

Call for Papers  
Special Issue of the WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs

## **Shifting Trade Patterns and their Impact on Governance, Pricing and Performance of Ports in Southern Africa**

### **BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE**

Global trade has seen significant changes and shifts in trade patterns in recent years, mostly due to supply chain disruptions caused by such issues as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia/Ukraine conflict. Supply chain pressures and logistics disruptions have caused severe supply shortages and spiralling shipping costs, mostly due to changes in consumption patterns. For instance, Notteboom, Pallis and Rodrigue (2021) indicated that although the COVID-19 pandemic only caused a short-term shock, each crisis highlights the need for structural changes and opportunities to improve current processes and be more resilient.

Seaports are critical to the maritime industry and to the development of regional transport chains. Developing countries, dependent heavily on maritime transport for access to global markets, have experienced a significant decline in ship calls to ports in terms of number and cargo carrying capacity in terms of volume (Grater and Chasomeris, 2022). However, UNCTAD (2022) reported a more positive trend for international trade due to increases in commodity prices, subsiding pandemic restrictions and a stronger recovery in demand patterns. Similarly, the changes in trade patterns and commodity prices have caused an increased demand for products from southern Africa. The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) is also aimed at driving increased trade in the African region, which in turn will place increased pressure on port and transport infrastructure in the region.

Globally there has been a gradual shift towards global value chain (GVC) diversification and regionalism, as a regional approach to supply chains provides logistical advantages and reduction in costs (Pretorius et al., 2022). African countries largely continue to supply raw materials to trading partners. As global supply chain disruptions continue to challenge the recovery of GVCs, there is a similar need to build more efficient regional value chains. As southern African countries work to rebuild their competitive advantage, addressing key bottlenecks to trade and trade facilitation becomes crucial.

Shipping lines only call on ports if there are enough cargoes to be shipped, which depends heavily on the demand for cargo movement in the geographical vicinity of the port. Conversely, shippers will only use ports if shipping lines offer sufficient connections to and/or from that port and the necessary infrastructure and handling facilities exist (Van den Berg, De Langen and Van Zuijlen (2017).

The latest Review of Maritime Transport (UNCTAD, 2022) highlights the poor performance of ports in southern Africa compared to other regions in the world. Similarly, the World Bank's Container Port Performance Index (World Bank, 2021) ranked such African ports as Durban, Cape Town, Maputo, Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa towards the bottom of the list of 370 ports

worldwide. The reports call for increased port development, to expand capacity and improve connectivity and performance. The reports also indicate a need for governments or public authorities to expand and upgrade port infrastructure and accelerate trade facilitation reforms. In many southern African countries, national government structures still govern and regulate ports. Van den Berg et al. (2017) indicate the governance and physical characteristics of ports differ substantially from port to port and even from nation to nation, and that the issues of port pricing are not generally driven by commercial considerations. Ports are also not viewed as business ecosystems with multiple users. This shapes how port pricing principles are implemented. Van den Berg et al. (2017) also indicate that research on pricing and governance of ports as commercially operating entities are virtually absent, and the same can be said for research in the southern African context.

Research on the practices and challenges of sustainable port development is limited. Hiranandani (2014) has highlighted the need for a more critical global analysis of port operations and port governance. Few studies have, however, investigated the issues of port governance and port pricing structures in southern Africa. Specific studies do exist in the South African landscape, including Gumede and Chasomeris (2017; 2018), Meyiwa and Chasomeris (2020), Grater and Chasomeris (2022), and Fakir and Chasomeris (2022). These studies have categorically raised a concern about port pricing methodologies applied in the South African context and expressed that the current model is causing unfair pricing and excessive revenues to the port authority.

As trade patterns are changing, there is a need for additional infrastructure development in the southern African ports. Southern Africa has great potential to grow its maritime footprint globally. Oyenuga (2021) indicated that although Africa's maritime transport is small compared to the global context, Africa's port industry in the post-pandemic period should aim to improve operational performance and maritime governance to ensure that the region's developmental outcomes are achieved. The paper also refers to the need for a multi-stakeholder governance framework to overcome longstanding issues of weak public management, under-investment in maritime infrastructure and low interconnectivity in the logistical network. It is therefore necessary to work towards more effective port governance models, reconsidering port pricing mechanisms and subsequently enhanced port productivity as a way to adapt to the increased trade and industry demands in the future.

## **SCOPE OF PAPERS**

This Special Issue will focus on gathering articles that provide a detailed and evidence-based analysis of the current landscape in the ports in southern Africa. This Call for Papers includes analyses and reviews of reforms for port governance structures (models), adjustments to port pricing strategies and measures as a means to enhance port productivity. Furthermore, the Special Issue aims to determine how the post-pandemic trade landscape shapes prospects and initiatives for development in the ports sector.

Papers of interest are in the current opportunities and challenges facing port development in southern Africa. The Guest Editors welcome both logically sensible conceptual papers and empirically sound studies and invite intellectual debates on those issues mentioned in the above section that do potentially guide those stakeholders of the port and maritime industry in southern Africa specifically.

Possible topics, of course not limited to, are:

- Port infrastructure opportunities and challenges in the changing landscape of trade.
- Port governance and coherent policies for the maritime sector.
- Port developments and initiatives for growth.
- Competitiveness of southern African ports.
- Port pricing strategies applied in southern African ports.
- Opportunities and challenges for increased performance in southern African ports.

## KEYWORDS

Port governance, port pricing, port performance, competitiveness, southern Africa.

## IMPORTANT DATES

Full paper submission	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
1 <sup>st</sup> round of review	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024
2 <sup>nd</sup> round of review	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
Editorial decision	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025
Publication	June 2025

When submitting your work(s), please select “**SI: Trade and African Ports**” from the Article Type. All submissions will be peer-reviewed and selected based on the quality, relevance, and originality in line with the standard practice set by the *WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs*: <https://www.springer.com/journal/13437/submission-guidelines>.

## GUEST EDITORS

An informal enquiry could be made to any of the following guest editors.

**Mihalis Chasomeris** is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Professor Chasomeris has a PhD degree in Economics from UKZN. He has lectured economics to university students for more than 22 years. His fields of academic research and experience in international consultancy include the economic regulation of seaports, port governance and pricing, maritime transport economics, international trade and transportation costs. He has a sustained record of research in economics, as evidenced by his attendance and presentation at national and international conferences, as well as publications in accredited journals. He is a member of the Economic Society of South Africa and the International Association of Maritime Economists. As a Port Economist and Maritime Economist, he regularly meets with port stakeholders to resolve challenges and assist in enhancing South Africa’s ports system and maritime industry. Prof Chasomeris has been involved in port research projects for several organisations, including the Ports Regulator of South Africa, Transnet, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, and Business Unity South Africa. Email: [Chasomerism1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Chasomerism1@ukzn.ac.za)

**Sonja Grater** is an Associate Professor at the School of Economics, North-West University (NWU). Professor Grater has a PhD degree in International Trade from the NWU. She has lectured undergraduate and post-graduate courses at the NWU for the past 15 years. She is also the Co-ordinating Programme Leader for International Trade in the School of Economics and serve on several management committees. Prof Grater's research specialisation is trade facilitation and includes work on trade in services, export promotion, foreign direct investment, global value chains, the role of customs, transport and ports in trade facilitation. She has published in several accredited, peer-reviewed journals and books. She has also supervised numerous masters' and PhD students. Prof Grater has been involved in several research projects for organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Department of International Development UK (DFID) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition in South Africa. Email: [Sonja.Grater@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Sonja.Grater@nwu.ac.za)

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