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Title of the presentation

Investigating the Maritime Transport Structure of the Middle East: How Competitive is Dubai hub Port-City?
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Abstract (400-500 words)

Container ports worldwide are competing to expand their capacity to keep pace with the needs of the fast growing trade requirements. Ports of the Middle Eastern region, especially those favored by the oil revenues, are also pursuing a port development strategy. In particular, the Persian Gulf States (GCC¹) are investing their oil revenues on further developing ports along with free trade zones and industrial complexes with the aim to promote trade, create employment and diversify the non-oil based economy. Although Middle East is a strategic region and its ports are becoming more connected into the world network, yet scholars have largely neglected this region and we know little about the port structure of this part of the world.

This paper aims to investigate Dubai's changing level of competitiveness within the inter-port structure of the Middle Eastern Region. Dubai's established position as the main 'hub port-city' of the region is analysed by studying on one hand the Middle Eastern port hierarchy, based on the level of container throughputs handled by each port-region between 1980-201. On the other hand, a network analysis of the inter-port flows (for years 1996, 2006 and 2012) is applied by means of a graph theory: ports as nodes (or vertices) connected by container vessel movements as links (or edges). Here the conceptualized measures of centrality and intermediacy within the urban network of economic are used to investigate the city's position as a transportation hub (Fleming & Hayuth, 1994). This methodological attribute is seen useful for investigating the changing regional status of emerging hub port cities (Ducruet, Lee, & Ng, 2010).

This study focuses on Dubai, as the most important maritime territory in the Middle East. In terms of handling container throughputs (TEUs), Dubai ranks as the world's 9th busiest port and the third largest transshipment centre (after Hong Kong and Singapore). Dubai's historically entrepôt economy depends on its efficient local port and in particular competitive transshipment capabilities. Despite the growing regional and global factors, the paper discusses that despite the growing neighbouring ports, Dubai's regional competitiveness has been strengthened and the emerging competitors are an opportunity rather than a threat to Dubai's status as the main regional hub.

Selection of bibliography:

Ducruet, C., Lee, S.-W., & Ng, A. K. Y. (2010). Centrality and vulnerability in liner shipping networks:

¹ The GCC stands for Gulf the Cooperation Council which is a political and economic union of Arab states bordering the Persian Gulf, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

² The data on vessel movements and container flows are extracted from the Lloyd's Marine Intelligence Unit (LMIU). The author acknowledges Dr. Cèsar Ducruet and his team in CNRS- Géographie-cités for providing the data.

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