
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Ulla Tapaninen is a Professor of Maritime Logistics at the Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS), University of Turku. She did her dissertation in Logistics at the Helsinki University of Technology in 1997. She worked for ten years as a Development Manager and Environmental Manager in a large Finnish shipping company. Since 2006 she has been in charge of the Kotka office of the CMS. She had vast experience with public (national and EU) funded research projects in logistics since 1992 as Researcher, Project Director and board member in the areas of maritime and cross-border transportation, logistics information handling and maritime safety.

Olli-Pekka Hilmola, PhD, is an Acting Professor of Logistics at the Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT), in Kouvola, Finland. Concurrently he serves as a Visiting Professor of Logistics at the University of Skövde, Sweden, and as a Docent at the Turku School of Economics, Finland as well as at the University of Oulu, Finland. Dr. Hilmola is currently affiliated with ten international journals, including the *World Review of Intermodal Transportation Research* (WRITR).

Despite the global economic slowdown, the Baltic Sea Region (the Northern Dimension of European Logistics) is experiencing a volume increase in freight traffic, and in the variety of cargo being shipped. This increase in volume and variety should sustain several decades time period. However, as the manuscripts in this special issue highlight,

logistics is currently experiencing a change in Northern Europe, from cost centric into multidimensional issue consisting also safety, security, environmental and multimodality aspects. Illustrating logistical flows with water flows is not a distant metaphor; water flows often seek the route that provides the most convenient flow for the largest possible volume. Maybe in a perfect world, the convenient flow could be described and analysed through costs, but in Northern Europe these costs also comprise more long-term cost items. In other words, in our region most of the seaports suffer from lack of enlargement space, sea vessels suffer from lack of travel slots and harsh winter conditions, sea vessel operators suffer from volume (and product group) imbalance to long-distance destinations, hinterland transportation suffers from lack of real alternatives for road transports (and related infrastructure for alternative intermodal solutions), and warehousing and local distribution suffer from suitable value-added packages for customer needs.

In the first paper of this special issue, Märkälä and Jumpponen illustrate traffic route selection with respect to Russian distribution. Their empirical findings show well the tradeoffs, between rapidly developing EU countries, Russia and Finland, of serving different logistical route alternatives in satisfying eastern demand. This research illustrates, through the Analytic Hierarchy Process model and empirical responses, why the 'high cost' route of Finland is currently more competitive than other alternatives. The findings of this research work are further verified in the second paper, authored by Inkinen and Tapaninen, which bases its argumentation on 25 interviews completed in Finnish logistics/transportation sector companies. Research shows that the overall costs in the Finnish route are competitive, mostly due to better sea transportation balance and a workable combination of warehousing services as well as lead time response provided for St. Petersburg and Moscow. In the third paper, Roso analyses the dry port concept starting from the largest Swedish container seaport, Göteborg. Economic prosperity usually results in a situation where seaports face problems of traffic congestion as well as lack of warehousing space. The dry port concept, implemented through intermodal principles of combining rail and road, provides better environmental sustainability and is feasible even with shorter distances. However, short-distance rail transport requires high frequency to be economically feasible. In the fourth article, Koskinen *et al.* report similar, but only unidirectionally functioning (export), intermodal supply chains, which have their origins in two paper producing units in Finland. The case company has a direct sea connection from Finland to North America, and the intermodal solution is implemented without the use of containers – similarly to the previous article, frequency on the rail connection and frequency between the two sea harbours were identified as important for the supply chain performance. In the fifth paper, Mazaheri and Ekwall report on survey research findings from Swedish seaports on the pressures of implementing new safety and security procedures. Although the ISPS code to improve these aspects brings numerous benefits, smaller harbours saw its implementation as resource as well as time consuming. This was also apparent in the satisfaction scores of the code implementation process, as smaller harbours were less satisfied than larger ones. The theme of safety and security continues in the sixth manuscript, where Klemola *et al.* discuss maritime transportation risk assessment and modelling. Sea vessel traffic safety is an extremely important issue in the Gulf of Finland, where high volumes of containers, oil and passengers are being transported in a relatively small water area. The authors suggest the use of Bayesian networks in modelling the different types of accidents, the season of occurrence and their local impacts. In the seventh paper, Juntunen uses structural

equation modelling and a large-scale survey to investigate how outsourcing and partnerships have affected logistics performance in Northern Finland. The research shows that trust between the logistics service provider and industrial customer, besides the ability of the service provider to offer tailored solutions, was found to be a driver of performance. In the eight paper, Jäger *et al.* report on a longitudinal case study on a logistics service operator of the furniture industry having most of its operations in Scandinavia. Tremendous volume increases in recent years are reported, *e.g.*, in used warehousing space, and in handled weekly amounts. Interestingly, operations are built in part through utilising a flexible part-time workforce, and simultaneously the company's customer interface relies on high quality. The latter item has been the reason why some customers outsource their logistics services solely to this provider.

We hope that all of you will enjoy reading this special issue, 'The northern dimension of European logistics', and find it helpful for development activities in your different organisations. The logistics lessons here up north are much more than just the success stories of Ikea, Nokia and Gazprom, to name a few.

Last, but not the least, we would like to express our gratitude to the referees of this special issue – the number of submissions was quite high, and the work done to achieve high-quality journal manuscripts was mostly dependent on referee work. Many thanks for your valuable input once again.