
Editorial

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Biographical notes: George K. Vaggelas is a research fellow at the Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport of the University of the Aegean (Greece). He is also a Senior Consultant on port economics and port policy issues. He has previously been a Senior Advisor at the Thessaloniki Port Authority S.A. and a member of the Greek Regulatory Authority for Ports. His research interests include port economics and management, port policy and maritime economics. He has authored papers published in international scientific journals and conferences and he has been involved in several research and contract projects dealing with the port and shipping industry.

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Maria Lekakou is an Associate Professor in Maritime Economics at Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport. She has a longstanding experience in passenger shipping and maritime policy, as Advisor to the Minister of Mercantile Marine, President of the Committee of Development of Domestic Sea Transports' System, a member of the National Regulatory Authority for Internal Maritime Transportation and as a maritime expert in many national or European bodies. She has extensively examined maritime markets and is co-author of four books examining European maritime policy, Greek shipping competitiveness and island transports.

The shipping and port industries are facing ongoing challenges owing to several developments and initiatives at regional and international level. Increasing global trade, new transport needs, new financing schemes, increasing integration of transport modes into supply and transport chains, new regulatory initiatives with a special focus on environmental issues and technological innovation are among the factors that shape the contemporary environment in which shipping and port companies operate, as well as the challenges they face. Ports and shipping companies readjust their strategies and decision-making processes in order to adapt to the new environment and at the same time to increase their competitiveness aiming at surviving in highly competitive markets.

This special issue aims at highlighting these challenges through a selection of best papers presented at the European Conference on Shipping, Intermodalism and Ports (ECONSHIP 2015), held in Chios Island (Greece). The special issue includes papers dealing with a variety of matters aiming at providing a more holistic approach to the trends, developments and challenges faced by shipping and port companies in various related markets. Determinants of demand and supply of shipping services, determinants of freight rates, employment in shipping, and port traffic modelling are among the topics that this special issue examines.

Regarding shipping, a first paper in this special issue comes from Pagano, Zou, Sánchez and Noruzoliaee, dealing with an analysis of demand and supply of trans-oceanic sea routes focused on container trade. The authors analyse the container trade (demand) and the current capacity of ports at the West Coast of America and at Central America. Taking into account four major developments that directly affect the demand and supply side of the market, namely the expansion of Panama Canal, the construction of the Nicaragua Grand Canal, the potential increase of port capacity at the North America West Coast ports, and the investments in increasing rail links at Central America, the authors are projecting the supply and demand balance for 2025 based on three scenarios regarding the demand for port capacity. Their projections show that in the foreseeable future and with the conditions under which the two canal-related projects will be materialised, substantial capacity redundancy will likely appear in the region, which might cause a series of side effects such as pricing issues and formation of cartels.

Bissias and Pallis in their paper examine the strategies of Greek shipping collective groups and associations towards the media. Through an extensive review of public relations, image restoration and corporate communications related theories, and a field research through a questionnaire, they interpret the public relations and media strategy of the Union of Greek Shipowners (UGS). They indicate that despite the image crisis that exists for Greek shipowners as well as the unfriendly confrontation of the media towards them, the UGS did not adapt to the new needs and challenges as it has followed an asymmetrical (one way) media communication and crisis response strategy. This attitude according to the authors is related to organisational and inherent characteristics of time lasting and large organisations, which led to inertia and resistance to change.

In the third paper, Jensen and Bergqvist deal with the image of shipping as a significant factor for attracting young people for a career in the industry. Based on literature review, the authors conclude on the existence of a causal relationship between image and intention and between image and attitude. Through field research with students in Sweden, Norway and Greece with the use of a questionnaire, the paper identifies and analyses the anatomy of the image concept. In total, nine image-dimension factors have been identified and evaluated according to their importance for the young people to choose a career in shipping. The research findings support several aspects that

have been identified in previous studies. From the selected image-dimension factors, influence by family and friends and the reward aspects are of the most importance for the students for the selection of a career in shipping.

The fourth paper of this special issue addresses a rather neglected, at least from the academia, shipping sector. The paper of Diakomihalis, Stefanidaki and Chytis examines cruise shipping and more specifically analyses the cruise ship's cost components through the application of the analytical hierarchy process (AHP). The authors identify the cost structure of a cruise ship and the significance of each one through an empirical research based on brainstorming and a field research based on the AHP. In total, six cost categories were identified, including 24 cost elements. The AHP application addressed two cruise companies with different characteristics in order to obtain insight on how a small and a major cruise company evaluate the importance of each cost element. The research results reveal significant variation between the hierarchy of cost categories, as well as the hierarchy of the cost elements, between the two cruise companies. For a small cruise company, technical upgrading and lay-up costs are the most important categories whereas for a large cruise company the first place belongs to the financial costs.

The last paper of the special issue that deals with the shipping industry comes from Cocconcelli and Medda, who examine the determinants of iron ore dry bulk freight rates. The authors analyse the determinants of freight rates at the micro-economic level using a two-stage least squares analysis. Also, they proceed with a back-test analysis in order to verify whether or not further hidden variables explain changes in level of freight rates. The authors used a dataset formed of 13 variables (and 685 observations each) that can affect dry bulk freight rates, which are grouped in three categories:

- 1 micro-economic variables related to the dry bulk industry
- 2 infrastructure characteristics at port level
- 3 the price of the commodity.

Based on the analysis, the authors unveiled a significant relationship between cargo features and the level of freight rates, and also concluded on some interesting results on how the iron ore freight rates can be influenced at micro level by factors related to the port infrastructures and factors related to the iron ore market.

The next two papers of the special issue focus on the port industry. The research of Langenus, Dooms, Haezendonck and Aerts deals with port performance indicators and the issue of the value added to the society by port's throughput. The paper focuses on the case of inland ports and specifically on the port of Brussels. The authors use the weighting rule concept and adapt it to the case of inland ports. Through a desk research and in-depth interviews, the paper concludes on the formation of 'Brussels-rule' and unveils the value added that each type of cargo produces. The authors proceed also into a benchmarking analysis for six ports with similar characteristics to the port of Brussels. Among the major outcomes of the paper is that the inland port traffic that creates high added values is the passenger, ro-ro and bulk-related traffic. The 'Brussels-rule' can be of essence for formatting value-added related strategies for inland ports.

The last paper of the special issue is dealing with traffic modelling in Ro-Ro terminals. Dragović, Nikitakos and Meštrović use the Ro-Ro terminal at the port of Bar as a case study for their traffic model based on an adapted discrete event simulation (DES) framework for bulk traffic. By encompassing the characteristics and critical

elements of a Ro-Ro terminal, the authors apply the model at the case study port, concluding on proposals for optimising the terminal operation, as the Ro-Ro traffic in the port has increased substantially in recent years.

The special issue includes significant contributions that deal with the current challenges in the shipping and port industry. Some of the papers provide significant input by developing methodological frameworks and tools applicable to specific shipping and port markets, while the case studies provide insights into real-world problems in the two industries and can be of significant value to shipping and port stakeholders. Also, the papers provide the potential of generalisation as some of the proposed methodologies and tools can be applied to a wide range of port and shipping cases, providing an interesting input to academia and to practitioners.