

The dynamics of a maritime container terminal complex system: optimization process design

Daineanu Robert-Alexandru ^a, Zus Noel-Mircea ^b, Panaitescu Mariana ^{c*}, Panaitescu Fanel-Viorel ^c, Scupi Alexandru-Andrei ^c, Dinu Dumitru ^a

^a Doctoral School of Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics, Maritime University, Constanta, Romania, ZC 900663; ^b Faculty of Navigation and Maritime Transport, 104 Mircea cel Batran street, Constanta, Romania 900663; ^c Dept. of Engineering Sciences in Mechanics and Environment, Maritime University, Constanta, Romania, ZC 900663

1. INTRODUCTION

The global flow of goods and materials is a decisive component in port operations and in container terminals, a fact that can critically frame the operational efficiency in such fields. The advantage and operational efficiency of these logistics components depends on the fast and efficient movement of goods in the terminal. To increase operating efficiency, it is recommended to use software as suitable operating solutions [1], [2], [3]. The simulations obtained with the help of specialized software offer a series of features and capabilities, such as: building an efficient operational flow in ports and cargo terminals, easy to monitor; optimizing operating times in a terminal with the help of models that provide strict information to facilitate the operations of loading/unloading goods, operating equipment, failure times; evaluations of loading and unloading methods; identifying the occurrence of blockages on the operational flow; concrete requirements related to the technical details of the operating equipment in the terminal, as well as the storage characteristics of the goods.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Defined methodology

Simulation-based optimization defined as the method "for evaluating system performance for a given configuration, while the optimization algorithm explores alternative configurations as a function of space and identifies the optimal setting" [7]. Simulation-based optimization is applied in practice as a screening procedure [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13]. These solutions target parameter configurations. To evaluate the configuration of a specific parameter, one must enter a system that imitates in real time the constituent elements of the container terminal. This is done through a simulation software [14], [15], [16].

This study is based on real data from Constanta Container Terminal, and it is studied the statistical relevance between operational indicators and applied inverse statistics as a pertinent tool for waiting time expectancy. It is proposed a simulation based-optimization process viewing the dynamics of the Container Terminal as a complex system, because during operation, many sources of disturbance and uncertainty exists.

The research starts by looking at the statistical relevance of the different operational indicators, out of which it chooses berth arrival time, first lift time, quay length occupied by the ship, total crane moves (containers, hatch lids, etc.), crane hours (the sum of the hours worked by multiple cranes), berth hours (actual) and work hours (actual), determining the descriptive statistics and the correlations between operational indicators.

Through inverse statistics (exit time statistics), it reverses the roles of the variables, the fluctuant variable becomes fixed, and the fixed one, variable.

The real data obtained from the Container Terminal are analyzed and processed in JASP (JASP, 2022)[21] and Mathematica (Mathematica, 2012)[22], both the graphs and the tables below are generated with these programs.

3. DATA AND RESULTS

3.1. Statistical interpretation of real data in a container ship terminal

In the following the real data obtained from the Container Terminal for one month (actually 35 days), 42 feeder type ships (between 135m and 240m in length), going through 24 500 containers movements is investigated. Out of the different operational indicators, it was chosen berth arrival time, first lift time (when quay cranes started operating), quay length occupied by the ship, total crane moves (containers, hatch lids, etc.), crane hours (the sum of the hours worked by multiple cranes), berth hours (actual) and work hours (actual) (Table 1)[21].

The correlation plot for the main indicators Berth Length, Total Moves, Crane Hours, Berth Hours and Work Hours shown in Figure 4, depicts the good correlation between the indicators, with the exception of the length occupied by the ship alongside quay (normal occurrence, normally not affecting directly operational aspects of the terminal, but port taxes). In Figure 5 a, b, c, d, e using scatter plots, there are compared operational indicators, with good correlations (see Figure 4), the Berth Length, Total Moves, Crane Hours, Berth Hours and Work Hours against each other, observing the density of the indicator above and to the right, in blue the regression line, and in gray the 95% confidence interval.

The results obtained above using the Pearson's Correlation method: in Table.2, the Total Moves, Crane Hours, Berth Hours and Work Hours indicators showing really strong positive correlations (Pearson's $r > 0.9$ and p -values $< .001$) are checked. The results depicted in Table 2 can be also clearly evaluated in Figure 6, the correlation scatter plots, the dotted lines showing the 95% prediction intervals for each plot (Figure 6. Correlation scatter plots of the operational indicators (JASP, 2022, adapted).

3.2 Inverse statistics

In the following, in order to employ the inverse statistics (exit time statistics), it will be introduced the ships Berthed timeline and the First Lift timeline (as seen in Table 3), and will be used the mean interval between the consecutive ship arrivals (approximately 20 hours).

The waiting iteration (or the first passage iteration) associated to the threshold value, for the Total Moves, Crane Hours operational indicators, can be defined by analogy with the time series case [14]:

The analysis was performed for several values of the threshold parameter, in the case of Total Moves indicator, are chosen +200, +300 and +500 necessary moves, respectively for Crane Hours indicator +10, +20, +30, +40, +50, +60, +70, +80, +90, +100, +110, +120, +130, +140, +150, +160, +170, +180, +190, +200, +210, +220, +230, +240, +250, +260, +270, +280, +290, +300, +310, +320, +330, +340, +350, +360, +370, +380, +390, +400, +410, +420, +430, +440, +450, +460, +470, +480, +490, +500, +510, +520, +530, +540, +550, +560, +570, +580, +590, +600, +610, +620, +630, +640, +650, +660, +670, +680, +690, +700, +710, +720, +730, +740, +750, +760, +770, +780, +790, +800, +810, +820, +830, +840, +850, +860, +870, +880, +890, +900, +910, +920, +930, +940, +950, +960, +970, +980, +990, +1000, +1010, +1020, +1030, +1040, +1050, +1060, +1070, +1080, +1090, +1100, +1110, +1120, +1130, +1140, +1150, +1160, +1170, +1180, +1190, +1200, +1210, +1220, +1230, +1240, +1250, +1260, +1270, +1280, +1290, +1300, 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