EDITORIAL

10 Years of *MEL*

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This double, commemorative, issue marks 10 years of *MEL* publishing.

It is as difficult, at such times, to segregate sentiment and nostalgia from factual reporting as it is for a parent – in this case the founding editor – to talk about his children. If nothing else, such an account is bound to entail considerable systematic bias.

MEL, the *International Journal of Maritime Economics* as it was called at that time, was launched in 1999, at the same time with the Erasmus Center for Maritime Economics and Logistics. I have always believed in the fruits of such a synergy: a research centre needed a focused journal to provide advanced input to curricula, and graduates needed ‘their’ journal not only as future authors but, more importantly, as practicing executives in need of applied research output to guide and orient their decision-making processes in one of the most complex of industries: international ocean transportation and logistics.

The fundamental philosophy of *MEL*, and thus its editorial policy and content, has been to depart from the traditional sectoral and modal approaches to port and shipping research and rather look at the ‘*MEL*-sector’ through a holistic and integrated perspective, where international ocean transportation, ports and terminals constitute the central components of global (maritime) supply chains. Trade liberalisation and the complexity of global sourcing, production and distribution possibilities clearly required such a *systems* approach, aiming at trade efficiency and consumer welfare. This approach, it has been considered, was necessary even in areas as focused as maritime security or simulation of terminal operations. In other words, *MEL* editorial policy has focused on papers that on top of their scientific rigour, were able to demonstrate, and often measure, the wider supply-chain; economic; societal; and welfare implications of their findings. To that effect, and as much as possible, authors were asked to write at least abstract and conclusions in non-technical language. It was in such a context that the term *maritime logistics* was coined in an earlier editorial of this journal: Any improvement, however incremental, to any of the global supply-chain components – from shipbuilding to maritime safety and from terminal management to liner

network configuration – would fall in the domain of *maritime logistics*, as long as the paper's 'wider' ramifications were in sight by the author, implicitly or explicitly.

In addition to higher impact factors, *MEL* has also given emphasis to papers originating either from funded research or ones deriving from actual industry research needs. Journal Editors have been closely following business conferences and meetings, of those that by hundreds take place in London alone, in an effort to identify (a) scholars with the ability to meaningfully 'translate' scientific findings in business language; (b) practitioners who have demonstrably endorsed scientific output in business and policy decision making. Authors fulfilling either criterion have been targeted by *MEL*, while the journal has been careful with unsolicited research of low scientific or societal impact (among other indexing services, 'google scholar' has been relied upon to that effect).

Methodological rigour, especially this of *operations research* and *econometrics*, has been in most cases a prerequisite for sending a paper to peer-review. This, not only in order to define and map the development of the discipline in a meaningful way but also in order to make *MEL* content suitable for university treatment at graduate level.

At the same time, a sizable number of papers has consistently been submitted with important policy ramifications; untested ideas; practical solutions and in general papers that although perhaps weaker in methodological treatment were considered as kindling wood for promising future research. Papers in this category have been hosted in the *Policy Perspectives* section of the journal (non-peer-reviewed).

The triennial PhD competition, the third one at the time of writing, is another manifestation of the journal's emphasis on methodology and on work of promising young researchers. They have all fast-tracked the academic ladder together with many other colleagues whose *MEL* publications have constituted prime material for academic advancement. In a way, albeit indirectly, the journal has contributed here too by shaping the international cadre of the *MEL academia*.

The adoption of *MEL* by the International Association of Maritime Economists (IAME) has been a milestone in the life of the journal. IAME was born at Erasmus in 1990, at the farewell conference of my predecessor, Henk Molenaar. Together with Richard Goss, Roy Humphrey and Tor Wergeland, I have had the honour of bringing the incubating Association to its first General Meeting, in Lyon, France, in 1992, and since then serving it as Newsletter Editor, Treasurer and Vice President. Since its inception, *MEL* has been staunchly supporting IAME in a multitude of ways including best paper prizes and PhD competitions. Our publisher, David Bull, a firm believer in *MEL* from

the beginning, has always been found ready to unquestionably provide any type of support asked of him.

Looking forward to the next 10 years of MEL, I wish to thank first of all the authors who have entrusted us with the publication of their work; the Editorial Board and Committee; our referees; the Assistant Editor; all colleagues at Erasmus who over the years have provided support to the Editorial Office; and last but not least Palgrave Macmillan for publishing a journal of the highest of standards.

I am sure we will all treasure this issue and look forward to the next one in 2018.

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