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**Policing the Port, Watching the City.
Manifestations of Organised Crime in the Port of Genoa**

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Manifestations of Organised Crime in the Port of Genoa

Abstract

This article will present the results of a qualitative research into organised crime in the port of Genoa, Italy's largest port, by looking at the challenges of policing the port space.

Through the case of Genoa, the paper reflects on how organised crime manifests across three trajectories in seaports: *trafficking* through the port, *infiltration* in the port economy and *governance* of the port management. This paper argues that the space and geography of the port-city relationship are key to understand how and to what extent different organised criminal groups act in and around the port and within global drives. An integrated approach between urban criminology and organised crime studies is needed to better map the very complex picture of organised criminality in the port within the city.

Introduction

Where the sea meets the land, in a series of coves and inlets in the deep blue Tirrenian sea in the North of Italy, the city of Genoa spreads across almost a hundred kilometres of coast, 30 of which occupied by the port. Genoa, also known as *La Superba* (the Superbe), between 1000 and 1700 built its reputation on the volumes of trades and on commerce through the port as a maritime republic "*superiorem non recognoscens*" (Republic that recognises no superior, the city's motto). The identity of the city is a maritime identity, with the museum of the sea, the history of the *Camalli* - the peculiar name given to port workers - the lighthouse, the *Lantern*, as symbol of the city.

Genoa's port is often referred to as a city within the city and it represents one of the main sources of wealth for the region. According to a governmental study run in 2017 the port adds a 12.6% of workforce to the economy of the city and represents the 8.3% of the total workforce of the region (Invitalia et al., 2017: 73). Additionally, while 61% of port activities are directly contributing to the port economy (trade and commerce included), the remaining 39% contributes to other sectors, among which construction, transports, the food & hospitality industries and other services to individuals and companies operating in or through the port. Moreover, 48% of the port economy contributes to the Liguria region, while the rest is spread out to reach neighbours such as Lombardia, Piedmont, Toscana, Veneto and even the far away Lazio region (Invitalia et al., 2017: 73).

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Genoa's port is also well known for being a hub for illicit trafficking and smuggling activities on the waterfront, also thanks to the proximity to France, Switzerland and North European markets (DNA, 2017). The city of Genoa, its port and the region of Liguria more generally, have been object of close scrutiny by Italian authorities in the past years. The Italian Antimafia Commission – a parliamentary commission that analyses the phenomena of organised crime and mafias in Italy – conducted a special mission to Genoa in July 2017¹ and found that Liguria is one of the most worrying regions in the North of Italy when it comes to the presence of organised crime. In particular there is, in Liguria, a presence of mafia-type criminal groups, especially the Calabrian 'ndrangheta (Sergi and Lavorgna, 2016), which not only profit from illicit activities such as drug trafficking, but also influence the legal economy, the management of infrastructures and large contracts and also the world of politics. Drug trafficking is particularly effective in Liguria thanks to the ports, not only Genoa but also the smaller ones of Imperia and Vado Ligure, where both mafia organisations and other criminal groups have different connections and prolific businesses. As also confirmed by Padovano (2016) recent investigations in the city of Genoa lead to believe that among unionised port workers and port employees there have been some “rotten apples” who have been found facilitating drug importations. This has come almost as a shock to the city, where the port workers are known, historically, for their civil and social engagement in the city.

Exploring the manifestations of organised crime in the port of Genoa has been the main aim of this research. The main argument of this paper is that an analysis of organised crime in the port of Genoa needs to consider the marked urban identity of the port. Understanding the *space* of the port, and how it sits within the city, is paramount to define priorities and challenges of policing organised crime on the waterfront of Genoa. Through the case study of the port of Genoa, this paper proposes a tri-partite analysis of organised crime in seaports: illicit trafficking, infiltration in the port economy, and criminal governance of the port territory. Finally, this paper argues that organised crime in the port can also be seen as a fragment – a *synecdoche* - of organised crime in the city, and this has clear relevance for policy and practice.

Crime on the waterfront

Ports are analytical loci through which several dilemmas of contemporary global economies emerge (e.g. deregulation of international trades, everyday life globalisation and illegality in markets) (Nordstrom, 2007). Port economy and maritime commercial networks have been widely discussed in

¹ Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno delle Mafie e sulle altre associazioni criminali, anche straniere Relazione Conclusiva Relatrice: On. Rosy Bindi, 8 February 2018
http://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg17/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/023/038/INTERO.pdf

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2 economics and globalisation studies (Daamen & Vries, 2013). Different studies (see for example the
3 edited volume by Carpenter and Lozano, 2020) have looked at the economy of port cities as
4 “*narratives of cosmopolitanism and even exceptionalism*” (Mah, 2014: 1). Indeed, while embedded
5 in global dynamics, port cities share “*global legacies*” (Mah, 2014: 1). Developments and
6 transformations of global trade networks have affected histories of migrant communities and/or
7 political actions of working-class on the waterfront. Indeed, port cities are a specific kind of urban
8 context where it’s possible to observe local and global changes at the same time. As Wang et al.
9 (2007: xv) argue, “*seaports that were significant for a ‘slower’ but no less global economy have been*
10 *undergoing transformation, re-imagining and re-inventing themselves, to stay economically and*
11 *culturally ‘relevant’*”. Links with classical criminological issues clearly emerge: for example, the
12 extent to which informal and criminal activities are intertwined with relations of trades, and also the
13 mechanisms through which illegal economy runs on the same track as that of international economic
14 exchanges.

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Criminological enquiries on the peculiarities of the port environment are quite limited, notwithstanding the wealth of research and attention to crimes that *touch* the port – primarily trafficking of illegal goods, i.e. drugs or weapons (Eski, 2011; Farrell, 1998). Ports are virtually always mentioned in relation to organised crime, first as they are key entry or exit points for drugs, other illegal goods and/or smuggled people, second as they are extremely difficult places to police and secure (Eski, 2019; Demeri, 2012). Indeed, crime control at the waterfront is a “*formidable task*” (Brewer, 2014: 9) because ports are places in constant flow, with different infrastructures belonging to different owners and having different interests (Christopher, 2015).

Empirical criminological research has approached different ports more or less always as case-studies, either individually or comparatively. Studies on port security and governance dominate the literature. Analysis of security providers and their challenges and efforts has shown how not only multi-agency approaches remain the only possible solution to the complexity of governing ports (Brewer, 2014), but also that the shortcomings of policing and surveillance remain the main problems in making the port a crime-free environment (Madsen, 2018; Eski and Kankaras, 2015). It has been demonstrated that the need to deliver security at the port – which was prompted by a number of specific international tools, such as the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code created in 2002 after 9/11 by the International Maritime Organisation (Eski and Carpenter, 2013) – creates rivalry across different actors and agencies involved, as well as difficulties in information sharing across institutions in the same port.

A discourse on complex crime and port policing and security must also consider the effects of privatisation on the port environment, both in relation to the privatisation of port management and in relation to the privatisation of security (Eski, 2019). The former clearly affects employment

1 relations in the port (for example between port workers and companies who manage the terminals)
2 (Madsen, 2018; Christopher, 2015) as well as the port economy and the city behind the port (Talley,
3 2009). The latter places considerable pressure on operational coordination across police actors, law
4 enforcement and security providers (Eski and Carpenter, 2013).
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9 Finally, some literature has looked at criminality in the ports from the perspective of actors
10 and networks of offenders (Zaitch, 2002; Antonopolous, 2008). Criminality on the waterfront ranges
11 from the occasional involvement of port workers in illicit activities to the systemic corruption of
12 union members and/or border and custom agents (Eski and Bujit, 2016); from the laundering of
13 proceeds of crime in the maritime supply chain to complex trafficking of drugs, weapons or humans
14 (Chalk, 2008; Eski, 2016); from piracy in high waters (Liss, 2011) to corruption of high ranking coast
15 guard officers for smuggling operations (Kostakos and Antonopoulos, 2010) to terrorist activities
16 (Greenberg et al., 2006). As Eski and Bujit (2016) pointed out, there is seldom just a financial
17 motivation behind criminality in the port: socio-economic explanations as well as criminal seduction
18 make the waterfront particularly interesting to study, as a stand-alone space, as a portion of the urban
19 space and as a particular area where organised *crimes* occur.
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28 Organised crime is one of those terms that carry an “*emotional kick*” (Levi, 1998: 336) also
29 in academia - having almost 200 definitions for the term (Von Lampe, 2016). The term refers to both
30 serious criminality that includes harmful crimes committed in patterns - such as trafficking of drugs
31 - as well as mafia-type activities, such as infiltration of ‘dirty’ funds in the legal economy and/or
32 systemic corruption of public administration and/or politics (Sergi, 2017). Especially in the urban
33 environment, phenomena of organised crime evoke images of gangsterism and street violence, but
34 also control of economic and/or social enterprises, often connected to the night-time economy, within
35 the entertainment business and its security services (Kupka et al., 2018), to the construction industry
36 and the management of public funds and services (such as waste management or green economy)
37 (Greyl et al., 2013; Caneppele et al., 2013; Calderoni and Caneppele, 2009; Dagnes et al., 2019). In
38 the urban setting, different social factors, such as national and cross-border migration, economic
39 transformations and investments, as well as political actions, all shape phenomena of organised crime
40 and their control strategies (Jacobs et al., 1999; Hobbs, 2013). Mindful of this complex picture, in
41 this paper organised crime refers to a spectrum of activities ranging from profit-driven criminal
42 groups, i.e. drug trafficking networks, to profit *and* power-driven ones, i.e. mafia-type groups.
43 Reference will be made to the main activities of these groups, from illicit trafficking to infiltration in
44 the legal economy and to meddling into development and political administration of the port, in a
45 profit-power spectrum (Sergi, 2017) that includes both activities of illicit and licit trade and of
46 governance of space and markets (Varese, 2011; Campana and Varese, 2018).
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Context and Methods

The port of Genoa is Italian biggest port. It ranks 68th in the world's largest container ports and 8th in Europe². With a total of 16 terminals and 2.6 million TEUs³ of container traffic per year (about 26 million tons), the amounts of goods and passengers going through Genoa is impressive. As a landlord port, Genoa's port public land is leased out (law 84/1994) to private companies who run the port facility's economic activities as well as implement security regulations by nominating a Port Facility Security Office (PFSO) as required by the ISPS code. Around 60,000 people work at the Port of Genoa, says its website.

This paper presents the results of a qualitative research conducted between December 2018 and February 2019. First, background data collection has selected relevant institutions involved in port security and policing. Then these institutions have been contacted for interviews or team focus groups. A total of 12 meetings have been carried out: Capitaneria di Porto (port authority security office, 2 people), Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia (DDA, district antimafia prosecutor office, 1 person), Procura della Repubblica (public prosecutor office, 1 person), Guardia di Finanza (fiscal police, 2 meetings with 4 people each), Polizia di Frontiera (border police, 1 person), Agenzia delle Dogane (customs agency, 2 people), Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (DIA, investigative antimafia directorate, 1 person) in the Genoa province, and Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs, 3 people). The roles of these authorities are summarised in table 1:

[Insert Table 1]

Interviews and focus groups followed a thematic guide revolving around the following topics:

1. The role of the institution in fighting organised crime within and around the port;
2. The types of criminal activities in and around the port that the institution links to organised crime;
3. The differences, if identifiable, across criminal groups active in the port according to their aims and short/medium/long term goals.

Additionally, the author has been granted access and toured three container terminals, SECH (South European Container Hub), Spinelli and VTE (Voltri Terminal Europe, whose name has

² One Hundred Ports 2018 - Lloyd's List Maritime Intelligence Informa - <https://lloydslist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/one-hundred-container-ports-2018>

³ Twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU or teu) is an inexact unit of cargo capacity often used to describe the capacity of container ships and container terminals. It is based on the volume of a standard-sized 20-foot-long (6.1 m) intermodal container.

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2 changed to PSA Genova Prà since 2018 even if it is still commonly known as Voltri). A walking
3 methodology has supported the collection of data during these visits, as the author has chosen to walk
4 to the terminals as much as feasible and grasp the sense of space of the port. This helped adding
5 cultural meaning to complex spaces (Natali and McClanahan, 2017; Natali, 2016; Kane, 2004; Degen
6 and Rose, 2012). Taking pictures and recording self-reflective audio-notes has provided the necessary
7 sensorial background, which was very useful when rethinking the context in which other data was
8 collected and helpful when contextualising the relationship between the port and the city
9 (McClanahan and South, 2020).

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16 The three terminals visited were selected as they are the biggest and busiest ones. **Table 2**
17 shows traffic in the three terminals during February 2019. Although organised crime manifests also
18 in relation to passengers' terminals (human trafficking or smuggling for example), in this research
19 the focus has been mostly maintained on container terminals.

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24 [Insert Table 2]

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28 It is beyond the scope of this paper to comment on the nature of commerce and trade to and
29 from Genoa. It is estimated by interviewees in the Custom Agency that not even 5% of all the
30 containers moving across the port are scrutinised (and scrutiny does follow previous risk
31 assessments). Both inbound and outbound traffic feature some of the areas of the world commonly
32 associated to the cocaine trade both for arrivals (from Colombia, Mexico, Spain) and for destination
33 (USA or Morocco) (UNODC, 2018). **Table 3** gives some basic information about destinations and
34 volumes of traffics.

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45 Last but not least, as judicial cases were often mentioned in the interviews and/or the
46 documents collected, this research has been enriched through a selection of case law, retrieved
47 through online portals of Italian courts using keywords (in Italian of course) such as “port of Genoa
48 + organised crime”, “port of Genoa + mafia”, “port of Genoa + trafficking”, “port of Genoa +
49 infiltration”; “port of Genoa + corruption”. The results were filtered to the last 15 years alone and
50 include only cases that have reached the last court of appeal: they amount to 23 relevant cases.

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55 The study has obviously a number of limitations, due to the difficulty to access certain hard-
56 to-reach security authorities and to cross-check relevant data from documents as well. Every effort
57 has been made to assemble a wide range of sources to secure **a representative and diversified** amount
58 of data was collected.

Data Analysis

Obviously, the majority of data comes from institutional perspectives, which means that data provides often a one-way perspective. This is an ontological bias of the data and needs to be taken into account. The author took two actions to mitigate this bias: first, by using a two-tier coding coding, to first assemble themes and then cross-cut through themes in different data sources; second, by associating the first-hand walking and observation methodology described above, to critically situate the data within those spaces the data was narrating. These steps allowed for a critical approach to the data, for as much as possible. The first-tier coding has been a thematic and content analysis to assess how organised crime, as conceptualised in this type of data, was fitting within the project's own operationalisation of the term. As said, organised crime was operationalised on a spectrum ranging from profit-driven to power *and* profit driven serious criminality. This coding confirmed that in the port, different behaviours are different types of criminal groups, from mafia groups to looser networks to corruption cartels. It needs to be reminded that, in Italy, narratives on serious organised crime often overlap with those of mafia groups (Sergi, 2015; Sergi, 2017); **this is a prejudice that the analysis considers**. In Genoa we find loose networks (occasional and mono-crime, profit driven), non-mafia groups (which are groups of different ethnicities, still profit driven) and mafia groups (systemic and polycrime, profit and power driven). Graphic 1 summarises the findings from first coding both from interviews and case law.

[Insert graphic 1]

Activities and actors in the port move across two different spectra when it comes to categorisations of organised crime. On one side we find systemic players (such as mafia groups) involved in fully illegal activities (i.e. drug trafficking); on the other side we have the same actors (mafia groups) involved in activities in the legal sphere (i.e. bid rigging). Similarly, involvement of port workers in illegal activities (i.e. drug distribution) could be both occasional and systemic while other complex activities, such as illegal waste disposal, could be done both by individuals and/or companies. Looser networks are involved in one-off attempts to traffic waste as much as non-mafia groups are routinely involved in drug trafficking and/or distribution.

The second-tier coding merged the themes from the first-tier coding related to organised crime in the port, trying to cross-cut different narratives and different data sources. **Activities and aims of organised crime groups in the port can be seen as moving across three trajectories within the policing and security context of the port: *trafficking* through the port, *infiltration* in the port economy and**

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2 *governance of the port territory. This tri-partite analytical scheme has been used also to approach*
3 *further fieldwork on organised crime in other ports, comparatively, beyond this paper. Additionally,*
4 *the perception of the space of the port within the city, emerged as an unexpectedly relevant item in*
5 *this research.* When authorities were illustrating difficulties of policing the port and were discussing
6 criminal opportunities in the port, they stressed repeatedly how important are the geography and the
7 space of the port as a segment of the urban environment.
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12 This last finding was also enriched by the walking methodology. The walk from the Old Port
13 to reach two of the three terminal containers visited, Spinelli and SECH, is 45-50 minutes long, and
14 it crosses the city following the sea line in a generous U shape. The walk touches upon the Darsena
15 terminal, Stazione Marittima (the passengers' terminal), Dinegro (the ferry terminal) and
16 progressively leaves the splendour of the urban design of the Old Port to the much more post-
17 industrial landscape of the terminal containers. Above Spinelli and SECH terminals, which lie next
18 to one another, the Lighthouse (La Lanterna), watches over the bay and already shows what will
19 become clearer in the interviews: the physical proximity of the terminals to the city is obviously one
20 of the peculiarities of this port.
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25 Being the largest and newest container terminal, for both volume of traffic and types of ships
26 it can host, Terminal VTE (Now Genoa-Pra') is reachable by car or with a train followed by 20
27 minutes' walk (which is what the author did during the two visits there). The arrival to the terminal
28 confirms that VTE is a very different reality from the city terminals. Gates protect the entry, clear
29 road signs indicate where vehicles must go. People can walk through, but should not really be there
30 on foot, in between cars and enormous trucks carrying in or out containers. The two visits in Voltri
31 were made during a normal day of business and during a day in which the terminal was closed due to
32 snow. In both instances, a constant feeling of being in a bunker, where entry or exit are under constant
33 surveillance. VTE feels, and is portrayed by the authorities, as a separate and critical entity - distant
34 enough from the city to be the largest terminal, but also remaining the most connected to the city's
35 economy and the most active nevertheless.
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40 After the second-tier analysis, organised criminality in the port not only appears linked to the
41 urban criminal landscape, but is also shaped by the perceptions of the geography and the space of the
42 port. These perceptions also impact policing coordination on and around the waterfront and, this paper
43 argues, are also likely to affect the way organised crime develops in the city-port relationship. If we
44 imagine criminality in the city as a jigsaw, the port is one of the most revealing pieces of the puzzle.
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49 The following sections will present the three trajectories of organised crime in the port of Genoa.
50 Each section will also reflect on how the perception of the space of the port within the urban
51 geography plays a role in the way we contextualise these trajectories and their policing responses.
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Illicit Trafficking

When it comes to trafficking, the port represents a *gate* for entry or exit and the city is *transit* or *destination* for trafficked goods. Both case law and interviews/focus groups confirmed that – when it comes to trafficking - the authorities’ focus remains primarily on drugs, especially cocaine. Cocaine trade in the port involves a number of actors, some of which are visible, some others are elsewhere. The Guardia di Finanza confirms a recent report by the Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (DNA, 2017) and indicated that Calabrian mafia-type clans (‘ndrangheta) are considered the reference players for trafficking cocaine arriving from Colombia or Morocco, but they often do so from neighbouring countries, such as Spain or France or Germany, while maintaining their contacts in the Calabria region.

Case law and interviews/focus groups at both the Antimafia District Directorate (DDA) and the Guardia di Finanza, confirm that while cocaine trafficking through the port is often organised by Calabrian clans, the market of distribution (especially wholesale, *high*, distribution) appears flexible, accessible to newcomers and associates of the ‘ndrangheta clans, of different ethnicities (DNA, 2018), who have access to the port in different roles. Port workers and terminal employees are involved on a more or less occasional basis (Padovano, 2015; 2016), but not that often, as they are disposable to criminal organisations and they are more likely to be caught. Drug cases considered in this project show some common characteristics: the multi-ethnic background of the network active in the port; the access to the port granted by via a worker/employee; the existence of many external units to the network that provide information or organise the shipment. For example, in Operation Rebuffo⁴ in 2017 (in 2019 awaiting appeal), 5 men were charged – a port worker (with the CULMV⁵) and an employee of Spinelli, both from Genoa, two Albanian nationals and a Calabrian man with links to ‘ndrangheta clans in Genoa and Milan. The importation of 75 kg of cocaine hidden in bags - and/or ready to be bagged - in the front of a container on the ship “Carolina Star” from South America (rip-off system⁶), was mainly destined to the local market and to France.

Even if drugs make up for the majority of cases about trafficking, **the authorities, especially Customs, noticed the evergreen presence of other forms of inbound trafficking, mainly on excise**

⁴ Procura della Repubblica, press il Tribunale di Genova, DDA, Proc Pen. N. 13335/2017 RGNR/Mod. 21

⁵ CULMV – Compagnia Unica fra i Lavoratori delle Merci Varie (Sole Company for Workers of Various Goods) – is the principal and the oldest company streamlining port workers’ services in the port of Genoa, counting around 1000 members.

⁶ The “rip-off system” is a concealment methodology whereby a legitimate shipment via a container is exploited to smuggle contraband (particularly cocaine) from the country of origin or the transshipment port to the country of destination. In “rip-off” cases, neither the shipper nor the consignee is aware that their shipment is being used to smuggle illicit cargo (UNODC website definition)

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2 **goods**. Cases include illegal tobacco and counterfeit goods, such as food, as showed in Operation
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4 Provvidenza⁷ where inferior quality extra-virgin olive oil going from Calabria, through Genoa, to the
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6 United States.

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8 Outbound trafficking mostly involves waste trafficking (i.e. shipping waste without paying
9 the correct duties on the shipment): this seems to be linked to the high number of routes to North and
10 West Africa where these products seems to be mostly destined. Actors involved in this type of illicit
11 activities are usually companies that are trying to profit from the lack of controls on duty evasion.
12 The involvement of white-collar and corporate criminality is, unsurprisingly, the most controversial
13 for authorities, as it might touch ‘high powers’ in the city.

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15 Counter-trafficking efforts are heavily centred around, and influenced by, the space
16 configuration of the port. **Security plans in port facilities are visibly delivered via environmental
17 design, on the basis of situational crime prevention techniques** (Von Lampe, 2011; Bullock et al.,
18 2012): **the aims are to monitor, control and ban access through the use of surveillance camera, smart
19 cards, ban on foot-walk, barriers, and so on. This indicate that, for purposes of counter trafficking
20 efforts, policing and security functions in the port converge in crime prevention frameworks** (Prenzler
21 and Sarre, 2012). Increased security controls in Genoa are the result of several reforms happening in
22 the field of maritime security worldwide as much as at the national level (Eski, 2016; Brewer, 2014).
23 These controls seem to have favoured the displacement of certain criminal activities (Elkwall, 2009).
24 For example, authorities have noticed, especially at VTE, a slow but steady abandonment of the rip-
25 off system as it would be very difficult to open containers and walk around the terminal unnoticed.
26 Other smuggling techniques, such as the movement of a whole container outside of the terminal, seem
27 to be preferred.

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29 As said, reducing opportunities for crime, imposing obstacles and creating a hostile
30 environment for deviance are the aims of situational crime prevention that are pursued by port
31 terminals in Genoa. Monitoring and controlling access and mobility in and around of the port is the
32 common struggle of all authorities especially because the port environment is made of habits and
33 patterns: people tend to know each other; they tend to move around in the same patterns as well. As
34 shared by the PFSO of VTE: *“Habit, in my line of work, familiarity, is the worst enemy of security.
35 The agent that lets you in because he/she knows you is the worst thing”*. A very similar message is in
36 SECH, on the wall upon entrance to the terminal (reading, “Habit Our Enemy”), a sign that the
37 terminal is embracing the same philosophy.

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39 Arguably, the configuration of space affects counter-trafficking efforts also because of the
40 geography of terminals in relation to the city. Spinelli and SECH terminals are located in the city

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⁷ Procura della Repubblica, Tribunale Ordinario di Reggio Calabria, Proc. Pen. n. 206/2017 R.G.N.R. Mod. 21 DDA

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2 centre, and therefore, most of what happens in and around them is so absorbed in the city routine that
3 it often goes unnoticed. At Spinelli, the Guardia di Finanza observed how “*once a container, or a*
4 *bag or a person is out of the port, it takes a couple of minutes to be out in the city or on the main*
5 *road; this is not just about more or less security, it’s about the territory*”. The Guardia di Finanza
6 reminds also that there are differences – due to space and geography again – between the terminals
7 in the city and the Voltri terminal, outside of the city centre:
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14 *“[In the city terminals] just look for yourself, on a normal day here how many vehicles go in*
15 *and out, we got used to it and it would be impossible to check it all as if traffic was an*
16 *extraordinary thing; it’s ordinary, very ordinary indeed (...) There [in VTE] it’s really about*
17 *the territory and the shape of the terminal. Voltri is organised in a way so that entry and exit*
18 *are on the same route, confined in a relatively small area (...) it’s constantly evolving and*
19 *better controlled. In the city terminals, instead, the situation is totally different; the port in the*
20 *city is much older and it’s confusing, it’s in the middle of the traffic of the city, entry and exits*
21 *are more...fluid, let’s say fluid”.*
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27 **Infiltration in the legal economy**

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30 The different segments of the port economy are *opportunities* that the city economy offers to
31 organised crime. Criminal networks and business actors meet in collusive and corruptive networks
32 around the port, **making the port another grey area of licit and illicit economic activities and actors of**
33 **the city** (Sciarrone, 2011; Sciarrone and Storti, 2016). Within this category, organised crime groups
34 participate to dirty economies (Ruggiero, 1996). When it comes to the infiltration in the port economy
35 and/or services, case law becomes more rarefied and interviews/focus groups less specific in their
36 references. Often, organised crime groups’ infiltrations, or attempts to infiltrate, port economy, or
37 services, are unearthed during drug trafficking investigations: criminal groups use business in the port
38 (i.e. transport companies) to conceal and support trafficking, often by infiltrating the supply chain.
39 For example, this is how an Antimafia Prosecutor describes a case of heroin arriving in Genoa in
40 2018:
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51 *“When the narcotics arrived, the containers were handled like any other type of good. We*
52 *knew the buyer was a company in Czech Republic, and they got in touch with the forwarding*
53 *agent here in Genoa to agree where to send the containers. The forwarder then agreed with*
54 *the buyer on how to actually send the products, that was by placing the containers on a truck.*
55 *The buyer sounded very worried about how and where the containers would have been*
56 *arranged by the transport company (...). They agree on an address in the Netherlands. We*
57 *understood then that the Czech company was a shell, and the forwarding agent had been*
58 *fooled”.*
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2 Infiltrating the port economy, however, also means exploiting the opportunity of contracts for
3 services at the port, i.e. construction, supply of machinery, catering services and so on. Two sets of
4 illegal activities have revolved around the construction of a new terminal for rail transport on a strip
5 of land between Spinelli and SECH, named Calata Bettòlo (operational at the end of 2019). All three
6 companies that won the contract had been under investigation for mafia links in the construction
7 industry between Calabria and Sicily. In 2016⁸ one of the companies, Tecnis S.p.a. was interdicted
8 and placed under coerced administration for mafia infiltration by one of the strongest clans of Sicilian
9 cosa nostra, the Santapaola, in Catania. Second, another investigation in 2015⁹ brought to light more
10 mafia links aimed at waste trafficking. In particular, 8 people **were accused of falsifying the entrance**
11 **of goods in Calata Bettòlo**. Waste, disguised as demolition material, was buried in the construction
12 site in 2014-15: entrepreneurs, transport staff and managers of the site were charged with fraud and
13 environmental crimes. Personnel working on site had contacts with members of both a 'ndrangheta
14 clan from Crotona, Calabria, and the above-mentioned Santapaola clan in Sicily. This was discussed
15 with a prosecutor who confirmed the "complexity of the case" as "the investigations on mafia
16 interests and rogue business in Calata Bettòlo are far from being over notwithstanding the
17 progression of construction on site".
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29 According to the DIA (2018: 233), mafia groups, especially linked to the 'ndrangheta, in
30 Genoa are well entrenched in the city's economy and politics and this links to the port:
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34 *"Not only they are acquiring political and administrative positions, but also privileged spots*
35 *in different economic sectors as well as in the trafficking of narcotics (cocaine mainly), thanks*
36 *to the proximity of important ports".*
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41 This was confirmed in the interview at the DIA, even though one needs to be always careful
42 to 'blame it on the mafia' alone, as other types of organised crime and corruption are actually more
43 widespread:
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48 *"There are few situations that somehow erode the sturdiness of the port, we feel it, we know*
49 *it...corruption, clientelism, but to what extent are we able to actually understand how*
50 *occasional or systemic they are? (...) We would like to investigate more, contracts with*
51 *suspected links to some mafia clans in the city and other forms of corruption, but we can't for*
52 *many reasons, including resources and tenability at trial".*
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58 ⁸ Corte di Cassazione, Sezione Prima Penale Sent. Num. 52933 -14.12.2016 avverso la sentenza n. 851/2013
59 Corte d'Appello di Catania, del 10/09/2014

60 ⁹ See Rifiuti sospetti, sequestro a Calata Bettolo, 7 August 2014, La Repubblica Archive,
https://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/08/07/news/rifiuti_sospetti_sequestro_a_calata_bettolo-93308632/

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4 The port security manager at SECH, while commenting on the events of Calata Bettòlo,
5 summarised an interesting perspective on the importance that space – or rather the lack of it – can
6 have when it comes to investments around the port:
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11 *“A square metre in the port is gold. Why? Because this is the history of Genoa, of a city*
12 *pressed between the mountains and the sea. It doesn't have more space, it does not have a*
13 *proper dry port behind. It's a stretched and slim city, 40 km long and 5 km deep, in between*
14 *two valleys (...) Turning the water into land – this is the history of Genoa - such as where we*
15 *are now, here at SECH, it used to be water, now it's land”.*
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21 Indeed, as the port territory is very limited and cannot be stretched out any longer, its value
22 tends to be also overstretched. Each opportunity of investment in the port, especially when linked to
23 construction and assets, **attracts funds in what is essentially a very reduced space for manoeuvre, bit**
24 **physically and metaphorically**. In this space the port economy includes and excludes investors coming
25 from the city and often beyond the city. **There is an ideal boundary between the port economy and**
26 **the economy of the rest of the city, but osmotic relationships are obviously the norm (Van den Berghe**
27 **and Daamen, 2020)**. Criminal networks and collusive groups who have their relationships with other
28 businesses and in other sectors of the city are more likely to be able to move in such a reduced space.
29 *“Competition is fierce”*, as noticed by an Antimafia prosecutor: only those who have established prior
30 relationships and have the ability to discourage, legally or illegally, other competitors by affording to
31 pay higher sums or by intimidating them, eventually win contracts; these are certainly not only mafias.
32 In terms of policing, it has become clear that oversight over contracts should start from considering
33 the port economy as a specific space within the space of the city. Existing criminal and corruptive
34 networks in the city economy are more likely to be attracted to the port economy and also likely to
35 be successful in securing access to it.
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50 **Governance of territory**

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54 The port is also a *territory* within the urban *context*, over which different actors seek to gain
55 influence for the sake of economic or political power, and, through power, increase their profit, legally
56 or illegally. In the city-port scenario, governance comes to manifest in two ways: first, governance
57 can mean (quasi) permanent control on illegal activities through and via the port. Second, governance
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2 can be the authority exercised over political and economic processes at the port - thus the influence
3 sought in port development strategies and administration.
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5 In the first meaning, governance equates to the capability of certain groups to monitor and
6 dominate information in relation to illicit port activities, for example through influence on the port
7 authorities or control over the unions of port workers (Jacobs, 2006). Jacobs and Peters (2003: 232)
8 have argued: “*control over a union was immensely valuable to the organised crime bosses, who could*
9 *steal from the union coffers and extort money from employers. In addition, they could barter union*
10 *support to politicians in exchange for immunity from investigation and prosecution”*. This scenario
11 is excluded in Genoa, notwithstanding the involvement of some port workers, sporadically, in
12 criminal trafficking. This proves to be a sensitive issue, however: as said, the CULMV (the port
13 workers’ union) has a longstanding history of political influence and therefore, warn antimafia
14 authorities, could become a target for criminal factions interested in ‘investing’ in this type of
15 governance. Security officers in SECH and VTE also commented about the position of economic
16 advantage granted to port workers of the CULMV for allocation of work in the terminal: it could
17 secure electoral support from port workers when needed.
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19 As most of it remains hearsay, it is not easy to track the presence (or indeed exclude the
20 absence) of organised crime groups interested in the governance, illicit, political or administrative, of
21 the port territory on a stable basis. More attention to unduly influence of dirty economics or mafia-
22 type governance in this sector is certainly advocated for by most interviewees.
23

24 Secondly, the governance of the port economy, in administrative and political terms, is highly
25 competitive, highly concentrated and highly remunerative. As reported by the Antimafia
26 Commission, in seaports, administrative and political governance are intertwined with the port
27 economy and also linked to criminal activities (Commissione Antimafia, 2011: 28):
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*“There are activities of corruption [in the port governance] also because whenever there are
such enormous quantities of drugs transiting, criminal networks, including mafia groups,
need to establish collusive links within the port infrastructures. Even if there are very few
cases of that, their weight is significant”*.

A complex judicial case that started in 2003 and ended in 2014¹⁰ involved corruption, bribery
and bid rigging of contracts for the development of the port and in particular the procedure to assign
state-owned maritime land (including the management of the above-mentioned Calata Bettòlo). The
case saw individuals working close to the directorate of the Port Authority, managers, engineers and

¹⁰ Corte di Cassazione, Sezione Penale Sesta, Sentenza N. 32237 - 13.03.2014

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2 entrepreneurs in the port economy, forming a cartel that, through intimidation, could/would have
3 pushed away competitors. The aim was an agreement on the allocation of contracts and
4 subcontracts *ex ante* and before any public evaluation of tenders. The Court of Cassation described
5 the context as “*characterised by informal meetings, agreements and pressures, that were all but*
6 *unusual*”¹¹. The Court noticed how the institutional setting of the port does not respond to normal
7 public administration logics:
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14 “The Port Authority enjoys a substantial sphere of discretionary power. It is not possible to
15 consider the existence of a public tender in the cases where potential contractors are
16 individually invited to present their bids but the Authority remains free to choose the winner
17 within a framework of convenience and opportunity similar to that of the private sector”.

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23 The discretionary power that drives decision processes around development and management
24 in the port can lead to illegal activities, abuse of power, informal trafficking of favours and agreements
25 where - as shared by one of the prosecutors in Genoa - “*a sort of legalised enterprise criminality*
26 *where private interests convert into public ones*” becomes the way to govern sectors of the port.
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30 Only a few cases of white-collar and corporate criminality have emerged from case law in
31 Genoa, and interviewees often speculated on the presence of mafia money or power within these
32 networks. Indeed, this is the scenario where mafia-type groups can or could be able to act, as they are
33 groups aiming at a long-term strategy of territorial sovereignty (Varese, 2011), but it is a difficult
34 scenario to investigate. We know that contemporary mafia groups in urban spaces use corruption as
35 well as threats of violence to maintain their reputation and increase the likelihood of impunity and
36 profit (Sergi, 2019; Chiodelli, 2019; Campana and Varese, 2018; Gambetta, 1993). Mafia-type groups
37 are likely to influence the governance of a small space – with more predictable interactions across
38 fewer influential actors (Dalla Chiesa, 2010) - by aligning with the interests of one or more actor in
39 that territory, i.e. political or social sectors.
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47 Finally, the reduced availability of space in Genoa does affects the governance of the port as
48 a territory, split among different authorities, private and public. Indeed, when discussing the difficulty
49 of policing the waterfront with the *Guardia di Finanza* during one of the focus groups, it was noticed
50 how:
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55 “*This is a territory that does not allow any further possibility...there is no space here. Of*
56 *course, there could be decisions to build or expand [the port] but the territory is what it is,*
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¹¹ Ibid, page 47

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2 *there is no space left. What could be built was done decades ago, relationships have been*
3 *made over 30 years ago now, and they stayed on”.*
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7 The relationship between private terminals and public authorities in the port environment is
8 ontologically confrontational especially in the field of port security (Brewer, 2014), due to the
9 different aims pursued: terminals aim at boosting productivity, law enforcement aims at crime
10 disruption and prevention. Both private owners of terminal facilities and public authorities keep
11 amicable relationships in Genoa. However, as private companies are “tenants” in the port facilities,
12 they often perceive public law enforcement entering their premises not only as a disruption in their
13 daily job, but also as an intrusion in “their house”. *Territoriality* is advocated at the terminal level.
14 As noticed by the PFSO in SECH:
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23 *“Privatisation of the land, that’s the key to understand our relationship. It’s been 25 years*
24 *but it’s like only 2 passed. Until 1994 authorities could enter and circulate in the port as they*
25 *pleased and this is still the way they behave; at all times and the question remains, who is in*
26 *charge here? (...) You enter my house, you have to have a reason or an authorisation,*
27 *otherwise you shouldn’t enter right? In theory this is my house, I pay the rent, right? But*
28 *obviously they always have a reason to enter”.*
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34 It is certainly a shared and multi-party governance that works in the securitisation of the port.
35 An understanding of the interests at play in the territory helps mapping vulnerabilities that organised
36 crime or mafia-type groups can exploit to exercise potential or effective influence of port operators.
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43 **Discussion and Conclusion**

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47 **Some initial considerations on the relationship between ports and their cities emerge, through**
48 **the tri-partite analyses of organised criminality on the waterfront, in the case study of Genoa.** The
49 analysis shows how serious and organised criminality in the port goes far beyond illegal trafficking;
50 the port economy is a particularly attractive sector for illicit investments of all kinds, aimed at profit
51 as well at power and influence. **This aspect needs to be further explored in future research.**
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54 We have noticed the importance of space and geography to understand the city-port
55 relationship. **While on one side influenced by the vicissitudes of global capitalism, on the other side,**
56 **port cities are still local universes where complex and dynamic urban identities materialise and**
57 **transform (Andrade and Costa, 2020).** Urban identity is in itself a fragmented and constantly evolving
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2 concept that considers different social actors, interests and architectures (Harney, 2006). The port
3 represents a portion of urban identity and actively contributes to changing and defining it. **As noticed**
4 **by Ducruet (2007:168), “the closer ports are to the heartland, the less their port-city equilibrium will**
5 **be realised, given the concentration of flows and the indirect dependence on inland markets”.** If this
6 **is true from a geographical perspective on transport it can also be true for the criminal dimension;**
7 **illicit flows in Genoa not only concentrate in the city but also depend on inland markets.** Organised
8 crime groups and activities in cities – even so in port cities - are often intertwined with the global
9 trade as well as mirroring the different composition of ethnicities and the territorial fragmentation of
10 the urban landscape (Hobbs, 2013).

11
12 It is argued that an integrated approach that looks at the countering of organised crime
13 activities in the port as tightly linked with an understanding (and therefore countering) of the criminal
14 landscape in the city might bring interesting insights. Graphic 2 places the three trajectories of
15 organised crime on two spectra: one moving from the port to the city and the other moving from
16 profit-driven only criminal groups, to mafia-type groups, both profit and power driven.

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28 [Insert graphic 2]
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32 What this graphic summarises is that criminal groups active across the three trajectories of
33 organised crime will have different types of links with the surrounding space and the local economy,
34 and will be more or less visible in the criminal landscape.

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36 Watching the city means watching criminal actors and how they move in the city space to
37 understand what kind of interest they might have in the port. The reality of the port will mirror into
38 the scenarios emerging from the city, because the space the of the city heavily affects the way the
39 port is built, policed and governed.

40
41 The port can be understood as a synecdoche of the city. The particular space of the port is, in
42 fact, influenced by the general geography of the city and this has various effects of port criminality
43 in all the three dimensions we have discussed in this paper. An understanding and a mapping of the
44 criminal actors in the city might shed light and offer insights on potential criminal behaviours
45 expected, predictable or already active in the port. This relationship relates to the evolution of criminal
46 opportunity in the era of global economics and the challenges of trying to manage local
47 transformations within global drives (Giddens, 1990).

48
49 Policing organised crime in the port, and therefore providing security of its territories and
50 activities, means understanding flows and networks (Castell, 2000): who has the capacity, the
51 resources and the intent to enter the port territory and economy for different types of illicit activities
52 and from different locations. There is a greater scope, we can argue, to develop spectra of
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2 criminality/transgression and security responses, and to tie these to questions on the urban
3 environment, global economics, and municipal management of the port-city interface (Daamen and
4 Louw, 2016).
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7 The port requires specialist and diversified policing approaches, from different institutions,
8 from municipal to national and international. These institutions will have to liaise with authorities in
9 the city in what will be a strategic and specialist cross-trajectory approach based on the following
10 starting points:
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14 1) From the case study at hand, it appears that the majority of the trafficked inbound goods
15 do not remain in the vicinity of the port, but transit elsewhere. Some actors appear sporadically in the
16 city and will rely on communications from different areas of the country or the world; in this case,
17 importation and distribution networks that cut through the city and via the port should be at the core
18 of investigations on trafficking.
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22 2) Infiltration in the port economy refers to attempts to influence or acquire business
23 opportunities, ranging from infiltration in the supply chain to the provision of services on the grounds.
24 These activities are both aimed at increasing revenues as well as laundering money, thus they are
25 carried out by organised crime groups who are able to be active both in the illegal and in the legal
26 worlds, capable and willing to acquire power over certain economic sectors. Actors involved in these
27 activities might be already present in the city. Even when they are external investors active in the
28 global maritime economy, they will interact with partners in the territory anyway through brokers,
29 investors, legal figures and third parties to get a foot in the territory to carry out their activities.
30 Investigations in this city-port relationship needs to depart from tracking the level of sophistication
31 of certain groups and their ability to launder money through the legitimate economy in the city,
32 through corruptive or collusive pacts with corporations or other business partners, or via small firms.
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35 3) In terms of governance, the port-city relationship develops across a range of influential
36 political and economic actors around the city, with the ability and the will to access the port
37 administration to further their profit and increase their influence and power. A strong presence of
38 mafia-type clans in the city might result in their interest in port governance. Investigations in this
39 relationship need to consider the ability of mafia clans to interact and dominate economic and political
40 sectors (Sergi and Lavorgna, 2016) in different industries and markets in the city. The port is a
41 territory where influence, power and consensus are convergent with economic success (Jacobs and
42 Peters, 2003). In a highly networked and globalised economy, such as the port economy, the loss of
43 power at the national level produces to serve the needs of the markets, the possibility for new forms
44 of power and politics at the local level is predictable (Sassen, 2000).
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47 The space and geography of the city and the port also influence policing strategies. On one
48 hand the port needs to appear as a 'fortress' (Smith, 2019), look and feel secure, impenetrable but yet
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2 accessible (Whelan and Molnar, 2018). On the other hand, the city has today but one form of centrality
3 (Sassen, 2000) and therefore some areas will remain unregulated because of the layers of complexity
4 in coordinating and prioritising plural and multi-agency policing (Loader, 2000).
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7 Policing efforts will need to develop different strategies for each manifestation of organised
8 crime in the port: Investigating trafficking is intelligence-led and often cross-border in nature; it
9 requires deductive skills. Investigations into irregularities of port economics and dangerous liaisons
10 in port governance are more local, resource-intensive and essentially evolve into anti-corruption and
11 anti-collusion efforts; these are inductive. Arguably, the rules of trade and the needs to obey the neo-
12 liberal turn of cultures of capital (Bartilow and Eom, 2009), affect the success of illicit trafficking
13 and infiltration in the legal economy more than the failures of security and policing.
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19 The more exposed, open and receiving is the port to routes of trades, the more sporadic actors
20 are likely to transit through the port and the higher the likelihood that the port will serve as a hub for
21 surrounding areas as well. At the same time, however, the closer the relationship between criminal
22 actors and their territory, the higher the probability for these actors to invest in their territory. And
23 finally, the higher the ability to embed themselves in the territory, the higher the influence exercised
24 in the port economy or governance. The rates of penetration and success of different criminal actors
25 in a port are likely to be shaped by the interaction that these actors have in the urban criminal
26 landscape. Nevertheless - even in the apparent simplicity of such a statement - the port-city
27 relationship, for the study of organised crime, is very complex and needs to be meticulously assessed
28 on a case-by-case basis.
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43 **Acknowledgements**

44 This work was supported by the 
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Tables and Graphics

[Table 1]

Authority	Function/Aim
Capitaneria di Porto (within the Port Authority)	Regulation, surveillance and control of all port activities.
Autorità Portuale (Port Authority)	Regulation and coordination of norms and directives related to port activities, port facilities leases and maintenance.
Polizia di Frontiera (Border Police)	Running security check-points for the Ministry of Interiors; crime prevention and repression; surveillance over security services in port facilities; assistance to public prosecutor for police activities at the border.
Guardia di Finanza (Fiscal Police)	Military wing of the Ministry of Finance; public order and surveillance of the port (one office in the city and one in VTE); crime prevention and risk assessments for imports/exports.
Agenzia delle Dogane (Customs Agency)	Tax and Revenue authority within the Ministry of Finance with offices in VTE and the city; collections of custom duties; controls over incoming and outgoing goods; anti-fraud controls.
Terminal (Port Facility)	Management of security through the nomination of a PFSO (Port Facility Security Officer) who is responsible for the Security Plan and its implementation.

[Table 2] *Containers (figures for February 2019)¹² – in TEU*

Southern European Container Hub (SECH) Terminal	21,481 TEU
Spinelli Terminal	32,778 TEU
Voltri Terminal Europe (VTE) Terminal	126,430 TEU
Port of Genoa total February 2019	202,145 (tons 1,938,391)

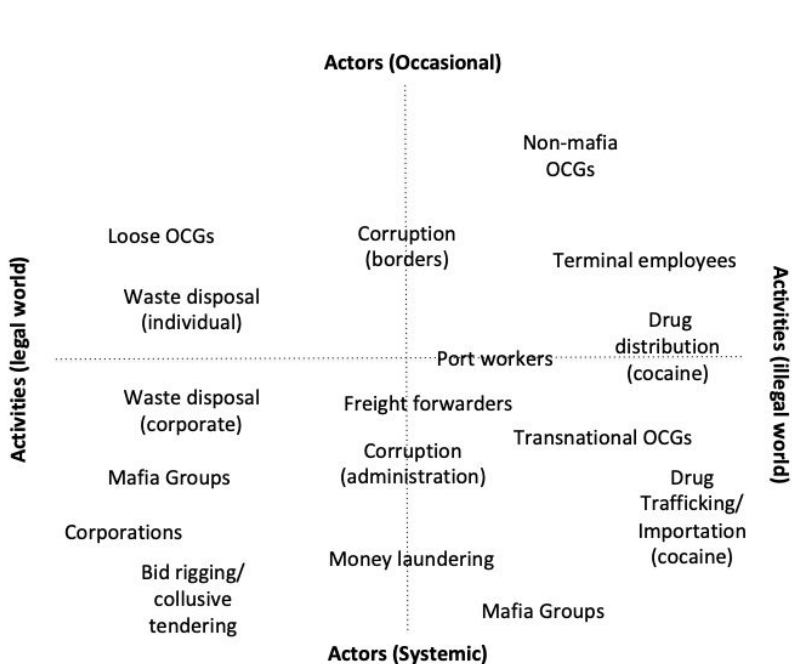
[Table 3] *Containers and geographical areas during 2018¹³ - imports (in) and exports (out) of selected countries.*

Area	Import	Export
<i>Europe</i>	Spain 71,443 TEU	Spain 68,440 TEU
	Greece 23,868 TEU	Greece 19,448 TEU
<i>North America</i>	USA 94,660 TEU	USA 183,833 TEU
	Canada 27,855 TEU	Canada 57,817 TEU
<i>Central America</i>	Mexico 11,962 TEU	Mexico 21,862 TEU
	Cuba 9,083 TEU	Cuba 6,047 TEU
	Dominican Rep. 6.678 TEU	Dominican Rep. 3.362 TEU
<i>South America</i>	Brazil 57,719 TEU	Brazil 68,088 TEU
	Colombia 11,152 TEU	Colombia 6,047 TEU
<i>Africa</i>	Morocco 39,601 TEU	Morocco 18,872 TEU
	Egypt 27,789 TEU	Egypt 37,768 TEU
Total Port of Genoa	1,283,302 TEU	1,325,836 TEU

Graphic 1

¹² Traffici Porto di Genova Merci - <http://servizi.porto.genova.it/archivio/TRAF/TERM/14519.ashx>

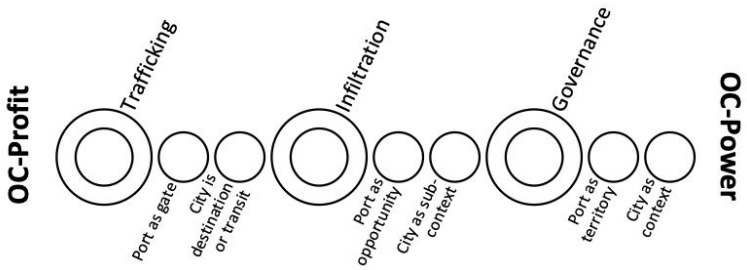
¹³Traffico contenitori in TEU suddivisi per nazioni e aree geografiche
<http://servizi.porto.genova.it/archivio/TRAF/PORTO/14444.ashx>



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Graphic 2



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