

Port Governance Reforms in Diversified Institutional Frameworks: Generic Solutions, Implementation Asymmetries

Adolf K.Y. Ng

Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Hong Kong, China

Tel: +852 34003625

Fax: +852 23302704

E-mails: lgtan@polyu.edu.hk / adolfng@gmail.com

Athanasios A. Pallis

Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport

University of the Aegean

Chios, Greece

Tel: +30 22710 35275

Fax: +30 22710 35299

E-mail: apallis@aegean.gr

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Abstract. Bringing in neo-institutional perspectives, this paper investigates the recent corporatisation process of three seaports in Asia and Europe. We focus on whether the newly established seaport governance structures follow a path largely affected by the local/national institutional frameworks and the political traditions in place. Findings confirm that path-dependent decisions largely preserve the institutional characteristics of local/national systems, resulting in implementation asymmetries when different countries seek generic governance solution.

1 INTRODUCTION

Global economic changes, technological development and the consequent restructuring of transportation process pose significant implications on seaport (hereinafter called ‘port’) management and policies. The worldwide response is reforming governance structures, aiming to enable ports to provide specialised services, integrate in complex supply chains, and execute both public and private responsibilities. The several distinctive variables of the sector - as exemplified in this journal (Olivier and Slack, 2006), and elsewhere (cf. Bichou and Gray, 2005) - and the increased commonality of the problems faced by international ports¹ leads various institutions, including inter-governmental organisations like the World Bank, to recommend prototype practices that may be employed by all. Studies suggest that public agencies, port authorities (PAs), and relevant managing bodies
40 often apply generic solutions, differing from those happening in other sectors of the economy on the basis of the unique characteristics of the port sector (Brooks and Cullinane, 2007).

Despite the similarities of problems faced, reform objectives pursued, and generic solutions endorsed, the reform ‘substance’ observed varies significantly. Searching for an

¹ For a detailed review on the challenges faced by ports, see: Heaver (1995), Panayides and Cullinane (2002), Ng (2006 and 2009).

explanation, this paper examines whether the newly established port governance structures follow a path affected by institutional frameworks and political traditions. It does so based on a systematic analysis on the corporatisation process of three ports, namely Busan (South Korea), Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Piraeus (Greece), which allows for both inter- and intra-continental comparisons. The latter is useful, as political tradition may differ even within a continent where economic and political integrations progress.

In the 1990s, reforms were undertaken in these ports as the intensification of competition was evident in respective regional market shares. Meanwhile, regional political and economic developments added extra dimensions to competition, affecting the power of managing bodies to deal with new pressures. For example, the EU single market triggered the necessity to introduce new structures within Rotterdam and Piraeus when decision-makers adapted to the new political reality. The presence of diversified institutional frameworks preceded the decisions of stakeholders to embark on port reforms. While economic geographers gradually re-figure economic issues with relations
60 and cultural terms, this is lacking from port geography's literature (Olivier and Slack, 2006). Although studies on the effects of 'nesting' on private firm behaviours during port/terminal investments are available (Airriess, 2001b; Wang et al., 2004), similar studies on institutional legacies are found wanting. It is only recently that scholars (i.e. Hall, 2003; Jacobs, 2007; Jacobs and Hall, 2007) focused on a concept previously applied in the context of transportation (Heritier et al., 2000) and maritime (Pallis, 2002) policy evolution: institutional settings do matter. Generalisation and further theorisation can enhance and further establish these findings in port governance.

Following the neo-institutional approach that institutions structure the relationships between actors within various units of polity and economy (see Hall, 1986), and with the help of the cultural political analyses of the economy (see Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008),

this paper concludes that observed asymmetries of port governance, even with generic solution, are results of variations of institutional frameworks within which the restructuring strategies are nested.

Section 2 develops the theoretical foundations. The cases provide evidence on the shapes that the restructuring of respective ports have undertaken in the light of the key features of political and broader institutional frameworks. Attention is on the implementation asymmetries and any restrictions posed on the initially stated adjustments. Section 4 discusses the findings and their theoretical implications. The paper concludes by providing suggestions for further research on the interplay between institutions and port governance structures.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Worldwide Port Reforms: Applying Generic Solutions

Decision-makers implement new port governance and management structures to positively adapt to changing circumstances via a process similar to other economic activities. Three settings unfold over time (Figure 1). In the pre-reform setting, particular structures and strategies coordinate relations and behaviours between stakeholders in a way matching the original economic and operational environment. Evolving circumstances affect (often unexpectedly) market demands and stakeholders relations. The original setting finds difficult to execute stated functions and therefore the sector adjusts to fit in the new conditions.

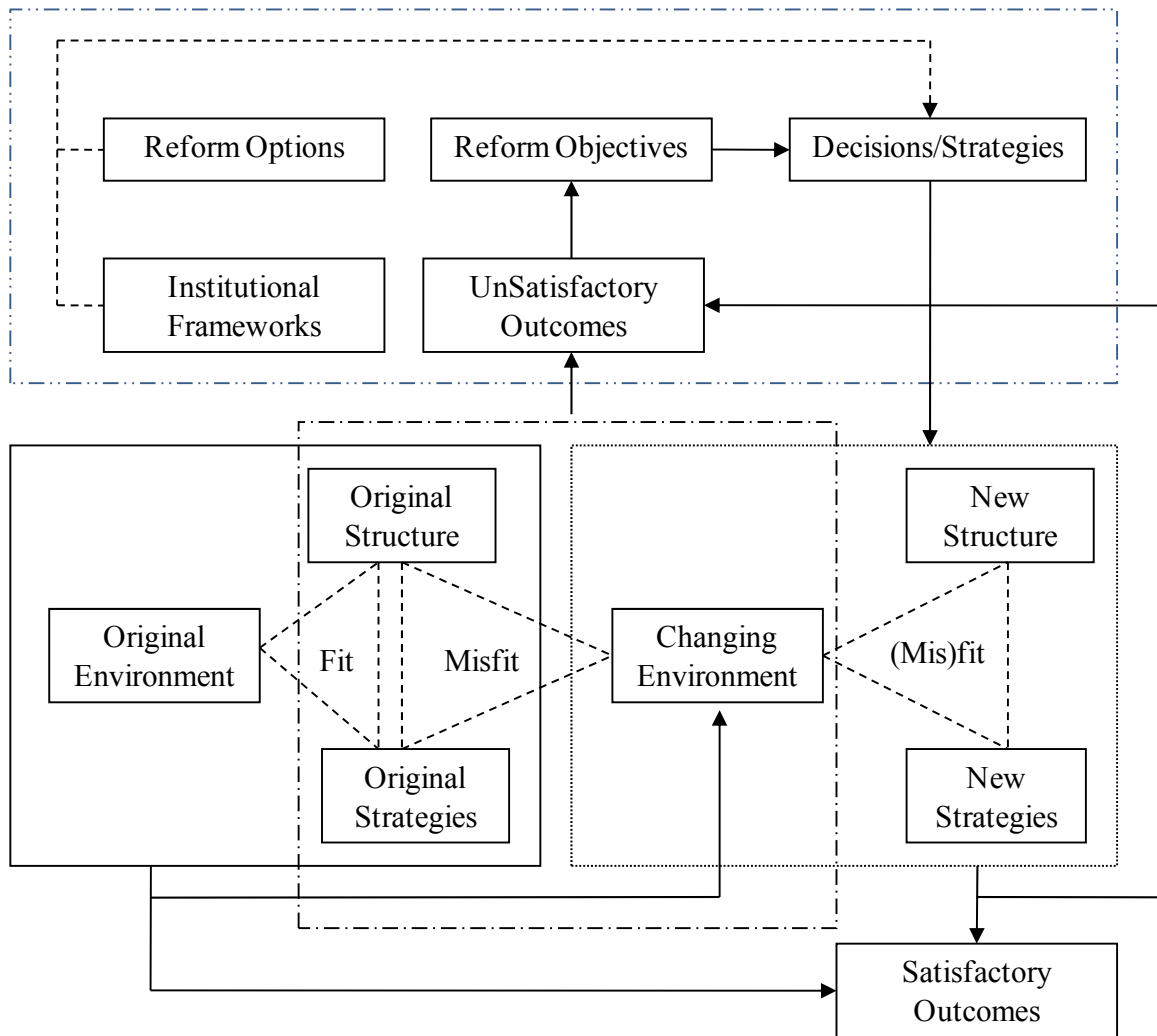


Figure 1. The road to management reforms and governance

Changing conditions in the early 1990s marked an *unsustainable setting* in port policies and strategic management. Ports serving international trade were confronted with new trends, as changes in the global division of trade, labour, and capital transformed localised
100 Fordist patterns of production and distribution to global, flexible, and customer-oriented systems. Along with containerisation and technological innovations, they resulted in shipping strategies demanding ports integration in spatially expanded supply chains.

The new conditions upset the *status quo*. Ports needed to re-position themselves in spatially expanded supply chains, blurred geographical monopolies, and increased proximity with established and emerging competitors (Notteboom, 2009a; Notteboom et al., 2009). This created forces of change of traditional structures characterized by bureaucratic (frequently inefficient) control of comprehensive public entities (Airriess, 2001a; Notteboom and Winkelmans, 2001; Wang et al., 2004).

To tackle misfits and unsatisfactory outcomes, ports pursued structural governance reforms. Reforms and a *post-reform* setting were the means to address an unsustainable setting shared by the industry globally via new port governance structure and strategy.

Being well-documented (cf. Brooks 2004; Cullinane and Song, 2007), most reforms shared key objectives: efficiency, economic benefits through competition, minimizing bureaucracy, reducing demands for public investments, enhancing management skills, efficient labour organisations, and organisational re-scaling so as to facilitate economic coordination between different social and spatial levels.

An additional feature was the advocacy of generic solution, as typified by the *World Bank Port Reform Toolkit* (World Bank, undated). By endorsing explicitly or not such recommendations (see various national port policies in: Brooks and Cullinane 2007a),
120 policy-makers gradually moved ports away from direct public management. Through the devolution to autonomous hybrid entities of mixed forms of ownership, ports transfer

operational responsibility (in some cases, port assets), to local (decentralized) public or private entities.

Important questions are yet to be satisfactorily answered. Does the presence of distinctive institutional frameworks affect the likely shape of the process of change, the endorsed reform strategies and the resulting outcomes? It is possible that policy-makers proceed to localised interpretations and face particular limitations in their abilities of applying the same tool as others. In this case, the institutional setting stands as factors creating asymmetric implementations when generic solution applies to other geographical scales.

2.2 The Impact of Institutions: Questions and Theoretical Perspectives

Empirical examination of the impacts of political traditions and relevant frameworks on port governance between (or within) nations has only recently attracted academic interests, with Airriess (2001b), Hall (2003), Jacobs (2007a) and Jacobs and Hall (2007) examining Singapore, Baltimore, Dubai and Los Angeles/Long Beach respectively. They provide evidences that choices are restricted by institutional conditions, which lead to diversified outcomes and development trajectories. Can these conclusions be generalized? Or are these findings location-bound due to peculiarities in the particular samples examined? Lee et al. (2008) observe that port evolution in advanced western economies has been different from those observed in developing ones, while Ng and Gujar (2009) highlight the danger of implementing ‘western solutions’ in developing economies without investigating fundamental regional differences. By arguing that contextual issues might affect port evolution, these studies trigger the need for understanding such diversifications.

Port policy reforms aim in most senses to lower transaction costs. This is irrespective of whether they succeed to do so, or, unintentionally create obstacles and inertia towards further change. Transaction costs theory (Williamson, 1985) suggests that bounded

rationality leads dominant policy-makers advocating the implementation of generic solutions. However, in a cultural political economy analysis, Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008) suggest that there is little scope regarding implemented reform as ‘de-contextualised singularity’: when economic forces seek to (re)define specific subsets of economic activities, such as subjects, sites, and stakes of competition and/or as objects of regulation and to articulate strategies, projects and visions, they tend to deploy power to secure results. Still, all these are developed within institutionalized boundaries and geometries, and temporalities in a system of mobilised global capital, that can displace, defer or sustain inherent contradictions and crisis-tendencies.

Existing institutions, ‘the formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationships between actors in various units of the polity and economy’ (Hall, 1986: 19), promote efficiency among transacting partners, minimize distributional conflicts and monitor compliance within social spheres. New conditions
160 causing structural contradictions are addressed within established framework via path-shaped and depended re-organizations (Boyer and Hollingsworth, 1997). State structures, shared conceptions about polity and economy and collective political experiences influence ideas’ dissemination. Norms and traditions within given societies restrict, often informally, economic and social structures from moving too far from original forms through ‘embedding’ or ‘nesting’ them into long-run institutional characteristics (Williamson, 2000). Even if other stakeholders do not prefer them, institutions provide enforcement mechanisms and affect the range and sequences of alternatives on choice agendas. Whether by desire or necessity, the values and characteristics of institutional frameworks within which economic governance is structured will ultimately be incorporated.

There is a need to balance between economics that naturalizes economic categories and soft economic sociology that focuses only on the similarities between economic and

socio-cultural activities at the expense of the economy's specificity.² In new (historical) institutionalism (March and Olsen, 1989; Steinmo et al., 1992; Hall and Taylor, 1998),³ institutions pose systematic constraints on individual and collective choices, promoting certain actions and (preferred) outcomes and pushing non-institutional actors towards strategic calculations to 'optimally' fit into new environments (Figure 1). Yet, they are rarely the sole cause of outcomes. Ultimately, even the institutional framework depends on what can be done within the economic sphere, i.e., the pressures along identified
180 directions; the possibility of implementation; the nation's position within the global economy; and the organisation of labour, capital, and the state.

That globalization is still highly segregated, both in definition and impacts on economic institutions (Grant, 1997; Stiglitz, 2006), increases governance complexity. Brenner (1998) coins the phrase 'glocal scalar fix', referring to responses to challenges initiated by global economic development. Reform instruments *should* be (and *are*) used differently depending on the differentiation in strategic priorities between authorities locked in diversified institutional frameworks (also: Henderson et al., 2002).

The neo-institutional position recognises that path-dependent policy is affected by 'critical junctures', when events create visions of institutional change and divides events into different periods. The development of institutional change design and evolution is dialectic (Buitelaar et al., 2007). In addition, coercive and persuasive powers enable the development of events (governance forms, institutionalised norms, traditions, etc.) which

² The division between 'abstract' and 'substantive' analyses of economically oriented social science research is not new (cf. Granovetter, 1985) but calls for dialectic convergence of these approaches are increasing (see: Lee et al., 2008).

³ It is worth clarifying that certain concepts developed within both neo-institutionalism and the culture political economy (CPE) frameworks are used to construct a theoretical background to understand change in the sector. It is the former, and its emphasis on the nested multi-scalar governance, that provides the framework of empirical analysis. The latter provides scope for further research in the ways that the political culture framework is affecting the governance change in question.

often ‘counterbalance’ the change in completely de-shaping existing structures. In most cases, reforms take place incrementally with notable characteristics, reflecting the remnants of *pre-reform* setting (Denzau and North, 1994).

This account is valid for organizational change and competitiveness (e.g., Powell and Di Maggio, 1991; D’Aunno et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2000; Sminia and Van Nistelrooij, 2006), including public service organisations. Studies of changes in (ex-)public sectors argue that public organizations are major actors in exercising institutional pressures but also strongly affected by such pressures (Pouder, 1996). When moving service transactions to market environments the prominent role of the regulatory framework, and legitimacy, is firmly embedded within distinctively social, legal and economic environments demand institutional studies (Fernandez-Alles and Llamas-Sanchez, 2008). Drawing upon this debate, the forthcoming analysis examines how local port governance arrangements are actually ‘nested’ within higher scales of (territorial) governance and institutional structures, and how these levels interact to create unique reform outcomes. Along with identifying the different outcomes resulting from existing institutional legacies, this helps to conclude how the devolutionary process (the re-scaling and reformation of governance within particular institutional frameworks) is shaped.

3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE PORT REFORMS⁴

3.1 Pre-reform Port Settings

Korea, the Netherlands and Greece share diversified institutional and political traditions. In Korea and Greece, power largely concentrates within the national government.

⁴ Because of space limitations, this empirical analysis only undertakes a critical comparative examination on the corporatization process of the stated cases. Reference to national institutional traditions is brief; for a detailed descriptive analysis that expands in these, and other, issues and is associated with the present study, readers should refer to: Ng and Pallis (2007).

Business develops according to political needs, though the degree of ‘leadership’ in Korea is more pivotal. All countries attempt to adjust to new economic context (due to ‘unsatisfactory outcome’, see Figure 1), although the dominant force is rather different, namely globalization for Korea and European integration for Greece. In contrast, the Dutch tradition and, not least, the comparatively recent endorsement of new public management, challenge bureaucratic tendencies and advance the concepts of flexibility and entrepreneurship as keys in undertaking and executing public policies.

The respective traditional port management and governance reflect such differences. Korean ports were regarded as strategic assets. Ownership, operation and planning were under the direct leadership of the national government via the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs (MLTM), executed through the Regional Maritime Affairs and Port Offices (RMAPO) located in different ports.⁵ The national government owned port land and was also responsible for preparing related budgets. All port infra- and superstructures were provided by MLTM directly financed by public money.

The Dutch and Greek cases were typical examples of two (out of three) different traditions of port development observed in post-WWII Europe (Chlomoudis and Pallis, 2002). Dutch ports responded to the ‘Hanseatic’ tradition of landlord PAs with powerful managerial and economic presence of local or municipal management. Greek ports responded to the ‘Latin’ tradition involving ownership and intervention by the national government, via a (usually governmental) managerial body; the concept of public welfare services prevailed and national authorities acted as both regulators and service providers, through a state-appointed, state-controlled, public PA.

⁵ Until 2008, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MOMAF) executed policies through regional offices (RMAFO). Following the latest amendments to the Government Organization Act (no. 8852, 29.2.2008), MOMAF was dissolved in May 2008, and maritime and port affairs were taken up by MLTM; RMAFO was renamed RMAPO. For details, see: MLTM’s website.

Each country historically assigned different roles to respective nation port systems. In the Netherlands, port competitiveness – particularly Rotterdam – has been a core part of national industrial politics since WWII. This is partly due to the size of the cluster associated with the port (de Langen, 2002) and partly due to the need to serve another
240 core part of the economy, the contribution of the port and its related logistics and distribution activities made to national GDP. The role of ports in ‘national’ development is even more significant in Korea, being the ‘steam engine’ in triggering Korea’s rise as an economic powerhouse (BPA, 2006a). On the contrary, the Greek maritime paradigm traditionally focuses on flag-state policies supporting the large Greek-owned fleet, placing little importance on ports (Pallis, 2007b). The location of Greek ports at the crossroads of three continents, and port potential had been overlooked, and the 1930s model of state-controlled port organisations remained intact until the late 1990s.

3.2 Establishment of Port Authority Corporations: structures and functions

Facing analogous challenges, policy makers in all ports seem to have adopted similar reforms - the establishment of Port Authority Corporations (PACs) in line with *corporatisation* as defined by UNCTAD (1995) and endorsed by the *World Bank Port Reform Toolkit*. Within this process, an organisation, originally belonged to the public sector, transforms into a corporation with legal status where the governmental bodies hold the shares of this newly established corporation. These PAs underwent corporatisation within the same period (the last decade), thus comparisons of developments are both possible and relevant.

Busan

In 2003, the Korean National Assembly enacted the ‘Port Authority Law’, establishing the Busan Port Authority (BPA). The objectives of BPA are two-folded: (i) to ensure that

260 Busan contributes significantly to national economic growth; and (ii) develop Busan into a competitive logistics hub with efficient and optimal services and expand its infrastructure (BPA, 2006a).

The aim was to dilute the ‘public’ image of the PA, strengthen marketing and public relations, and advance new projects. With employees being civil servants, BPA recruited employees with private sector background expanding from 11 teams and 77 permanent staff in 2004 to 17 and 146 respectively in 2006 (BPA, 2006a). Financially, BPA was authorised to adopt self-supporting budgeting, with emphasis on income and expenditure balance, and maintain separate balance sheet records. This was a significant detachment from the traditional system through which the port’s finances being inscribed into the national budget. Granting financial autonomy encouraged BPA to be more responsive to the business environment while reducing public influence in daily operations. Between 2004 and 2006, BPA’s net income grew from €6.8 to €12.2m (BPA, 2006a). Financial autonomy also implied that BPA assumed responsibility for investments in port infrastructure.

Apart from segregating public-private responsibilities, reforms aimed to address regional characteristics that had been overlooked by the national government-dominated system (Yeo and Cho, 2007). The establishment of BPA allowed increasing participation from Busan’s municipal government on port-related matters, mainly supporting port development through financial incentives, like granting profit tax exemptions to BPA for
280 three years. Moreover, for the first time, Busan’s municipal government was involved in the appointment of the BPA’s CEO through the Port Committee.

Rotterdam

In 2004, the RMPM (Rotterdam’s Municipal Port Management) Commercial Affairs Department and the Rotterdam Port Authority (RPA) formally detached from RMPM to

form a public corporation, *Havenbedrijf Rotterdam N.V.* (PoR). The major responsibilities included commercial and financial affairs (including investments of new development projects), re-development of old port areas and acquired new customers. The new management structure was designed so that PoR would be efficient and sensitive to cost, opportunities, customer satisfaction, and social responsibilities (PoR, 2004).

In terms of human resources, significant restructuring aimed at installing small, specialised task-oriented units. Collective agreements with the labour union led to new contracts with 1200 RMPM staff. The historically constantly increasing population of employees had since 2004 reversed (PoR, 2002-07). The 2006-10 business plan aims to reduce the permanent staff population by a further 10% by 2009 (PoR, 2005). In contrast, since corporatisation, the number of divisions increased from four to 25 divisions. The ‘more task-oriented’ units were expected to better monitor work results and enable performance-based remuneration policies. PoR also prepares annual reports and business plans addressing mid-term business plans, i.e., *Port Vision 2020*, implementation and fulfil long-term objectives.

300 The national government traditionally played peripheral roles in port affairs, even though PoR claimed that port operation persistently contributed 7% of the Dutch GNP (PoR, 2008). The situation changed with the establishment of PoR, as exemplified by the 2006 initiative of the national government purchasing 25% of PoR shares. The backing of powerful national level lobbies that had a stake in the competitiveness of the port (e.g. the National Transport and Logistics Association) had contributed towards this direction. By forming multi-scale coalition involving national-level representatives, the national government pushed a (trans)port expansion agenda (the *Mainport Agenda*) against the reservations of city authorities who were less keen on attracting more business within the port’s premises through a too drastic port governance reform (details: Jacobs, 2007b). These developments implied more visible roles for the national government in matters

like board members' appointment and project development. Acting as a new finance source to *Maasvlakte II*, in 2008 the national government planned to invest another €500m, increasing its shareholding to 33.3%. Local political shifts were not irrelevant. Port expansion and governance reform became strategically and politically coupled with the national-state taking this equity but only after power changes at local level worked in favour of this development. Meanwhile, it acted as the 'liaison agent' between PoR and the EU, especially regarding the roles of Rotterdam in trans-national projects like the Trans-European Transport Network. Being nested in an institutional framework involving emerging supranational policies, the national authority was perceived to undertake more active roles.

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The presence of the Rotterdam municipal government remained significant, as it stood as PoR's largest shareholder and the owner of its 10500 ha of land and water (leasing to PoR). The latter paid approximately €45m worth of dividends annually and subleased the land, while it must finance all facilities previously financed by RMPM. Other financial arrangements include nearly €1b in loans received by Rotterdam's municipality to be re-financed within 10 years (with the PoR paying off 10% of its debt each year by re-financing) and an annual sufferance tax of €12m levied by PoR on supporting facilities. Implementing a pre-condition for its establishment, the PoR assumed all port-related public obligations that had been performed by RMPM through the within-PoR Harbour Master Department the head of which is directly appointed by the municipal government.

Piraeus

In 1999, the Greek Parliament enacted Law 2688/1999, converting Piraeus and 11 other Greek ports of national interests, from Port Funds to limited companies (*Société Anonymes*, or SA). Each SA had one share owned by the state and would operate as private business, with the objective of developing infrastructure and providing quality and

competitive services. In 2003, the national government decided to reduce its Piraeus Port Authority SA (PPA) shareholding to 74.5% and listed it in the Athens Stock Exchange (PPA, 2001-07). With the absence of any relevant public mobilisation for reforms in a ‘low interest’ sector, these moves took place only when the national government’s modernisation projects coincided with the willingness of EU institutions to promote market openness in international ports in a way making the state-controlled Greek model unsustainable (Pallis, 2007b). The new PPA set as primary objectives the improvement of effectiveness, profit maximisation through revenue increase, cost reductions due to strict control over the expenditures, and the improvement of port service quality.

The (former and current) civil servant personnel of Greek ports are actively unionised, a common feature of Greece’s public sector. Trade unions successfully advocated the absence of substantial port labour reforms. Many personnel regulations (*organograms*, operational practices, dockers’ payment schemes) remained the same, though port managers had long claimed that labour reforms were essential (Pallis and Vaggelas, 2005). Nor was there a new labour statute, as the national government continued to control the process of hiring employees (the recent governmental intentions for employing unemployed seafarers in ports are illustrative). As Psaraftis (2006) reviewed, Piraeus had strict employer-personnel relationship with the workforce that guaranteed, among other things, minimum salaries, extensive overtime working hours and the absence of negotiations towards more task-oriented port-workers’ gangs. Since corporatisation, the endorsed policy of non-replacement of retiring personnel had led to persistent reduction in permanent staff population.

3.3 Commonalities in the reform contents

It is possible to identify several commonalities in the reforms under examination. First, despite the differences between the political systems, decisions in all cases were to

include previously peripheral stakeholders into new systems. The structural and strategic adjustment process corresponding to Figure 1 implied more complex governance models involving more stakeholders. Thus, political compromises and power sharing were witnessed. In the more corporatist state of all (The Netherlands), a powerful coalition in favour of reforms was present. In the most centralised-state cases (Korea and Greece) this backing was neither present nor essential.

Another shared feature was the progress towards financial autonomy of the new entities. Recognising that any financial difficulties would jeopardise PACs' autonomy and thus affect genuine changes, all PAs were granted limited financial autonomy and the right to prepare independent budgets. As Rowan (2002) noted, budget independence could be decisive in determining whether an institution could execute new strategies and policies. Finally, all reforms included deliberate attempts to dilute the 'public sector' image. In BPA and PoR, this was apparent in policies regarding new staff employment. In PPA, trade union structures provided an institutional restriction towards this manifestation, prompting the national government to prioritise the need of PAs to become SAs.

Although corporatisation offered similarities, reformed structures and the 'substances' of PACs were largely diversified in accordance to respective political traditions. The following sections examine whether this is also true as regards to (i) the corporate nature of the PAs; (ii) the power sharing between different government levels; and (iii) the role of national governments in port development projects.

3.4 The corporate nature of the PAs

Table 1 provides a comparison of the PACs, supporting legal documents and shareholding structures. Despite pronouncing each of these entities as a 'corporation', Korean and Greek governments attempted to preserve their political characteristics. Rather than being governed by ordinary company/business laws, PAs were legally supported by special laws

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enacted by respective national parliaments. While the establishment of PACs was initiated by the national governments, the latter either repeatedly refused to issue shares (Korea) or insisted on remaining the overwhelming majority shareholder (Greece), thus ensuring that the control of PACs lay within the grasps of national administration (**Table 2**).

Table 1. The corporate structures of different PACs

Category	Rotterdam	Busan	Piraeus
Name	PoR	BPA	PPA
Legal Document	Private Company Law (no port-dedicated law)	Port Authority Law	Law 2688/1999
Shareholding	Yes	No	Yes (but limited – state the majority stakeholder - retains 74.5%)

Table 2. The supervisory institution and its key appointments within different PACs

Category	PoR	BPA	PPA
Name	Non-Executive Board	Port Committee	Board of Directors
Composition of Supervisory Board	Depends on circumstance, but no politicians/members from interest groups	6 Interest groups; 4 academia; 1 labour union	6 National Govt.; 1 Ex-Mayor of Piraeus 1 Chamber of Commerce; 1 Econ & Social Committee; 1 Employee 1 Dock Workers
Functions of Supervisory Board	Nominates and appoints Executive Board members, including CEO, as well as their removal, if deem necessary	Advices the choice of CEO to MOMAF and the National President	Act as advisor to the key stakeholder (state); limited decision making capacity. PPPSG and CEOs, who run the corporation are nominated by the ministry

On the contrary, PoR's structure reflected a much more business-oriented nature in line with the recently enacted NPM. PoR was a shareholding company, of which management, accountability, supervision and financial operations were implemented on the basis of conventional Dutch company law, articles of association, and internal regulations, without port-specific laws being introduced (PoR, 2007). This approach was also found in its supervisory Non-Executive Board (NEB), where no politicians or interest group representatives were allowed. In contrast, the composition of the supervisory institutions

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in Korea and Greece reflected diversified political interests, notably interest groups, labour unions and dockworkers. In Greece, this body retained limited decision-making capacity, as the appointed by the Ministry of Mercantile Marine (MMM) secretariat and CEOs ran the corporation.

An additional differentiation related to the power of respective executive branches (**Table 3**). The major function of Busan’s Port Committee was very much restricted in offering advice and CEO nominations. BPA had neither genuine power in auditing the executive branch, nor appointing or removing the only authorised executive member, the CEO. These powers lied within the National President and executive power remained highly centralised. The CEO was responsible for deciding and carrying out all executive functions and only accountable to the National President. Also, the national government did not seem enthusiastic to give complete freedom to BPA in deciding and autonomously progressing in development projects. Certain commercial functions remained within the centralised public framework ensuring that development would be in line with ‘national welfare’, as exemplified by the continual existence of various departments within the restructured RMAPO (like Port Logistics Division and Port Construction Office), with many responsibilities duplicating BPA’s executive branches.

420 **Table 3.** Key executive appointments within different PACs

Category	PoR	BPA	PPA
Name	Executive Board	(N.A.)	(N.A.)
CEO(s) appointed by	Non-Executive Board	National President	Nominated by MMM, endorsed by shareholders, i.e. National Government. (the MMM itself)
Other Executive Members appointed by	Non-Executive Board	(N.A.)	(N.A.)

The situation was similar in Piraeus. The Chairman and the Managing Director were the

only executive members of the Board of Directors (BoD) (13 members in total) nominated by MMM. Their appointments had to be approved through shareholder meetings, decisions of which were determined by the supervisory Ports and Policy General Secretariat (PPPGS) of the MMM. The same was true for six non-executive BoD members who were appointed by the national government. Political interference continued to take various forms not limited to general regulatory, planning or financial issues. Interferences in tariff setting were present, favouring particular shipping sectors or even companies. Psaraftis (2005), CEO of Piraeus port himself (1996-2002), advocated that, by refusing to approve requested increases in low domestic ferry berthing rates, the government essentially provided subsidies to private coastal shipping companies, many of which are listed in the Athens Stock Exchange.

In contrast, the PoR NEB played more check-and-balance roles. It was authorised to appoint the CEO, but also to suspend his/her duty if deemed necessary. The CEO was part of an Executive Board (EB) involving a senior hierarchy and expected to make all decisions in consultation with all other EB members. All other PoR departments, except the Harbour Master, were also business-oriented in both structure and personnel policies.

The centralised concentration of power was explicit and formalised in Korea. As
440 discussed, the National President directly appointed the only executive member - a theoretically lower (regional) level position. This direct power control was more implicit in Greece. In Piraeus, the 'hands-on' approach was informal and followed the culture of the state's behaviour against the (ex-)public corporations (utilities or else), whereas the state retained a major stake. This resulted in the replacement of CEOs in the aftermath of virtually every election contest, or even during ministerial re-shuffles.⁶ Yet, the formalisation of this intervention was unthinkable and would contradict the existing

⁶ The PPA was managed by six different CEOs within a decade since its corporatisation.

(national and EU) legislative framework. While the Greek national government could be regarded as interventionist, it was far from being state-developmental.

3.5 Power sharing between different levels of governments

Table 4 illustrates the established powers and responsibilities of national governments within the respective PACs and ports. The Dutch national government assumed a peripheral role. Despite acquiring PoR shares, it was not involved in port operation and development, apart from ensuring that they complied with national and EU regulations. Compliance with the latter resulted in additional involvement, which was that of the liaison agent between the port and the EU, with the latter role being out of the PoR's jurisdiction.

Table 4. Power and responsibilities of national governments within the respective PACs and ports

Category	Rotterdam	Busan	Piraeus
Shareholding within PAC	30%	(N.A.)	74.5%
Ownership of Port's Land	No	Yes	Yes (Concessioned to the PPA for nominal fee)
Construction of Infrastructure	Uninvolved	Fully involved	Not formally involved - In practice coordinates planning
Introduction and Enactment of Port-related Laws & Regulations	Only ensure that port operation and development is in compliance with national (and EU) and regulations	Fully involved	Monitoring implementation,
Assistance in port networking and marketing	Uninvolved	Partially Involved	Co-ordinates networking of Greek ports but not involved in marketing
Involvement in Port Development Projects	Limited	Significant	Limited
Others	Liaison between the port and the EU	--	Actively involved in the liaison between the port and the EU

460 Following a different process, the Korean national government was directly involved in virtually every aspect of port development: land ownership, infrastructure construction, introduction and enactment of port-related laws, networking, marketing and development

projects (i.e., Busan Newport - BNP). In Piraeus, it was the national government (not PPA) which expressed an intention in 2005 to initiate a concession of Piraeus's container terminals. It was also MMM which proceeded to direct negotiations with multinational operators and foreign government (China) about concessions. In 2006, when the second MMM proposal for tendering the container terminal resulted in strikes, industrial action ended when MMM decided to postpone it. Reportedly, PPA's BoD was not involved in such initiatives. Following a new MMM public announcement in November 2007, the BoD simply acknowledged the objectives of international public tendering in line with what the MMM had determined. Authorities at ministerial level also administered the subsequent call for tenders (2008), and the relevant final decision of the winner (Cosco Pacific) on February 2009.

Significant differences are also identified in the power and responsibilities of municipal governments (**Table 5**). In Korea, despite calls for a municipal-level PA - supported, among others, by the *Government Organization Management Survey Report* - Busan's municipal government failed to play any genuine roles. The provisions of tax incentives, nominations of Port Committee members, and advising the National President regarding the choice of CEO serve as main 'authorities'. The municipal government did not own the port's land, nor was genuinely involved in any port-related development projects. The sustained national government-dominated old system was evident in the post-reform setting. Limited roles of the municipal government were also observed in the Greek post-reform setting, as devolution did not imply significant willingness of the national government to share power with local authorities. Although the mayor of Piraeus was a member of the PPA BoD, there were no other institutional infrastructures for the active participation of either the municipality or the prefecture of Piraeus in PPA's daily or strategic decisions. In Rotterdam, the municipal government retained land's ownership, while it played pivotal roles in infrastructure construction, port networking and marketing.

Being the majority shareholder, it remained a key player in deciding the nomination and appointments of key personnel within PoR.

Table 5. Power and responsibilities of municipal governments within their respective PACs and ports

Category	Busan	Rotterdam	Piraeus
Shareholding within PAC	(N.A.)	70%	Not participating
Ownership of Port's Land	No	Yes	Owner of adjunct region
Construction of Infrastructure	Uninvolved	Fully involved	Limited Involvement
Introduction and Enactment of Port-related Laws & Regulations	Uninvolved	Fully involved	Uninvolved
Assistance in networking and marketing	No/trivial involvement	Active involvement	Limited Involvement
Involvement in Port Development Projects	Limited	Limited	Uninvolved
Others	Tax incentives to BPA; Nominates Port Committee members; Busan Mayor gives advice to BPA's CEO appointment	--	Special tax paid by PPA; City council nominates a (non-executive) member of the PPA BoD

3.6 The role of national governments in port development projects

Cultural political economy posits that different countries or regions would interpret similar concepts differently, thus invoking a critical stand to hegemonic discourses. Hence, we compare the perceptions of different authorities in the relevant port reforms. In this respect, such differences can be illustrated by focusing on the roles of national governments on major port development projects. When projects of considerably different scale were under development (**Table 6**), both the Korean and the Greek governments financed nearly half of the amount of their respective (budgeted) projects, through direct investments taken out from national budgets. For *Maasvlakte II* - a major project of a size having the potential to transform the features of the port system in North Europe - the Dutch government regarded the project as 'conventional business' and invested

corresponding amount to only part of the project through the purchase of 19% of PoR shares. Given the calls for more balanced regional development (see: Jacobs, 2007b), the government also ensured that PoR would not gain significant competitive advantages due to public financing. Furthermore, it substantially emphasized on the environmental and social impacts of *Maasvlakte II* – whereas such emphasis was more implicit in Korea and Greece.

Table 6. Role of national governments in port development projects executed and managed by their respective PACs

Category	Rotterdam	Busan	Piraeus
Name of Project	Maasvlakte II	Busan Newport	Pier I
Motivation for Govt. Funding	Part of the funding of public goods, e.g. sea defence	National priority project	Strategic project for the PPA development
How to fund?	Purchasing PoR's shares	Direct investments	PPA; EU loans
How much?	€0.5b (19%)	€3.3b (45%)	€35m (50%)
What items can be funded?	Public infrastructure only	No limitations	Infrastructure and superstructure
Environmental and social issues	Great significance	Limited significance	Limited significance

In Korea, the ambitious project to construct 30-berth container terminals in Busan by 2011 was launched by the national government, rather than BPA itself. Limitations on construction items and commercial advantages were non-existent, and the national government retained pivotal roles in developing BNP (Ryoo and Hur, 2007). As Pusan Newport Co. – the BPA's subsidiary established to manage the construction of BNP – states, the purpose of the project was the enhancement of Korea's competitive power through the enlargement of port facilities (PNC, 2008). Port policy directions were developed in accordance with national targets like concentration on container cargoes (notably Busan and Gwangyang), development of port backup area to attract transshipment traffic, cooperating with China and Japan, etc. (MOMAF, 2004).⁷ Given the substantial

⁷ As indicated, "...BNP is a national priority project that is being driven as one of the three national policy projects along with the Incheon International Airport as well as Seoul-Busan

amount of public money pumped in, BNP was not just a port development project, but a ‘national priority’ high on the national agenda, so as to enable Korea to become the international logistics centre and sustained its international and regional competitiveness. Based on that, BPA acted as an ‘agent’ helping to fulfil such ambitions.

On the contrary, *Maasvlakte II* was a port-oriented project pushing Rotterdam’s ambition to become a European, even global, hub where the impact of port development on national power was lacking. As *Maasvlakte II*’s website (October 2006) stated: “...now that [the Dutch] parliament has taken the ‘go’ decision this week, the *Maasvlakte II* project is...no longer on the national political agenda...”. On this issue, Piraeus shares similarities with Rotterdam. Although noted as an important issue in the Greek national port policy, the current flagship development project, *Pier I*, remained port-initiated with the core objective of Piraeus becoming a regional transshipment hub, endorsed by the government and further expanded by PPA and the European Investment Bank. The linkage between the project and the Greek national administration was not significant, even though the state was the major PPA shareholder.

However, the state did not disassociate from active decisional involvement in financing – as well as charging – practices of Greek ports (Psaraftis, 2006). Unlike Korea, the government-restricted public funds invested in *Pier I* to necessary infra- and superstructures, rather than planning and constructing the terminal itself. While differences exist regarding the detailed roles of Dutch and Greek governments in the progress of *Maasvlakte II* and *Pier I* projects respectively, both remain largely port-oriented, and the role of government was mainly supportive rather than directive. This was in line with the ‘path-dependent logic’ (Boyer and Hollingsworth, 1997) of the EU to limit state aid to (ex-)public sector utilities related companies. Hitherto, though,

Rapid Transit Railway project...” (Korea IT Times, 2005).

there is no legal regime applying to the port sector.

4 FINDINGS AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN RETROSPECT

The reformed governance models in each of the cases is not dissimilar with the respective pre-reform models, with the ‘plays and rules of the game’ (Williamson, 2000) restricting the respective corporate and power-sharing structures of the reformed ports within certain paths.

Exogenous factors acted as the catalysts towards port re-structuring, by destabilising the pre-reform setting. In all cases, relevant policy-makers anticipated similar governance reformations (devolution and corporatisation) to advance financial and decisional autonomy, dilute ports’ ‘public’ image, and involve previously peripheral players -
560 including levels of public administration - in forming networks of self-governing actors that participate in port management and development.

Evidently, the respective reforms implementation followed existing institutional framework and traditions and thus the asymmetries observed. Policy-makers enabled reforms through decisions that preserved the institutional characteristics of local (national) system as much (and as long) as possible, with the result being implementation asymmetries when different nations seek generic port governance solutions.

Reform in Busan reflected the Korean tradition marked by the presence of a developmental, and remarkably centralised, state. Citing adjustment to globalisation and economic growth, centralised executive leadership remained in port reform structures and project developments much in the same way that the national government monitored other economic sectors of ‘national importance’. Overcoming the lack of participation of local government and the introduction of self-management were welcomed but, in implementation, remained minor parts of the adjustments rather than the core of fundamental changes. Any attempts in the ‘community-led socialization’ of any core

national assets (Hart-Landsberg and Burkett, 2001) were yet to be undertaken.

Reforms in Rotterdam were nested in the Dutch tradition of decentralised, business-oriented, division of the involvement of public authorities in broader public sector. Government adjustments re-tuned to promote the implementation of national government decisions (NPM principles) associated with multi-scale coalitions with
580 business, while they also attempted to maintain balance with (any) local objections. This was a regular pattern in other sectors of the economy, leading to thoughts that, in this case, even a ‘brilliant’ government policy would not materialise if ill-rooted within the underlying institutional state structures and deeper socio-cultural developments (Toonen, 1998). Changes in the balance of national/municipal authorities responsibilities in the economy had been for long more ‘path dependent’ than ‘path creating’ (Buitelaar et al., 2007). However, institutional change was brought by exogenous, non-state dynamics, resulting in more active central role in port (development) matters and partial re-balancing of national/local public authority responsibilities. This feature was European integration and the norms and policies implemented throughout the progress of this experiment.

Reforms in Piraeus were embedded within the Greek institutionalised traditions of an interventionist state. Apart from retaining ownership, the state maintained control through national-level mechanisms, rather than devolving power to municipal/local authorities. It sustained its ‘hands-on’ approach in almost all daily and strategic decisions, while continuously failed to effectively negotiate reforms with the strongly unionised public sector’s work force. Since the early days of reform (1999), both socialist (until 2004) and neo-liberal (2004-2009) governments argued for autonomous port entities. Changes were occasionally evident in administrative configuration only; in practice, no government broke its political culture to implement and enforce change. Even when not resulting from
600 configuration, intervention remained strictly informal. Some forms of intervention were

restricted due to the need to comply with the features of the institutional framework that were structured by Greece's commitment to European integration.

Apparently, structural variations of port governance reform implementations are 'locked-in' (Pierson, 1993) the respective norms, practices and forms of public and private actors' interaction in local polity and economies. Moreover, the analytical results support the 'glocal fix' proposition (Brenner, 1998): they indicate that regional institutional (at least) differences imply diverge potentials of how globally generic solutions would be implemented locally. On the other hand, by establishing the association of port governance reform implementation with the institutional setting, the three-cases enhance in specific respects (i.e., local scale) Hall's (2003) conclusion that considerable pressures by international inter-governmental institutions and potentially private actors for globally applying similar port governance reforms imply that institutional transformation, rather than convergence of port-related institutions, is more likely.

The findings are in line with the transformations of Singapore (Airriess, 2001a) and Dubai (Jacobs and Hall, 2007) to global hubs, the comparative study of South California, Dubai and Rotterdam ports by Jacobs (2007a; 2007b), and the remarks on the importance of contextual traditions for port models (Lee et al., 2008). The contextual role of developmental state in the corporatisation of Singapore is very similar to the one observed in Korea. The role of institutional framework in shaping relationships between actors
620 involved in the provision of specific (i.e., Dubai) port's land, infrastructure and superstructure, is evident in all the examined cases. In this respect, this study enriches generalisation of the previous studies' conclusions.

Public officials deliberate over formal choices; hence, governance transformation is ultimately associated with implementation asymmetries dependent on the path that is established by broader political and economic traditions. As Notteboom (2009b) argues such path-dependency affects port system development making models to be applied to any

ports inapplicable. With a variety of (un)successful performing governance structures being present, this study contributes to a better understanding of whether, and why, port reforms have actually (un)fulfilled the initially set objectives. The findings strongly recommend that decision-makers need to go beyond simple predicaments of the collective effects of policies, and understand the institutional characteristics - requirements and limitations - at the early stage of reform possible, as they can affect comprehensively the implementation of their choices.

At a future point, the output (performance) of the three reform implementations examined will background further adjustments. This feedback loop (detailed in: Brooks and Pallis, 2008), involves a transition period that may last more than 10 years. All reforms examined had only been undertaken recently (within less than four year before the research). The period of transition is not yet over and it would be unjustified to look into which port reform is (un)successful and how this might trigger further adjustments. Even
640 when the governance model is fully implemented estimations of its output are not instantly possible because of the demanded cultural and operational adjustment by all those involved (Delmas and Tokat, 2005). Future research is required to focus on outcomes and examine their potential association with reform implementation asymmetries. This will advance the discussion and reveal further policy conclusions. How to measure the outcomes is also subject to further research though, with Ng et al. (2009) providing constructive insight.

As detailed in Figure 1, establishing the role of the political institutional framework does not imply that it alone explains the entire reform process. Additional elements have an impact, with the changing economic environment being a key one. As commonly accepted, changes over the last two decades resulted in similarities of the challenges faced by all international ports around the world without however diminishing the 'locality' of some market conditions. This research emphasized the former developments,

quintessentially acting as ‘exogenous factors’ faced by all ports around the world including those studied: apart from being global hubs, Busan and Rotterdam are very important regional hubs, precisely as Piraeus is. All of them need to adjust to similar types of changes in shipping and supply chains while facing intensified competition from neighbouring ports targeting similar markets (like Shanghai, Hamburg; Izmir and Mersin respectively). The chasing of generic solution by all three is not irrelevant. All these provided the scope of research seeking additional causes of implementation asymmetries; and dictated the decision to examine to confirm the extent that differentiation.

Conversely, this does not mean an undervaluation of existing ‘local’ market situations. Rotterdam faces stiff competition not only for attracting transshipment but also cargo to/from major European hinterland regions such, while Piraeus plays a much more local role compared to Rotterdam and Busan. Having established the role of political culture in case of some major transshipment ports exposed at similar economic conditions of global scale, it is useful to proceed to additional comparisons of different nature (e.g. between ports facing similar political cultures but different port reforms), in order to conclude on the extent that differences in concrete local market challenges stand as additional explanatory (or causal) factors towards reform implementation asymmetries within the same economy.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The comparative examination of recent reforms in the case of three international ports of three countries with different institutional traditions, works in favour of the new institutional hypothesis that (port) governance association is associated with implementation processes dependent on the path that is established by the broader institutional frameworks in which the economy develops.

By enlightening the correlation and causality between institutions and governance reforms

implementation, this study also provides a platform for future port research. As port studies remain preoccupied on the *public vs. private* responsibilities emerging in the
680 *post-reform* setting, the role of political traditions in deciding the nature of recently reformed organizations is a theme that has only recently become part of the research agenda and has yet to be comprehensively assessed. The issue of causality needs to be further established by research in other dimensions as well; for instance Hall and Jacobs (2009) conceptually turn the analysis on the emerging institutional proximity of ports themselves and the effects that ‘too much’ and ‘too less’ of this proximity may have on inter-port competition in infrastructure upgrading and innovation.

This study suggests that, similar reforms follow divergent paths of trajectory in different regions with political-cultural traditions standing as causal factors. Hence, relevant local and national port policy-making agents and stakeholders should be cautious rather than a priori accepting generic solution put forward by global institutions. The case studies serve as an ideal base to extend similar analysis towards other regions, including currently under-researched emerging markets, and develop a general theory explaining the ways institutional frameworks and political traditions affect the process of reforming a unique in certain respects economic sector and, not least, better understanding the evolution of port development.

The conducted examination of the implementation phases of previously decided reforms provides a first engagement of port studies with the cultural political economy (CPE) account. It is worth using this account further, examining why particular options had been in the first instance chosen at the expense of others. The focus of this study was at a later
700 stage of the reform, the one happening once this choice is made; as stated outright (title) with the use of the three case studies we shed light on the correlation of ‘implementation asymmetries’ once the relevant policy makers have opted for the same generic solution. In a CPE (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008) vein, empirical analyses might seek explanations

about how economic and policy actors within a polity understand and develop key institutional concepts for the economy, e.g., efficiency, state, capital-labour relationships, etc., how these differ from the understanding of others, or even within the same society (i.e., the interplay of localised conditions and economic environment might result in a variance of reforms even within the same country) and what all these mean for either the choices made or the structuring of the institutional framework, which in turn affects choices implementation. The CPE framework also invokes a more critical stand when studying hegemonic discourse such as the neo-liberal pre-economic crisis calls for port governance reforms in order for ports ‘to only stay competitive’ in a system of mobilized global capital. As such discourses are altered – in the early 2010s the shift towards ‘sustainability’ is evident – a discourse analysis in a comparative CPE fashion would further advance knowledge about port governance formations within specific polities and institutional contexts.

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