

# SWINGING ON THE ANCHOR': THE DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING GREENHOUSE GAS ABATEMENT IN SHIPPING VIA VIRTUAL ARRIVAL



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***The concept of virtual arrival was initially thought to be a major boon in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as it would allow ships to slow their progress while also reducing unnecessary wait times. However, key shipping stakeholders have been slow to adopt virtual arrival in their practices. This article examines the causes of waiting time for ships at anchor and the limited uptake of virtual arrival.***

## APPROACH:

Data for this study was collected via two qualitative methodologies. First, semi structured interviews were conducted with ship company managers to gain an insiders perspective on why virtual arrival policies were not being adopted, and whether it is the ship managers themselves that are inhibiting them. Second, ethnographic materials were collected over the course of two separate sailing trips onboard two commercial tankers. The data collected via these methods was then compared to what could be obtained through a review of relevant grey literature meant to contextualize, confirm or disconfirm the data collected in this study.

## MAIN FINDINGS:

- While virtual arrival initiatives appear to theoretically bring a net benefit to the shipping industry, evidence indicates that the practice of virtual arrival is impeded by a number of commercial and logistical impediments. Opting for wait times over virtual arrivals is not considered irrational as:
  - Cargo-owners have commercial imperatives other than fuel savings that must be considered. In particular, cargo is seen as a more volatile and crucial variable than fuel costs, leading to the decision to prioritize its arrival over reducing fuel consumption. Furthermore, ship-operators and owners continue to make money even while a ship is waiting to port. In fact, demurrage is a major source of revenue for ship-owners.
  - Charters and clients do not put pressure to adopt virtual arrival. As a result, there are fewer incentives than was initially expected for virtual arrival.
  - Virtual arrival may also have unintended negative consequences. Moorage wait times are often used as a periods of needed rest and relaxation, as well as the opportunity to catch up on work that is difficult to complete while at sea.
  - Ship-owners feel a lack of trust with terminal operators, believing there is not enough evidence that virtual arrivals will be respected and that they may lose their tickets
- This study provides useful guidance for future shipping policy implementation for organizations such as the IMO. Primarily, the study illustrates how cargo-owners' commercial priorities and decisions have a significant effect on air emissions that should be considered when attempting to reduce said emissions.