Version initiale

This paper investigates the pattern of international transport costs over time, using information contained in the US imports flows from 1974 to 2013. First, we document the importance of the per-unit (additive) component of transport costs. We find that additive costs are quantitatively sizable, representing between one-third and one-half of overall transport costs. Second, we identify the respective roles of the reduction in ``pure'' transport costs and trade composition effects in the downward trend of international transport costs, in the same spirit as Hummels (2007). Unlike him, we find that trade composition effects do not matter much and, when they do, they tend to amplify (rather than reduce) the decrease in pure transport costs. Importantly, this difference of results can be attributed to the new method of modeling the per-unit component of transport costs we offer. In both aspects, our results point to the importance of the additive component in accounting for international transport costs.

Version Lise finale? 98 mots

This paper investigates the pattern of international transport costs over time, using information contained in the US imports flows from 1974 to 2013. First, we document the importance of the per-unit component of transport costs. It represents between one-third and one-half of overall transport costs. Second, allowing for time-varying per-unit costs, we find that the downward trend in international transport costs comes from the reduction in “pure” transport costs over time, with trade composition effects playing a minor role. In both aspects, our results point to the importance of the additive component in accounting for international transport costs.

Version Guillaume 100 (98 mots)

We investigate the pattern of international transport costs over time, using information contained in the US imports flows from 1974 to 2013. First, we document the importance of per-unit component of transport costs. It represents between one-third and one-half of overall transport costs. Second, we find that allowing for the presence of time-varying per-unit costs reduces the role of trade composition effects in the downward trend in international transport costs. In both aspects, our results point to the importance of the per unit, additive component in international transport costs compared to the multiplicative one that dominates the literature.