

## Foreword

Peter F. Drucker, one of the world's most influential management gurus of all times, once said that "the best way to predict the future is to create it". In other words, those managers who systematically study the future have also the power to shape and influence the future. By the means of anticipation they can prepare for the expected as well as the unexpected which allows them to react more flexible and faster than competitors. Futures research, i.e. the interdisciplinary and systematic analysis of the future, has matured to both a theoretical-conceptual and application-oriented research discipline. In his dissertation, Dr. Heiko A. von der Gracht concentrates on its most prominent and powerful tool: the scenario technique.

The future of the logistics service industry is characterised by many upcoming challenges and opportunities. The industry experiences strong growth rates, but is also confronted with high complexity and dynamism. Intensifying globalisation, stronger competition, and higher customer demands are just some of the factors that lead to a more turbulent and uncertain environment. Against this background, there is a considerable need for futures orientation and innovation in logistics in order to establish flexibility, creativity, and the ability to adapt to changes quickly. The scenario technique is in fact one of the best tools to support decision making under uncertainty and can therefore be considered of high value for the logistics environment. Nevertheless, its proliferation among logistics service providers is low.

In his thesis, Dr. von der Gracht examines the current scenario planning practices of the logistics service industry in all its facets. In numerous expert interviews he reveals the status-quo, underlying causalities and motives, potentials and future relevance of the topic under consideration. Since scenarios turn out to be uncharted waters for most logistics executives, Dr. von der Gracht continues his work with a fantastic expert-based scenario study for the future of the logistics service industry 2025. In all his measures, he follows high scientific standards and strong methodological rigour and thereby assures the high quality of his research.

Given its pragmatic research nature, the thesis is of high value for both practice and science. The insights into the industry's scenario planning practice represent the first empirical data of its kind and form a valuable framework for future research. The scenarios provide executives with a sound planning basis for long-term decisions, illustrate the potentials and value of the scenario technique, and serve as a methodological guideline. Students and researchers will further find lots of helpful information on methods, procedures, and quality criteria of futures research – particularly on the innovative linkage of the Delphi survey technique and scenario planning.

Dr. Heiko A. von der Gracht showed that a high level of rigour in research is compatible with relevance for practice. Intensive cooperation within a scientific and corporate network revealed under his management valuable insights into a very "hot" topic for logistics and

supply chain managers. This effort is appreciated by his team, his supervisors and the logistics community. Dr. von der Gracht continues his work as head of the Center for Futures Studies in Logistics & SCM at Supply Management Institute (SMI) of the European Business School (EBS), Wiesbaden, Germany.

We wish you a pleasant reading and many useful insights into the future.

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