they enable the communal block to "regain control" in a relationship where the State appears often as the privileged interlocutor of the port authority. In this, the communal block sees itself endowed with an excess of leadership. On the other hand, urban planning documents are also learning tools for cooperation (Loubet, 2012) and help to improve the dynamics of local development. In addition, "Spatial planning, urban planning and development documents therefore constitute territorial arenas for dialogue between stakeholders (Nadou, 2013). This makes port decision-makers re-examine their territorial anchorage, operate an "expansion of their baseline territorial status" (Loubet, 2011), here the port. Similarly, they incite councillors, technicians and even inhabitants, to question the port's integration in the city and the way in which they participate in building a sense of identity. As such, the procedure of drafting urban planning documents reconciles urban and port projects. It also constitutes a means for testing the organizational competence of local communities in a context of increasing complexity where account should be taken of the plurality of stakeholders and all of the issues. As in the management of social movements in the port of Le Havre, the "mediation" (Muller, 2000) used bolsters the municipal and intercommunal leadership. In Finland, the status of a municipal port and the low interventionism of the State, reduces the importance of planning documents as regulation tools for involded stakeholders.

So, structuring planning tools, different projects and multiple spatialities brings to light a multifaceted interplay: public/private relationships, institutional interference, effects of competition and a divergence in viewpoints between people of the sea and those of the land (Foulquier, 2009). Similarly, "the relationship with public authority remains ambivalent, between the need for strategic supervision to see ahead and calls for autonomy to act faster. " (Guillaume, 2014). Thus, the port authorities have been encouraged to think about the medium and long-term relevance of their development strategies. What is important is no longer the tons handled, but their impact on the territory, especially in terms of job creation (Lemaire, 2012).

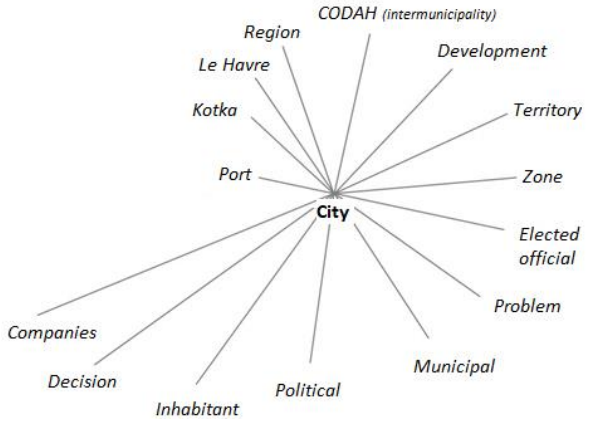
Moreover, the rescaling of ports means that cities have to go along with the new territorial recomposition. "The complexity and extremely contextual character of the issues make it indispensable that there is collaboration between the different stakeholders and the preliminary study of the strengths and weaknesses of the territory... A good city/port relationship would thus appear to be indispensable" (Jugie, 2014). As a consequence, scales and contexts are of primordial importance. A country with a big number of ports will conduct a different policy from another, boasting few ports, or ports having little impact on the domestic economy (Foulquier & Maugeri, 2014).

Furthermore, structural changes caused by global, intermodal logistics are redefining the relationships between the port and its region (Comtois, 2014). Ports today enlarge their activities and functional involvement above and beyond their metropolitan or regional borders. (Prelorenzo, 2011). There remains, however, an unfamiliarity with the advantages for the whole territory which are connected to maritime traffic (be it regional or national). It therefore seems imperative to reflect upon the scales in discussions, in a context where decentralizing ports enables the regions to exercise and impact on port infrastructures and the development of seafront and inland areas. Increasingly, the regional stakeholder is encouraged to strengthen his leadership in the governance of port communities. Yet according to the studied cases, its role appears to be only poorly identified.

6 CONCLUSION

Our primary results value the role of stakeholders, their aptitude to implement cooperative behaviors within particular territorial configurations. Beyond the institutional settings, the relationships between stakeholders need specific attention. The degree of dependence on central government, the interaction between deconcentrated and decentralized local authorities create an environment structuring the quality of cooperative relationships and local development.

To sum-up, we analyzed the network of shapes of the word "city" (Figure 3). The presence of the word "port" at the first place reflects the important functional proximity between the port and the city. But some words are also referring to conflicting relationships such as "problem" or "decision".



Source: Made by the Authors, 2020.

Figure 3: word « city » shape network

It would be interesting to extend the study to other medium-sized port cities in Europe in order to take into account a greater diversity of port and urban dynamics. These initial results provide several issues for reflection on the characteristics but also the roles of medium-sized port cities in Europe within the global, regional and even local port competition

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