

Ports in Today's Transport Philosophy

Günümüz Ulaştırma Felsefesinde Limanlar

Güler Bilen Alkan

Istanbul University, Engineering Faculty, Department of Maritime Transport and Management Engineering

Abstract

The two traditional and primary users of seaports are the shipping companies and traders. Shipping companies are mostly concerned with reliable, competitive and quickest possible turn-round of their vessels; whereas the traders' concern is for the safe and due delivery of their goods. Ports provide many numbers of services for their customers in the form of handling of and supplying for ships; shipment, storage, discharging and forwarding operations for cargoes, embarking and disembarking for passengers. Ports earn income by charging port users for the use of their facilities and services. Port users are, inter alia, ship owners (or ship managers), shipping and forwarding agents, cargo owners and passengers. Ports are subject to fierce competition of other neighbouring or regional ports, domestic or foreign in character, depending upon of course the management philosophy. In this study the ports are examined ports in view of present transport philosophy.

Keywords: Maritime transportation, seaports, shipping service, international shipping, multimodal transport.

Introduction

1. Seaports: functions and structural transformations

International trade is one of the driving elements of economic growth and such growth exists when and where trade is created. Transport services exist however to serve and to foster the trade, be it domestic or international, and without the inclusion of the said

services the trade cannot be fulfilled properly. Shipping at this stage is the fundamental as well as the dominant means of transport for the World trade as the Earth is almost covered by the sea - in terms of rounded figure 4/5th of the total. Depending upon the development in maritime transport, international trade also allows cargoes to be transported from areas of low utility to areas of high utility. (Güner, İ. and Bilican, 2001)

The demand for shipping services arises from the existence of shipping trade; being ships and seaports (or seaport terminals) the intimate elements. Services for ships, cargoes or cargo groups, passengers and - in more general terms port users - are rendered at such purpose-built commercial establishments - namely ports. Seaports are geographical areas, acting as link in the transport chain and at the same time play important functions as distribution centres for national as well as regional economies by way of hinterland networks. They are also dependent elements of the chain within which they operate - mainly because ports exist for ships and ships are the servants of cargoes. Seaports are the ultimate points for ships; whereas the intermediate points for cargoes in the transport chain, i.e. door-to-door delivery. A seaport is defined by several authors as: "a terminal and an area within which ships are loaded with and/or discharged of cargo and includes the usual places where ships wait for their turn or are ordered or obliged to wait for their turn no matter the distance from that area. Usually it has an interface with other forms of transport and in so doing provides connecting services." (Branch, 1986), "a ship / shore interface on a maritime intermodal interface." (Alderton, 1995), "a gateway between land and water; One side of the gateway is used by ships, coasters and sometimes aircraft; the other by railways, motor lorries, and perhaps barges. Through every such gateway there constantly passes some part of the traffic of the World - that is, goods, passengers, or both." (Bown and Flere, 1967), "a place where each-way exchanges between land and sea transport regularly take place" (Bird, 1971), "The port is the installation that enables water-borne cargo to be transferred to land carriage."

(Oram and Baker, 1971), “Seaport is a commercial establishment, where physical means such as berths, storage facilities, and handling equipment are available and services for port-users are generated” (Akten, 1999), “Seaports are purpose-built and commercial establishments where services for ships, cargoes or cargo groups, passengers and – in more general terms port users - are rendered. (Birgun and Akten, 2004)

All commercial seaports are open for international shipping traffic; freedom of access to the port, the use of the port and the full enjoyment of the benefits as regards navigation and commercial operations based on the principle of equal treatment, are granted for commercial ships as per the Geneva Convention, 1923.^{1 2}

Ports form as an important as well as primary part of the overall pattern of trade and transport. The main roles of a port can be summarised as follows: (Bird, 1971)

- a. provision of shelter from the elements; especially for ships seeking safe anchorage arising when due to heavy seas and prevailing storm conditions,
- b. cargo and passenger handling,
- c. support services for ships, such as victualling, stores, bunkering, ship repair and maintenance etc.
- d. a base for industrial development; to facilitate the development of trade passing through the port,
- e. a terminal forming part of transport chain; i.e. an interchange point linking the shipping service with other transport modes to provide an overall international or local trade distribution network, involving rail, road or inland waterways / canal transport.

Ports are nodal points exposed to unexpected cost increase in the eyes of their users. They play however considerably important part

¹ Convention and Statute on the international regime of maritime ports, Geneva, December 9, 1923, Statute article 2.

² Within the meaning of the Statute, seaports are taken as “maritime ports”.

in reducing sea transport (shipping) costs, if they deliver rational service(s) for the customers. Several obstacles in ports such as low productivity, failure to streamline documentation, seasonal concentration of ship arrivals as well as of cargo take-off etc. may ultimately end up with either congestion or delays in service(s) and may tend the service(s) charges to increase. Ports have undergone changes and developments as shipowners' seeked solutions in many ways for rational shipping services. As the ships developed in types, in size and in whatever forms, ports have faced the problems of matching continuously with changes in ships in order to cope with providing adequate services for ships. Ports however have faced the following quadruple challenges to provide proper and rational service(s) for their customers: (Akten, 1999)

- a. handling the growing maritime trade and traffic to and fro,
- b. meeting the demands of changing ship technology,
- c. offering quicker, rational as well as reliable and timely service(s),
- d. staying always competitive, bettering up the service quality and cargo security.

Ships increased in size over the years have forced ports to serve for deeper draught vessels. Not only the water depth and increase in mechanisation ratio with the advent of containerisation, but also the management style have changed in ports; and in most of the countries ports have become autonomous bodies, standing on their own feet and free from Government intervention of any sort.

Types of port administration vary widely - the dominant form being the autonomous body. Autonomous ports have the characteristic of independent, non-political administration, jurisdiction over an area regardless of local government boundaries, and a constitution that can be varied to suit different local conditions. The advantages are unity of administration within the port, and an independent financial status which gives no financial chance of a financial being confounded with a political policy or of one port being favoured at the expense of another, as is

