

# A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF PORT MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE GLOBAL PORT SYSTEM SINCE THE 1950S



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***This paper contributes to the research on port migration theory by examining both the forces that shape port migration and provide a quantitative assessment of port migration (port migration in this case is defined as the shift of port infrastructure and/or maritime traffic from one location to other location(s) over time). It seeks to illustrate how research in port migration might best be approached and recommends future research avenues.***

## **APPROACH:**

Data was collected through a qualitative literature review examining the factors shaping port migration as well as a quantitative review of three large data sets to deduct rules by which port migration is more advanced in certain locations than others. Due to the wide range of factors that might affect port migration, the authors opted to adopt an urban perspective which is more holistic than only examining ports themselves as this allows the study to catch relevant phenomenon occurring outside the strict limits of the ports.

## **MAIN FINDINGS:**

- The study demonstrates that there is no simple explanation as to the dominant tendencies that shape port migration. While the literature review of prior research offers little empirical evidence, the results are shown to be contradictory, and each case is unique enough to not offer any shared laws of port migration.
  - However, there are important interdependencies between the main drivers that tend to be related to a port terminal's geographic location, and those related to economic and governance factors.
- Traffic proportions between older ports (typically within urban areas) to and newer ports (typically further from urban areas in more deep water areas) appear to remain relatively stable over time, though a small number of examples show the new ports have been engines of significant traffic growth.
- A problem the authors acknowledge is that measuring port activity can be done through several accepted metrics, each one offering different insights into port activities that may be affected by a number of spurious factors. Future research in the area thus ought to revisit the question of how best to measure port activity.