
Editorial

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The maritime industry is characterised by its diversity and dynamism, and is one of the most globalised industries. The increasing role of the industry to the more and more globalised business world enhances the research interest and widens the opportunities for maritime researchers. The high levels of vulnerability stemming from the global supply chain networks, due to the shift of production from the west to east, have forced those involved in the day to day decision-making to seek for robust methodologies which

would provide sound solutions to these problems. Decisions are made from the different stakeholders of the numerous maritime industrial sectors on a daily basis related to short, medium and long-term issues, which do not affect these sectors alone but other industries or human activities as well. Those involved in this decision process need to have a more systemic and holistic approach in the modern world as their actions could lead to externalities.

This special issue aims at covering the diversity, dynamism and modern methodologies assisting in the decision-making process of those involved in the industry. Thus, it contains a selection of ten double-blind refereed articles presented during the European Conference on Shipping and Ports (ECONSHIP 2011) organised by the Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport of the University of the Aegean in Chios Island, Greece. The theme of the conference was 'Maritime transport: opportunities and threats in the post crises world'. Adopting the approach the ECONSHIP2011 had followed with regard to the topics of interest, this special issue includes papers that cover many different fields of analysis. Thus, papers included are dealing with management, IT, human resource, logistics, supply chain, environmental and intermodal issues relevant to a number of maritime sectors such ports, bulk shipping, liner shipping, short sea shipping, cruise sector and more. All papers provide supporting decision-making tools to a number of current aspects they deal.

The first contribution by Verbraeken and Notteboom focuses on port terminal productivity. The paper aims to reintroduce exogenous factors to the contemporary land productivity analysis. They develop a conceptual framework for the identification of relevant exogenous factors and the potential impacts these factors have on the possibilities for the terminal operator to achieve a high land productivity. They argue that the conceptual analysis and the related typology of exogenous factors contribute to a more relevant international comparison of terminal productivity which takes into account the complex environment surrounding the terminals considered. Terminal operation experts were asked to assess exogenous factors in relation to land productivity. The results indicate that exogenous factors are considered a valuable contribution.

Xideas and Geomelos investigate spot prices of tanker market following an extensive empirical analysis using dynamic multiple regressions models via autoregressive distributed lags (ADL). The paper focuses on an extensive testing of stationarity and time trend issues in order to overcome the problem of spurious regression. The estimated models have been also used to generate ex-post and ex-ante forecasts in order to evaluate both econometric specification and predicting accuracy of dynamic multiple regression models. Results reveal that spot prices of each ship type market are affected by different sets of independent variables and estimated models generate quite accurate predictions.

Škurić et al. investigate bulk queuing models in developing the container performances at terminals using analytical expressions. The arrival and service process of containers at container yard must give the input data in shape of some statistical distribution. The models discuss the total bulk queuing system costs of containers at container yard and specific cost ratio. The authors propose different models in relation to old and new explicit formulae from previous investigations. Comparing these various models with bulk arrival of containers give the optimal value of queue discipline. Finally, a given comparative analysis between these models and analytical approach will improve the best values for container performances at container yard.

Iakovaki takes a HRM approach examining the intercultural dimension of new learning tools for seafarers. The paper is an attempt to analyse the decisions made during

different situations concerning the intercultural dimension of maritime English, the elaboration of what constitutes added intercultural value in a sector specific sense and how these elements can be incorporated to concrete learning items via the creation of a syllabus and with the aid of novel language learning approaches, IT technology and new learning tools.

Acciario deals with environmental aspects of global logistics. Policy measures and the threat of public indictment have acted as powerful incentives for transport operators to green global supply chains. The paper argues that in order to integrate environmental factors in global logistics processes it is necessary to link them to the concept of value delivery through adequate pricing mechanisms. The paper also discusses how non-traditional forms of pricing are a valuable method to integrate the environmental dimension in container shipping and logistics value propositions.

Kontovas and Psaraftis provide another dimension of the effect that shipping activities have on the environment. They explore the effect the combination of low demand for transport, low freight rates and high bunker prices have on the environment. Sailing at speeds lower than the design speed reduces total fuel consumption resulting in bunker cost savings. Therefore, during the crisis slow steaming has been extensively exercised and some modern vessels were operating at half of their design speed. Given that fuel costs and emissions are directly proportional to one another (both being directly proportional to fuel used), it appears that reducing both could be a straightforward way towards a 'win-win' solution. Thus, this paper discusses the lessons learned by slow steaming providing the link between economy and the environment, which is fundamental towards sustainability in shipping.

Yildiz and Yercan examine transportation and logistics systems. The natures of these systems involve various levels of resource allocation decisions where usually it is not always possible to execute these decisions in the field on time at the best possible way because of the unpredictable factors in plans. By considering the uncertain operational environment, this paper explores the uncertainty issue within operational systems and deals with the problem of allocating resources to maximise expected total profit and minimise inefficiencies under uncertainty. A representative optimisation model, which is developed to address the uncertainty issue, is solved via an optimisation algorithm. The results show that operational plans without the utilisation of uncertainty models could have negative impacts, including increased emissions, negative environmental effects, along with higher costs to organisations.

Marianos et al. propose a particular approach that combines the strategic fit, AHP, QFD and balanced scorecard techniques in order to evaluate the e-services to be adopted in a container terminal environment, using a variety of criteria covering technological, organisational and environmental dimensions. The paper presents the case study of the container terminal of Piraeus Port Authority (PPA) where the methodology has been applied to evaluate a number of selected electronic port services.

Diakomihalis and Stefanidaki examine the supply chain of cruise companies, focusing on the factors that influence their decision to outsource activities. They analyse the complicated structure of the cruise sector that enforces companies to strive for low cost operation while preserving high levels of quality. The study they conduct, using the analytic hierarchy process method reveals that several factors affect companies' decision to outsource, the cost being the most important.

Veldman et al. examine the effect of post-Panamax ship design parameters to support statements on future containership particulars with respect to size, dimension, speed and related engine capacity. In their analysis, they also include external costs related to the effects of CO₂ emissions on climate change. Discussions on the monetary value of these emissions are in full swing. Results of the analysis show that economies of ships size continue to exist for ships up to 25,000 TEU and that most likely some technical limitations with respect to propulsion, engine power and cavitation problems cannot be put further anymore.

The Editors believe that further theoretical and empirical research in areas such as the ones represented selectively by the articles included in this special issue would be useful and welcomed. It is quite surprising that despite the fact that the maritime business is by far the dominant transportation sector, supporting and enhancing world trade flows and global economic growth, sound empirical research – that blends academic and practitioners' aspects – remains still rather modest. It would be interesting and useful to see further research in this business field, partly challenged by the selected articles in this issue.