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Seaports, Urban Sustainability, and Paradigm Shift

Peter V. Hall

SEAPORTS are big business; not just because of the valuable land, labor, and technology inputs they combine, but more so because of the role they play in global production and distribution systems. In his history of the first half-century of the ocean shipping container, Levinson argues that the container has been an integral piece in contemporary economic globalization. According to the United Nations, six and half billion metric tons of seaborne trade cargo was carried across the wharves of the world's seaports in 2004. These cargo movements do not simply transverse the waterfront; they move through sensitive marine ecosystems and along popular waterways, on city streets, through neighborhoods, and in shared rail corridors. Containerization and the rise of logistics have unleashed a fundamental change in the relationship among seaports, the localities that host them, and their associated cargo movements. These changes in seaports have important implications for the urban paradigm shift demanded by global climate and energy change.

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The challenges of global climate and energy change demand that urban communities adapt to profound environmental and economic change, while shifting to a sustainable footing. Seaports will be on the front line of the adaptation process. The freight transportation and logistics systems in which seaports are embedded will confront a very different energy cost structure. Seaports will have to confront rising sea levels and more intense

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