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A framework for researching port-port city relationships

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6.1 SUMMARIZING THEORY

In Chapter 1, the changing relationship between port and the city to which it belongs was introduced. The problem was defined by describing how this relationship has been constrained by global dynamics that have a positive but also a negative impact on ports all over the world. In particular, the three most important European ports – Rotterdam, Antwerp, and Hamburg – have each responded to this in their own way, with effects on the relationships between the port and the port city. In this chapter a research model was presented (Figure 1.7) to enable research on the port–port city relationships. This framework contains concepts that create three main perspectives from various bodies of knowledge to direct this research: cluster development, governance determinants of social structure and institutional arrangements. In addition, varieties in political economic structures were examined. These perspectives were dealt with in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. The reason for elaborating extensively on this was to find out whether the concepts within these perspectives could be used as a basis for a. characteristics of port-port city clusters, and b. to find sensitizing concepts for describing and analyzing the relationships to structure the empirical research presented in part C of this thesis. In Chapter 2, the cluster as a unit of analysis was described from the perspective of the components of a cluster, the development of a cluster, and the relationships within a cluster. It was found that heterogeneity, the presence of a good balance in commonalities but certainly also the right complementarities, are essential for the performance of a cluster to survive external influences over time, in order to survive a situation of being locked in, which makes the cluster vulnerable in the future. Chapter 3 operationalized governance by examining actors, processes, and institutions. Governance in the cluster was seen as a network in which actors balance out structure and strategies within a given environment to create a fit. Trust, business relations, ownership and company's contribution (investment) to society were discussed as the mechanisms guiding the processes. Chapter 4 examined the forces driving the behavior of actors positing that it is the institutional framework with its arrangements that absorbs external forces that influence society – in this thesis, the port-port city cluster. Institutional arrangements can be seen as outcomes of political-economic systems. For this, in Chapter 5 the comparative capitalism approach offered the concepts of the LME, the CME, and the Latin economy as a variant of the CME. This is seen as the context in which cluster is situated.

6.2 DETAILING THE RESEARCH MODEL: CHARACTERISTICS, SENSITIZING CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS

Taking these perspectives together the next visualization emerges as shown in Figure 6.1.
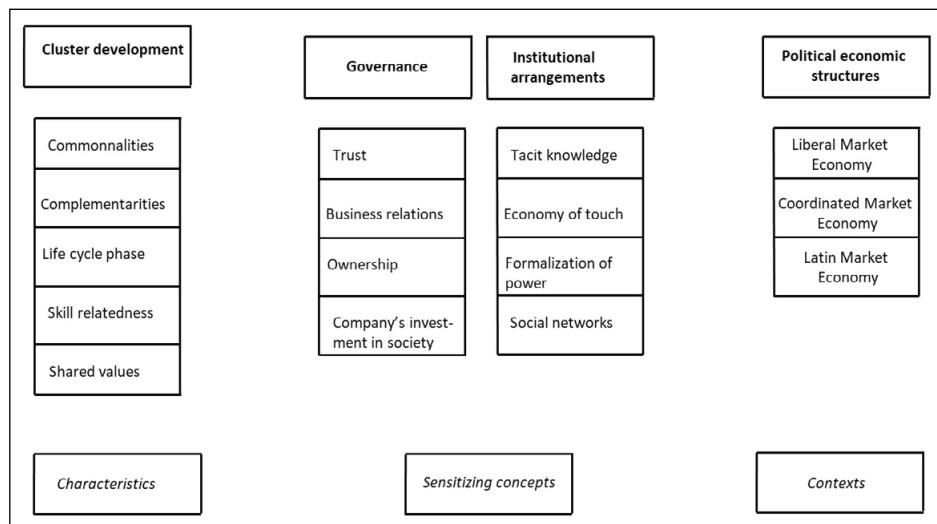

Figure 6.1 Describing and explaining port-port city relationships

The research will use characteristics of cluster development, the sensitizing concepts of governance and institutional arrangements and the contexts of political economic structures to describe and analyze the port-port city relationships of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Hamburg. The elements used were starting points for the empirical research: desk research and field research as to be found in Part C of this thesis.

The characteristics guide the research for describing the three ports and their cities where the dynamics increase of scale, containerization and globalization/agglomeration have been influencing their developments. This will lead to a description of how the current situation can be viewed economically and culturally. The sensitizing concepts will explain what mechanisms were of influence that helped shape the end results as described, whereas the contexts will relate this to structures in which governance and institutional arrangements were shaped and in turn shape the contexts.