

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies
Research Seminar

Essays on Sustainability Issues in Transportation Management

by

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Date: 22 October 2018 (Monday)
Time: 10:00am - 11:00am
Venue: V303, Jockey Club Innovation Tower
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

(Conducted in English)

Abstract:

Global transportation has profoundly affected and shaped our modern-day world. However, transportation of cargo and passengers produces massive global negative externalities on environment and societies that need to be addressed appropriately. As commercial transportation companies are inherently focused on profitability goals, they tend to disregard environmental and social issues in their operations by implementing sustainability practices in accordance with the legally-mandated minimum or by paying lip service to demands of stakeholders. Consequently, and in particular with the international nature of the transportation business in mind, efficient ways to regulate and govern these externalities in a global context need to be identified while paying special attention not to compromise the economic viability of transportation firms.

This thesis explores holistic sustainability as a tri-dimensional construct encompassing economic, environmental, and social goals in the transportation industry. It consists of five independent empirical studies that jointly discuss how the sustainability discourse diffuses through the industry, which factors are antecedents of sustainability practice adoption, and how sustainability practice adoption affects operational performance of transportation firms. We employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods on different data sets from both the maritime and air transportation industries to show that external institutional pressures play a dominant role in a transportation firm's sustainability performance, and that the implementation of said practices incurs hidden costs and benefits for companies that need to be regarded by executives.

Consequently, this thesis contributes to the current discussion of sustainability in transportation in both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, we provide additional evidence on how practices and discourse diffuse through an industry, as well as contributing new measurements and methodical approaches to the general discourse on holistic sustainability. Practical insights include the implications for managerial practice that shed more light on the intricate link between performance and sustainability, as well as profound insights for policy makers on how and why firms adopt (or not adopt) sustainable practices, which can help to significantly improve the effectiveness of future policy and regulations.

Bio:

Markus Vejvar is currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a research assistant at the Institute of Textile and Clothing at the same university. He holds a bachelor's degree in business and a master's degree in supply chain management from the Vienna University of Economics and Business. His research focuses on transportation management, particularly on issues connected with the antecedents and effects of sustainability practice adoption in transportation. Before his studies, he worked as a sourcing consultant specialized on the sourcing of transportation services.

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All are welcome!