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The Friuli Venetia Giulia region as a "Strategic territorial platform" on the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor

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Abstract. In this paper the Friuli Venetia Giulia (FVG) region is described in terms of a "Strategic territorial platform". The author, that is a spatial planner, is conscious that this is not the only possible description of a region. But, in this case, it must be recognized that this specific region has, at least in geographical terms, all the potentialities for getting a great deal from its position in the root of the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, which is an European corridor (along the Nord-South direction) recently established (2013) in the context of the "Core Network" of the Trans European Network for Transport (TEN-T). For transforming the geographical potentiality in a real and concrete new development opportunity for the whole region, the maritime regional ports must be upgraded and more efficiently connected with the whole logistic and infrastructure system distributed in the region. In the meanwhile, this system must be more efficiently connected with the main productive zones located in the region. This perspective, to be effective, requires that public policies (both at national and regional level) and regional spatial planning, deploy these supply chains in the real physical territory also as a precondition for attracting both private investments, for realizing the lacking infrastructure, and efficient operators in transport service management. But these may be attracted only if public decision and plans can assure a stable policy framework and pursue certain and reliable implementation times and rules.

Key-words. Region, infrastructure, port, Friuli Venezia Giulia, strategic platform.

1. Introduction. With reference to the North-East of Italy, the value chains originated by globalisation and the new scenarios that look over the post-crisis, require a careful reconsideration of the original definition of the European priority corridors devised in the early nineties. Nowa-

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days, it seems that corridors, which run on a North-South direction, such as the Rhine-Alpine (former Corridor 24 Rotterdam-Genoa), the Scandinavian-Mediterranean (former Corridor 1 Berlin-Palermo) and the new Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, bringing Italy as well as the Mediterranean countries into closer contact with the richer and more dynamic areas of the so-called "Blue Banana", are those which seem to have more possibilities, in the medium term (before ten years), to generate economic growth, in particular for the Italian North-eastern territories (Dean, Fabbro 2011; Fabbro, Dean 2013; Fabbro, Maresca 2014).

The Friuli Venetia Giulia (FVG) region has, in geographical terms, the potentialities for getting a great deal from this scenario. The region is currently interested by the following two important European corridors, with both highways and railway infrastructures:

– the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor (along the Nord-South direction), which is a new corridor interesting the region for the extension of the TEN-T project "Gdansk-Wien", from Wien to the North Adriatic ports (that currently are trying to cooperate through the North Adriatic Ports Association – NAPA);
– the Mediterranean Corridor (along the East-West direction), which is the TEN-T corridor linking Spain to Hungary (often referred to as former Corridor 5).

Through the Adriatic Sea, the FVG region presents direct connections with the Southern Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. This, in turn, means great possibilities to intercept a consistent part of freight flows between the Far Eastern countries (particularly China and India) and the most industrialized and developed Central European regions.

In reason of the comforting forecasts regarding maritime trade trends and thanks to the regional favourable location, two out of three seaports in the FVG region, Trieste (the major port in the region and one of the largest in Italy) and Monfalcone (which is smaller than Trieste, but only 30 km far from it), could be interested by development programmes, aiming at increasing significantly the actual container handling capacity. In 2011 these ports handled only ca. 400,000 TEU. Development projects could provide for the doubling of the existing container terminal in Trieste and the construction of a new terminal in Monfalcone. Thus, these ports could realistically increase capacity to at least 2 million TEU in the next ten years. Derived outcomes could also regard the creation of new jobs, both in the short term during the construction phase and in the medium and long term as a result of the increase in the logistic activities in the whole region (RAFVG 2011; Dean 2010; Dean, Fabbro 2011; Fabbro, Dean 2013). Furthermore, the transformation of the FVG region in a gateway of European level could represent a chance to reaffirm, in a stable and convincing way, a new "specialty" for

the existing regional Statute of Autonomy that, originated during the Cold War epoch for safeguarding borders, it seems now to have lost some of its original legitimation (Fabbro 2011).
This perspective, also well known at the national level, requires a radical change in both the regional and national transport policies. Only with a decisive commitment in the development of seaports and in the completion of the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, it would be possible for the FVG Region and North-East of Italy, to become a global platform for international freight flows.

2. The "Strategic territorial platforms" as a model of reference. Let's now introduce the planning concept of the region as a "logistic and territorial platform". In 2006 seven macro logistic areas referred to as "Logistic platforms" were conceived by the National Logistic Plan (MIT 2006) in order to allow Italy to play a more relevant role in the global trade. Moreover, 25 punctual infrastructures, including airports, seaports and freight villages, were identified as key nodes within these platforms. Nonetheless, the National Logistic Plan has missed a precise functional characterization of the Logistic platforms and the main supporting infrastructure nodes afterwards appeared to be an exorbitant number if compared with the general tendency of reducing the number of unnecessary links and break-of-bulk points (Dean, Fabbro 2011). Later, the 2007 National Strategic Framework (MSE 2007), a document aiming at integrating the national development strategies with the European directives so as to guide in Italy the allocation of European Funds for the period 2007-2013, has instead defined 16 "Strategic territorial platforms" along the TEN-T corridors crossing Italy. For the North-eastern regions, a "trans-national strategic platform" named "Strategic territorial platform A4-Corridor 5 East" was defined.
These platforms were intended mainly as innovative governance entities. Spanning over different Italian regions interested by the major European transportation corridors, they should have had an important role they should have had an important role in mediating the global and national interests with the regional and local ones, thus ensuring that the different territorial specificities would be opportunely accounted during the decision making-processes of the European transport network. However, the real utility of these strategic platforms for the Italian territories as well as the possibility for their implementation in reasonable time, has not been explored (Fabbro, Mesolella 2010; Dean, Fabbro 2011; Dean 2014).
Finally, even the new 2010 National Logistic Plan (MIT 2010 and 2012) has not given any concrete response to the new transport needs and, furthermore, has not taken any concrete initiative to overcome the current

economic and financial crisis. The Plan has abandoned the "Strategic territorial platforms" approach, after only three years from its adoption, in favour of the early "Logistic platforms" model, resulting only in a partially reworking of the previous 2006 National Logistic Plan.
The approach of the 2007 National Strategic Framework, with its 16 "Strategic territorial platforms" has left an important trace from a methodological viewpoint and it has demonstrated that an integrated system approach is conceivable, also in the context of the regional planning. The contents and objectives of the 2007 North-East trans-national strategic platform have been recently taken up and re-launched in a book (e.g. Fabbro & Maresca, 2014) that recognizes the need to promote this integrated territorial system even through a campaign of strong visioning and political persuasion.

3. The Friuli Venetia Giulia region as a "Strategic territorial platform".
In this perspective, the Territorial Governance Plan of the FVG Region (RAFVG, 2013) interprets and plans the whole territory of the region as an integrated "territorial platform". It aims to recognize the peculiarities of its geographical location and the potentialities for a new model of regional economy strongly linked to trade flows between the Mediterranean Sea and Central Europe. In 2011 the absolute values of containerized traffic crossing the Suez Canal, to and from the Far East, corresponded to 18.35 MTEU. With an European absorption of approximately 31 MTEU, the Northern Range ports handled 20.4 MTEU. In comparison, the NAPA handled only 1.81 MTEU in addition to 120 MTON of other trades (MDST 2012). Considering that the demand for containerized cargo in Central and Eastern Europe increased by 390% between 1996 and 2011 and that containerized traffic crossing the Alps from Italy to Austria increased only by 14% during the same period, it is to be recognized that, while the opportunity was great, the performance of NAPA ports has remained low. Current capacity of the NAPA ports, equivalent to 2.5 MTEU, could be saturated by 2020, only in presence of a 10% annual growth. Forecasts for the NAPA ports at 2030 range from a minimum of 2.6 MTEU (the double of its current handling) to 6.0 MTEU but with consistent interventions on the port system and on the rail network (MDST 2012).
However, before being planned as an integrated territorial and logistic platform, the region has to be recognized for its existing international freight transport assets:

- The port system, as already mentioned, is constituted by three main ports: (*i*) the port of Trieste, that covers an area of 230ha and whose banks reach depths up to 18m, currently handles 0.39 MTEU of containerized goods

and 13.9 MTON of general goods per year (2011). It is estimated that the existing structures of the port could handle up to 0.6 MTEU per year. Therefore, current use is more or less 65% of its capacity. New construction works foresee an increase of the port area to reach 385ha. A new container terminal of 90ha would allow to handle further 1.2 MTEU to achieve an overall port capacity of 2 MTEU per year; (*ii*) The port of Monfalcone, that covers an area of 60ha and whose banks reach depths up to 10m, currently handles a small volume of containerized goods and more than 3.4 MTON of general goods per year (2011). New construction works would expand the port area to 135ha and deepen its banks up to 13m to host big ships in the order of 3,000 to 5,000TEUs; (*iii*) The Port of Nogaro, which is essentially a local river port covering an area of 36.5h, handles 1.5 MTON of goods per year (2012). New construction works would expand the port area up to 72.5ha and deepen its banks to 8m.

- The rail and road networks: (*i*) the motorway network comprises the toll highways A4 for 120km, A23 for 121km and A28 for 49km. Freight flows cross the region in the order of 5 MTON per km per year; (*ii*) the railway network has double tracks for 299km and single-track for 170km (including 85km non-electrified). The level of use is mostly international with freight flows crossing the region with an international origin and destination in the order of 5.4 MTON per year. For comparison, international flows originating or arriving in the region are 5.3 MTON, while national flows are only 2 MTON per year (2008). The current use does not exceed 50% of the potential capacity, thus the rail network could move 7.5 MTON or 1 MTEU in addition. However, the railway network is poorly joined to the ports of Trieste and Monfalcone due to bottlenecks that must be removed. These interventions appear more urgent than costly; (*iii*) the main intermodal terminals are: the intermodal Terminal of Trieste-Fernetti, with an operating surface of 13ha (25 ha total) and a rail link with 6 tracks for 13 trains per day and a junction with the toll highway A4. The Freight Village "Alpe Adria" of Cervignano, with a operating surface of 27ha (46 ha total) and a rail link with 6 tracks, a capacity of 24 trains per day and a junction with the toll highway A4 at 9 km. The Trucking Terminal of Gorizia with a surface of 12,7ha has nearby a railway system of 26.7ha with 5 tracks, 1,700m of platforms and capacity for 12 trains per day. The intermodal Wholesale Center of Pordenone, with a total area of 74ha, is connected with the toll highway A28 and it has a rail link of 3ha

with 2,000m of platforms and a capacity of 16 trains per day. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that goods crossing the Alps in the FVG region are for 2/3 via Tarvisio (North-South bound) and 1/3 via Gorizia and Villa Opicina (East-West bound), an amount estimated in 10 MTON by rail and 50 MTON by road.

- The network of production zones: in 2011 the regional gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to € 34 MLD. The regional level of export amounted to € 12.4 MLD (mainly toward Germany, the United Kingdom and France) which is roughly equivalent to 36% of regional GDP. The transport and logistics supply chain is the most important in the region both for service and production. It comprises, in fact, about 3,000 companies which contribute for about 30% to the realization of the regional GDP (MSE 2012). In FVG region there are also 12 large industrial mixed zones of regional importance and ten clusters of typical products: knife, furniture, agricultural food, wine, coffee, chairs, naval and marine productions, thermo electro-mechanical, digital technologies, Piasentina stone.
- The network of cities and territories: the region is not particularly populated having only 1,233 million inhabitants and few major cities: Trieste, Udine, Pordenone and Gorizia. The territory is articulated in a number of municipalities (more than 200), but the very same Territorial Governance Plan tries to aggregate them in only 11 Local Territorial Systems (STL), for programming and planning aims, with sizes ranging from the greatest STL Trieste - Monfalcone - Gorizia with a population of 306,000 inhabitants (marked by serious population aging) to the smallest of STL Maniago - Spilimbergo with a population of only 26,000 inhabitants (marked by population growth, but poor infrastructural accessibility).

The structural and governmental integration of all these logistic and territorial components (assumed as a perspective in both the infrastructural and territorial regional plans, RAFVG 2011, 2013) is considered (see again the mentioned recent book by Fabbro, Maresca, 2014) as a unique system worth to be planned and implemented as a whole and capable to pursue two main regional objectives:

– to set territorial strategies and regulations in order to plan a new space order, directly and indirectly linked to European transport corridors and their opportunities;
– to generate conditions for the emerging of a new territorial economic base in a region that, due to its strong manufacturing base, is particularly suffering the current economic downturn.

4. Conclusions. We should not think that there must first be the logistics

platform (RAFVG, 2011) and then the territorial platform (RAFVG 2013). The two platforms, even if they refer to different actors, plans and programmes, must go hand in hand since they represent the two sides of the same coin (Fabbro 2015). The so-called regional "Territorial platform" is a metaphor not only to represent a simple "Logistic Platform" – integrating the different logistic components in order to get a more efficient system of organizing and distributing the freight flows –, but also to generate a new territorial economic base and a space order directly and indirectly linked to the main transport and logistic supply chain. This perspective, to be effective, requires that public policies and spatial planning deploy these supply chains in the real physical territory as a precondition for attracting private investments to realize the infrastructure and also efficient operators in transport service management. These may be attracted only if public decision and regulation could assure a stable policy framework and certain and reliable implementation times and rules. Regional spatial planning instruments can play an important role in promoting greater political consensus about spatial strategies and in stabilizing land use regulations.

In particular, the new Territorial Governance Plan, approved in by the FVG Region in 2013, that seems now to be negleted if not abandoned at all, should be strongly addressed toward, the pursuing of this objectives.

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