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INFORMAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR SECONDMENTS

LOGISTICS LESSONS FROM DISASTER
RELIEF OPERATIONS

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Informal Learning Framework for Secondments

Logistics Lessons from Disaster Relief Operations

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Informal Learning Framework for Secondment: Logistics Lessons from Disaster Relief Operations

Key words: humanitarian, logistics, partnerships, informal, learning, networks

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*“We can't have full knowledge all at once. We must start by believing.
Then afterwards we may be led on to master the evidence for ourselves.”*

Saint Thomas Aquinas

Philosopher, Theologian, and Doctor of the Church

Indeed, I started by believing.

Believing that the subject matter was possible, relevant and important. I was led to believe thanks to the many motivated and courageous managers from the private sector going on secondments that I met during my research, and by the executives in their companies committed to making a difference. I became a believer thanks to the open-minded, humanitarian logisticians that I encountered in my missions, who helped me to understand the complexities of their world, its value, and the opportunities to improve it.

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I believe that I may never reach full knowledge, and this is fine. For the best has been all I gained in trying to master the evidence, which I hope to continue to do and enjoy through the rest of my life.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Disasters challenge and destroy growth and socio-economic achievements. They are often communicated in the media with heartbreaking images of suffering, destruction and despair. They tend to inspire a wave of generosity and compassion among those who feel vulnerable, concerned, touched. Individuals manifest their solidarity through donations, collections and by sending money, goods, foods, medicines, and other essential items. Like individuals, companies are increasingly moved to act upon their sense of compassion and generosity, and contribute with skills, capacity, and of course money. These initiatives are welcomed by employees who are ready to put their knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the greater good, on behalf of the company.

When a natural disaster takes place, humanitarian organizations activate all their response mechanisms to assess and respond as quickly as possible to the rising needs. However, everything is uncertain, and only time can provide the answers as information becomes available about the level of impact, the number of people affected, the resources available and the type and length of aid required. Among the difficulties faced by humanitarian organization is getting access overnight to trained and available staff who could implemented such sophisticated and life-saving logistics. A survey conducted by the Fritz Institute (2005) following the tsunami indicated that during the relief efforts there was a lack of trained and experienced logistics staff, resulting in organizations having to relocate senior staff from other operations overnight. Even though the situation has evolved over the past seven years, the need to some extent prevails.

Some companies, like those reviewed here, have set up secondment programs to be able to send managers on short missions to disaster relief operations where they are convinced they can help. This thesis is designed to contribute primarily to the literature on humanitarian logistics. It focuses on partnerships between humanitarian organizations and the private sector designed to augment and improve the response capacity during a disaster relief operation with seconded staff from partner companies.

Despite their importance in research and practice, the literature on partnership is still growing, especially in the area of humanitarian partnerships. McLachlin and Larson (2011) conducted a scan of the ABI/Inform database looking for literature on supply chain partnerships from 1991 to 2010. They found that first essay dated to 1991, followed by 379 others. They also noticed the growing attention given to the topic with 26 during the first eight months of 2010. However, when the term “humanitarian” was included in the search only three essays were listed, confirming the gap on this combination despite its acknowledged importance in practice. Fortunately, this is changing.

Lambert and Knemeyer (2004) explain that partnerships are difficult and costly to implement, and that they should be reserved for occasions where they are likely to produce substantially higher value than the company could achieve on their own. This thesis supports their conclusions and expands it with the proposition that the logistics activities of humanitarian organizations can be a valuable source of knowledge to humanitarian-private partnerships seconding staff, and not just the other way around (Balcik *et al.*, 2010). Much has been written about the benefits and motivation for companies to work with humanitarian organizations such as “bolstering their reputation with customers, demonstrated their good intentions and attracting employees who want to work for responsible citizens” (Thomas and Fritz, 2006, 117).

On the flip side, researchers have talked about the benefits for humanitarian agencies who welcome private partners with lists that include cash, space, access to technical skills, learning to manage partnerships (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). Nothing is found in the current partnership literature about what happens in humanitarian-private partnerships when a seconded manager returns to his everyday job. In other words, what lessons from humanitarian logistics can the private sector manager bring back to their company following his secondment? This thesis focuses on this particular angle to identify what seconded private sector managers can learn from humanitarian logisticians during disaster relief operations.

For companies, it is necessary to justify their partnerships. As globalization has revealed its numerous consequences, creating shareholder value alone no longer seems to suffice to have a sustainable competitive advantage. Companies have expanded their otherwise myopic vision of stakeholders to include governments, society, and NGOs in their list of interlocutors. "Many companies are moved to participate in humanitarian efforts because they have seen the staggering losses inflicted when disasters interrupt the flow of business" (Thomas and Fritz, 2006, 116). They are also being questioned about their social and environmental impact, and often required to explain what they are doing to improve it (Yaziji, 2004). Thus companies have entered into closer contact with the social sector to provide their capacity and capabilities towards solutions (Porter and Kramer, 2002). This proximity could be an opportunity to learn from each other through dialogue, joint projects, and secondments.

Secondments, or the practice of lending an employee to another organization to perform a specific task over a limited period of time, provide a unique opportunity for seconded managers to develop skills and competencies as confirmed a study of how to improve the learning capacity of high potential in an organization. In his study Argyris (1991) explains that too often companies misunderstand what learning is and how to bring it about. This is mainly because they focus too much on problem solving, albeit important, rather than on critically reflecting on how their own behavior and actions may block the individuals from tapping into a continuous learning opportunity. For Argyris the main learning blockage is the defensive behavior that highly skilled managers display when faced with tasks that are outside of their comfort zone or skills set, given that they have rarely experienced failure and that formal education has trained them to succeed within a defined scope of tasks. He suggests that the best learning/innovation labs are those which provide managers with an opportunity to use their know-how in a different context, such as secondments, and pushes them to reflect on how their own style and behaviors affect the way they learn from the application of their skills.

In this thesis the assumption is made that secondments to disaster relief operations will accomplish this type of setting for the managers, who will suddenly be required to perform in a different conditions, and asked to revisit their working approach and behavior to succeed. This assumption is supported by research on learning that indicates that proximity and trust among the parties exchanging knowledge increases the likelihood of a positive exchange and outcome (Szulanski *et al.*, 2004). Such proximity and trust are prerequisites of not only the secondment but for partnerships as well. The secondments studied here are done through partnerships between humanitarian and private organization, as the examples from TNT, Agility, and UPS will illustrate. These secondments meet a need in the humanitarian sector to augment and reinforce the existing logistics capacity.

This collaboration is a rather new phenomenon, most of this contact has been carried out on a trial and error basis, in some areas more structured than others, but overall sophomoric. Seeking exposure, publicity and at a times a cleaner conscience, very few companies have actually sat down to think how they can systematically and sustainably improve their competitiveness and know-how thanks to their involvement in the public and social sector (Moss Kanter, 1999). In disaster relief operations contact between the two sectors is led by secondment of qualified technical staff including logisticians (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). However, seconding qualified staff on a moment's notice is not a top priority for managers who depend on their team's performance. Letting go, and especially capturing the tradeoffs of their absence, is a real concern for middle managers signing off on the secondments of their team members to last minute disaster relief operations. The practice of secondments raises the question, both in practice and academia, about what is the most suitable framework to second staff, to develop an environment where they can learn while providing their knowledge and expertise, to capture what they have learned for the benefit of the company seconding them.

The managerial issues addressed here are also in line with the main concerns highlighted by IBM's 2010 report, *Working Beyond Borders: Insights from Global Chief Human Resource Officers*. The report, which consolidates of the input from over 700 Chief Human Resource Officers, indicates three major human resource gaps to be competitive in today's global economy: the need to cultivate creative leaders, the ability to mobilize at a greater speed and flexibility, and the possibility to capitalize on collective knowledge. These three gaps are addressed in the outcome of this thesis which promotes opportunities for managers to further, and creatively, develop their knowledge during disaster relief secondments, where agility and flexibility are paramount, and the focus on the importance for the companies seconding staff to capture on the lessons learned by their employees in secondments.

1.1. Overall Aim and Research Questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to develop a framework for informal learning during secondments to disaster relief operations. To develop the framework, this thesis has focused on the following questions, each corresponding to the research developed for the essays published for this thesis:

1. How do partnerships develop in disaster relief operations? (Essay 1)
2. How do partners interact during a disaster relief operation? (Essay 2)
3. What can seconded managers learn from secondments to disaster relief operations? (Essay 3)

Combined, these questions support the development of the framework that will be instrumental to understand how these secondments may be used as learning opportunities for the seconded managers. The framework facilitates understanding by abstracting and identifying from reality types of relevant variables and the theoretical relationships that may exist among them (Tece *et al.*, 1997).

These questions and the overall research aim are relevant today, given that humanitarian private partnerships have seen an important rise in the public and private sector agenda, as confirmed by the incremental number of companies participating in the activities of the UN Global Compact and the World Economic

Forum (Lacy *et al.*, 2010). However, these partnerships are expensive, risky, and at times even difficult to manage. For this reason, shareholders of the companies partnering are rightfully asking the question why do we partner? (Porter and Kramer, 2002) What do we get out of this? Is it charity, philanthropy, or is there a real and valuable strategic fit? The latter is the preferred answer of optimistic partnership managers who believe there are more than just communication and reputation gains for their company. Based on their intuition and personal experience, these managers often cite “learning” as one of the potential benefits of undertaking joint projects or secondments with their partners (Moss Kanter, 1999; Porter and Kramer, 2002; Binder and Witte, 2007). Thus the research questions from this study aim to address their intuitive and experiential comments, and the managerial concerns about how to use the secondments as a learning opportunity. These concerns are unaddressed in the academic literature on humanitarian logistics and partnerships, which focus on of what companies can teach humanitarians, yet they overlook what companies can learn from humanitarians. Thus a gap exists there as well on what seconded managers can learn from their experience participating in disaster relief and how they can learn from each other.

1.2. Delimitations

The focus on disaster relief operations presents the first delimitation. Each disaster is different, affecting varying numbers of people, with different levels of impact and attracting different amounts of resources. A large and diverse selection of disasters has been studied, however, it is impossible to cover them all or consider them all in the analysis. Among the disasters, the research has been delimited to the initial stages of the disaster focusing only on the relief operations over the first week.

The focus on disaster and events leads to two structural delimitations: time and space. Time is understood through the lens of event networks to analyze specific events and their evolution. Outside of the event window time has not been considered. Furthermore, time has been delimited to the pace and rhythm of the event itself, as opposed to the experience of time by the individuals. Space (or geography) has not been considered as a variable, leading to the position that events are comparable despite the setting and magnitude of them. This is possible in light of the position that seconded managers are chosen and sent only to case where their capabilities match the needs thus space and geographical issues such as cultural sensitivity, language skills, knowledge of the area, etc. become secondary or irrelevant. If the seconded managers were always the same for all areas and magnitude of disaster then this could have been considered.

Another important delimitation is the focus on lessons learned only by the person seconded. This leaves out the humanitarians working and interacting with the private sector secondment, and the humanitarian organization itself, which is engaged in a partnership with the employer of the secondment. While the lessons acquired by the humanitarian organization may not be negligible (if any at all), the data collected has not analyzed the learning processes, needs, or goals of the humanitarians. Considering the focus of this thesis, the humanitarians have only been identified as organizations in need to augment their operational capacity during the event.

The focus on partnerships raises another important delimitation. The partnerships analyzed here between humanitarian organizations and private companies all fall under a corporate philanthropy agenda for the company (as opposed to profit-driven

partnerships with suppliers for example where secondments also take place to increase mutual knowledge). Porter and Kramer (2002) explain that the acid test of good corporate philanthropy positive when the intended social change is so beneficial to the company that the organization would still invest in it even if no one heard about it. All the partnerships, as well as the disaster relief operations analyzed here, are heavily mediatised and closely linked to communications campaigns. Thus it is difficult to know if the conclusions would be the same if they applied to partnerships in more discreet or lesser-known settings. As discussed later, companies are driven to participate in these types of partnerships for their reputation, among other reasons, which is an important source of competitive advantage for global companies operating in different environments (Hess *et al.*, 2002).

Outside of the scope is the question of how the lessons learned in secondments can be quantified as contributing to the partnership. Company shareholders are often asking the very specific question of how many units of cash they get back in return for every unit invested. The framework only looks at the possibility and dynamics of learning from the secondment. A future and different step would be to quantify the benefits of that learning within the organization investing in the secondment. Eventually this may affect the type of learning desired by the organization from the secondments if the company is able to conduct some kind of value/impact analysis that isolated what are the most valuable lessons from a secondment in light of the resources invested.

Finally, another delimitation concerns the focus on informal learning, which as the literature confirms is very difficult to measure. Skule (2004) explains that the difficulty is rooted in the lack of learning theories are difficult to quantify and measure with indicators to compare the quality of the learning environment. While a list of qualitative indicators exists that can be used to identify positive or negative conditions, there is a gap in measuring how positive or how negative those conditions are. Skule (2004) goes on to explain more traditional methods for measuring learning (i.e., participation rate, training hours, expenditure, or level of qualification) do not apply to informal learning. Perhaps a more suitable solution would be measure how the lessons learned during the secondment are adopted by the organizations and what impact do they have internally. However, the latter is premature at this point of the research and thus outside of its scope.

1.3. Research Methods

This thesis reflects the three different stages conducted, in which the research questions are constantly revised and updated. The use of case studies provides the context necessary for meaning. Case studies help to uncover a plethora of factors and describe the richness and complexity of the context, describe actors and their interaction in a network throughout time, and progressively refine the research question from one stage to the next. This approach is endorsed by Voss *et al.* (2002, 2001) who point out that “when conducting case-based research it is not uncommon for the research question to evolve over time and for the constructs to be modified, develop or abandoned during the course of the research. This can be strength as it can allow the development of more knowledge than if there were just a fixed research question.” Each of these research stages results in a peer-reviewed essay based on the case or cases analyzed during the specific research stage. For example, the first essay focuses on humanitarian partnerships and their important role in fulfilling the needs of relief operations. The second essay goes deeper by introducing the private sector as an important partner, and defining how the two sectors interact. The third essay focuses

on the lessons to be learned from the humanitarian sector for seconded managers. The discussion of all these essays will address how to promote learning from to the secondment experience.

Case study research predominates, given that it emphasizes the detailed production of holistic knowledge using multiple empirical sources of data to capture and analyze a rich and potentially complex context (Tellis, 1997). Meredith *et al.* (1998) explains that as a method, case study research is suitable for to initiate explorations in cases where the variables are still undefined. This leaves the door open to a wide set of data and questions to be collected as was done when looking at what seconded managers and logisticians do during their secondments. These, if unmanaged, could be overwhelming and disconcerting for any researcher. Data collection must be pertinent and useful at the different stages of the research to understand the issue at hand. The best way to achieve this is to link the data collection to the research question and purpose in mind. Understanding how well the case study fits into the research process has been helpful in discerning what information to consider in the data collection process. Following guidelines of the method, each case study has been designed with a question in mind (around the research purpose), and a set of data collection protocols that group open-ended questions around the topic and purpose under review. These protocols serve to plan semi-structured interviews with related actors, and to identify keywords for searches in the public domain.

Chapter 4 provides a more detailed discussion about the research process including the paradigms, approaches, tools and methods used.

1.4. Terms and Core Concepts

This thesis builds upon concepts and theories from a variety of literature and professional fields. Perhaps the most important are the terms actors, events and systems. The term “actor” is used here to refer to the individual seconded managers, unless stated otherwise, while the secondment itself is referred to as the “event”. By the definition explained later, the supply chain is no longer equated with the “system”, but rather the network. Thus the term “system” is only used when referring to the systems approach (see section 2.1), as opposed to systems theory.

Building upon these three definitions, this section introduces the terms and concepts used to develop an understanding around the research question, and to collect and analyze the data. First, it defines the scope and concept of **disaster relief operations** to delimit what is meant by it and its relation to humanitarian logistics. It places the latter in the context of **supply network management**. Then it introduces the concept of **event networks** to provide the theoretical lens under which **secondments** are analyzed here. In closing, the section presents the concept of **informal learning** to describe how actors in the humanitarian supply chain can work with their private sector counterparts and foster conditions for learning for the seconded managers during the disaster relief operations.

Disaster Relief Operations

Throughout this thesis the term disaster relief operations is used to refer to the logistics and supply chain activities deployed by humanitarian organizations to attend to the critical needs of a population affected a disaster. These operations are characterized by a large number of actors working under high levels of uncertainty in unstable

conditions. They are usually short and targeted to provide life-saving support such as medical aid, sheltering, and nutrition, depending on the impact of the disaster itself. The term can be equated to humanitarian logistics as occasionally done here to align with other publications. Nonetheless the term disaster relief operation has been applied here to incorporate the supply chain as whole in the analysis and to focus only on the window of time of the disaster relief efforts, rather than the subsequent development and reconstruction periods that could also be considered humanitarian.

Supply Network Management

Tatham and Pettit (2010, 610) propose the application of the supply network concept to humanitarian operations by explaining that “whilst the phrase “supply network management” may not be as well-known or understood as that of “supply chain management” (SCM), we believe that the former is actually a more accurate representation of the reality found in many commercial and humanitarian scenarios”. They also confirm that this view is in line with many other academics such as Chandra and Kumar (2000), Harland *et al.* (2001), Christopher (1998) and Aitken *et al.* (2005). Together they posit that the supply chain is a network of business relations that is of utmost importance to supporting all the activities of the supply chain. Harland *et al.* (2001) is more precise in describing them as “nested within wider inter-organizational networks and consist of interconnected entities whose primary purpose is the procurement, use, and transformation of resources to provide packages of goods and services” (Harland *et al.*, 2001, 22).

Event Networks

Events are defined by Hedaa and Törnroos (2008, 324) as “temporarily specific outcomes of performed acts by the actors”. They support their proposal by explaining that “events connect actors with acts and can therefore be used as a general research device in order to trace process and change” in the network (Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008, 344). They also propose a paradigm in network research that incorporates time and process into the industrial network analysis by suggesting that events be a central focus of the network evolution. Time is brought into the network discussion by acknowledging that networks are constantly evolving based on the previous experiences (past), ongoing activities (present), and expectations (future). Process refers to the changes which take place as events evolve.

The concept of event networks is adopted here to analyze the evolution of the relationship of the different organizations and companies that interact during a disaster relief operation. Among those types of relationships are partnerships, which happen at the network level when two or more actors engage in a mutually dependent relationship that should bring additional value (i.e. learning) than over and above what each could achieve alone.

Secondments

The term secondment is used to define the act of a company allocating (seconding) an employee to another organization. Secondments are treated here as events, where time and space are bound to the length and location of the secondment and the interaction required to complete the tasks associated with their mission. The seconded person is expected to integrate the host company to perform functions related to his traditional job. The seconded person may even adopt an identity (email, badge, telephone, etc.) within the host company and participate in decision-making and information exchange.

Informal Learning

Watkins and Marsick (1992, 287) defined informal learning as learning that is “based on experience; embedded in the organizational context, oriented to a focus on action; governed by non-routine conditions; concerned with tacit dimensions that must be made explicit; delimited by the nature of the task, the way in which the problems are framed, and the work capacity of the individual undertaking the task; and, enhanced by proactivity, critical reflectivity (sic) and creativity”. A complimentary definition that is used here describes it as “learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and non-institutionalized” (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, 4). Learning is distinguished throughout the text between, the act and process of learning (informally), and the outcomes and benefits of doing so, to which this thesis make several references.

1.5. Theoretical Research Focus

A combination of different theories and concepts interacting with each other has been used to develop the proposed framework. First, there is the literature on supply chain management and logistics and its application to the humanitarian sector. Then there is the literature on networks with focus on the event network concept of business networks. Finally, there is the literature on learning with a particular focus on the informal learning experience of seconded managers. As seen in figure 1, the intersection of these three provides the theoretical foundation of the framework to address: informal learning in the area of (humanitarian) logistics within an event network (secondments).

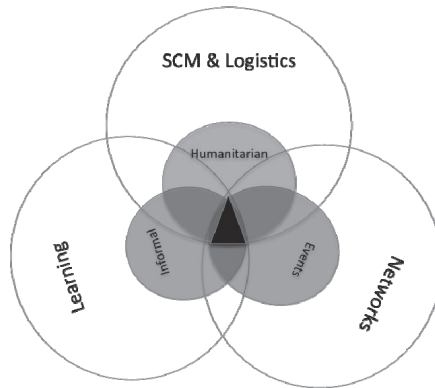


Figure 1 Research Focus

The interaction of the three theoretical foundations provides a richer context for analysis. For example, logistics, a discipline that has evolved through the borrowing of theories from other disciplines (Stock, 1997), is combined here with other disciplines and theories to address the research questions around learning in an event network of partnerships. Also networks and learning theories in logistics hold a significant track record which has been used to develop a systems view of supply and distribution networks (Tatham and Pettit, 2010). In fact, Stock (1997) proposes that both the network and learning approach be used in logistics research, making the distinction that networks theory serves to establish a systems view of logistics, while learning theory builds upon what has gone before to examine relationships among partners in a

strategic alliance. In other words, both approaches are valid and complementary, with learning peaking as the main focus.

1.5.1. Logistics Research in the Humanitarian Sector

In the design and analysis of this thesis, logistics, as a subject, is approached within the context of disaster relief operations. This entails marking the difference between business logistics and humanitarian logistics. Kovács and Spens (2007) explain that unlike their business counterpart, the humanitarian supply network is made up on a diverse number of organizations without clear links to each other, rather than a set number of suppliers and manufacturers. Unlike the private sector, demand and supply is subject to uncertainty and unpredictability, and collaboration among the different parts of it is not profit-driven leading to other difficulties in terms of alignments and collaboration (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009).

Once could interpret the concept of logistics in the humanitarian sector as a fully flexible version of the commercial model (Gattorna, 2010). By placing the concept of logistics in the humanitarian context, the original concept may be enriched by several factors. The multiplicity of actors working together without a profit incentive in itself is an enriching point for the original concept, which merits further research. Likewise, the high levels of uncertainty in demand and supply present an unusual type of operation rarely seen or studies in business logistics (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). Another aspect of interest is the ability to respond in such a short notice. This type of reactivity could be of great value to business logisticians who seek to control and minimize risks or unpredictable events.

1.5.2. Event Networks and Humanitarian Logistics

Partnerships are analyzed here through the lens of events which dictates a focus on the specific events, such as the secondments to a disaster relief operation. The partnerships studied are designed to generate interaction when a disaster takes place and when the actors in the partnership have something concrete to contribute by working together. In the partnerships examined here, private sector staff is seconded to disaster relief operations at the request of the humanitarians for these events.

The second essay discusses the application of Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) time and space event networks concept to humanitarian logistics. This approach enables to consider the humanitarian supply chain as a dynamic, temporal, and adaptive network that is activated on a need-basis.

The third essay applies the event network perspective to humanitarian logistics in order to analyze the interaction among its actors and acknowledge that specific events (disaster and/or secondments) will create changes in the network (Madhavan et al., 1998). It also serves to acknowledge the dynamic nature of the network, using time and space as a basis for analysis (Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008). Finally, the event network concept proposed by Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) highlights an important factor for disaster relief operations, i.e., the fact that not all actors need to be active in every event to be a part of the network. In practice this means that only relevant actors participate on a need-basis only, preventing an overload of assistance and unsolicited donations.

1.5.3. Informal Learning in Humanitarian Logistics Events

As the third essay highlights, learning is not the main goal for the seconded managers, however, it can be an additional bonus to company allocating managers to participate in the relief operations. As defined earlier, informal learning is “learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and non-institutionalized” (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, 4). This is exactly what happens when seconded managers are asked to perform a variety of tasks, frequently changing in priority, by a list of different actors involved in the success of the disaster relief operation.

The experience of the secondments itself is an opportunity to learn. Over 70 percent of the learning that takes place in the workplace is considered to be informal, through experience and collaboration, from the participation of different projects and assignments (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Day, 1998; Leslie *et al.*, 1998; Lohman, 2000; Enos *et al.*, 2003; Skule, 2004; Ellinger, 2005). The events approach provides the additional benefit that learning that takes place in the network is considered cumulative even if the actors learning are different at every event. This means that the partnership members learn and improve from one event to the next, thus the longer a company invests in secondments for their partnerships the more lessons learned they should be acquiring over time.

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

To address the research questions listed earlier, this thesis is composed from a combination of peer-reviewed essays, a summary of the literature used throughout the research, a description of the research methodology and design, and a discussion of the conclusion with its managerial implication and limitations. All of these elements are presented in the following order to reflect the research approach adopted: First, the current section that introduces the problem statement and the main concepts and positioning of the thesis. Second, a section dedicated to the positioning that discusses the methodological approaches and research paradigms. Third, a section dedicated to the motivations and shortcomings of the existing research where each of the concepts is discussed in greater detail. Fourth, is a section on the research design, quality and generalization. Fifth, is a section on the thesis contributions, which includes a section on how each essay was performed and how their respective contents address each of the research questions and the actual framework and its contribution to theory and managerial implications. To conclude there is an overall summary, and self-criticism linked to avenues for further research.



Figure 2 Structure of the Thesis

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the thesis. The above figure is complimented by the annexes, which include the three peer-reviewed essays that form the basis of this thesis. Chapter 5 provides in greater explanation of each of them, and their content. Each of the essays has been designed and published as the results of each the research stages completed here.

Essay 1: How do partnerships develop in disaster relief operations? (See Appendix 2a)

- Tomasini, R. M. (2012). “Humanitarian Partnerships—Drivers, Facilitators, and Components: The Case of Non-Food Item Distribution in Sudan”. In Kovács, G., & Spens, K. M. (Eds.), *Relief Supply Chain for Disasters: Humanitarian, Aid and Emergency Logistics*. pp. 16-30.

Essay 2: How do partners interact during a disaster relief operation? (See Appendix 2b)

- Tomasini, R. M. (2012) “Humanitarian Private Partnerships as Events Based Networks”. Book to be published by the Academic Council of the United Nations. Palgrave.

Essay 3: What can seconded managers learn from secondments to disaster relief operations? (See Appendix 2c)

- Tomasini, R.M. (2011), “Helping to Learn? Learning Opportunities for Seconded Managers”, *Journal of Global Responsibility*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 46-59.

2 POSITIONING: RESEARCH PARADIGM AND APPROACH

Problems are perceived and created through paradigms, i.e. “different types of ultimate presumptions” (Arbner and Bjerke, 1997, 10). Arbner and Bjerke (1997) explain that the ontological and epistemological assumptions held by the researcher constitute the paradigm at the base of this research. This chapter focuses on the methodological approaches and their impact on the research paradigms.

2.1. Methodological Approaches

Approaches may differ by the order in which theory, empirical research, and hypothesis or propositions appear. Spens and Kovács (2006) distinguish different research approaches by where does the process start, its aim, and when a hypothesis or propositions is developed and applied. They also consider if the research process started with theoretical advances or with an empirical study; if it aimed to develop or test theory; at what point it states a hypothesis or propositions; and finally, the type of research methods used (Spens and Kovács, 2006).

Research producing new knowledge can be either inductive or deductive in different stages (Hyde, 2000; Spens and Kovács, 2006). The inductive starts with observations to establish generalizable conclusion about a subject under review in order to test theory. A contrario, deductive research starts with a theory or generalizable conclusion that is tested through observation of a well-defined set of variables. A third approach, abduction, is less popular combining iterations of deduction and induction in an erratic pattern.

The approaches used in here should be analyzed by stage and level. Figure 3 and table 2 describe the direction, overall aim, and questions. The latter was done through inductive reasoning combining observations, experiences, and general knowledge of the sector and the issues. The rest of the research was deductive, using literature to refine the framework, and empirical data obtained from the humanitarian sector. For example:

- first stage a case study was drafted using primary data to get a better understanding of partnerships in the humanitarian sector. The protocol for data collection and the conceptual basis for the data analysis is anchored on literature on supply chain partnerships;
- second stage uses secondary data to develop case studies that incorporate the use of event networks in the discussion about humanitarian-private partnerships and the secondment of managers to disaster relief operations;
- third stage and essay uses concepts from the management literature to conduct content analysis on case studies describing tasks performed by humanitarian logisticians in disaster relief operations.

Each one of these research stages is treated independently even though they consecutively build upon each other with the results of one stage providing input for the next. The coherence among the essays is designed following purpose-sequence logic (Handfield and Melnyk, 1998) as discussed later.

Table 1 Step-by-Step Research Process and Content Details

	Motivations Based on observations, and professional experience motivated to explore the learning opportunities in the partnership	Data Sources Independent consulting missions, and readings.	First Step Observations, interviews, discussions, and experience	Second Step Define the research questions, aim and objectives based on information gathered	Third Step First draft of the framework suggesting that private companies can use humanitarian relief operations to learn logistics capabilities	Contribution to Thesis Set the direction of the research and positioning the research questions, aims, and objectives	Result Research Proposal highlighting a general idea about the framework	Output Define the Research Questions, Aims and Objective
Preparation (EDUCATIVE)	Identify <i>Where the drivers and success factors of partnerships in the humanitarian logistics?</i>	Primary - UNJLC Student consulting mission	Identify the issue with the management team, use literature to define and position the issue, use concepts from the literature to define the protocol for data collection (interviews, reports, and observations)	Choose and apply the Lambert and Knemeyer framework to the case study	Analyze the data from the case study using the partnership model from Lambert and Knemeyer to understand how partnerships work in the humanitarian sector	Get a better understanding of how partnerships in the humanitarian sector work for disaster relief operations	Drivers, Facilitators and Components for Humanitarian Partnership	First Essay - Peer reviewed and published by ACUNS
Phase 1 (EDUCATIVE)	Explain <i>How these partnerships can be structured to integrate private partners?</i>	Secondary - Publicly available reports on the LET's partnerships and their members	Aware of different public-private partnerships, looked at different models for partnership interactions to define who the private sector can work with in disasters	Choose and apply the Heide and Trossos event-networks model to analyze the partnership and the secondments	Analyze the partnerships through the lens of the event-secondments function	Introduce the private sector as a partner for disaster relief and through the lens of events how they can participate in disaster relief.	Event-networks as a form of private-humanitarian collaborations for the secondments	Second Essay - Peer reviewed and published by HUMLOG
Phase 2 (EDUCATIVE)	Understand <i>Why's cross learning important for partnerships?</i>	Secondary - Publicly available versions of the INSEAD Cases on UNJLC	Select a list of case studies of disaster relief operations and developed a list of tasks of logistics operations	Choose and applied Minzberg's definition of managerial roles to code list of logistics tasks (content analysis)	Understand the learning opportunities that can take place during the secondments	How and What logistics tasks can seconded managers learn from their secondments	List of managerial roles and informal learning opportunities stemming from secondments	Third Essay - Peer reviewed and published by JGR
Phase 3 (EDUCATIVE) Kappa	Explain the research process and the contribution emerging from the three article	Sum of the 3 essays	Using additional data from secondary sources and literature to define the concepts and the links that make up the framework	Finalize the conceptual model using the data from the case studies and the literature. Further validated with the Labadens interviews			Secondment Framework for Informal Learning - revised version of the research proposal but with theoretical arguments supporting it	Finished thesis for submission and defense

The research process is also considered both deductive and inductive. Deductive as each of the essays began with a series of general conceptual and theoretical starting point (upward vertical flow in figure 3). Inductive in the way each essay is used as input for the next stages to motivate the empirical data and research (horizontal right bound flow in figure 3). This process is illustrated below (figure 3), describing how literature and data were constantly used for the production of each of the essays to answer all three research questions and produces the content of the framework. The processes can be interpreted as horizontally inductive, vertically deductive.

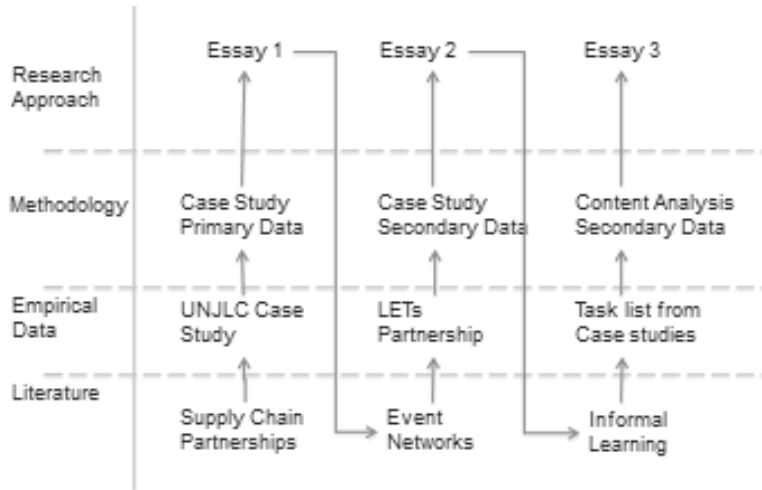


Figure 3 Research Stages, Process and Approaches (Horizontally Inductive, Vertically Deductive)

2.1.1. Actors vs. Systems Approach

Vafidis (2007) recalls that logistics doctoral research is a combination of both academic and practitioner interaction. The different types of logistics research may differ for each researcher based on their research settings, leading to different approaches and end results. In this case the setting of humanitarian logistics, partnerships and learning have led to a clear inclination towards an actor-network with a base on the systems approach (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997). As mentioned earlier in the discussion about the reality the actors approach enables a focus on the individual interaction of the seconded managers and their learning experience, while the dominant systems approach serves as a base to focus on the structure of the partnership and how that structure enables the actors to interact and learn from it.

Actors Approach

Gammelgaard (2004), interprets Arbnor and Bjerke's (1997) approaches for logistics research describing the use and implication of the actors (and systems) approach. She reiterated that the actors approach uses theory to interpret, and understand contextual knowledge using qualitative research methods focusing on people (unit of analysis). Data analysis is done through interpretation with the researcher typically being inside

the context under analysis. Interpretation is used here as a mean to understand the relations among the different interpretations made by the different actors (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997). The relations sought are among the different interpretation to see how they mutually affect each other to collectively develop a picture of reality that leads to understanding.

The seconded staff and their learning experience in the field are seen here through the lenses of the actor's approach, whereby the individual interpretation of their experience is collected and analyzed. Their interpretation of the logistics tasks carried out in the field during the disaster relief operations are crosschecked with the results of their actions to develop an understanding of their experience. Arbnor and Bjerke (1997, 158) explain that main aspect of the actors approach is the concept of intentionality which "provides purpose to the experience" and makes the actors active players in the context where reality is created. Intentionality is applied at the actor level thus interpreted here as their intention to participate in a secondment for a disaster relief operation. The framework proposes that this be complimented with the intention to learn as well from their experience, which in the research findings is only a tacit goal. Internationality is also used here as a basis for diagnosing the actor's experience. This means that pre-understanding, understanding and post understanding are equated with the periods in the framework of: before secondment, during secondment, and after secondment.

Gammelgaard (2004) also notes that the actors approach is less prominent in logistics research, unlike the systems approach, which is the predominant norm. However, the actors approach has been used to study how supply chain organizations and implementations happen in organizations given its ability to bring closer strategy and implementation, as well as research and practice. Hence, the choice to incorporate this approach into the research is based on the implementation of the strategy. Moreover, it addresses the actor-driven behavioral components of the supply chain partnership, lesser known in this field's literature.

In theory, when using the actors approach, "the ideal is to understand and construct the future from within, the researcher being a part of the research reality" (Gammelgaard, 2004, 481). As the second essay will describe later, the network of actors may include humanitarian organizations as well as private companies, governments, military, media, and the beneficiaries themselves all interacting at various levels. While none of the data collected was from direct and physical presence in the field. Numerous interviews were carried out with seconded managers and humanitarians immediately before and after their secondments to disaster relief operation following case study research design.

Systems Approach

The systems approach uses theories to interpret knowledge about concrete systems. This is done through the use of qualitative (and/or quantitative) case studies, which in this case have served to map the partnership, their boundaries, and feedback mechanisms with the researcher observing from outside the context under analysis (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997; Gammelgaard, 2004). This approach serves as a lens to understand the structures of the partnerships designed to implement the secondment of staff to disaster relief operations. Data for this portion of the research has been obtained as an outsider without active involvement in the design or implementation of these partnerships.

To check the appropriateness of the systems approach, Arbnor and Bjerke (1997, 126-128) list several characteristics and behaviors of a system fitting the empirical data used (See table 2).

Table 2 Characteristics and Behaviors of a System Adapted to Humanitarian Disaster Relief Operations (Inspired on Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997)

Variety	There are several distinguishable components in the systems in terms of actors (humanitarian organization, private companies, governments, military, etc.) interacting in a variety of ways (before, during and after disaster; on-site and off-site) at different levels.
Depiction	System is able to reproduce its position for every disaster creating event networks. The humanitarian community arrives at every disaster and recreates a system of interaction that fits with the actors and needs.
Adaptability	The system is constantly adapting to the changing needs of the disaster relief operation, which dictate the priorities, type of actors, and resources to be deployed. For example, through the different stages of the disaster relief operation they may focus on debottlenecking the supply chain, developing pipeline visibility, and creating reports on the contents of the pipeline, and the performance of the delivery activities.
Existence of Tension and Conflicts	The dynamic nature of disaster relief operation has it that conflicts (i.e., differences of opinions, ideologies, and objectives) will be present as everything evolves. These tensions will be a source of input to adapt this system to the needs. For example, during the first week the needs may dictate that nurses and other medical staff are a high priority, however, the following week that may change with the arrival of new teams. If nurses keep coming, they should be treated as the highest priority in light of the deteriorating water sanitation issues. Member of the system need to be able to switch and adapt as tensions and conflict change.
System Objectives	During the disaster relief operation, the parts of the systems become interdependent and on their own almost irrelevant. To the environment hosting the system, the seconded private sector manager is a humanitarian, and the humanitarians are the conglomerate of all agencies pursuing the same purpose and not each individual agency.
Management System	The system does have its leaders who assume the responsibility of leading the interaction with actors outside, but also of coordinating and managing internally. These could be lead agencies, or simply the humanitarian agency best equipped and informed in the country.
Fit	The idea of the 'humanitarian sector' is not to compete, but rather to collaborate and coordinate with other. Thus fit is an essential characteristic, best illustrated by the collaboration that humanitarians are required to have with local authorities and military forces.
Reactions to and in the environment	Fit and adaptability inherently imply reaction to and within the environment hosting the system. More importantly, is that the system takes into account those reactions to adapt its priorities and evolve with the needs. One drastic example of this could be knowing when to leave and hand over the remainder of the relief efforts to the local authorities.
Dynamic conservatism	Due to human nature, the system members may resist change and seek some form of continuity and stability ignoring facts. This is noticed when humanitarian agencies negotiate to define a lead role in some activities or regions (i.e. water sanitation, or food distribution in a region, etc.) and especially when they try to commit to a length of time and magnitude (i.e. for the next year for a population of a million people). This comes with business logic when each actor wants to stabilize their operations and recruit staff and rent space or equipment.
Recipe	Based on previous experiences and cultural sensitivities, the system as a whole adopts a set of beliefs and/or assumptions that determine the behavior of its members. An example to is the segregation of females in Islamic countries, nutritional habits, and family structure.

The third alternative, analytical approach, restricts itself to “a formal logic that is represented by specific judgments that are independent of individual subjective experiences” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 50), and thus ignores the impact of relationships between the individuals. Using the analytical approach would fall short of understanding the problems addressed here since the core of the analysis is built on how managers participating in a network of partners can learn from their counterparts in a different sector.

The systems approach defines that objective reality lives in the mutually independent interaction of the different actors of the system and in the way that those actors are arranged in the system. This approach is particularly evident in the essays where the lessons and learning opportunities are created and exploited through the interaction among the seconded managers. The way they are arranged in the system is dependent on the design and procedures established by the partnership that allows them to participate in the disaster relief operation. This reinforces the position, described in the next section, of adopting the actors approach against a systems base.

2.1.2. Actors Approach to a Systems Base

Regardless of the philosophical discussion, it is nearly impossible to ignore the advantages of the systems approach adopted by the long tradition of researchers in logistics who see the supply chain as a single entity, rather than segmented parts, managing the total flow of goods inventory from the supplier to the ultimate customer (Mentzer *et al.*, 2001). Thus the actors approach here is applied to a systems base, as recommended by Arbnor and Bjerke (1997, 438), who agree that “methodological approaches are rarely used in practice in the absolute forms”. Thus it is not only possible, but in fact desirable to use different approaches in a complimentary way which allows the richness of reality to emerge from the diversity of logics structured.

They also explain that doing so implies reshaping the methodological approaches into each other, where a relative view is applied to an absolute base. Here the actors approach has been chosen as the relative view and applied to a systems base. The actors view focuses on the experience of logisticians from both sectors and the meaning of their actions and experiences while operating in disaster relief operations versus the systems approach which serves to understand the structure of the partnerships and the learning mechanisms enabling seconded managers to be exchanged and to work together in the field. This is noticed in the three essays that compose the contribution.

The first essay describes how partnerships are created in the humanitarian sector and what it takes for them to succeed in fulfilling logistics tasks for a disaster relief operation. It presents the drivers and facilitators for collaboration among the different active members of the event network. This essay concludes that success is dependent on how the actors in the system developed relationships to meet their mutual goal (i.e., debottlenecking of an aid distribution channel, reduction of lead time, increased distribution coverage, etc.). Through their interaction in the partnership, the different actors exchange a wealth of information, which leads into knowledge creation and acquisition. This knowledge is based on the actors yet system dependent, in other words, dependent on the actors’ participation and interaction with the partnership network.

The second essay describes how an event network is created following a disaster with members of a pre-negotiated partnership. The impact of the disaster determines the

specific needs on the ground, their magnitude, and time. These factors help to define which actors need to be active in the event network to meet certain needs. As the essay points out, it is important to note that this thesis focuses on “event” networks, meaning that the network is only active during a specific event and time, and that not all members of partnership need to be active for the network to exist. These concepts and examples lead to the next point of the systems approach description: the actors and their relationship.

The third essay introduces the notion of informal learning in the workplace which enables seconded managers to acquire a set of logistics lessons from the humanitarian logisticians. It analyzes the activities carried out by humanitarian logisticians to generalize potential lessons to be learned from the humanitarians. Overall, this essay supports the idea that purposeful behavior for the seconded managers could be to learn from their humanitarian counterparts informally while working together during the secondments.

Another ramification deals with objectivizing the actors’ experience. The experience of working in the disaster relief operations, and the meaning of it for the actors, becomes an input and recommendations for the system. These inputs are used at the systems level to improve the dynamics of the partnership resulting in better deployment procedures, and hopefully better learning conditions.

Finally, the system provides context to understand the meaning of the actors’ experiences. While actor’s knowledge is subjective and dependent on the interpretation of the individuals, systems develop knowledge that is context based and thus dependent on the conditions of the system. By combining both approaches it becomes possible to capture and combine the personal experience (actors) as a condition for the context in which the system is to be understood (secondment among partners). Thus, knowledge developed here is conditioned by the environments described by the individuals. This is important for disasters considering that each disaster may have distinct operational requirements and environmental factors affecting decisions, resources and activities.

Harland (1996) encourages the use of the actor’s approach and network theories within the systems approach to develop a better understanding of supply chain partnerships. She reaches this conclusion by highlighting that importance of interdependence among the actors in the network of suppliers. Her arguments develop one of the definitions of supply chains: “the management of network of interconnected businesses involved in the ultimate provision of product or services” (p.65), which she critiques by explaining by that most partnerships, or cooperative relations concentrate on linear interactions at the level of dyad, while the supply chain should be interpreted considering the larger and more complex interactions with multiple actors. Her conclusions open to door not only for the coexistence of a systems and network approach to the supply chain, but also to a richer understanding of the interactions in it at both levels and the role of actors in each one of them. By introducing the network perspective Harland (1996) places the accent on the position of the actors in the network, their interdependence, and the resources and activities that they control and perform. Such approach is in line with the views of this thesis and its methodology.

The combination of both approaches enables to complement their shortcoming, as described by their critics. Critics of the systems approach claim that adepts of the approach “cannot see the tree for the forest leading to a tendency for people to experience themselves as system components in the process of solving problems, having information relations among themselves, that is, being defined by the systems”

(Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 429). More specifically those from the actors approach criticize the systems approach for associating the actors too closely to the system and failing to recognize their human individuality. They state that:

“the actions of the actors cannot be derived starting from the system... To claim that business concepts or the psychological needs of the members determine their behavior or that the system reacts to the changes in the environment leaves no room for the meaning and significance that individuals place on their own field of knowledge creation. The meaning and significance are the source of all actors. So the actors approach asserts that we cannot develop any real knowledge on the basis of systemic principles. Instead, we must understand aspects in our environment in terms of the meaning that we bring to them. Otherwise, we will become, in the right sense of the word, meaningless” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 429).

To these arguments the systems creators of knowledge would reply to the criticism that they “do not deny that people in organization must be considered”... and expand that “sometimes there are reasons to look at systems at such a low level of magnification that individual, subjective conceptions enter the picture” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 433) leaving the window open for combination with the actor approach.

On the flip side, critics of the actor’s approach claim that adepts of the approach are “unable to see the forest for the trees” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 433). These same critics claim that actors approach starts from subjective conceptualizations of individual actors thus only leading to subjective knowledge of lesser value to solve problems. More specifically adepts from the systems approach criticize the focus on the individuals by arguing that actors creators of knowledge place delimitations where they do not exist (i.e. the individuals). To this statement the actors creators of knowledge react by acknowledging the importance of interaction among the actors leaving the window open for a combination with the systems approach as well.

The application of the actors approach in a systems base has several ramifications here. For example, in the systems approach, the concept of actors is used to understand rather than explain reality. This means the purpose is more to understand what drives those actors to exist and interact, rather than to explain why they exist at all. This is known as “finality relations” or “purposeful behavior” according to Arbnor and Bjerke (1997, 69). These relations or behaviors are the “forces that influence the system as whole, forces that prove to be more or less purposeful with respect to the particular system” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 66). From the actors approach such purposeful behavior would be compatible with intentionality by looking at the actors intend to assist in disaster relief operations.

2.2. Research Paradigms

Bjerke (1989) describes six different social paradigms, or categories of knowledge, to describe how researchers create knowledge based on their different views of reality. His approach has been chosen for his ability to clearly link the paradigms to the methodological approaches in a continuum. In his illustration of the different categories, he abstains from making independent and isolated descriptions of the different approaches but rather acknowledges the different shades of gray in the range of explaining versus understanding. This is important for the research in that it points out to a wider range of methodological approaches to seek understanding based on the different presumptions of reality applicable to the context and adopted by the researcher.

The six concepts are presented in a spectrum with one end representing objective and rationalistic views aimed at explaining reality, versus the other end representing subjective and relativistic views aimed at understanding reality. The distinction between explaining (objective and rationalistic) and understanding (subjective and relativistic) is important because understanding provides a more contextual approach necessary to understand the learning opportunities created, and the influence of interactions between two or more actors.

Table 3 Social Paradigm Spectrum (Inspired from Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997)

1(Explain)	2	3	4	5	6 (Understand)
Reality as a concrete and conformable to law on a structure independent of the observer	Reality as a concrete determining process	Reality as mutually dependent fields of information	Reality as a world of symbolic discourse	Reality as a social construction	Reality as manifestation of human intentionality

Some researchers refute the difference between explaining and understanding, notably the positivist researchers who have long shaped the dominating stream of logistics research. However, Gammelgaard *et al.* (2001) acknowledge the importance, and the necessity, of going beyond the positivist tradition to create new knowledge in the field of logistics as done here.

Two complimentary approaches are combined at different stages of the research. The systems approach is used throughout as a base. The latter defines reality as objectively accessible (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997). This approach is in line with the second paradigm illustrated above, whereby reality is a concrete determining process that is organically evolving, and in which man is a social fact and knowledge can be created through historical analysis such as interviews, and reviews of historical documents and/or the combination of both for case studies.

The second, and more relativistic approach, is the actors as a relative view applied to the systems base, for which “reality is a social construction” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 54) and in line with the third paradigm illustrated above, whereby reality is mutually dependent on the field of information (i.e. the disaster relief operation and its related tasks) and knowledge is created through contextual analysis given that the actors, organization and environment are all considered to evolve through continuous interaction as they adapt themselves in dynamic networks. This paradigm reflects the conditions of the partnerships in the field that keep changing as the needs and roles of the individuals evolve with the context. This view is suitable and called for considering that “different environment give different systems” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 152), thus reality should reflect that what is applicable in a hurricane relief operation may require some adaptations for a post-conflict relief operation.

Combined, these views of reality acknowledge that each individual is ‘social’ and that through his interactions he develops a concept of reality through what he is able to absorb from the environment thanks to his cognitive filters (concept of science). It also acknowledges that individuals are driven by their ideals to pursue reality (or knowledge) for their survival through periodic exchanges, and the environment evolves as well as it interacts with them through time. In simple terms, the two views acknowledge that individual learning will be based on the interactions of the managers

as the disaster relief operation evolves, and that their own learning experience will contribute to the evolution of the partnership that enable the secondments in the first place. The meeting point of both views will be on the analysis of the events (i.e. secondments to disaster relief operation) which serve as the access points to understand reality in time. For the events both views of reality acknowledge the importance relations a network of informants and the different levels of stability for those relations.

This view of reality is partially in line with the well-established critical realist approach in logistics research that “seeks to understand the generative structures and mechanisms that underlie events” (Aastrup and Halldórsson, 2008, 748). However, as noted earlier, reality is more complex with different sets of data fitting at different points in the spectrum from explanation to understanding. Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010, 102) reinforce this criticism explaining that critical realism “fails to take into account the multiple perspectives to reality that different business communities have”. These differences are particularly relevant here where the views of the business community are combined and confronted with those of the humanitarian sector. Thus the alternative, suggested by Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010), of moderate constructionism is adopted which incorporates multiple community based realities from the different points of view and case studies while remaining epistemologically, ontological and methodologically close to the well-established critical realism. In other words, reality may exist contextually (ontological point of view), and it is possible to understand it through community-based empirical data.

Lewis and Grimes (1999) also confirm the choice for multiple paradigm lenses to collect and analyze data, which they claim helps to preserve the diverse representation of complex organizational and business phenomena, and it is particularly suitable for multistage research where the paradigms can be used in parallel or sequentially as done here. Sequential studies have been used to purposefully inform each other using the output of one study as the subsequent input for the next. The complimentary and sequential application of these lenses provides the opportunity to develop the framework integrating a wider variety of theories that depict the context in which reality is to be understood (i.e. informal learning, event networks, and humanitarian logistics).

3 INFORMAL LEARNING IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS

This thesis is motivated by the growing need in academic research to develop a better understanding, both in theory and practice, of humanitarian-private sector relations. This motivation is enhanced by the possibility to explore the subject with a combination of concepts and theories from different disciplines towards which humanitarian logistics can contribute even more in return.

The managerial concerns of partnership managers reflect the outcome that their company seeks from seconding staff to disaster relief operations. The managerial concerns coincide with a gap in the existing academic literature of humanitarian logistics, event networks, and informal learning which have been used to develop the framework. The literature on humanitarian logistics, as mentioned earlier, has yet to look at the learning opportunities from secondments, and is still growing and developing in terms of partnerships. More work has been done on humanitarian partnerships, looking at supply chain activities, yet focusing less on human behavior and learning according to recent searches. The literature on event networks is also fairly nascent with the majority of the academic works available at the methodological and ontological level. Its application to disaster relief operations has yet to be tested to incorporate into the notion of time and space of the network, the sense of urgency and intensity rooted in relief operations. The latter two points exist in social network and industrial network research but have yet to be integrated into the academic dialogue of event learning, and humanitarian logistics. Finally, the literature on informal learning is also a motivation, as it provides a base of concepts and propositions that fit well with the realities of the humanitarian sector.

Table 4 Conceptual Development of the Framework and Essays

	1. Disaster Relief Operations (3.1)	2. Events Networks (3.2)	3. Informal Learning (3.3)	Essay
<i>1. SCM and Logistics</i>	Logistics partnerships in disaster relief operations (3.1.1)			1
<i>2. Networks</i>	Partnerships with private sector for disaster relief operations (3.2.1)	Staff secondments during disasters (3.2.2)		2
<i>3. Learning</i>	Humanitarians logistics as a source of learning for the private sector (3.3.1)	Secondments as an opportunity for learning (3.3.2)	Factors for informal learning in secondments (3.3.3)	3

This chapter is structured to reflect the research process and development of the framework. First, there is a discussion about humanitarianism and disaster relief operations and the role of supply chains and logistics in disaster relief. This discussion builds upon the content of the first essay. This is followed by a discussion on event

networks and on how they apply to partnerships between companies and humanitarian organizations, more specifically during disaster relief operations for secondments. This discussion builds upon the contents of the second essay. Finally there is the discussion on learning, more specifically informal learning for seconded managers during a disaster relief operation. Table 4 illustrates the progression of the arguments in this thesis as presented in this section. It also describes how each of these meeting points has resulted in a particular essay (far right column).

3.1. Disaster Relief Operations

The term “humanitarian” is frequently used socially and in the media with a rather large scope of connotation. It often encompasses anything that has to do with poverty, suffering, or simply non-for-profit operations. Depending on the ideological background of the individuals it may even contain political or religious connotations, which can change its meaning and context (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009).

In practice, the term can be traced back to the roots of the Red Cross Movement by Henry Dunant following the Battle of Solferino in 1854 when he was marked by the cruelties of war. From his experience, Dunant published *Un Souvenir de Solferino* (1862) as an appeal for help from the international community for the suffering of soldiers. Dunant highlights the need to define a status for neutral and impartial parties that could provide assistance to people in suffering. In his own words he expressed the need for the creation of voluntary aid societies responsible for the wounded during war (Dunant, 1862). In practice this was particularly focused on the provision of healthcare for wounded soldiers. Its application throughout time has evolved to include food aid, and third parties affected by fighting and hostile activities.

Traditionally, over the past decades disaster relief operations have been researched under the point of view of two groups: political scientists or health professionals. The first have focused primarily on the legal framework of humanitarian interventions, and on the political roots and ramifications. They have questioned the role of governments, the relationships with international organizations, the type of funding mechanisms provided by international organizations and their impact, policy recommendations, etc. Historically, this could be explained due to the nature of the crises that we experienced in the last century. Post-Cold War, a great percentage of humanitarian interventions, and or resources allocated to them were related to political issues leading to large population displacements (i.e. Balkans and the Great Lakes are two of the best known examples of the 1990s) and the economic recovery of economies in transition (for example the Marshall Plan or European Bank for Recovery and Development).

Health professionals have raised more operational issues addressing questions about the provision of health services to affected populations. This perspective is closer to the questions of resources and their allocation. Extensions of this focus led to research concerning sanitation, and strategies to prevent diseases. However, the scope remained within the medical area disregarding all other resources (food, non-food items, housing, etc.) and activities of the supply chain (procurement, transport, storage, distribution, etc.). Eventually, lessons from this area began to be generalized with applications to items and activities outside of the scope of the medical supply chain.

One could also argue that research on the operational aspects of relief operations finds its roots in the military, which is partially true as well. The military is not only at the origin of logistics but also a source of detailed information about operations (Tomasini

and Van Wassenhove, 2009). For a long time warfare and military intelligence have gone hand-in-hand with relief operations even if there is a big and dividing difference between them. At the same time, this argument is partially false since the military scope only includes their own operations (within a prescribed and well-defined chain of command and resources), which are not necessarily humanitarian. A separate branch of military research that is closer to our interest is civil-military collaboration, which involves non-military personnel as part of teams dedicated to non-belligerent activities such as humanitarian relief. Still, this is only an aspect of what defined here as humanitarian logistics, and one could argue that it cannot be fully considered humanitarian given that the military is acting under the command of a political body and agenda (i.e., government).

The combination of “humanitarian” and “logistics” is relatively new in academic literature, as well as in practice. Kovács and Spens (2011) summarize its history and evolution by highlighting that logistics has long been disregarded as a central activity in the humanitarian sector with poor investment in technology, resources, and experts. Along with Thomas and Mizushima (2005) they also highlight the poor efficiency and effectiveness of the activity due to its disconnectedness within the organizations to finance, information technology, management, and other fundamental functions of the supply chains.

Despite the growing academic interest on humanitarian organizations and emergency relief operations over the past decade, there is very little to conclude in the academic literature about how humanitarian organizations manage the logistics and supply chain issues they face (McLachlin and Larson, 2011) in light of disasters and their impact.

Today, literature on humanitarian logistics is rapidly evolving with several journals dedicating special issues over the past years and the nascent dedicated peer-reviewed journal (*Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management*) already on its second volume. This helps to formalize the contribution of a growing group of researchers from different disciplines trying to build upon each other’s knowledge. Naturally, this will help over the next few years to consolidate all the research in this topic and identify emerging trends in methodology, consensus on the definitions, and agreement on the topics and theories that will shape the research agenda. All of these benefits have yet to be developed for a clearer understanding of the gaps in the subject.

Throughout isolated articles in the different journals and special issues, the majority of the research has focused on the different stages of disaster relief, processes and performance measurement, coordination and collaboration issues, specific functions of the supply chain, agility and responsiveness, disaster management strategies, and information flow (Kovács and Haavisto, 2011). However, most of the research on humanitarian logistics available today has been guided by practice and managerial issues and is only slowly setting an agenda for humanitarian logistics (Kovács and Spens, 2011). However, the rising number of articles per year, and the forthcoming dedicated journal should help to address this issue in the next few years.

The ongoing evolution of the term “humanitarian” has it that in practice and theory “humanitarian action is now understood in more inclusive terms to encompass both the delivery of relief and other life-saving and life-supporting assistance and the protection of basic human rights. The assistance component of the humanitarian enterprise involved activities such as providing emergency food, medicine, and shelter, helping societies rebound from current emergencies, and strengthening indigenous coping mechanisms to avoid future crises” (Minear, 2002, pp 42). Under international

humanitarian law, and by mere principle, any of these activities considered humanitarian are expected to be free of any agendas and ideologies be political or faith-based.

The term “humanitarian” is linked here to activities carried out by individuals and organizations during the disaster relief operations to attend to human suffering. These activities must adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009), held by relief agencies. In practice, the humanitarian principles define the humanitarian space. Minear (2002, 5) explains the humanitarian space as “the area - political as well as geographical – within which assistance and protection activities are undertaken... [it is] a concept that should be viewed in dynamic and elastic terms, expanding and contracting according to the circumstances”. The humanitarian space depends as well on actions and on the allocation of resources among a long list of political, military, private, and humanitarian organizations. Minear (2002, 4) explains that “each crisis pits the same institutions (the United Nations, governments, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) against the same protagonist (governments and insurgent groups, civilians and military officials) in a continuing effort to find solutions to recurring problems: the obstruction of humanitarian access, the manipulations of relief, inequitable economic relations, the absence of viable and countable local structures”.

The concept of the humanitarian space is closely linked to the concept of “license to operate”, an understanding between the different parties in a humanitarian crisis that acknowledges that humanitarians are the best placed party to assume their responsibility. Like the concept of humanitarian principles, this is nothing new either. In his reflection on the Battle of Solferino, Dunant (1862) expressed as well the need for international principles, sanctioned by a convention that might constitute the basis for organizations providing relief for the wounded. His message was best captured and implemented by a close collaborator, Gustave Moynier, also known as the father of humanitarian law. Together they led, eight years later, the Geneva Convention of 1864 that provided the legal framework and by-laws for the first 21 societies of the Red Cross movement over the following five years. The legal framework complemented a theoretical and practical framework by Moynier, then President of the movement, and Appia, member of the international committee, in 1867 entitled War and Charity that focused more on how the humanitarian principles led to a humanitarian space.

Needless to say that the framework designed by Moynier and Appia has evolved over the past 150 years, through lessons learned from different conflicts, the engagement and ratification of the nation states, and the emergence of the United Nations as a leading player in the humanitarian sector. Suffice to say that the humanitarian space is reinforced by the sometimes political or legal mandate granted to humanitarian organizations. Like the humanitarian space, this “license to operate” is as much physical as it is virtual. In practice it becomes legitimate, not because the humanitarian agencies have a mandate on paper, but because their actions earn the trust of the locals who find them reliable. In the physical sense, the humanitarian space is a zone of tranquility that protects civilians and aid workers from the perils of war (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). In a virtual sense it is something that humanitarians achieve through their relationships and credibility thanks to “decades of experience on the front lines of disasters and in long-term development initiatives... [and to] expertise cultivated in various intervention strategies... [as a result of this credibility]. Their brands generate trust and respect, which facilitate their ability to solicit donations” (Thomas and Fritz, 2006, 117) and work in difficult and remote areas in need.

The evolution and implementation of the humanitarian principles and space help to understand the position of the humanitarian organizations as actors in a supply network where they will interact and exchange resources; collaborate in processes and activities with actors driven by very different objectives and principles.

Logistics Partnerships in Disaster Relief Operations

To achieve their mandate, especially in relief operations, humanitarian organizations must rely on their logistics capacity and function to deliver aid. “Humanitarian logistics is central to disaster relief for several reasons. First, it is crucial to the effectiveness and speed of response for major humanitarian programs, such as health, food, shelter, water, and sanitation. Second, with procurement and transportation included in the function, it can be one of the most expensive line items of a relief effort. Third, since the logistics department handles tracking of goods through the supply chain, it is often the repository of data that can be analyzed to provide post-event learning. Logistics data reflects all aspects of execution, from the effectiveness of suppliers and transportation providers, to the cost and timeliness of response, to the appropriateness of donated goods and the management of information. Thus, it is critical to the performance of both current and future operations and programs” (Thomas and Kopzack, 2005, 2). All these points are obvious in the description of the disaster relief operations in all three essays in which logistics plays a central role in improving the conditions of the affected populations by bringing together different humanitarian organizations in a supply chain. Moreover, logistics “serves as a bridge between disaster preparedness and response, between procurement and distribution and between headquarters and the field; provides a rich source of data, since it is this department that handles the tracking of goods, which could be used to analyze post-event effectiveness” (Thomas and Mizushima, 2005, 60).

The Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) proposes one of the most widely used definitions for logistics researchers: “Logistics Management is that part of the Supply Chain Management that plans, implements, and controls the efficient, effective forward and reverse flow and storage of goods, services and related information between the point of origin and the point of consumption in order to meet customers’ requirements” (CSCMP).

CSCMP’s 2009 definition of supply chain management (SCM) says that SCM encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all logistics management activities. Importantly, it also includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third party service providers, and customers. In essence, SCM integrates supply and demand management within and across companies best reflected in a later definition stating: “Supply Chain Management is the systemic, strategic coordination of the traditional business functions within a particular company and across business within the supply chain, for the purpose of improving the long term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole” (Mentzer et al. 2001, 18).

While there are different definitions of logistics, supply chain management and supply network management, including some that combine and exclude each other, the common thread among them is what Arlbjørn and Halldórsson (2002) call the ‘hard core’ of the concept. They highlight that “the unit of analysis is the flow of material, information and services” (Arlbjørn and Halldórsson, 2002, 27) helping to bring both terms closer to a parallel.

Larson and Halldórsson (2004) take the idea even further and signal that some managers could assume no difference between the terms of logistics and supply chain management and they suggest, as is done here, that both terms could be treated as one discipline. They reach this conclusion after carefully reflecting on the conceptual boundaries of the concept of supply chain management with the intention of understanding the components and limitation of the concept. Having reviewed several definitions of supply chain management, CSCMP included, they identified four conceptual perspectives of supply chain management's relationship to logistics: the traditionalist, the relabeling, the unionist, and the intersectionist.

For the traditionalist, supply chain management is a small part of logistics. This position has historically been maintained by a fading group of organizations and scholars for whom logistics is outside of the firm's activities. Relabeling replaces the term logistics with supply chain management considering that supply chain management is another way of saying integrated logistics. This position is supported by authors like Simchi-Levi et al. (2000) who use supply chain management and logistics networks interchangeably and see no relevant difference, and Gammelgaard and Larson (2001) who noted that in practice, logistics managers fulfill the same responsibilities as a supply chain manager. The unionist integrates logistics into the supply chain as one of the functions. This position is held by authors like Kozeny and Beskow (1999) who explicitly list logistics as one of the functions of the supply chain. The same view is supported by authors like Stock and Lambert (2001) in their description of the eight key business processes of supply chain management. Others like Guinipero and Brand (1996) would argue that supply chain management is not a subset of logistics but rather a broader strategy that includes all the business processes within the firm and its channel.

The cases studies used for the analysis here present different perspectives, with differences illustrated in examples at the tactical level. None of these differences have a direct impact on the learning opportunities for seconded managers, and in fact they all share strong inclinations towards the unionist perspective, in the sense that they look at logistics as merely the flow of goods and thus one of the many activities that a supply chain manager should oversee. However, given the limited or null impact these perspectives have on the learning process this thesis is aligned with the conclusions of Larson and Halldórsson (2004) that supply chain management and logistics should conceptually be treated as equals, even though they each hold unique yet complementary contents at the strategic level.

The discussion about logistics and supply chain is taken even further to the network level here. Håkansson and Persson (2004) conclude from an analysis of interdependence among supply chain actors the need to view the supply chain as a network. They arrive at this conclusion by studying different types of interdependencies in the supply chain (i.e. serial, pooled and reciprocal) and explain that all three can be present in supply chains, whilst the concept of supply chain management in its purest form can only adopt to the first type of interdependencies (i.e., serial). Thus, they invite the complimentary use of the network rationale to incorporate the remaining two types of interdependencies, and the advantages of combining resources and increasing innovation through interaction among multiple actors.

“The supply chain network concept appears to be more complex than the supply chain concept. Supply networks encompass the mess and complexity of networks involving lateral links, reverse links, and two-way exchanges, and include a broad, strategic view of resource acquisition, development, management transformation. Supply chain

management tends to concentrate on more simplistic, linear, and unidirectional flows of materials and associated information, taking a less strategic, logistical perspective” (Harland et al. 2001, 22). Thus, the concept of supply networks seems more suitable to capture the activities of the supply chain in disaster relief operations where complexity and uncertainty prevail.

Humanitarian logistics is defined here as “the process of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost effective flow and storage of goods and materials as well as related information, from the point of origin to the point of consumption for the purpose of meeting the end beneficiary’s requirements” (Thomas and Mizushima, 2005, 60). This definition takes into consideration all the activities that are necessary to fulfill the needs of the beneficiaries such as procurement, warehousing, transportation, customs clearance, and last-mile distribution. It also emphasizes the cost-effectiveness aspect, which is often overlooked in discussions about disaster relief where speed, rather than cost, tends to be the main objective. Even though logistics remains an important part of disaster relief operation, as mentioned earlier, disaster relief operation applies to the logistics during the relief phase only, while the definition provided by Thomas and Mizushima has a wider time range of time.

Harland et al. (2001) describe a taxonomy of supply networks, based on the degree of supply network dynamics and the degree of focal firm supply network influence that serves to identify the activities of the organization is the network. By their taxonomy disaster relief operations would fall under the dynamic, high and low degree of influence type of networks where conditions and processes are always changing, yet the organization has either strong or weak leverage to influence the market conditions (i.e., situation affecting the needs of the beneficiaries). The ability to influence the supply network will vary depending on the size, reputation and capabilities of the organization in the disaster relief operation (i.e., UN agencies, international NGO, local NGO). The higher the level of influence in the network, the higher the ability of that organization to make decisions for the network and to choose their partners. Consider the two levels by thinking about a UN agency coordinating access to the beneficiaries and choosing a partner local NGOs present in the field for distribution versus a medium size international NGO seeking any partner to share truck loads to reach the beneficiaries at a target cost and time.

In either of these type of supply networks processes are rapidly evolving and adapting to the needs with high variations in volumes, demand uncertainty results from changes in the context, the emergence of new actors in the supply network, and substitutes (e.g., coping mechanism enabling the affected population to meet their needs independently). Much like the humanitarian organizations, the supply networks described in these categories by Harland et al. (2001) do not compete on cost but rather on innovation (or the ability to adapt and deliver new solutions). They also explain that to be able to better understand the creation and operation of supply networks such as these two types relevant to disaster relief, it is important to focus on the networking patterns employed by the organizations. For this type of supply networks the integration of human resources and the exchange and integration of new knowledge are crucial networking patterns for their survival. These two activities are in line with the focus on the immersion of seconded staff to learn through experience in a rapidly changing environment.

Humanitarian Logistics: A Developing Field

The magnitude of logistics in the disaster relief operations led by humanitarian organization is difficult to isolate. However, a simple look at the size of the budget invested in disaster relief operations provides a glimpse of the magnitude of the activities encompassed by the humanitarian supply chain. According to Thomas and Kopczak (2005) humanitarian aid from governments doubled in the decade of the 90s reaching approximately \$5.9 billion, and continued to rise after the Indian Ocean Tsunami reaching \$12 billion in 2004. They put this sums in perspective by signaling that the budgets of the top ten aid agencies exceeded combined \$14 billion. Other estimates point to the sum of estimated annual expenditure in the order of \$25 billion out of which \$15 billion are dedicated to logistics (Tatham and Pettit, 2010). The media attention around the operational difficulties of providing aid during the tsunami relief efforts awoke the scrutiny of millions of donors globally who wanted to see the impact of their donations. This scrutiny certainly helped help to move the function up the agenda.

For Van Wassenhove (2006) the tsunami was more than a peak in the funding for disaster relief, but a catalyst to move logistics to the center stage of the humanitarian organizations were it was considered a back-office function, not given without proper attention and underdeveloped. He posits that besides being the most expensive function of a relief operation, logistics is a crucial function to the success of the relief operations (Van Wassenhove, 2006). Nonetheless, logistics has had to face many difficult challenges including deeper organizational issues such the lack of formal career paths for logisticians, high staff turnover, poor knowledge management practice and limited local capacity development according to the Fritz Institute review of the tsunami operations (2005). Parts of this situation has evolved since the tsunami with more professionalization efforts flourishing such as series of training and certification programs, and professional association that aim to formalize and recognize the skills of humanitarian logistics while promoting career opportunities and paths. More specific to supply chain processes, the Fritz Institute noted that supply chains were predominantly managed with manual solutions like Excel spreadsheets, thus limiting their ability to produce reports and track metrics.

“Today's underdeveloped state of logistics in the humanitarian sector is much like private sector logistics was 20 years ago. At that time, private sector logistics suffered from underinvestment, a lack of recognition, and the absence of a fulfilling, professional career path for people performing the logistics function. Over the last 20 years, private sector logistics has found its voice with top management. Under the rubric of supply chain management, it has established itself as a core discipline whose best practices are taught and researched at top business schools and promulgated by leading consulting firms” (Thomas and Kopczak, 2005, 7).

Even though much progress has been done since 2005, with organizations like the IFRC attaining the European Supply Chain Excellence Award and UN agencies investing in state of the art warehousing facilities, the state of logistics in humanitarian organization is still not at par with their private counterparts.

3.2. Event Networks

The first essay proposes that the supply chain, and the interaction of all its members, be interpreted as a network which forms in response to a set of needs defined by the

disaster relief operation. This type of business network is defined as “event networks”. Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2009) make this parallel to humanitarian logistics explaining that disaster relief operations can be thought of as if you were planning the next Olympics without a clear indication of where it will be, how many athletes will participate, visitors attend, and who will contribute with what resources. To accomplish this event, the relevant actors will need to work in a collaborative, relationship-based network that will adapt as more information becomes available at time progresses.

The relationship between the actors is the basis for the network, while the events in business network are interpreted as temporally specific outcomes from the action of the actors (Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008). Human interaction develops the pace of the event. The event focus serves to track at different points in time the evolution of event, and each point to understand how structure has evolved (Madhavan *et al.*, 1998). Change and evolution of the event network is based on the understanding of the event structure as experienced the past, present and expectations of the future by the actors in it (Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008).

Whipple and Russell (2007) propose the concept of an event-oriented relationship that involves “joint planning and decision making centered on critical events or issues, such as identifying where supply chain disruptions or bottlenecks may occur” (McLachlin and Larson, 2011, 34). This concept applies well to humanitarian logistics and partnerships where “joint needs assessments and sharing of assessment information” should help to identify which actors should be mobilized for which tasks (i.e., a local NGO to conduct aid distribution in the affected area, using aid transported by the World Food Program or UNICEF). The second essay presents a detailed discussion about an adaptation of Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) event network model for disaster relief operations. Their model depicts the relationship between the actors and the events over time to show how events from within or outside the focal network create change and adaptation mechanisms. In the adapted model, each event dictates the needs that determine which actors should be involved in an operation.

As Forsman and Solitander (2003) conclude, the concept of networks is used in management research with different variants for different disciplines. Some refer to its application as social network (Burt, 1992; Nohria, 1992; Uzzi, 1997), others for inter-organizational research (Powell, 1990; Nohria, 1992), and some, like this thesis, refer to them as industrial networks (Håkansson and Snehota, 1990; Håkansson and Johanson, 1992; Ford, 2002; Håkansson and Ford, 2002;). Regardless of the variant, the network approach enhances this analysis with its origins and antecedents. According to Tichy *et al.* (1979), there are at least three schools of thought that define the conceptual basis of the theory: sociology, anthropology, and role theory. Sociology contributes with the perspective of human relations, which are inherent in the learning process and the interaction of the members in the supply chain. Anthropology expands on those relationships to understand how they evolve over time, which enables the actors to develop knowledge from their interaction. Role theory defines the contribution of each individual in the relationships, an important element to help understand who is learning and from whom within the supply chain network

The general assumption of business networks is that firms form partnerships to interchange and access resources, such as knowledge, which they do not have internally (Forsman and Solitander, 2003). As defined earlier, event networks are a type of business network that is analyzed by the factors of time and space, both of which can be used to trace and define the network evolution. The ability to do is what makes the event network approach so relevant and important given that disasters happen in very

irregular patterns and degrees of intensity, engaging different sets of actors in a different way each time. The analysis of time and space during the events helps to understand how learning can happen before, during and after the secondments among the partners.

The first essay illustrates the imperative need for partnerships during a disaster relief operation where no single agency can take upon itself to address all the needs. For this reason, Moore *et al.* (2003, 316-317) propose that the “success of humanitarian aid operations ultimately depends on the ability of the organizations to work together. Whether ‘working together’ means information sharing or joint operations and projects, inter-organizational coordination is not simply the product of two organizations choosing to share resources, personnel or projects. It is also the product of the inter-organizational structure [or network] in which the organization exists”. Moore *et al.* (2003) resonates with the view of the humanitarian supply chain presented by here where functions and actors of the supply chain are interpreted as a network.

In addition to providing a foundation to analyze the humanitarian supply chain, Seybolt (2009) proposes that a network approach could give the humanitarian sector a useful combination of market and hierarchical governance. Seybolt proposes that networks are like markets in facilitating horizontal communication and independent decision-making by individual organizations. They are also like hierarchies in attempting to reduce internal conflicts and preserve individual organizations. Network members tend to work collaboratively to plan, implement, and evaluate their activities. All of this could lead to better coordination of humanitarian organizations.

Existing the commercial supply chain literature has also drawn on the network approach. Pathak *et al.* (2009) advise that it helps to understand the adaptability of firms and complexity of interrelations inherent in supply networks. Equally important, according to Podolny and Page (1998), networks foster learning, enable individuals to attain status or legitimacy, they provide members with autonomy, and especially they help to manage resource dependency. The learning that is fostered by the network is an essential part of this thesis, to be addressed in greater detail in the next two sections.

3.2.1. Partnerships with the Private Sector for Logistics in Disaster Relief Operations

Motivated by similar interest for the link between supply chain partnership and their application to the humanitarian sector, scholars have noted that “relatively little has been written to provide specific guidance on relationship or partnership building” (McLachlin and Larson, 2011, 35). Nonetheless, the existing literature confers on the success and failure of partnerships: “partnerships evolve over time and consequently have to be viewed in relationship to the phase they are in” (Knoppen and Christiaanse, 2007, 165). Scholars also agree that in contrast to the economic and technical aspects, behavioral aspects are less understood when in fact they tend to be the cause of more problems in supply chain partnering (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004). By focusing on the behavioral aspects, such as learning among the actors, this thesis considers how actors influence the network through their interactions.

Among the few frameworks that describe how partnerships develop is that of Lambert and Knemeyer (2004), which was used and described in greater detail in the second

essay. Their work proposes that supply chain partnerships are formed when two parties agree on a set of compelling reasons to partner (i.e., drivers) along with a set of supportive factors that promote collaboration (i.e., facilitators). The partnership is then shaped by joint activities and processes (i.e., partnership components), which produce outcomes that are used to evaluate if the partnership meets its expectations. They warn that partnerships are expensive and time-consuming, thus only advisable when the both parties are conscious that they would not be able to achieve substantially better results towards a particular goal without mutual support and interaction.

Even though the Lambert and Knemeyer framework is built with data from the private sector, and its intended purpose used within the private sector as well, the drivers can be easily translated and/or adapted to the humanitarian sector as the example of second essay shows. McLachlin and Larson (2011) support the versatility of Lambert and Knemeyer's framework by explaining that like their counterparts in the private sector, humanitarian supply chains share the same drivers. For both supply chains "it is critical to the get the most out of scarce resources and limited budgets" (McLachlin and Larson, 2011, 35). Rather than differing they propose that humanitarian supply chains have additional sets of drivers such as: "increasing awareness; becoming better prepared for the next disaster; gaining more rapid access to accurate information about what is needed; and providing better security in the field." (McLachlin and Larson, 2011, 35)

Humanitarian-Private Partnerships

"For decades, companies have occupied a secondary place in humanitarian relief, providing goods and services to dominant humanitarian actors contracting their assistance. However, the business community has recently started to respond in an unconventional way to needs arising from humanitarian emergencies, offering more than just logistical support or the delivery of construction materials on a fee basis. This suggests that new forms of business engagement in humanitarian relief may be emerging." (Binder and Witte, 2007, 3) Indeed, they have more than emerged, to become a new modus operandi. The UN, much like NGOs, has developed strategies and policies to engage with the private sector at more intimate levels. In 2000, the UN developed a common framework for UN-Business collaboration, which applies to the whole UN. This was an effort by the Secretary-General to modernize and create fertile ground for UN staff to develop more effective partnerships between the UN and the business sector without compromising the integrity and independence of the humanitarian sector. These guidelines have evolved, leading to several more concrete initiatives tightly linked to UN Global Compact and the UN Foundation in close collaboration with other humanitarian organizations and NGOs.

While one could argue about the large sums of money and resources as a proof of their progress in collaborating with the private sector, one could also cite the examples of what the UN has done to be more welcoming and proactive to attract private sector partnerships. In 2009, the UN revised their guidelines to produce a more prescriptive document explains how to choose a partner, the type of partnerships possible, the communication around the partnership, and the review mechanisms. More specifically to the area of humanitarian logistics and disaster relief, they developed a new website (business.un.org) that serves a platform for companies to get a quick overview of the needs logged by the humanitarian organizations, and to identify how the company can help. During a demonstration of the beta version of the website, several business executives expressed their contentment with this new development while sharing their frustration from the past when they knew nothing about the UN and its numerous

agencies, had absolutely no contact person, let alone an explanation beyond the un.org website. To these executives, these types of initiatives taken by the UN to articulate their position for partnership and needs were a clear and strong sign of the evolution. These are just some examples from a long list of initiatives in the UN and others led and housed at NGOs all over the world. Efforts to harmonize guidelines and facilitate the partnering process have led to parallel initiatives like the Global Humanitarian Platform who developed in 2007 a set of guidelines for partnership as well with the active participation of the International Red Cross Movement, representatives from humanitarian NGOs and the UN.

Balcik *et al.* (2009) define humanitarian-private partnerships mentioned above as strategic partnerships to systematically improve relief chain logistics through resource and expertise sharing. Witte (2005) comments on the evolution of the United Nations towards developing these types of partnerships that helps them to get the “job done”. He explains that “originally conceived as a purely intergovernmental organization, the UN has begun, during the past decade, to reach out to civil society and business in search of new partners for shaping a new world. The gradual and ongoing process of opening and engaging business and civil society is a result of the increasing realization that the UN by itself will not be able to confront the manifold challenges of a globalizing world. In a world of complex and fast-changing transnational challenges, effective international cooperation among governments is certainly more important than ever before. Yet, in order to effect change and improve the living conditions of billions of people in a sustainable manner, partnering with civil society and business is more than just an option” (p. ix).

According to Bull and McNeill (2007) and Witte (2005), partnerships, such as the ones explored here between the humanitarian and private sector, have one or more of the following four objectives: resource mobilization, advocacy, policy and operational. The examples covered here address most of these objectives though with a more significant focus on the operational objective since action is driven and focuses on logistics collaboration and performance. It is assumed for this type of objective, resources like cash and seconded staffs are mobilized, and at times accompanied by funds raised through advocacy programs and awareness building.

A complimentary type of partnership classification suggested by Thomas and Fritz (2006) is based on the actors and the relationship they form rather than the objective. This results in single-company philanthropic partnerships, multi-company philanthropic partnerships, single-company integrative partnerships, and multi-company integrative partnerships. The classification reflects the answers to two essential questions that Thomas and Fritz (2006, 116) suggest CEOs answer when developing a partnership: “First, do they want primarily to give philanthropic donations, or do they want to engage in efforts to improve the aid delivery process at a more systemic level? Second, do they want to foster a deep partnership with a single agency, or do they want to pool their resources with other companies to extend their impact to more aid agencies by joining one of several recently established consortiums?”.

3.2.2. Staff Secondments During Disaster Relief Operations

Secondments to disaster relief operations are considered as the event here. The idea is that based on the needs described by the humanitarian organizations during a disaster, the humanitarians can identify and welcome the ideal secondments from the private

sector to augment their operational capacity during the relief efforts. The second essay goes into greater detail about the focus on event networks and how they relate to partnership in the humanitarian sector. It provides a case study of a partnership functioning as an event network where learning is expected to take place.

Secondments are considered the points in time when the partnership brings together different actors to interact towards a common goal. These secondments can be interpreted as an opportunity to develop the conditions for informal learning for the seconded managers. The secondments provide a unique opportunity for seconded managers to develop skills and competencies essential and important for their survival in their organization and marketplace. The advantage of having a network approach is that individuals learn from each other in multiple ways and interactions. They acquire learning from all the members of the network, but also enrich the network by participating with their input and interaction.

To properly analyze secondments as an event, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of an event. Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) explain that the smallest unit of analysis is two inter-related events (dyad). As explained the second essay, that could be several things: the dyad formed by a company and a humanitarian organization signing a partnership (before the secondment), the dyad formed by the humanitarian organization activating the secondments in response to a disaster (transition into the secondment), the dyad formed by the seconded manager and his humanitarian peer (during the secondment), the dyad formed by the circumstances leading to the end of the secondment. They also point out that an event is the outcome of a human act or nature (non-intentional) such as the decision to partner, a disaster that defines the need for both parties to collaborate, the decision to be seconded to relief operations, the secondment itself, and the end of the secondment. Concerning the actors in the event, Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) define them as being mediators, meaning that each side takes decisions that involve and engage the other as the event ramps up and down depending on the prevailing needs in the field. Finally, they put forth that events have antecedents in previous events. For example, a secondment has the antecedent of a partnership; a partnership has the antecedents of the motivation of both organizations to need a partner. Even unintended natural events have their antecedents: consider the vulnerability factors that interplay for a disaster to occur. Talking about antecedents implies that we are already in the future which itself serves to explain that learning in event networks is constantly happening from one event to the next. This means that every secondment and disaster is not only a learning opportunity for the person seconded but also for the network itself, thus the companies partnering with humanitarian organizations to second staff continue to accumulate lessons over time as they continue to participate in the events. This has been noted in the partnerships analyzed in the second essay, which show that from one event to the next, the company has adapted not only the way they manage the secondments, but also used the secondments to acquire and refine their capabilities. For example, one company refined the timing of the arrival and the length of their secondments to find the window of time that was most productive for their humanitarian partner. Another company has refined over time their commercial offer for high security areas based on the knowledge acquired over time by their staff participating in secondments. By being an active part of the network, learning develops and accumulates even if it is not the same person seconded to every event.

Pless and Maak (2009) explain that similar types of secondments have been tried by private companies like PwC and their program that sends their managers to work in developing countries on social and environmental projects. Their cross-sector

collaboration seeks mutual benefits exchanging the knowledge and expertise of highly skilled professionals for the opportunity to work and learning environment that forces them out of their comfort zone.

Participants in the PwC program are confronted the roots of today most crucial socio economic problems, such as poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and malaria, lack of clean water and sanitation, among others. Participants get the work with these problems and reflect upon what can be done about them while providing their professional services (Pless and Maak, 2009). Citibank is another example of a firm launched a similar program of secondments, as well as companies in the airline industry and consulting.

While the format of the secondment and exposure to experience proposed by PwC, and Citibank (among others) are very similar to the one presented here, theirs, like many others, differ in that their goal is to develop “responsible leadership” rather than management skills. This is not to say that responsible leadership is to be undermined or ignored in secondments. In fact, it should be considered complementary as an area of future research in these cases. Kotter (2001) explains the complementarily nature of leadership and management clarifying that “management is about coping with complexity... by bringing order and consistency to key dimensions like the quality and the profitability of products. [While] leadership, by contrast is about coping with change... by deciding what needs to be done, creating networks of people and relationships that can accomplish the agenda, and then trying to ensure that those people actually do the job” (Kotter, 2001, 86). In other words, when a leader sets the direction, a manager plans the reality checks; when a leader is building the network and aligning the people, the manager is organizing the people to implement the plans efficiently; when the leader is motivating and engaging people, the manager is controlling and building routines to keep the plan from deviating. These examples highlight that leaders and managers have different but complementary roles, and that both can be obtained during a secondment.

Another important difference from the PwC example above is that most secondments organized by companies are designed around predictable settings and needs which is the opposite of disasters. It is important to keep in mind that the disaster relief operations aspect of the secondment is not to be confused with a mission for social sensibilisation, as is the case with many programs designed around volunteer in underprivileged areas. The disaster relief operation is important in here because it holds the conditions to foster informal learning effective.

Focusing on managerial skills during the secondment and letting the leadership skills flourish from the experience is a more pragmatic approach favored here. This position is supported by the literature on change management which explains that leadership is embodied in the process of change. Kotter and Rathberg (2006) explain that when individuals are faced with a sense of urgency, leadership is on fertile ground. They propose that against urgency, teams be guided by people with credibility, legitimacy and good communications and analytical skills to explore the options for change. Subsequently decide what to do, make it happen and stick to it. This process of leading change through action focuses on building leadership skills of the individuals involved through the accomplishments of concrete managerial tasks such as the logistics tasks listed in the third essay (i.e., logistics tasks).

3.3. Informal Learning

“Learning is seen as a natural aspect of everyday work, and work itself is seen as a rich source of learning” (Collin, 2002, 133). This type of experiential and experimental type of learning happens naturally as tasks are performed since knowledge is tacit and embedded in the work routines and activities (Marsick and Watkins, 1997). This type of learning has been chosen as a theoretical foundation for its fit with the network approach and the coherence with dynamic capabilities explored later, which posits that capabilities are embedded in work routines.

“Event networks are learning structures where continuous interaction between events and actor networks and networking take place” (Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008, 335). Thus, as the seconded managers (actors) engage in disaster relief operations, they acquire lessons from their experience which are then used as sources of input to improve and renew the structure, processes and activities, in the partnership at the network level. For example, one company found that their secondments were arriving too soon to the disaster relief area, which leads to a window of time in which they were not operational in the midst of confusion. This personal lesson was fed to the network, and eventually led a set of deployment procedures which include a lag of time for them to arrive at the moment when they can be productive and efficient.

The literature on network learning is rather extensive, yet conclusive overall that networks are an effective and efficient approach to inducing learning, which for the most part is informal, relationship based, action focused, and experiential (Watkins and Marsick, 1992; Marsick and Volpe, 1999; Skule 2004). It usually begins with an internal or external event followed by an inductive process of action reflection and interaction with peers (Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Marsick and Volpe, 1999; Ellinger, 2005). This is reflected in the examples provided where secondments are analyzed as the event, and humanitarian and private logisticians work together through an iterative process of trial and errors to perform their tasks using information from the relationships they have developed on the field. Disasters are ridden by uncertainty, which is actually a contributing factor to informal learning as it pushes the individuals to take risks and experiment even if it leads to mistakes (Ellinger, 2005).

Informal learning is also considered a key source of corporate competitiveness (Skule, 2004) embedding in the processes and routines critical knowledge and know-how for the organization and its members (Zollo and Winter, 2002). This thesis focuses on the learning conditions at work that foster informal learning to develop the proposed framework, as well and the learning opportunities embedded in the routines and tasks performed by humanitarian logisticians attending to disaster relief operations.

While there is no scientific evidence to check or quantify the value from the learning opportunities to the companies seconding their managers to humanitarian organizations, this thesis proposes that the learning opportunities do exist based on the tasks that managers do during their secondments. Furthermore, those lessons from informal learning experience could be an important source of value for the companies. Skule (2004) supports this position with his seven learning conditions most conducive to informal learning at work, all of which are met during secondments by managers immersed in a humanitarian operation.

3.3.1. Humanitarian Sector as a Source for Learning

During his term as the UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, Jan Egeland, noted and expressed to potential private sector partners that “relief efforts can benefit from the innovation, cost efficiency, and ability to make investments for multiple returns that are ubiquitous in successful companies” (Thomas and Fritz, 2006, 117).

Yaziji (2004) provides several examples of companies which could have avoided great losses if they had partnered with NGOs through the design and launch process of their products. He posits that NGOs are a rich source of competitiveness for companies who are willing to make the investment in partnering with them. For example, “large companies know how to compete on the basis of product attributes and price. But NGOs attacks focus on production methods and their spillover, often non-economic effects. Similarly, NGOs are able to convert into liabilities companies’ standard competitive strengths such as size and wide market awareness of their brands” (Yaziji, 2004, 111). If companies are willing to reconcile these different perspectives they may access through partnerships what Yaziji (2004) lists as the strengths of the NGOs: legitimacy, awareness of social forces, distinct networks, and most importantly for our discussion, specialized technical expertise. By targeting the latter, Yaziji (2004, 115) explains that companies may accelerate innovation due to the idea that credible NGOs will hold companies to “higher standards than the firms are able to hold themselves”.

Specifically to the humanitarian sectors and disaster relief operations, Tatham *et al.* (2010) explain that humanitarian logisticians use similar skills to their private sector colleagues. They describe the skills in four categories (general management skills, problem-solving skills, interpersonal/people management skills, and functional logistics skills) using the model developed by Mangan and Christopher (2005). However, they posit that in addition to those four categories of skills, humanitarian logisticians are required to develop, and are solicited for, skills concerning “ethical conduct, knowledge of donor regulations, working under pressure in harsh environments, premise management, information literacy, ability to work independently, the ability to be a team player, mechanics and maintenance, security management, design and implementation of policies, procedures and standards, coordinating with other agencies, fleet management, training others, and emergency preparedness” (p. 12). While many of these tasks, such as training others, may not seem as rare for a manager in general, what is important here is the context and the resources used to carry out the tasks. Other, less popular tasks among logisticians, such as security and emergency preparedness, will provide more obvious learning opportunities for the average secondment.

3.3.2. Secondments as an Opportunity for Informal Learning

Supply chain partnerships can be a source of learning for partners interacting in the joint projects as described by the Lambert and Knemeyer model. With more specific reference to how they do can be a source of learning, Håkansson (1993) explains that learning among logistics partners can be through experimentation, by accessing a partner’s experience, and/or through joint learning and experimentation. All of these may be considered in the framework depending on the situation and the actor reviewed.

Based on the interviews from the seconded staff secondments are interpreted here as an opportunity for informal learning where both parties exchange knowledge and experience in a common goal (i.e., joint project). In other words, when a logistician or warehouse manager is seconded to a humanitarian organization to help for two weeks during a disaster relief operation he is immersed in a setting with challenging informal learning conditions where he will perform his job for a different purpose. The humanitarian organization automatically gets access to his knowledge and experience, while the manager builds new experience and applications of his own work. While this is all happening, both parties are working together using interchangeable knowledge to fulfill their humanitarian mandate.

The type of network learning described above is in line with Hansen (2002) proposes the concept of “project-related knowledge networks”. Hansen explains that organizational networks are composed of direct and indirect links binding together individuals who hold knowledge to achieve a project. In other words, there are two types of actors in the network: those who hold the specific knowledge and those who the knowledge-holders know. Those who hold the knowledge are present to achieve the specific tasks of the project that brings them together. They are probably from different departments without any formal line of command, and have limited experience working together... but for this project, together, they are the right solution. The others around them, the second type of actors, are the people who build the connections and support the activities of the “knowers” to achieve the tasks for the project. The project-related knowledge network considers both the knower and their acquaintances because it acknowledges the importance of their interaction and their capacity to work together to achieve the project tasks most efficiently. This interaction is very operational and focusing primarily on task execution or simply put in “doing”.

3.3.3. Factors for Informal Learning During Secondments

In an attempt to understand what is important for the learning to take place in the case of the secondments I have taken a look at the temporal constructs of the event, thus focusing on what needs to be considered before the secondment, during the secondment, and after the secondment. “Before the secondment”, focuses primarily on how to align the right individuals with the right secondment opportunity (i.e., how do you know you have a good candidate?) “During the secondment” focuses on what factors will foster the learning, and finally, “after the secondment”, how do you capture the learning? The answers to all these question here developed in the different sections have been confirmed through the interviews carried out with seconded staff, and the accounts of the case studies analyzed.

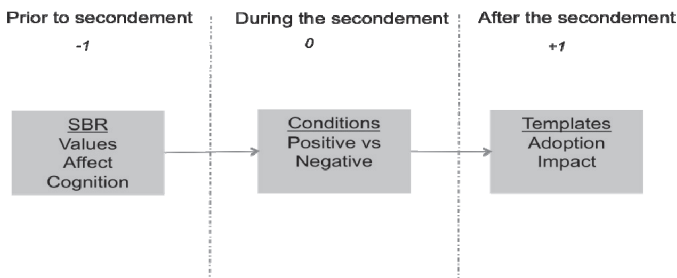


Figure 4 Learning Framework

“Learning” is a personal process. In fact one could argue that organizations do not learn, individuals do. In any case, the point is that for learning to happen there is a strong component of personal engagement by exposed individuals. The type of learning proposed here is heavily influenced by the interaction among individuals during the relief efforts. Private sector managers agreeing to a secondment are above all seeking an opportunity to contribute to society through their engagement. They are clearly looking for a personal experience to ‘do good’, or ‘do no harm’. This type of behavior is also known as socially responsible behavior (SRB): “discretionary decisions and actions taken by individuals in organizations to enhance societal well-being (do good) or to avoid harmful consequences for society (do no harm)...This requires the capacity to take into consideration the interdependencies and the multiple, often conflicting, demands of various stakeholders” (Crilly et al., 2008, 2).

Before the Event (-1)

The definition of SRB is used here to identify before the secondment mission whether the candidate has the antecedents to invest in the opportunity and learn, and during the secondment mission as a facilitator for the learning process. The model proposed by Crilly *et al.* (2008) lists a set of non-exhaustive psychological characteristics for SRB grouped as: values, affect, and cognition. Under values they propose a combination of self-transcendence, or the “values that motivate people to transcend selfish concerns and promote the welfare of others” (Schwartz, 1992, 43-44) and self-enhancement, or the “values that motivate people to enhance their personal interest” (Schwartz, 1992, 43-44). Under affect, they propose a combination of positive and negative affect, that is “the tendency to experience pleasant or unpleasant feelings” (Crilly *et al.*, 2008, 4) guilt, and shame. Values contribute to cognition which they define as a combination of moral reasoning, economic reasoning, reputational reasoning and legal reasoning. In greater depth these psychological characteristics could be considered as preliminary requirements for the seconded managers to be open to the experience and eventually benefit from the learning opportunities. This link, however, should be considered as a point for further research to determine the correlation between the psychological characteristics and learning. For this the correlation is assumed supported by the idea that motivated employees see “learning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage” (Ellinger, 2005, 390).

Another important issue to consider before the secondment is choosing the right candidate. Considering the cost involved in seconding staff, and the opportunity cost of having the person absent and change through the experience individuals chosen by the organization are considered in this thesis as high-potentials or at least a good long-term investment. “For the high-potential employee, whose familiarity with leading edge organizational theory is often the match of university academics, traditional training methods are rarely appropriate. The standard secondment to a backwater operation or an overseas subsidiary, for example, aimed at developing “experience” in some vague manner, is likely to be seen by sophisticated graduate fast-trackers for exactly what it is in all too many cases. Thus, it is important that the secondment be their own initiative, and that they understand how it fits with their long-term career development in the long run within the company.

Identifying these individuals with potential and motivation to learn is not always obvious, and in making the secondment opportunities voluntary, the company is bound to be faced with candidacy from lots of inadequate candidates. To identify those who would be most inclined to take the learning opportunity offered by the secondment, Gritzmacher (1989) outlined nine key characteristics to observe: fast-trackers, as he refers to them, have a unique perception of their occupation and interpret their daily activities as pieces of a career path in which they will be leaders. They have a broad-thinking style that allows them to see global pictures and identify symbols and symbolic

actions. They are also time-conscious and efficient. They tend to be independent, exercising lots of creativity to add value to guidelines, and at times expressing difficulties with pace of teamwork. They engage in tasks with a high level of commitment, and occasionally feel indispensable. They are energetic. They look for tasks that require creativity, are drawn to diversity and variety, and insatiably look for ways to improve themselves.

During the Event/Secondment (o)

Above all, the secondment is an opportunity to perform tasks that are urgent and important to the humanitarian organization hosting the manager. Nonetheless, as it is posited, the secondments are a rich opportunity for the managers to learn, informally, and develop new skills and competencies for their career.

As cited in the third essay, this is the time when work and learning gets done. Secondments assume different management roles and responsibilities in close collaboration with their humanitarian counterparts. As mentioned earlier, Mintzberg (2001) explains that managers have three means to manage: information, people and action.

By using information as their mean, managers can assume the role of communicators or controllers. The communicator can focus internally and externally, where the controller is an internal role. In the role of a communicator managers exchange information internally and externally. In the role of controllers managers rely on information such as directives, systems and procedures to control internal actions. In the cases where managers resort to people as their mean to accomplish goals, managers can act internally as leaders, or externally as linkers. Leaders encourage people around them to take action. Linkers “establish a network of contacts and use it to represent the needs of the unit and influence the people and efforts of the unit externally” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). Finally, managers who meet the actions criterion assume the role of doers at the internal level, or dealers at the external level. Doers monitor action and manage disturbances in crisis. Dealers negotiate and execute agreements with outsiders.

Most importantly for the purpose of the framework, there are factors that influence informal learning present in the secondments important to consider. The accent is placed on informal learning, which comes about on an *ad hoc* basis when the seconded managers fulfill their main task for the relief operation. Given the time pressures and limited resources of a disaster, seconded managers are commissioned to perform timely and punctual tasks in the exchange with others. It is inherent in these tasks and the interaction they require that informal learning occurs. Nelson and Winter (1982) highlight that routines in an organizations hold important knowledge for its members, hence the importance for seconded managers to integrate themselves in the relief operations to assume relevant tasks by doing the routines that hold the knowledge of the host organization.

Consider that “informal learning is integrated in the work and daily routines, often begins with an internal or external jolt or trigger event, is haphazard and not highly conscious, is an induction process of reflection and action, and is linked to the learning of others... [it is] predominately unstructured, experiential, and non-institutionalized” (Marsick and Volpe, 1999, 4). This reflects exactly how seconded managers interviewed felt when arriving at their missions. Some of them refer to this process during a team debriefing as a ‘baptism by fire’ that pushed them to reposition their skills and

knowledge so they could be useful in the new context. A seconded manager, from an international logistics company, explained upon return from his mission that he knew what he could do to help, but had to quickly adapt the way of doing it to fit. Adaptation required talking to others, being receptive to implicit hierarchies and codes evolving among the different agencies and NGOs, and constantly changing to evolving needs, new authority figures getting involved, new information emerging from the field, etc. When asked about how this compared to his regular job, he explained that to be successful in this mission he relied more on using his personal skills to lift up the level of his performance. At work he felt that the corporate codes were so well-defined that he could simply adhere to them to get things done. His future was more linear at work and based on the company culture and career path, whereas in the field it was more erratic. He explained that during the secondment mission he was forced to reflect upon the routines to understand how to work each time. This for him was a source of learning, especially in hindsight.

The example cited above is representative of several others that highlight the importance of the context in which they are placed for learning to take place. This point leads to reflect on the factors which influence informal learning (see table 5), which is recommended here as pre-requisites for the secondment to be successful. These factors are present in most of the cases analyzed, describe the organization's disposition to push the individual to engage on their secondment as a learning experience, and on the secondment mission serving as a productive ground for learning. Ellinger (2005) lists primarily the organizational factors to highlight the importance of a management team that provides time, resources and incentives to their employee in secondment. Skule (2004) lists the condition in the field that make the person "experience" in a manner conducive to learning.

Table 5 Factors influencing informal learning (inspired by Ellinger, 2005 and Skule, 2004)

Positive Factors	Negative Factors
<p>Ellinger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning-committed leadership and management • An internal culture committed to learning • Work tools and resources • People who form webs of relationships for learning <p>Skule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high degree of exposure to changes • A high degree of exposure to demands • Managerial responsibilities • Extensive professional contacts • Feedback from superiors • Management support for learning • Reward of proficiency 	<p>Ellinger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and management not committed to learning • An internal culture of entitlement that is slowly changing • Inadequate or a lack of work tools or resources • People who disrupt webs of relationships for learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural inhibitors • Lack of time because of job pressures and responsibilities • Too much change too fast • Not learning from learning

Following the Event or Secondment (+1)

The main goal following the secondments should be to identify and capitalize on the lessons learned from the experience and transfer them to the company. The seconded manager is expected to develop new knowledge from the lessons learned during his secondment. It also proposes that the lessons be captured by the organization building on the postulate that organizations learn through their individuals.

Knowledge transfer is understood as the process of identifying, capturing and maintaining routines for replication in a new setting (Szulanski, 2000; 2003). It is a resource-intensive process which demands explicit managerial attention to succeed (Szulanski, 2000; 2003; Winter and Szulanski, 2000). Szulanski (2003) outlines four stages for the transfer, namely initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration. Concerning the type of knowledge, this thesis does not make the distinction between tacit or explicit knowledge assuming that both will be transferred during the experience and eventually be analyzed to fuel the development of new dynamic capabilities in the firm.

Contrary to 'informal learning', where measures and proper indicators are missing, the literature on 'knowledge transfer' points to two measures for the effectiveness of knowledge transfer: (1) level of adoption of the template, and (2) improved performance following the adoption (Jensen and Szulanski, 2007, 1718). In other words, the companies seconding managers to humanitarian relief operations should be able to identify potential lessons from their managers' experience in a template, adapt and adopt pertinent ones, and measure the impact they have in the company to measure the learning part from the secondment.

To make the transition from the learning done by the individual and the learning captured by the organization, the focus is now shifted from the individual learning to dynamic capabilities in organizations. This transition is supported by the arguments presented by Winter and Szulanski (2000), which posit that dynamic capabilities may evolve from the replication of knowledge in the process of transferring the latter. Zollo and Winter (2002) explain that organizations learn through their learning capabilities and replication of experience and knowledge. The learning capabilities are defined by Teece et al. (1997, 516) as the "firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly-changing environments". These dynamic capabilities help to question and revise operating routines that the firm uses to keep functioning.

Organizational knowledge is said to evolve in a cyclical way which starts with external stimuli which set a variation stage where individuals come up with a set of ideas to solve old problems with a new approach, or address new challenges (Zollo and Winter, 2002). The framework developed here proposes that following their secondments, managers be purposely exposed to this type of reflection of opportunities where they can use their experiential and tacit knowledge to propose new ideas and create the stimuli. This falls in line with the literature on dynamic capabilities that points to a period of reflection and internationalization for the individual post-mission. An example from a seconded manager interviewed illustrates that upon return to his department, his supervisor asked him to revise the procurement procedures and propose a set of guidelines and criteria for a fast-track emergency procurement process, which the country offices could use to request support from the headquarters in exceptional circumstances. Another example was the reorganization of a warehouse to improve use of the space and reactivity.

Knowledge articulation can take the form of discussion, or debriefing of performance evaluation. The purpose of this is to allow the individuals to share their experiences, and, through a constructive and educated discussion, identify the causal relationships behind the lessons learned as well as the importance of those lessons (Argyris and Schon 1978, Duncan and Weiss 1979). It is meant to identify and transfer “know-why” and “know-how”. For example, the manager cited above was the subject of a meeting with his management team in which he explained the tasks he performed during his secondments and what he learned from them. During the discussions, other participating members of the meeting helped him to reflect on how important those lessons were to their organization and what the key causal elements were. The participants highlighted that in no way was this meeting intended to be an evaluation of the subject’s competencies and performance but rather a dialogue of fresh new ideas.

The subsequent set of steps in the organizational cycle, the knowledge codification, facilitates the diffusion of existing knowledge (Winter, 1987; Nonaka, 1994; Zander and Kogut, 1995), as well as the coordination and implementation of complex activities (Zollo and Winter, 2002). This can take the form of designing a manual, guidelines, operating protocol, company rules or whatever normative equivalent the organization has adopted to capture, replicate and harmonize knowledge embedded in routines.

The result of the codification is what Jensen and Szulanski (2007) would refer to as templates. They suggest that for knowledge to be successfully transferred the experience of the seconded manager should be turned into templates that provide empirical support to enhance the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The term template is used by Szulanski (2000) to refer to a detailed account of the experience from which critical aspects of the routines can be extracted; along with the details of how the work is executed; against which challenges; and the relationship to other variables that may affect the expected outcome. These templates capture the uniqueness of each situation, a relevant point in disaster relief since no two emergencies are alike. The templates serve to identify what is adaptable and transferable for future uses. Ideally, the template will also serve to highlight constant and variable indicators that may be used to measure the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer.

Transferring knowledge between the two sectors is considered here to develop sustainable partnerships that will help to augment the logistics capacity of humanitarian organizations responding to a disaster. As this chapter develops, disaster relief operations can be seen under the lens of event networks to study informal learning conditions. The next chapter discusses the research design and tools used before entering into the details of the research contribution and the framework developed here for informal learning during secondments.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN, QUALITY, AND GENERABILIZABILITY

This chapter focuses on the addressing the questions of what kind of methods were used to understand the world under study (research strategy) going into the details on the type of qualitative research employed, the use of case studies, secondary data, and content analysis. It also discusses how the data was accessed and the biases related to its collection and analysis. It also addresses the criteria for judging the quality of how these methods were applied, and the generalization.

4.1. Research Strategy

In addition to helping to define the problem, the paradigms and type of research questions help to determine the methodology to be used in the research analysis. Methodology, not to be confused with the methods, focuses on the ways (i.e., methods) that could be used to better understand the world, and to describe a specific issue (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Methods are tools that serve to facilitate the data collection and analysis process described in a methodology. Methods can be divided into quantitative and qualitative based on the nature of the data collected and the analytical tool applied. Qualitative data and analysis predominate here, a choice that will be explained later in this chapter.

Another important distinction to make is that of methodological approaches. They are meant to decide when and how to use the various methods to develop knowledge. These approaches enable the researcher to identify the different assumptions held about reality in the process of using the methods for the methodology. “Different methodological approaches make different assumptions about the subject areas. This means that when people apply the different approaches in practice, they have to proceed differently when trying to understand, explain, and improve business, depending on the approach used...you can never logically or empirically determine the best [methodological] approach. This can only be done reflectively, by considering a situation to be studied and your own opinion of life” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997, 2 and 5) with plausible and motivated choices.

Research Stages

Much like the process described earlier with the research questions, “the research process is not a clean-cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time” (Gill and Johnson, 1991, 3). Karlsson (2009) explains that finding the fit between the problem, method and contribution may take several iterations, as the researcher discovers that the question could not be answered with a given data set of method. Hence the acknowledgement that the research strategy evolves over time as new data is generated, as more literature is considered, and as new methods and methodologies are incorporated. Karlsson’s explanation captures well the different research stages of this thesis.

“The goal of writing published research seems to be to make it appear as if the researchers knew along the way what they wanted to do and that they found what they expected... but is unlikely that most of us can. Perhaps, *expost* we believe that we should have known better, but we think that published research should reflect the

learning that did occur, and why and how researchers adapted their method(s) to the investigation.” (Malina *et al.*, 2011. 67). The path to conducting exploratory research is a multi-step path with multiple discoveries and uncovers a wealth of additional, and often enriching, information. Thus, to understand the different steps of this study, it is important to keep in mind how the research process evolved through the three consecutive stages.

About Qualitative Research Methods

Ghuri and Gronhaug (2005, 202) explain that “qualitative research is particularly relevant when prior insights about a phenomenon under scrutiny are modest, implying that qualitative research tends to be exploratory and flexible because of ‘unstructured’ problems (due to modest insight).” This is exactly the case with partnerships in humanitarian logistics given the current state of the academic literature on the subject and limitations that researchers have faced over the past years in accessing reliable data in the field to draw analysis and conclusions.

“Qualitative research typically answers research questions that address ‘how’ and ‘why’, whereas quantitative research typically addresses ‘how often’ and ‘how many’... [it also] includes context and adds understanding that numbers alone cannot” (Malina *et al.*, 2011). As the research question points out, the focus here is not about the frequency or magnitude of an issue but rather about the factors around the issue and what kind of relationship exists among those factors (Yin, 2002).

But as Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain that it is rarely enough to define the research as “qualitative”. Instead they invite researchers to describe the type of qualitative research done. Tesch (1990) presents four categories of qualitative research based on their interest. The first focuses on language; the second on discovering regularities; the third in discerning meaning; and the fourth in reflection.

This thesis assumes the third category which uses case study research and methodology to discern meaning in the area of cross-sector partnerships. This choice is supported by Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) who argue that the analysis of qualitative data provides research questions meaning and understanding. For them qualitative data is the context or light in which the questions can take a specific meaning. Under that logic, partnerships in a humanitarian context take a different meaning. The humanitarian context dictates that these partnerships are not profit-driven, but rather value-driven (i.e. attend human suffering), and they are structured around needs emerging from isolated and non-linear events (i.e. disaster relief operations).

Malina *et al.* (2011) also advocate the need for qualitative research to disclose their research process to reassure the reader that research bias does not exist. Doing so entails enquiring if the conclusions depend on the subjects and conditions or on the researcher? If the researcher is able to critically develop valid descriptions of the phenomenon, and support it against contrary evidence? Together the questions are aimed to make more explicit the researcher’s biases.

About Multimethods Research

To go beyond traditional contributions and adapt to contemporary challenges of the supply chain, researchers may opt to enrich their analytical toolkit with multi-disciplinary and multimodal research (Sanders and Wagner, 2011). Indeed, this thesis is no exception to this trend. Humanitarian logistics is heavily influenced by contemporary issues such as the speed of information and communication, the

complexity of dealing with security issues and disruptions, access to and allocation of qualified skills and resources, the challenges of forecasting and predicting supply and demand, etc. All these demand a more comprehensive set of approaches that consider a wider set of both qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources. As a consequence, the analysis of such a diverse data set also demands a combination of methods as done here (case study and content analysis).

4.1.1. Use of Case Studies: Tool and Methodology

In a comprehensive literature review of articles appearing in the five top tier logistics and SCM management journals (Menachof *et al.*, 2009), case studies are noted to be the most frequent form of methodology used in SCM/logistics research using learning and network theory, and specially for the data collection and analysis in new areas of research (Defee *et al.*, 2010). “To cope with the growing frequency and magnitude of changes in technology and managerial methods, operations management researchers have been calling for greater employment of field-based research methods” (Voss *et al.*, 2002, 162) such as case study research. The adoption of case studies into business research is consistent with a custom of using real-life cases in business teaching. Moreover, the use of case studies network research is what Gummesson (2007, 227) calls “birds of a feather” by arguing that case study research “speaks a verbal language while network theory speaks a nodes-and-links language and provides the foundation for graphical” interpretation of actors within a complex system.

Case studies with rich descriptions of actors, and settings are suitable to analyze and develop conclusions about reality when using actor approach and systems approach (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997). They are also widely used in other management disciplines, notably organizational behavior and strategy (Voss *et al.*, 2002) given their ability to present complex and hard-to-grasp business issues in an accessible, vivid, personal, and down-to-earth format (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Case studies are “process- or means-oriented and help the researcher comprehend why certain characteristics or effects occur, or do not occur” (Meredith, 1998, 442). However, rich and contextual case studies face the difficulty of fitting into one specific ontological and epistemological approach that is able to encompass the variety and complexity of issues that it considers in its narrative. A solution to this problem, adopted here, is suggested by Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010) who propose moderate constructionism as an alternative to critical realism. They argue that moderate constructionism has the added value over critical realism in its ability to integrate multiple views of reality, as needed for the cases designed here.

Yin (2002, 23) builds upon the case study’s ability to illustrate complexity and context by defining them as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Meredith (1998, 442) provides a richer definition of case study research: “A case study typically uses multiple methods and tools for data collection from a number of entities by a direct observer in a natural setting that consider temporal and contextual aspects of the contemporary phenomenon under study, but without experimental controls or manipulations”. Meredith’s (1998) point is in line with Bonoma’s (1985) concept of ‘perceptual triangulation’, which uses multiple types of data as sources to proof that accuracy of the information collected.

The key message in any of these definitions is that a case study can be considered “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’... [using] multiple sources of information that are rich in context.” (Creswell, 1998, 61). It can include data from “direct observation and systematic interviewing as well as from public and private archives. In fact, any fact relevant to the stream of events describing the phenomenon is a potential datum in a case study, since the context is important” (Leonard-Barton, 1990, 249).

As a method, using case studies “allows the much more meaningful questions of why, rather than just what and how, to be answered with a relatively full understanding of the nature and complexity of the complete phenomenon... it lends itself to early, exploratory investigations where the variables are still unknown and the phenomenon not all understood” (Meredith, 1998, 444). By acknowledging the unknown and leaving room for unexpected discoveries within the complex systems, case study method enables the researcher to revisit and refine the research question, enrich the theoretical and conceptual framework, and adapt the methodology as each case reveals more facts and evidence. This was particularly important and useful here where several consecutive stages emerged as the case studies evolved and signaled directions. This process of interaction with the data in the case is what both Meredith (1998, 444-5) and Whetten (1989, 491) suggest when they say that in the application of case study methods “logic replaces data as the basis for evaluation... (which) requires explaining the whys underlying the reconstituted what’s and the how’s.” What serves to identify the issue to be researched. This sequence of purpose-question logics helped to build the link between the different variables from each case study emerged as the research progressed from one stage to the next.

The relationship between the different variables and the links of the framework enabled literature and additional triangulated data to be considered and integrated. This approach, proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Voss et al. (2002) was followed by other such as Sousa (2000) who explains in that during their research as knowledge became available through the field work and associated conceptualization, there were recurrent patterns of interaction between issues and concepts in the research framework that was emerging within and across cases. Certain issues and concepts were connected, while others looked random. These patterns influenced the direction of the framework, helping to draft the first versions of the causal networks, which were later amended and refined through more tests against the data collected in the field.

Case studies have been used through all the research stages and in particular for the first stage and essay where a case study was developed with primary data. The first case provided here some clues about the importance of partnerships in the humanitarian sector to accomplish logistics tasks. Further research and (primary and secondary) data confirmed that partnership could and should be considered with the private sector. It also raised questions about the possibility of a sustainable business case for those partnerships for the companies engaging. Finally, the variables pointed out the subject of informal learning as a benefit for the partnership. At each stage, observations, interviews and reports served as a pointer to the next stage of the enquiry. Prior to moving onto the next stage of enquiry, the literature served to confirm the direction, refine the research questions, and set the guidelines for what needed to be collected and analyzed as data. As a tool, each case study helped to reach an empirical generalization or “isolated proposition summarizing observed uniformities of relationship between two or more variables” (Merton, 1957, 95). Handfield and Melnyk (1998) explain that case studies be designed with a research purpose in mind to collect and analyze data in a sequence that leads to theory development. This purpose-sequence relationship is

reflected in here with each essay, and related set of case studies, designed to actively complement each other. Figure 5 below illustrates how purpose was defined for the case studies used in each of the essays respecting the sequence proposed by Handfield and Melnyk (1998).

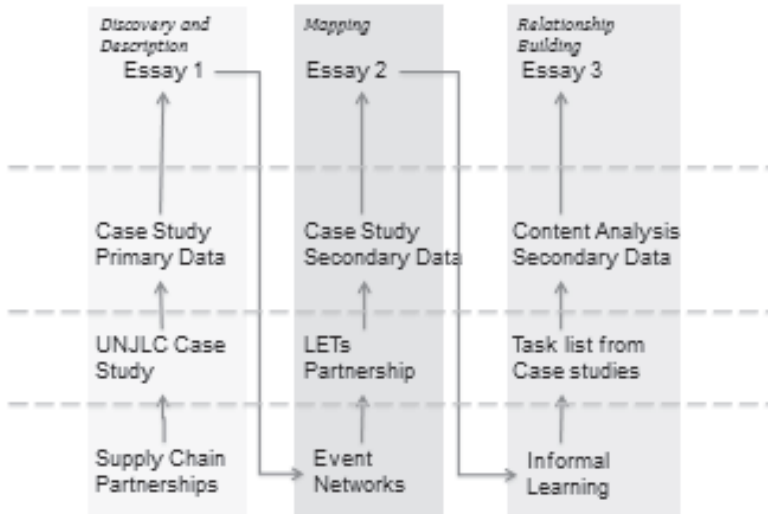


Figure 5 Purpose-Sequence for Empirical Generalization

In the first essay the purpose of the research is to discover (i.e. uncover the research area) and describe (i.e., explore the territory). This is done through the use of in-depth case studies to answer general questions like what is going on in this area. What is interesting about it? What are the key issues? and map the territory using observation, interviews, documents, and focusing on critical incidents. The data is analyzed using categorizations, expert opinions, and through building rich descriptions. The results indicate a set of drivers that facilitate partnerships in the humanitarian sector.

In the second essay, the purpose is to map the subject by identifying and describing key variables and their relationship. This is done through the use of a few focused case studies, in-depth field studies, best in-class case studies with secondary data collected from observations, in-depth interviews, history, and reports that are used to answer the questions of what are the key variables, themes, patterns and categories. The data is analyzed through different mapping techniques. The results support the application of the event network concept to partnerships in the humanitarian sector.

The purpose of the third essay is to build relationships by improving the previous maps by identifying the linkages and 'whys' underlying the relationships. This is done using a few focused case studies, in-depth case studies, and best-in-class case studies to answer the questions what are the patterns? Why should these relationships exist? The data is analyzed using content analysis. The results point to a list of learning opportunities for seconded managers to acquire during their secondments from the humanitarian logisticians.

Case Selection or Sampling

Another important way of looking at the logic behind the sequence of the essays and how they fit with the research design and stages is the discussion of case study sampling. According to Dubois and Araujo (2007) the most important methodological decision in case study research is the case selection or “purposeful sampling” (Patton, 1990). They emphasize that a researcher needs to explain why a case is selected and what makes it relevant to the research question. They explain that cases should be selected based on a dependent variable. Thus, logistics tasks performed by humanitarian organizations during disaster relief operations have remained as the constant dependent variable. The independent variable from one case to the next has been who performs those tasks (essay 1), under what type of collaborative agreement (essay 2), and motivated by what (essay 3).

Miles and Huberman (1994) expand on the choice of case studies by proposing that sampling be done in two actions. First, the researcher should set boundaries about the case studies to focus on given the research question. Then, subsequent cases included in the pool of samples should build upon the initial one to refine the questions, methodology or findings, or simply “provide particular insights into poorly understood phenomena” (Dubois and Araujo, 2007, 179). This is exactly the process taken here where the first case study explores humanitarian logistics partnerships, the second expands on the type of partnerships which work best when interacting with the private sector, and the final case identifies within those partnerships what can be learned by the private sector seconded manager.

Table 6 Essays and Variables Sequence

<i>Essay</i>	<i>Case Sampled</i>	<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Relevance to the Research Questions</i>
1	United Nations Joint Logistics Center non-food items pipeline for South Sudan	Factors driving partnership formation	Drivers and success factors for a partnership in the humanitarian sector
2	LETs Partnership: divided into three mini-cases: UPS, Agility, and TNT	Type of partnership agreements and structure, and types of interventions in relief operations	How partnerships should be structured to pull from the private sector available resources based on the needs of the humanitarian organization during a specific relief operation
3	Content Analysis of collection of publicly available case studies from INSEAD on humanitarian logistics	Type of managerial tasks undertaken by the humanitarian logisticians	What seconded managers can learn through their secondments?

Table 6 presents in greater detail the cases that were chosen for each essay used here and the relevance of the cases and essays to the different points in the evolution of the research question. These cases have been chosen at the different stages with a specific purpose. The first stage, summarized by the first essay, has been the identification stage. This stage is designed around a case study from essay 1 that illustrates the need that humanitarian organizations have to work in a network of partners in order to achieve the logistics tasks that fall under their mandate. More importantly to the research question this case illustrates the drivers and success factors for a partnership in the humanitarian sector.

The second stage, summarized by the second essay, has been the explanatory stage. This stage is designed around a set of case studies described in the second essay that illustrate partnerships between the private and humanitarian sector to augment the capacity of humanitarian organization for the fulfillment of their logistics tasks. More importantly to the research question this set of cases illustrate how partnerships should be structure to pull from the private sector available resources based on the needs of the humanitarian organization during a specific relief operation.

The third stage, summarized by the third essay, has been the understanding stage. This stage is designed around a set of case studies also described in the third essay, which provide a rich list of tasks performed by humanitarian logisticians during a relief operation. More importantly to the research question this set of case studies answer the question of what seconded managers can learn through their secondments.

The overall purpose of case study research should be to provide a narrative and detailed story worth sharing (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). Part of building these stories includes providing rich descriptions of the settings evaluated. The purpose of these descriptions is to describe the context with arguments that clarify meaning, thus they do not need to be lengthy and verbose, just clear and comprehensive. To provide these rich descriptive narratives, an extensive amount of interviews with practitioners were undertaken at different stages of the research. Some interviews help to explore the topic with lots of open-ended questions, others to explain and understand with more detailed cause-effect focused questions. Transcripts from these meetings were kept confidential, yet systematically shown to the interviewees to rephrase, correct, and/or complete any details or facts that they thought should be considered in the data collection and analysis. The data provided by personal interviews, and observations, was triangulated whenever possible with reports, pictures, press releases, other interviews, etc.

Throughout the research, the position of the researcher has remained relatively passive vis-à-vis that of the research subject, despite extensive observation and interaction. Using Eilon's (1974, 359) description of researcher's archetypes, it could be said that at some points the position of the researcher has been more of 'chronicler', i.e., "a detached observer whose function is to record a series of facts or patterns of behaviors for posterity... whose attempt is to study the phenomenon of interest without prejudice and by adopting a passive role outside of the process. At some points, in the search for clarity and more in-depth explanation, the position has been that of 'dialectician', i.e., an observer who participates yet seeks to develop an objective view of reality through dialogue. As a dialectician one questions, debates and argues to compliment data obtained through passive observation.

4.1.2. Using Secondary Data

Contrary to the first case study and essay, the second and third essays have been designed using public sources, i.e. secondary data. Secondary data has been chosen in each essay for different reasons. In the second essay, which narrates the activities carried out during several different disaster relief operations by different companies with their partners, accessing data would not only have been extremely expensive, but also time consuming and difficult. The events spanned over different periods of time, each involving different organizations in different countries and different types of disasters. Considering that each of the concerned organizations is responsible and proactive in reporting their operations, partnerships, and activities (website, reports, press releases, and annual reports), access to the secondary data was deemed to be a viable option. This choice was confirmed by the limited funds for this particular essay, and the extensive possibility to triangulate data from multiple sources.

Moreover, secondary data is also a recommended means to illustrate and analyze events. Rabinovich and Cheon (2011) explain that secondary data can be a good mean of information to reproduce the context and important details of an event through the use of several sources of public and private data, as is done here. To properly describe the events analyzed in the different research stages a combination of public data

(organizational reports, public reports, news, bulletins, etc) have been supplemented with private secondary data (interviews, narratives, accounts, etc). The caveat they raise is to set a clear criteria and boundaries to determine what is relevant in collecting the data and building the sample pool for analysis. Hence, the events have been defined as clearly as possible, focusing on disaster relief operations (events) and the logistics tasks to be performed. This is a focus which has served to isolate and exclude a lot of the information that is outside of the scope of the first week following a disaster, and all the information that is not relevant to explaining or contextualizing the performance of the supply chain.

For the third essay, which analyses a long list of tasks performed in a different disaster relief operation, access and availability to data that fit the research question was possible and obvious given the extensive amount of pertinent data available from the publicly-available case studies from INSEAD and European Case Clearing Housing. The case studies provided rich narratives describing the context and the list of tasks performed by the logisticians in the field, a list that served as the basis for the content analysis from which conclusions were drawn. Having to produce this as original data would have not only been extremely expensive and time consuming, but simply impossible in the time frame of this doctoral research. The list of tasks analyzed spans over ten years with activities taking place on almost every continent.

The choice of secondary data for these two essays is motivated by the advantages of using secondary data in research: publicly-available, presumably more objective than direct observation or interviews by the concerned researcher who holds his own biases and wide accessibility to others motivated by the same research question for analysis (Calantone and Vickery, 2010). Nonetheless, the choice of secondary data is not without challenges. When choosing secondary data, Calantone and Vickery (2010) explain that one should consider the usefulness and pertinence of the secondary data. First, to ensure that the data matches the theory. This is done by matching the secondary data with original data and then with the data requirements for the analysis. Here this comparison has proven to be a positive match. For each of the two essays and especially for the triangulation process a limited number of interviews were carried out with practitioners to confirm that the secondary data match the original and both sets of data were then used to confirm, and revise if necessary, the criteria for data.

Second, they propose that one should consider to what extent the secondary data influences the scope of the question. This is particularly important in cases where the question is broader than the data, since the data cannot be enlarged or modified to fill the gaps in the analysis. However, in these cases, the research questions have been rather broad and even though the data has not been the starting point of the research, but rather the literature, knowledge of the available data and sources has been helpful to be mindful of the fit between the research questions, and their scope and the publicly available data.

Finally, they propose that “secondary data can play a valuable role in exploratory research as a preliminary step to developing” (Calantone and Vickery, 2010, 7) more research. Secondary data has been used for the individual essays nourishing the research process that is linked to the framework. Thus, it can be argued that automatically the data has contributed to further research helping to establish the different links and relationships.

4.1.3. Qualitative Content Analysis

In contrast with the second essay, which used several mini case studies with (secondary) data from public sources, research for the third essay was done using a larger pool of data that require contextual analysis of the content. Thus, the choice to recur to content analysis at the third stage and essay.

“Content analysis is an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of communications” (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991, 243). Content analysis is suitable for situations where the researcher needs to interpret the meaning of words in a greater context. For example, a logistician doing inventory management in a commercial operation is not the same as a logistician doing the same task in a disaster relief operation. Content analysis is able to differentiate the meaning of the same tasks in two different situations.

The combination content analysis of secondary data has been identified as a promising duo for business logistics research of which there should be more (Rabinovich and Cheon, 2011). The potential of their contribution is particularly interesting as concerns defining the empirical roots for new research, or research in a new area like humanitarian logistics. Thus the choice of method and data type fits well with the idea of producing a framework as a contribution.

Following Spens and Kovács (2006), a set of case studies were chosen as the sample base for analysis. Then each case selected was treated as a unit of analysis and analyzed in the public version, to check for tasks performed by the humanitarian logisticians contributing to the supply chain. This resulted in a long list of logistics tasks drafted using secondary data from case studies that described disaster relief operations.

The list of tasks emerging for the selected case studies was then codified using the definitions of managerial roles provided by Mintzberg (2001), as discussed in the third essay. These definitions not only provided the basis for the coding system but also for the categories of actions described in the essay. A more detailed description of the methodology applied is available from the essay describing the process step by step.

One of the main criticisms of the content analysis is the subjectivity of the coder(s) given based on the role of language, and the understanding of the context in which language is used. Spens and Kovács (2006) summarize all actions related to improve the validity and reliability of the content analysis for this type of research as described in the next section.

4.2. Access to Data and Research Biases

As mentioned earlier access to data and biases play an important role in determining the quality and reliability of research. Thus the choice to dedicate a separate section to how data was collected at each point of the research and how biases were mitigated. Two types of biases have been noted: qualitative methods, and secondary data, corresponding to the following subsections.

4.2.1. Data collection

Data was collected in different ways for each one of the essays affecting the position and consideration of the researcher in each case. While each essay provides a detailed description of the data collection process, it is important to recall how that process occurred as a preamble to the overall research biases discussion.

The first essay was produced with field data collected through observations, interviews and secondary data supporting facts from the interview comments. This data was accessed during a field mission through direct contact with the sources and within their context. Each of them were informed of the purpose and given the opportunity to reread, comment, and complete on the transcripts of their interviews. The data was also collected with the support of a field officer who helped to put into context the more complex issues and clarify any ambiguities in cause-effect relations. Whenever possible data was triangulated with secondary data (i.e., databases, reports, and fact sheets or observations).

The second essay was done using publically available data, as mentioned earlier, and thus access is equitable to anyone seeking to reproduce the study. The content was as up to date as possible enabling a reasonably fresh analysis of the subject. Likewise, multiple public sources were sought to triangulate and complete the information and provide the best possible description of the partnerships evaluated. Nonetheless, the information sought remains institutional with limited personal depth and experience to sustain the facts. However, given that this essay is more focused on the methodological and theoretical aspects of interpreting disaster relief operations the latter flaw is deemed to have little impact on the outcome.

Counterbalancing the second essay, the third essay is very rich in personal accounts of disaster relief operations describe the actual tasks performed during a disaster relief operation. Much like the previous essay this one was done using publically available data (i.e., case studies developed by INSEAD describing logistics operations) limiting the role and bias of the researcher. Through content analysis, as discussed earlier, the issues of exhaustivity were addressed to check that a relevant sample size was treated.

4.2.2. Biases in Qualitative Methods

Within qualitative methods the first bias notes is related to prior knowledge of the field given several years of personal experience in this area of research and practice. Thus the possibility of biases related to prior knowledge and experience in the field is a reasonable and important one to consider. This was addressed and mitigated in the research process by introducing external feedback at critical points of the research, and by making those choices explicit in the essays so that peer-reviewers could also raise the flag if they noticed any issues.

There could also be biases related to consulting mission on the field, given that some of the data was collected for those purposes. However, interviewees were clear about the dual purpose of the meetings, and understood that the data could be used for research purposes as well. Technically, they were informed that the information would be used in a wider context and in both cases (consulting or research) remain confidential. The questions used for research were all anchored in the literature that was used for the study with a predefined structure irrelevant of the consulting mission.

4.2.3. Biases for Secondary Data

Concerning the use of secondary data, there is less of a possibility for personal biases since the purpose and intent of the data differs from the use in the study as explained by Calantone *et al.* (2010). They also highlight that there is less possibility that the data creation would have influenced the research design or results. Besides being a cheaper and most efficient form of data collection it, Rabinovich and Cheon (2011) highlight that as the data exists before the research construct it is more likely to be free of misconceptions and prejudice.

Nonetheless bias may interfere in the data selection process, if the researcher has to choose from sources or databases. In this case, such choice was neither available nor relevant since the secondary data used was a perfect fit for the definition of the unit of analysis.

4.3. Research Quality

Judging the quality of a research project is an essential step in determining whether if the outcomes are worthy of consideration. The process of doing so is as simple as asking the questions of whether the appropriate methods have been used to collect and analyze the data in order to explore the research questions (Karlsson, 2009). Research quality may be judged by looking in particular at three different elements of this research, namely: case study research, secondary data, and content analysis as described in each of the following sub-sections. For case study research consider that for a long time there has been a tradition to apply quantitative criteria to judge the validity of the research. Meredith (1998) is probably the most referenced article supporting this tradition along with the recommendations from Yin through the different editions of his unavoidable book for case study research. However, more recent evolutions have highlighted and recommended the use of a different set of qualitative criteria instead. This is expressed by Halldórsson and Aastrup (2003)'s reference to Lincoln and Guba (1985). In their suggestion for the use of qualitative criteria instead of quantitative, they suggest that dependability replace reliability, confirmability replace objectivity, transferability replace external validity, and credibility replace internal validity. Given the long tradition and importance, both sets of criteria have been observed in the design and process.

4.3.1. Case Study Research

In 1998, Meredith turned an important page for case study research with an essay about the difficulties that case study research had had over the past decade gaining recognition in operations management, particularly by top journals. Her work opened the path for its popularity and acceptance but also confirmed that research with case study should be careful and explicit in how it ensures quality.

Meredith is in line with Yin (2002) who outlines “three traditional prejudices against case study research: rigor, generalizability, and length” (Yin, 2002, 11). It also draws particular attention to the importance of validity and reliability in the research design.

Rigor has been observed throughout the research process by reporting on evidence as it appears, in particular transcripts from case interviews, or notes from observations. Most observations have been organized with a purpose linked to a controlled factor

(i.e., tasks executed by humanitarian logisticians, comments shared during a meeting about partnerships). Whenever possible, deduction has led the purpose of data collection, whether for interviews or observations, to replicate evidence seen beforehand or to check for more variables. In the case of interviews, semi-structured interviews have been performed with a mixture of open ended and targeted questions. Interview preparation has included historical research of the organizations, types of disaster relief operations, partnership agreements, etc.

Generalizability has been at the heart of the investigation to make sure that the findings are applicable in broader and/or different context. Yin (2002) explains that case study research can generalize not in the traditional statistical sense but rather through analytical generalizability. The latter is obtained through the replication of the theory in a different setting or case as done here. This contrasts the tradition of statistical generalizability where a qualitative analysis is used to develop confidence on the applicability of their concepts. Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010) further develop on moderate constructionism to explain that from the epistemological and ontological view support that the case study should be used to developed “local and historically context-specific understanding” (104) rather than universal truth. Thus replication is not used here as a mean to understand reality, but rather as a mean to reach analytical generalizability by applying theory to a similar context.

Following Yin’s advice, and that of similar scholars commenting on the use of case studies (Ellram, 1996; Meredith, 1998), and in the search for substantial and reliable data, this thesis is built on multiple sources of data (interview, observations, reports, meeting minutes, journalistic records, videos, field visits, internal mails, etc.) used for triangulation at the different stages. Throughout the different stages of the research this data, and its enquiry, has been driven by the academic literature that systematically confirms and guides the next stage of the research. As explained earlier each stage of the research process has produced a peer-reviewed essay based on a set of observations and case studies thus addressing the main concern on case study research around drawing conclusions from a single source, or insufficient sources. Through the replication and the use of multiple sources of data, relevant factors have emerged in each essay to identify the relevance of some variables in the construction of the framework.

Length is the third prejudice Yin identifies stating that case studies may be both too long and difficult to process, or on the opposite end, too lean in providing enough information. In either case, the solution adopted here has been to work with data collection protocols in each case, in order to filter enough (minimum and maximum) information to build the data set that will be analyzed. However, this is linked to another question of how many cases and/or observations are enough to draw conclusions. There is a misconception clarified by Ellram (1996) that one case study equals one research observation when in fact a case study, as it used here is the result from a large number of triangulated data sources and continuous observation of a context in which the data set resides and evolves. Thus each case study may be interpreted as a collection of data set and research observations. In the subsequent section you will notice how the third essay is conducted through content analysis of a set of case studies which were combined produced a list of 150 tasks (observations) quintessential to the conclusions of this thesis. In that form each case is simply a context where the tasks are illustrated for our interpretation and analysis.

In addition to Meredith and Yin’s three prejudices over the use of case studies the quality of the research design can be judged by the validity. In other words, does the

research do what it says it would? There are several types of validity defined by Yin (2002), many of these have already been addressed in the discussion above, however given the importance of this aspect of research, and they will be relisted below.

The first type is construct validity, which serves to check that the means that operational measures used to measure the constructs actually measure the concepts they are intended to measure. This is particularly relevant during the data collection. This is addressed in this research design through the use of multiple data sources and triangulation, leading to chains of evidence that have been guided and supported by the literature, and the validation of key informants and experts in the research process. Interviews and meetings used as evidence here have been transcribed and shared with the informants to provide them an opportunity to revisit, complete, and correct if necessary the information shared.

The second type is internal validity, which checks that the study actually measures what it is meant to measure and that demonstrated relationships are explained by the factors described and not by other factors. This is particularly relevant during the data analysis. This is addressed in the research design with the use of logic models, chains of evidences, and pattern identification all emerging from the data collected in combination with the academic literature.

The third type is external validity, which checks that the results are valid in similar settings outside the studied objects. This is relevant both during the data collection and analysis. This is addressed in the research design by the keeping constant concepts and theory from one case and research stage to the next to replicate and deepen the understanding of the subject at hand. It has also been addressed by looking at similar cases outside of the research scope to draw conclusions and enrich the understanding of the practices of partnerships (between companies, across sectors, and for development), secondments (consulting services, medical services, and military), and cross-learning (franchises and missions abroad).

Finally, there is reliability, which checks for objectivity so that other researchers can reach the same conclusions without bias. This is particularly important during the data collection process and this is addressed here following Yin's recommendation of using protocols as a guide for the interviews, and by building a database of all the data collected.

Halldórsson and Aastrup (2003) argued on the use of quantitative validity measure in case study, and suggest that the above mentioned be replaced by: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They conclude that the latter are more suitable and adapted for qualitative research. Thus practice is evolving in research towards the use of the above mentioned measures of validity, which have also been considered.

They propose that internal validity be replaced by credibility, which Guba and Lincoln (1989) define as the match between the realities constructed by the respondents and the researchers. This was done by sending interviewees transcripts of their interviews to verify that reality and interpretation matches between their version and the version caught by the researcher. This has also been achieved through triangulation of the data with multiple respondents present in the studied events.

As for external validity they propose it be replaced by transferability, which Guba and Lincoln (1989) define as the similarities between the comparable contexts. The case studies in this thesis have been designed using the partnerships model from the private

sector which is comparable to the type of partnership established by the humanitarians, despite the absence of a profit incentive. Questions raised in the interviews about the partnership have served to verify that the components of the partnership model apply and could be used as a basis for analysis. Some of the humanitarian respondents had prior private sector experience and volunteered the comparison validating the transferability of the model to the case study.

They suggest that reliability be replaced in qualitative research by dependability, which Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest can be achieved by documenting the process and methods used in the analysis. For this reason detailed deduction logic is described in the case study and its corresponding essays to show how the literature unfolds into the empirical data to provide the framework and its conclusions and recommendations.

Finally, they suggest that objectivity be replaced by confirmability, which Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe as the process to ensure that the findings emerge from the data and not from the researcher's biases. For the case study, this is perhaps the most important point raised during the peer-review for its publication. Thus special attention has been invested in making clear links between the data, the analysis, the deductive process, and the links. This includes keeping the analysis within a well-defined scope of data and concepts to ensure that conclusions emerge from a bounded system in which the researcher checks the evolution of the data and theory.

Table 7 summarizes the different criteria for quality used here, based on the definitions and purpose outlined by the different authors cited. As the research for this thesis has been carried out through several stages with different research methods, the table considers them separately yet in a complimentary fashion as it was done in practice.

Table 7 Case Study Research Design Quality

Quality Criteria	Reference	Purpose/Objective evaluated	Application to Research
Rigor		following systematic procedures to avoid missing evidence and biases from altering the outcome of the research.	Reporting on evidence as it appears using observation and reflection notes, interviews recording and transcripts.
Generalizability	Meredith (1998), Yin (2005)	Make sure that the findings are applicable in a broader and/or different context	Using multiple sources of data (interviews, observations, reports, videos, meeting minutes, documentaries, field visits, internal emails, bulletins, etc.) to triangulate data
Length	Meredith (1998), Yin (2005)	Defining and using the right amount of data to describe the context and the unit of analysis	Use of data collection protocols to ensure that all relevant questions and data is collected. Protocols have been drafted using support and propositions from the literature used for the conceptual framework. Also each case study is treated as a collection of data sources, rather than as one data source (especially in the third essay for the content analysis). As mentioned earlier all data collected is then triangulated helping to the fill in any gaps for completion.
Validity	Meredith (1998), Yin (2005)	Does the research do what it say it would do?	This has been checked using the three types of validity listed below, and specially by applying the framework in a different setting to check if it can be used in a different sector. Feedback from practitioners has also been used to double check and refine its application and consider its validity in the field of practice
Construct Validity	Yin (2005)	Are the means used to measure the concepts actually measuring what they are intended to?	Use of multiple data sources leading to chains of evidence that have been supported and guided by examples and cases studies from the academic literature and feedback from practitioners from the humanitarian sector and others fields.
Internal Validity	Yin (2005)	Does the study actually measure what it intends to measure? And are the relationships established demonstrated by the factors measured?	This has been done through the use of logic models supported by the literature and checked with practitioners and case studies in the literature. Ten logic models have served to confirm the relationship among the variables. The exercise is complemented by analysis of patterns in the data collected and of similar examples in the literature. To ensure that reality match the perception of intrabactors, records of data have been shared with interviewees to give them the chance to correct and add more information. Secondary data has been shared with practitioners to comment on it. External reviewers have been solicited to check if the logic of the arguments presented in sound and plausible. Multiple sources have been used to triangulate the data at each point.
Credibility	Haldorsson and Aastup (2003), Lincoln and Guba (1985)	Match between the reality constructed by the respondents and the researcher. To what extent do results represent the data from the study? Does the data support the research claims	This has been addressed in the research design keeping a set of constant concepts from one stage to the next, and by reflecting on which variables are independent or dependent from one phase to the next. Finally the meta-research has been tested in a different setting to check for external validity with positive results; the study has also been compared to other secondment studies following Eriksson and Kovalainen's advice to show similarities and parallel connections to others.
External Validity	Yin (2005)	Check if the results are valid in a different setting	This has been achieved by keeping in consideration all possible biases that could interfere in the research design, data collection, and analysis, as well as by keeping a rigour approach to data collection and documentation. This is all complemented by a rich description of the research process, and sound explanations of the choices made throughout the study.
Transferrability	Haldorsson and Aastup (2003), Lincoln and Guba (1985)	Responsibility of the researcher to make information and data accessible to the reader to support the research process, and the choices made.	Specific attention has been given to address biases that could have interfered in the research process. Some of these are related to language, previous knowledge about the issue, and the role of the researcher as a consultant. To minimize their impact measures have been used to make explicit links between the findings of the interpretation (as suggested by Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2006), between the questions raised and the literature, and the triangulation of the data collected at each time.
Reliability	Meredith (1998), Yin (2005)	Is the research objective enough for others to reach the same conclusion?	
Dependability	Haldorsson and Aastup (2003), Lincoln and Guba (1985)	Establishing clear links between data collected, analysis and results.	
Objectivity	Lincoln and Guba (1985)	to demonstrate that a given inquiry is free of bias, values, and/or prejudice	
Confirmability	Haldorsson and Aastup (2003), Lincoln and Guba (1985)	establishing clear links between data collected, analysis and results.	
Additional Criteria for Secondary Data			
Credibility	Buse (2010), Calantone and Vickery (2010)	Does the data represent the subject under study	Secondary data used in this research actually is based and developed in the same context and on the same unit of analysis studied, thus making it not only relevant but credible. Furthermore, parts of the secondary data utilized in this research has been collected and analyzed personally in the context of other research projects with different output, intent, and conclusions. Only publicly available material has been used in this research to ensure that other researchers can reproduce the same results without prior or deeper knowledge, and to respect the intellectual property rights associated to each of these sources listed by this patient.
Relevance	Buse (2010), Calantone and Vickery (2010)	Is the data meaningful in a different context for analysis	
Additional Criteria for Content Analysis			
Objectivity and Transparency	Kovacs and Spens (2006)	rules and scope of the categorization scheme applied to the data	Clearly defining categories for the coding process using concepts from the literature (Mintzberg 2001)
Validity	Kovacs and Spens (2006)	set variables for each category based on the theoretical foundations of the study; ensuring the independence, and exhaustiveness, and fine tune the categories through the coding process	pre-testing the category definitions for mutually-exclusiveness, independence and exhaustiveness through several iterations, and the participation of practitioners to ensure the reliability of the coding process, and fatigue over the final result. Alternative options were considered for sub-categories, and a list of additional categories was kept on a list separately should there be a need to add more categories in the search of clarity.
Reliability	Kovacs and Spens (2006)	Clear definitions and procedures for others to replicate; use of multiple coders; report discrepancies; guarantee coding consistency and stability	The research process has been detailed and explained step-by-step in the third essay to provide readers with a complete set of guidelines for reproduction, (see validity and objectivity as well)
Sampling Methods	Koabe and Burnett (1991)	Choosing a sample representative of the subject under study	Sampling was carried out using data that fit 100 percent the unit of analysis. The amount of data used was large enough to draw conclusions without ambiguity. The amount of data was deemed sufficient when no further insights could be obtained from one additional data point.
Systematization/Reduction of Biases	Koabe and Burnett (1991)	Applying rigour to reduce biases	Though the content analysis was not done through a computerized system, clear guidelines for coding were set out from the beginning and revised through several iterations to reduce the impact of biases. The use of multiple coders, and in specific of a random selection proved to be effective in creating a consistent application of the codes to the data and in producing a categorization of the data that was bias-free.

4.3.2. Secondary Data

Concerning the use of secondary data, almost exactly the same criteria for quality cited above apply. However, a particularly important point to cite about secondary data is the problem of credibility and relevance in a new context (Busse, 2010; Calantone and Vickery, 2010). Secondary data is generated for a purpose other than the research in question, thus the context is different and many biases may exist. To address this concern, consideration has been given to matching the data with primary data to verify that comparisons are relevant, verifying the fit between the data and the scope of the question, and the generation of further research from the data.

Secondary data has an additional value in research concerning ethical and or morally sensitive topics like humanitarian aid. Harris (2001) supports this argument with his experience conducting business ethics research for which he also favors secondary data to self-reported primary. He posits that interviewees are more likely to express to the researcher what they would like to hear, and what is morally/ethically/ or socially acceptable. As a result the interviewees increase the likelihood for bias reducing the quality overall. While the questions analyzed here are not directly linked to ethics or moral issues, it is important to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of logistics in disaster relief operations is to provide humanitarian assistance to people in need. Given the urgency and limited resources, logisticians may be faced with difficult to explain choices, and/or mediating conflicts of interest in trying to be efficient about the delivery of aid. Thus, it is important that in collecting data about the humanitarian supply chain, researchers be able to access objective data about the performance of the supply chain that is not altered by the source to match a particular set of values. Looking at logistics tasks through secondary data has enabled to isolate the actions themselves regardless of the ultimate impact they had on the affected population. The latter would have been outside of the scope of this thesis.

Beyond ethics research, the same arguments about the benefits and appropriateness of secondary data are found in business research. For example, Calantone and Vickery (2010) highlight the advantages of secondary data which they claim allows to “re-research”, thus enabling replication and validation of studies; as mentioned earlier, it is less contaminated by personal bias; and it removes the possibility that the purpose or intent of the research could have influenced the design or the results of the research while limiting the researcher to the scope of his/her study. Rabinovich and Cheon (2011) expand on the advantages claiming that secondary data exists prior to the research construct, and is thus built independently of the research objectives, removed from preconceptions, and overall cheaper to obtain in terms of time and money.

The credibility of the secondary data is enhanced by the fact that the purpose original intention of the data does not influence the research design and questions. Thus facts are taken as an accessible source of reality that exists irrespective of the researcher’s view or interpretation and that can be accessed and analyzed without changing its original form or content.

4.3.3. Content Analysis

For content analysis, the quality of the research is a critical issue considering that this type of analysis is prone to subjectivity. Kovács and Spens (2006) provide suggestions for addressing this issue while performing content analysis: objectivity and

transparence, validity, and reliability. All of these have been considered in the research process to monitor the quality and reliability of the outcome.

To a greater extent, this thesis follows the recommendations of Kovács and Spens (2006), and Kolbe and Burnett (1991), who reviewed and updated Kassirjian's critical guidelines for content-analysis (1977) used in the field on consumer behavior. The methodological recommendations from their research have a wider application and acceptability, thus in line and complimentary with Kovács and Spens (2006) and applicable to management research overall. Kolbe and Burnett (1991) suggest additional quality criteria such as sampling methods, and the systematization or reduction of bias.

In the third essay, objectivity was addressed by clearly defining categories and coding rules from the beginning, using the definitions and framework of managerial roles described by Mintzberg (2001). Each of the categories were pre-tested and checked for mutually-exclusiveness through several iterations. A second and independent judge was used to randomly codify one fourth of the tasks and check for congruence of the coding. Concerning sampling the case studies used were all selected according to a specific criteria, the number in each sample was significant enough to produce a number of tasks with substantial presence in each of the categories, and they spanned a comparable period of time. Reliability was addressed by using objective criteria for classification, by checking tasks were mutually exclusive or non-classifiable, and eventually by reverse checking to see if the tasks listed under each category were properly classified under the definition of their code.

Arguing that secondary data is not merely cheaper and quicker substitute for primary data, Harris (2001) is in line with the use of content analysis of secondary data given that the method is more appropriate for replication, and able to produce better validity and reliability than other methods in social settings. Kolbe and Burnett (1991) explain that content analysis has the advantage of being a good companion to multi-method research, as used in this thesis. Its combination with other methods, such as case studies, may serve as a means to mitigate through triangulation the biases inherent in other methods, thus increasing validity. However, Brannen (2005) explains that due to epistemological and ontological issues, data collected and analyzed through different methods cannot be simply added to complete or provide a more comprehensive view of reality. The combination of data collection and analysis methods may serve to corroborate, elaborate, complement, or contradict results. For example, in this thesis, the primary data from the case studies alone does not illustrate the tasks to be performed by the logisticians during the secondments. The latter is illustrated by the list developed with secondary data for the content analysis. In this case, as cited earlier, the use of multiple methods does not just serve to increase validity through triangulation, but rather to elaborate and complement each other.

4.4. Generalizability

Yin (2002) explains that in case study research analytical generalization is most suitable to understand the issues at hand. This is done by replicating previously developed theory in subsequent case settings that support plausible claims for the initial theory. In light of his recommendation, the framework has been tested for generalization by applying the theoretical framework to a different case study to better understand if it would apply outside of the disaster relief context. This provides a more robust logic to the development of the framework. The Labadens case presented next

was developed using interviews, observations and review of institutional notes, reports and minutes. The case was subject to the same research process cited earlier, with careful emphasis to minimize research biases and guarantee its quality and reliability (primarily through triangulation). Likewise, it was subject to the same quality criteria discussed earlier. Questions were drafted for each interview, with notes taken and double-checked. The transferability was judged from the onset to ensure comparable settings and context, and the research process replicated the framework following the same links and steps to ensure that results were comparable and reliable.

The Labadens case shows, the application of the framework to a different setting. Labadens is a private equity firm based in Paris doing impact investment in Mali, and Burkina Faso with a focus on small and medium enterprises (SME). Their investment policy dictates that the companies they invest in should generate not just financial benefits but also social benefits. This implies evaluating their social and environmental performance and defining an action plan to improve it. To achieve this type of double bottom line, Labadens relies on the intervention of seconded staff from French companies who are willing to send their managers to perform their jobs in a different setting for a short period of time (i.e., SMEs in Mali and Burkina Faso).

To apply the framework, five individuals seconded to Labadens missions were interviewed upon return from their secondment missions (Appendix 4). The list includes a project financial analyst (FA), an investment analyst (IA), an investor relations manager (IRM), IT manager (ITM), and merger and acquisition manager (MAM). They were each asked open ended questions inspired on what happened before, during and after the secondments and focusing on the learning they obtained. Each of them came from a different company and sector (banking, energy, human resources, strategy consulting, and finance). Each participated in at least one 10-day long secondment to work on a specific need in the host company. Their missions were followed by a period of part-time work with Labadens to prepare a report and recommendations for their host companies.

As in the case of the humanitarian secondments, Labadens secondees were chosen and asked to perform an operational task familiar to them in their home environments. The difference was that the context and resources available to them in Mali were completely different, in fact limited. While the Labadens secondments were not emergencies, the missions granted were urgent, time bound, and with a significant element of social impact. All five individuals were motivated to participate in the secondments by altruistic reasons but also by the professional development opportunities resulting from the experience in Mali. They each obtained time off from their regular job responsibilities using different arguments, but all conferring on the expectations that putting their skills to use in a different context would forward their competencies. Their expectations were inquired through open-ended semi-structured interviews anchored on the learning framework. They all concurred that during the secondments they furthered their understanding of their work through informal learning. One of the seconded manager (FA) expressed “that being able to do my job (financial analyst) in Mali pushed me to question how I do it, and why I do it, leading me to decide if I am going about it in the best possible way”. Another one (MAM) explained the benefits of the learning experience by pointing out that “the experience provides an opportunity to go deeper into the operational issues that affect decision in our line of work. Suddenly, I was closer to the impact of my decisions, and better understood their constraints around the problems I deal with, and the ramifications of my decisions”.

Following their secondments, much like the humanitarians examples, these individuals faced the issue of reintegrating their new competencies. While all of them recognized that the secondment had positively contributed to how they do their jobs, not all of them succeeded in having such contributions recognized by their management. Those who managed to get recognition had explicit and significant supports prior to the secondment and upon returning were given opportunities to engage in projects, and new responsibilities closely linked to their recent experience. One (IA) pointed out how the experience helped to diversify his already solid CV to find another job where he could put to use all his knowledge. The rest are still looking at options for integrating their experience into the jobs, including considering new positions inside and outside of their companies. By the completion of the case study development, one of them (FA) convinced his management to let him leave the company, with their support, to dedicate more time to Labadens.

An interesting point raised through the interviews, was that the informal learning experience gained during the secondments was not linked to any other internal mission in their home organization, or formal education experience (i.e., executive education, or seminar). The subjects were asked to choose between the secondment, an intensive week at a business school, or a special in-house mission. They supported their unanimous choice highlighting that the secondment was more personalized and insightful as an experience, and that being away freed them from the pressure of peers at work, and gave them freedom to experience beyond their traditional roles, which is something that they would not be able to do in the office.

Despite the different context, the Labadens case confirms the application of the framework in a general context, and similar outcomes in the conclusion. It provides lessons to the learning, network and partnership angles as expected from the framework. For learning, it highlights that prior to the mission management support is extremely important and valuable. During the secondment, the absence of the “urgency” found in disaster relief operations can be recreated with tight deadlines in the management objectives and limited resources. Following the secondment, it also confirms that follow-up tasks are necessary and important to capture and integrate the lessons learned. From the network perspective, prior to the secondment it shows that events do not need to be unpredictable, but instead they can be missions organized by the management team. During the event, it confirms that the interaction is based on a needs basis and that the actors in the networks will immediately create interaction based on their competencies. After the secondment, it confirms that the event network can be extended over time, past the physical presence in the field with more exchanges and learning happening post-secondments. From the partnership angle back to the Lambert and Knemeyer model (2004), prior to the secondments, it confirms that the field missions can be structuring block for the partnerships. During the secondments that collaboration leads to mutual learning, and that following the secondment, that partnership can use the learning from the joint experience and the outcome of the secondment to adjust and evolve the partnership model.

The Labadens case study serves not only for generalizability, but more over to develop the local and context based understanding that is intended when conducting moderate constructionist research. While the context of impact investment is different to disaster relief operations, the context of the partnerships and the structure and intentionality of the events (i.e., secondments) share similarities that make them comparable and the conclusions transferable. More importantly, the learning dynamics and conditions faced by seconded managers in both cases are similar enough to allow analytical generalizability to be reached through the replication.

The following chapter discusses the research contribution providing greater detail about the framework developed here, and its theoretical and managerial implications in practice. In closing the subsequent chapter will discuss the limitations and future avenues for research from this study.

5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

The contributions can be articulated in several levels of knowledge described by Arlbjørn and Halldórsson (2010): research questions, the discipline level, and the practice level. Overall this thesis contributes to the philosophy of science and most specifically to the ontological and epistemological debate. This part is addressed here by looking at the research question and the essay contribution. In the first section of this chapter, each of those essays is summarized, highlighting their contribution to the framework, and explaining the research process. Combined with the literature described and discussed over the previous sections, each of the essays provides answers to the research questions.

The discipline level in this case refers to the contribution to the literature on humanitarian logistics with the informal learning framework for secondments. The framework itself is perhaps the most important contribution here since it addresses the overall research aim. The second section of this chapter presents the frameworks and describes the different actors as well as discussing the concepts and theories that serve as a foundation.

Finally, at the practice level, is the managerial contribution and implications emerging from the framework. This last section of the chapter translates the framework into practical recommendations using the elements of the research questions and theoretical contribution. Rather than a prescriptive to-do list for managers concerned by secondments, this contribution is more to identify in practice what changes if the framework is applied. This type of contribution can serve as a set of non-exhaustive pointers for future researchers attempting to describe how secondments and informal learning occur in practice.

5.1. Research Questions and Essay Summaries

As explained in the introduction and throughout the different sections, each research question is addressed in the corresponding essays. Each of the essays may be found in the appendix. In the following pages a summary is provided to explain how they address the research questions posed here to contribute to the framework. These essays have been produced and accepted for publication in a chronological order, even though their public availability has not followed the same sequence.

Essay 1: How do partnerships develop in disaster relief operations?

Tomasini, R. M. (2012). "Humanitarian Partnerships—Drivers, Facilitators, and Components: The Case of Non-Food Item Distribution in Sudan". In Kovács, G., & Spens, K. M. (Eds.), *Relief Supply Chain for Disasters: Humanitarian, Aid and Emergency Logistics*. pp. 16-30.

This essay focuses on how partnerships in the humanitarian sector develop for the delivery of non-food items. It illustrates a case study of a partnership engaging multiple actors at different points of the supply chain with one common goal. The partnerships among humanitarian organizations is analyzed and discussed using the Lambert and Knemeyer (2004) partnership model, which focuses on its drivers, facilitators, and components. This essay provides the context of partnerships in the humanitarian sector, their important role for the delivery of aid, and the conditions for them to be

successful. Contributions from this essay include a list of best practices to follow when developing a partnership in a disaster relief operation. The latter become relevant in the subsequent stages of the research when secondments are placed in the context of partnerships to augment the response capacity of humanitarian organizations in disaster relief operations.

Data and financial support for this essay were possible thanks to an independent consulting mission carried out with the United Nations Joint Logistics Center in Khartoum in 2006.

Essay 2: How do partners interact during a disaster relief operation?

Tomasini, R. M. (2012) "Humanitarian Private Partnerships as Events Based Networks". Book to be published by the Academic Council of the United Nations. Palgrave.

This essay introduces the private sector as a stakeholder for humanitarian partnerships. It proposes that the private sector participate on a needs only basis, while it raises the question of how the members in the partnership network should interact. Through the analysis of a set of partnerships for disaster relief, the essay proposes the concept of event networks. The latter is taken from the business networks literature to describe a type of network collaboration that is defined in time and space by a specific set of needs. This essay contributed with an adaptation of the event network model that defines how the two sectors can interact throughout time and space to attend the needs in a disaster relief operation. The article contributes to the overall research by providing the event and network focus that dominates the ontological and epistemological direction of the thesis.

The literature and methodological part of this essay was performed with the support from the Hanken Foundation first year doctoral scholarship for the attendance of a KATAJA doctoral workshop on networks Research at the Turku School of Economics (June 1-5th, 2009). The rest of the research was done with the support of the Academic Council of the United Nations System who funded attendance to their annual academic conference in at the University of Alberta, Edmonton (July 20-29th, 2009) and peer-reviewed the latest versions of the essay.

Essay 3: What can seconded managers learn from secondments to disaster relief operations?

Tomasini, R.M. (2011), "Helping to Learn? Learning Opportunities for Seconded Managers", *Journal of Global Responsibility*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 46-59.

This essay analyzes a list of activities that humanitarian logisticians perform during disaster relief operations as extracted from a set of publicly available case studies on humanitarian logistics. It uses Mintzberg's definition of managerial roles (2001) to analyze these activities and through the analysis identify the potential lessons for seconded staff. This essay contributes with a list the learning opportunities for that seconded managers can acquire from the experience of their partnership. It also contributes to the thesis with a set of arguments as to why a secondment is a propitious setting for learning for managers.

Data has been obtained from public sources (INSEAD Case studies on humanitarian logistics available from the European Case Clearing House), while the time and work allocated to its completion and review has been self-funded in 2011.

5.2. Informal Learning Framework For Secondment

Based on the data collected, the analysis of the literature and case studies presented in the essays fulfill its aim by proposing the informal learning framework for secondment (ILFS) as a the main contribution.

As Figure 6 depicts, and based on the notion that event networks are analyzed over time, the framework links in three different periods (before the secondment, during the secondment, and after the secondment). Each period is then analyzed from the perspective of the humanitarian organization hosting the seconded manager, the seconded manager, and the company doing the secondment).

Following the structure of the framework, and inspired on the concept of time and space in event networks, this section is structured per periods of time (i.e. before the secondment, during the secondment, and after the secondment). Each period describes the notion of space by addressing what each of the actors (humanitarian, secondee, company seconding) in the in network does, expects or considers. The description in each case considers how theory contributes to the contribution, and subsequently how that contribution translates into practice for managers

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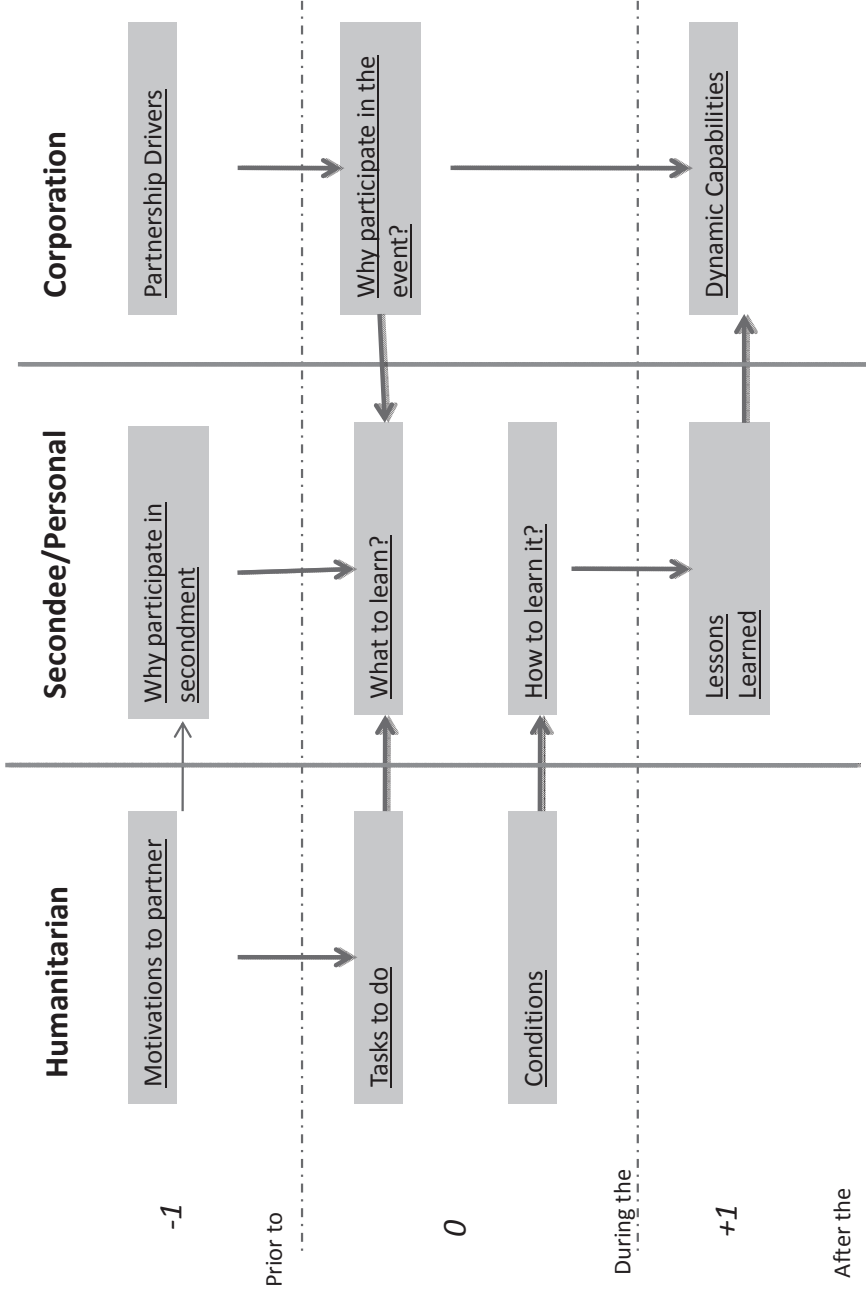


Figure 6 Informal Learning Framework for Secondment

Prior to the secondment (-1):

For the development of the framework the research for this period of time focuses at the private sector level on the partnership drivers; at the personal level on the reasons to participate; and at the humanitarian level on the motivations to partner. The partnerships drivers have been identified earlier with a perfect fit to the framework. At the personal level and humanitarian level the research has focused on checking for the match between the need for humanitarian agencies to augment their operational capacity and access trained and locally informed staff and socially responsible behavior manifested by individuals in a corporation willing and interested to participate in a disaster relief operation. The fit has been confirmed among these two aspects.

In practice, during this period the humanitarian organizations are motivated to partner and set up agreements with the private sector with the expectation of augmenting their operational capacity with trained staff. They are also interested in the availability of material and equipment such as offices, warehouses, photocopy machines, faxes, etc.; access to local information via the company operating locally. In most cases they seek trained staff that is readily available, with local knowledge and network of contacts.

For the individuals, this is a period when they can manifest their interest in participating in the secondments. For them the motivations are twofold: personal and professional. Both types of motivations need to be present and confirmed by their employer through a screening process. At the personal level, as mentioned earlier they must display socially responsible behavior that as defined by a mixture of values (i.e., self-transcendence and self-enhancement), affect (i.e., tendency to experience pleasant and unpleasant feelings, guilt and shame), and cognition (i.e., moral, economic, reputational and legal reasoning). At the professional level, there should be an understanding that the secondment is a learning experience to apply their skills and competencies in a different setting. They should also be able to see a connection between the experience and the evolution of their career, ensuring that this is not just an exceptional trip but rather a distinguishing element in their career path and training plan.

For a company sending an individual on a secondment is likely to be only one of the actions agreed under the partnership agreement. In any case, partnering beforehand enables both parties to define and agree under which circumstances their partnership will be activated (i.e., a natural disaster affecting over half a million people with logistical bottlenecks in a country where the company has commercial operations), the profile of the candidates who could be seconded (i.e., trained logisticians with experience in managing complex project, multi-lingual and fluent in the local tongue, enduring and energetic, and a sense of teamwork and negotiation skills), and the terms of the secondments (i.e., length of engagement, costs associated, level of risk tolerance, confidentiality and rules for external communications to the media, accountability, reporting line, and exit strategy).

The transition to the secondment is marked by a predefined disaster that activates the participation of the managers in a secondment. In the essays the disasters agreed between the company and the humanitarian organization were disasters meeting the criteria specified and agreed upon by the partners. As the second essay on the LETS partnership describes, a logistician from Agility could be deployed to help with the warehousing and distribution activities of a disaster relief operation in Lebanon, a country where Agility is present. The length of the secondment and type of mission

would be agreed upon prior to the person's departure based on the needs identified by the humanitarian agencies launching the request.

During the secondment (o):

For the development of the framework the research for this period of time focuses at the corporate level on the reasons to participate on a disaster relief operation; at the personal level on what to learn and how; and at the humanitarian level on the tasks to do and the conditions in which to do them. The reasons for the company to participate are aligned with the partnership drives from the previous period; the framework proposes that the reasons include a strong and explicit connection to learning for the individual. This is a point that has been verified in the literature and in the interviews, though it is noted as rather weak in relevance and understanding by the companies who put all their communication efforts into the altruistic arguments of their contribution. What the individual will learn and how is the mere subject of the third essay from this thesis, describing the managerial roles during a disaster relief operation and suggesting that informal learning prevails with success if learning conditions are defined. The research goes on to corroborate that informal learning conditions inherent in disaster relief operations and the tasks performed during them enable seconded staff to learn from the experience. In the same essay, the question from the humanitarian angle of what to do and how is addressed confirming the logistics tasks and their conditions to be performed.

In practice, during this period for the humanitarian organization, the secondment purposely coincides with the disaster relief operation, a time when they are most busy. The secondments serve to augment the operational capacity of the humanitarian organization and be more efficient with access to specialized knowledge, technical skills, language skills, local staff, and all the space, equipment and network that they may have negotiated when designing the partnership for the secondments. Besides hosting the individuals, the humanitarian organization will list and delegate a set of logistics tasks, as those discussed in the third essay, for the seconded manager to perform. For the most part these will be tasks that the person is familiar to executing; the difference is the conditions in which they are to be executed. These conditions will be the most crucial part of the learning experience since they force the seconded manager to perform in a different setting and thus rethink his *modus operandi*, and eventually learn from his behavior.

For the individual, this is the peak of their experience. For them, it is an experience, some would even say adventure, which will change everything. It's the moment to feel useful, purposeful, and be challenged personally and professionally. Here the accent is placed on what the individuals should be learning, and how. The answer to the first question is not logistics tasks, but rather how to do those tasks differently. Going back to the third essay and looking at the description of what managers really do, one will find what the individuals should be learning i.e., ways of managing themselves and others while performing the logistics tasks under different conditions (stress, pressure, limited resources, informal structure, loose hierarchy, lack of command and control, absence of profit incentive, etc.). How they will learn it? The answer is simple: informally. The experience itself will provide a lot of the lessons, granted that these experiences will need to be reflected upon and analyzed afterwards in order to identify them, code them, and transfer them. Nonetheless, for the informal learning to come about a list of factors influencing positively and negatively informal learning has been set. As discussed in that section, most of the positive factors are inherent to a disaster relief operation. Informal learning will be supported by the proximity to the

humanitarian team and the beneficiary. Both Hansen (2002) and Szulanski (2003) highlight the positive impact that proximity, collocation and frequency of contact have in transferring knowledge. The cases analyzed support this and illustrate how the sense of urgency and intensity of the field work exacerbate the openness of the seconded managers to absorb lessons from their humanitarian peers.

For many companies engaging in partnerships, the time spent in the field during the secondment is all there is. It is a moment when they can send staff to help that they can potentially communicate and tell the world that their staff were there, and actively involved. However, this short-sighted approach is not only detrimental to the partnership, but falls short of acknowledging that this is only one step in the learning curve of the seconded individual who can bring home a lot more value than the publicity and communication efforts around his presence.

After the secondment (+1):

For the development of the framework, the research for this period of time focuses at the corporate level on the dynamic capabilities they can acquire, while at the personal level the focus is on what lessons from disaster relief can be transferred to the company. The research angle here is on how to capture and assimilate the lessons from the secondment for which the framework addresses using the concepts of lessons learned and dynamic capabilities. Lessons learned, is partially equated with best practices, seems relevant as a concept since they are contextual or might transferable (Szulanski, 2003), while dynamic capabilities fit well into the logic given the process approach to integrating new knowledge and transforming it into productive assets (Teece *et al.*, 1997). This part of the research is highly dependent on the type of company doing the secondment and the presence or absence of an internal learning culture. Some companies may have their own model that captures and integrates those lessons, while others less focused on the learning and more on the humanitarian impact of their partnership may have completely overlooked this element of the secondment, as was noted in some of the companies analyzed.

The focus on lessons learned, rather than on best practices, is justified by the fact that seconded managers will be exposed to learning a list of unpredictable lessons, not all “best” practices. Nonetheless, the lessons have been placed here within the umbrella of best practice transfer since the process of acquiring the lessons, and transferring them to the home company is rather similar. The focus on dynamic capabilities implies that they can be replicated beyond the original setting of the acquisition and applied in a different context (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Halldórsson and Skjøtt-Larsen, 2004) at the organizational level, is the same way as the focus on lessons learned/best practices implies that they can be transferred at the individual level (Szulanski, 2003). In either case, what is important is to prioritize the allocation resources by the different parties to transfer and integrate the lessons learned from the original setting back into the seconding organization.

In practice during this period the humanitarian organization is technically no longer concerned. The exception to this is if they agree under the terms of the partnership, to assist the seconded managers to reflect on the lessons learned and ideally provide feedback and an evaluation on what was valuable (or not) from the experience. In this case, some may include the secondment all the way to the evaluation stage. This type of dialogue could be very beneficial for the person to question their performance and reflect on the value of the experience.

At this stage, the ideal scenario is the individual returning to his original employer having experienced an intensive, unique, and potentially exceptional experience that may even shake some personal aspects of their life (as most examples show). The objective at this point should be to articulate, list, illustrate the experience in a way that a template of the lessons learned can be developed for further analysis and discussion with peers and senior management. Research findings show that seconded managers regardless of their tasks encountered rich experiences from which to extrapolate learning. In most cases they were given the opportunity by their organization to articulate their experience in an informal basis, in fact none indicated the presence of a formal process or template to capture their lessons learned.

Over time the goal should be to develop templates that allow the returning seconded individuals to build upon the lessons from their experience. The template could be a tool for revisiting current practice, participating in different task, or contributing to working groups where the new skills may be useful and appreciated. This will require taking time to sell them internally and proving to others that they can be a source of competitive advantage. While the research shows that experienced seconded managers became references for their colleagues who solicited their input for projects in which they thought the disaster relief experience could help, there was no indication from any of the companies analyzed that the process was institutionalized and managed proactively. Ideally their lessons will not only be captured and shared, but the individuals themselves could be identified internally as references to the wider internal network.

Finally, each company would need to design a model to capture and integrate the lessons learned by their seconded staff. The success of the secondment depends on the latter. The company must include in the list of resources exchanged in the partnership knowledge and skills, recognizing that staff will share and simultaneously acquire some. The acquisition and integration of best practices into dynamic capabilities for the organization depends on the routines established by the company to do just that. Some scholars argue that dynamic capabilities should be developed and obtained by simple trial and error, imitation or replication (Zhara *et al.*, 2006). However, this approach fails to acknowledge the complexity of the original setting, a very important factor here, and the complexity of the new setting for replication (Winter and Szulanski, 2001). Given this, and the importance of the experience acquired in the secondment as a starting point, the perspectives of Zollo and Winter (2002), cited earlier, has been embraced here. It suggests a multi-step process: experience accumulation, followed by knowledge articulation in discussions and debrief, and knowledge codification through the use of case studies or manuals. This final stage has yet to be seen incorporated in organizations investing in secondments.

5.3. Contributions to the Literature

Based on this analysis of the network and informal learning, the findings contribute primarily to the literature on humanitarian logistics where a gap on this area exists to date. This contribution is composed of the different foundations used to develop the framework, namely supply chain and logistics, (event) networks, and (informal) learning.

Concretely, to the field of humanitarian logistics, the framework posits that humanitarian organizations may use their partnerships to augment their response capacity, and attract their partners with the arguments that participation in a disaster

relief operation has the added benefits of providing an informal learning experience for the seconded staff. By using the event network approach in disaster relief settings, the framework also implies that humanitarians may rely on multiple sets of partners and rather than developing specialists, they may benefit more from having a portfolio of skills available to them from their partners that they could access based on the needs identified at each disaster to activate a needs driven secondment. The framework also illustrates a process that private managers can use to design, implement, and follow up on the secondments of their staff participating in disaster relief operations. Most importantly, as mentioned earlier, the framework pushes the managers to also interpret the secondments as learning opportunities that could bring unique lessons to the company as part of the benefits from the partnership.

From the perspective of supply chain and logistics this thesis treats the supply chain as a supply network as proposed by Tatham and Pettit (2010). This concept fits well in a disaster relief operations where uncertainty and unpredictability demand greater flexibility and agility. The network focus serves to compensate the challenges listed for the humanitarian supply chain making it a more suitable interpretation of reality. Moreover, The framework pushed the network concept further by incorporating the notion of time and space to the actors. Furthermore the events that take place are used to shape and moderate the interaction among the network participants determining their length and scope (space) for involvement. The framework proposes that learning is possible among supply chain partners, even if it is unstructured and informal as noted here. In specific reference to humanitarian logistics, this thesis presents disaster relief operations as a source of learning for the supply chain members as mentioned earlier. This is a contribution to a literature and practice that has been dominated by arguments in the opposite direction (i.e. private sector as a source of lessons for the humanitarians).

From the perspective of networks, the adaptation of the events network model to disaster relief operations may also be listed as a contribution (as seen in essay 2). This adaptation contributes with the idea that secondments, and even overall contribution to disaster relief operations, should be driven by the needs determined in the event which subsequently will identify who are the most relevant actors to provide support and resources. This approach differs from an exclusive focus on the actors, but rather on how the actors evolve over time and space in the network as proposed by Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) as the needs evolve and the capacity of each actor to meet the needs changes. This appears to be a more appropriate approach for disaster relief operations where the roles and the tasks required of the different actors are constantly changing and evolving. The adapted model is taken even further in this thesis to make the link between networks and learning, this thesis contributes with the idea that events do not need to be formal and structured for learning to occur, on the contrary, informal learning privileges the opposite, which is characteristic of disaster relief operations.

Finally, from the learning perspective, the framework illustrates that partnerships may use their secondments as learning opportunities that can be interpreted as value to the initial partnership investments. The framework treats learning as a managed process that requires managerial attention and investment. It explicitly outlines the roles of the humanitarian organization, the secondee, and the company seconding through the different stages of the process. This multi-actor and sequential discussion helps to manage the learning process and count for its success. The thesis overall contributes to the learning literature by arguing that disaster relief operations provide a context for informal learning, and that the latter is propitious for the seconded managers to acquire lessons. Moreover, the framework proposes that this learning is most likely to

benefit to both the individual seconded and the company seconding them if learning is explicitly declared an objective of the secondment. Thus learning from disaster relief operations should be treated as a component of the career development of the seconded managers, to capture and integrate their lessons learnt. As mentioned earlier, though even stronger from the learning angle, this thesis confirms that disaster relief operations, besides being a humanitarian action, are also valuable learning opportunities for those participating in them, not just at the personal level, but also at the professional. In resume, learning is proposed as a positive argument for humanitarian organization and private companies to consider developing long term partnerships that foster the exchange of staff.

5.4. Managerial Implications

Managerial implications are aimed here at private sector managers responsible for the design, implementation and evaluation of partnerships. It is suggested that they view partnerships as learning opportunities, which can bring value to the company seconding staff. This is an alternative to the view that sees partnerships and their related secondments as mere communication opportunities. For a manager assuming this framework the main concern should be how to design the secondment program using the framework to promote learning.

The important points to keep in mind are that event networks can be used as an opportunity for informal learning for companies to second their staff as long the seconded managers can perform tasks required and pertinent to the disaster relief efforts. Seconded managers need to be able to be operational with minimal support and supervision, and autodidactic in adapting to the new setting. During the secondments the conditions for informal learning are noted to be present making it a natural and recommended approach. Informal learning is flexible enough and adaptable, allowing the seconded managers to fulfill their humanitarian/disaster-related tasks while at the same time learning to apply them in a context different to their traditional work environment.

Learning should not be seen as an activity to be done abroad and which ends abroad, it should be extended to the home front with the idea that learning is not over until the learner is able to apply and test his idea in his original environment. This suggests that partnership managers align the career objectives of the staff considered for secondments with the learning opportunities from the field. This can be done if managers reinforce the message that these secondments, in addition to contributing to the humanitarian organization and the disaster relief operation, will face an exceptional learning opportunity.

Prior to the secondments, the staff could be coached and taught to learn. Managers can make it explicit that the secondment is an opportunity to test their skills and experience in a different setting which should challenge their competencies. It is expected that they will be outside of their professional comfort zone, and should use this opportunity to reflect upon the limitations of their knowledge and its application. The experience of a secondment is not about problem-solving skills, but rather about reasoning skills to approach a problem (Argyris, 1991).

Managers should reinforce that the learning opportunities will be considered and evaluated upon return. This can be done through interviews with volunteers and seconded staff. Keep in mind that some of the staff interviewed shared a perceived

disconnection about the purpose and lessons of their mission and the continuation of their career. Several even fear that the experience may leave a gap or never be of additional beyond their personal enrichment. By explaining beforehand that the secondment missions will be considered and integrated in the career path and evaluation, the candidates may be more inclined to engage with a higher level of commitment and professionalism.

Upon return from the secondment, managers should allow time and resources to reintegrate the seconded staff. This period of reintegration should initially be part-time, allowing the seconded manager to transition without abruptly losing the momentum accumulated during the secondment. The remaining free time could be allocated to recording lessons learned and potentially discussing with colleagues to find potential uses or adaptations for it within the company. Some companies may prefer to have the managers draft case study or stories about their experience that will help them articulate the lessons learned. In some companies it may even make sense to share and discuss these cases with heads of different departments who could provide a different feedback and provide suggestion about the application of those lessons within the company. This could be an opportunity for the seconded managers to get coaching and feedback from senior managers, a positive way to reinforce learning and professional development (Saunderson, 2011).

Further reflection upon the missed opportunities for the organization seconding staff, managers could also decide on mechanisms for the seconded staff to participate in innovation and/or provide opportunities for them to practice their newly acquired skills. This may be through participation in working groups responsible for innovation, and/or evaluation and improvements within the company eventually identifying a set of beta projects.

Eventually these implications could be adapted to secondments between companies and non-for-profit organizations. The main difference to consider while adapting the implication is the relief operations are distinguished by the sense of urgency they provide to the tasks. Other adaptations should be careful to consider what changes in the context of the secondment, or the type of missions chosen.

Overall, secondments for learning is in line with the major challenges expressed by the Chief Human Resource officers (IBM, 2010), where the need to develop creative leaders and capturing global knowledge are raised as main concerns for companies today. The analysis from this thesis shows that by exposing managers to different and challenging settings they are not only able to complement and enlarge the application of their knowledge, but also they are able to learn new ways of interacting with stakeholders in different setting and mindsets to acquire, share, and develop new knowledge as well.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The framework proposed here has been developed looking at secondments and partnerships from a period of time when both sectors have made conscious and significant efforts to collaborate and work closer. It is my belief, based on the observations and the data collected, that this type of collaboration will become more frequent, relevant, and important. Thus, looking at sustainable business models for secondments is not only relevant, but important for the collaboration between the two sectors.

As noted by the data collected, secondments and participation in disaster relief operations are very powerful rich personal and professional experiences that motivate employees and revitalize their willingness and ability to learn beyond their zone of comfort. Anyone who has been through the experience can attest it. They are meant to challenge the traditional application of the individuals' knowledge and competencies by applying them to different setting in which they are forced to rethink their routines, approach, and style. Contrary to formal learning, it is unstructured, and heavily relying on interpersonal relations and interaction which creates a different context to the office and organizational setting in which the individual is used to working.

As described in the earlier sections, disaster relief operations are very particular, and motivate the individuals not only at the professional, but the personal level as well. The sense of urgency, limited resources and impact, contribute to create a setting in which the individuals will be motivated to use their talents, skills, and knowledge and adapt it to the changing conditions to make their contribution. Through this process, the individuals will learn more about themselves, and the potential benefits and multiple uses of their knowledge. The examples from data show how seconded managers invested above than average energy (time, enthusiasm, concentration) during the secondments to achieve their tasks, which required them to be flexible, and to discard some of their routine habits in order to be able to adapt and contribute to their new setting, goals, and chain of command.

Given these arguments, the thesis leads to the conclusions that secondments to disaster relief operations can be an informal learning opportunity for managers from the private sector. This opportunity may be beneficial to strengthen partnerships between private companies and their humanitarian partners, and used by the humanitarian organizations as means to augment their response capacity to disaster relief operations. Perhaps the most important conclusion, detailed in the contribution sections, is the process outlined by the framework to setup, implement, and follow up the actual secondments. The framework outlines the roles of the humanitarian organization, the seconded manager, and the seconding company before, during and after to provide a fruitful experience for all parties concerned.

Through the proposed framework companies are able to develop the conditions that will allow the company to foster and learn from the experience of their seconded managers. The framework is designed to capitalize on the individual learning experience and integrate it into the company to improve the partnership. It is also a way to train and develop their own staff. It is a merely a humble contribution to a subject that will evolve and progress as governance, policy and practices continue to move forward in light of unending needs in the humanitarian sector, and the increasing interest and need for companies to contribute to disaster relief.

Finally, the conclusions confirm an important and often overlooked point in the literature and practice, which is the interpretation of the humanitarian sector as a source of knowledge, value and experiences for the private sector. Too often, the academic literature, practitioners and even politicians and journalists, have looked at the humanitarian sector for its inefficiencies and challenges, but rarely taking them forward to be framed as learning opportunities and points. In fact, the most recurrent arguments are that humanitarians need more private sector influence which inherently overlooks the value of the knowledge and competencies found in their routines, and processes. By focusing on what seconded managers can gain from their secondment, the conclusions point to the value that the humanitarian sector has for their partners and other sectors

6.1. Self-Criticism

The first has to do with the choice of methodology. In a second attempt I would seek the opportunity to develop, and test the framework through either action research or an ethnographic study. I believe that either one of these two methods would complement well the ones used here, provide an opportunity for triangulation, and enrich the understanding of the settings in which informal learning is to take place as well as the reintegration of the individual back into the workplace post-secondment.

On the more general points, I would suggest considering the choices of scope and focus to include the question of the value of the lessons learned for the partnership. Some ideas identified through the interviews and literature would point to the direction that the value should be calculated once its final benefits are perceived (i.e., the lessons learned have been transferred and applied). The value could be considered under the line items of training and career development, employee retention and motivation, business development and consulting, research and development. The question of value could also be addressed under the corporate social responsibility umbrella considering that the secondments considered here are among companies that have partnerships with humanitarian organizations as part of the corporate social responsibility programs. This thesis does not consider if the return should be calculated in monetary terms or not, nor if calculated, the method for calculation. This requires a deeper understanding of the literature in accounting, finance and economics, which has been evolving in parallel to address the question of valuation of socio-economic impact, value-creation of partnerships across sectors, the use of non-financial indicators, estimation of social capital, etc.

An extension of the partnerships discussion is the argumentation used about dynamic capabilities. This builds on the assumption of Zollo and Winter (2002) that dynamic capabilities are a source of competitive advantage, and that the partnership is a vector for competitive advantage to the organizations participating in them (Porter, 1987). However, research on these links stills needs further attention. Eisenhardt and Martin (2002) contest Zollo and Winter (2002), positing that dynamic capabilities alone do not lead to competitive advantage. Likewise, the literature about partnerships and corporate social responsibility is inconclusive about the specific value of the partnership activities towards the competitive advantage of the company. On the same subject, another avenue for further research would be to focus exclusively on the knowledge transfer process to understand the facilitators and inhibitors of that process between humanitarian and private organizations, during and outside of the disaster relief stage. A whole body of the strategy and organizational behavior literature points

to facilitators and inhibitors which could be interesting for a better understanding of this topic.

6.2. Avenues for Future Research

A review of the research approaches used in Swedish and Finnish doctoral dissertations published between 1994 and 2003, Vafidis (2007) describes logistics as a field of methodological pluralism with a deductive positivism as the emerging trend (Mentzer and Kahn, 1995; Arlbjørn and Halldórsson, 2002; Näslund, 2002; Spens and Kovács, 2006). Further research on the use of different research approaches by Spens and Kovács (2006) point to the evolution of this trend towards more inductive research being published in the major logistics journals they analyzed. Spens and Kovács (2006) call for more inductive research in the discipline, which they say would be increasingly welcomed to further develop theories and introduce the application of theories from other disciplines into the line of reasoning. Along these lines the conclusions drawn could be enriched from action research, and experiential and/or experimental research approaches in the field of humanitarian logistics. The complexity of the sector and the difficulties in getting access to data could be offset by these research approaches in which a researcher could spend more time on a secondment.

Much like the work of Vafidis, Spens, and Kovács, this thesis follows the research tradition of Nordic dissertations, due not only to the school's affiliation but also to the input and influence of many Nordic researchers who have contributed to its content and design. Concerning the Nordic influence, Zachariassen *et al.* (2010) conducted a review of Nordic dissertations in logistics and supply chain management from 2002-2008 and confirming the predominance of exploratory and explanatory research. Their findings are in line with Arlbjørn *et al.*, (2002) who confirm a rise in qualitative doctoral research in the logistics and supply chain management based on case studies. Zachariassen *et al.*, (2010) not only ratify the fit of this thesis with the trends in Nordic dissertations but they point out that the topic of humanitarian logistics has received very little attention. In fact, they encourage logistics and supply chain management researchers to work in this area of vital importance for the years to come, where a lot has yet to be uncovered, and where a multiplicity of research approaches and theories is welcomed. Some of that research could expand on this one to adapt the framework to other stages of the disaster response like the preparedness or reconstruction, prior to and after the disaster. More research could explore if the typology and magnitude of the disaster affects the learning, in particular if the disaster is managed by local organizations only versus a flock of international humanitarians as done here.

Brannen (2005), Malina *et al.* (2011) and several other scholars argue for the added value of using mixed methods in logistics research, and in specific the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Following their recommendation, quantitative data collection and analysis could be applied in future iterations on this research process. Currently, the whole research has been carried out using qualitative data and the combination of both types could help to increase the validity of the results. For example, quantitative data could be used at the company level to carry out an analysis of the costs related to seconding the staff (internal recruiting and selection cost, travel and logistics cost, business opportunity cost during the absence, and reintegration cost related to the person's productivity and efficiency upon return). This information could be used to calculate if the secondments is an economically viable option for the company vis-à-vis the partners, to whom they could have simply donated more cash; vis-à-vis the employee, whom the company could simply send to an internal

or external training program to acquire learning; and vis-à-vis the return on investments for the media exposure, internal and external communication efforts, and new business opportunities. Likewise, the same arguments could be used for the humanitarian organization who could be better off contracting and paying for expert services rather than assuming the costs related to hosting, housing, integrating, and letting go and external staff member over a short period of time for a secondment. Conducting this quantitative would provide a richer explanation of the context of secondments for the different actors, and open the door to a discussion about when to use secondments in the different types of organizations.

I would also consider surveys to follow a set of seconded managers and their respective superiors before, during, and after their secondment mission. The use of survey could complement the point listed above concerning qualitative data, but more importantly it could be used to discern trends in the learning dynamic during and after the secondment. However, special attention should be given to make sure that the surveys themselves are not an instrument to foster and enable the learning by leading the seconded manager to reflect on their actions. If they are, which is likely to be beneficial for the learning process, the surveys should be treated as a learning tool and not just a research tool. As a learning tool, there would be a survey before the secondment that is done by the seconded manager and superior as an assessment of skills and competencies. During the secondment the survey would apply to the seconded manager only and used to describe his interaction with peers in the operation, and the types of tasks performed. Following the secondment, a final assessment would engage the seconded manager and their superiors again in an inventory of lessons learned during the relief operation. The latter could serve as support for the templates to be developed by the seconded manager to transfer internally the lessons learned. This type of approach is inspired and favored by scholars in the field of dynamic capabilities, organizational learning and best practice transfer.

Given the important role that human interaction and relationships play in the process of learning during the secondments, I would redesign the data collection to include ethnographic research approach during the secondments as mentioned earlier. I believe this would help to develop a better typology of interactions during the secondment mission, and to identify in the secondment what are points in time and routines for learning to be most effective. The results from a study like this could help to build stronger links to the literature on informal learning used in this study, which is based on research in a corporate context. Ethnographic research would also help to make a stronger contribution to the learning literature if the above mentioned links are made making the distinction between learning in a regular commercial operation versus a not for profit disaster relief operation. The approach would also serve to triangulate the secondary data used in the second and third essays, thereby increasing the research quality and validity. This approach was done by Mintzberg (2001) with the Red Cross managers for the study that is used in the third article to define what managers do at work.

Naturally, these three ideas would have an impact not only on the research design, but also on the resources required and time frame for execution. Qualitative data and surveys would require further interaction with the company and the humanitarian organizations to collect data. It also assumes that the costs listed above are tracked and calculated with some level of certainty internally. The scope of the organizations concerned could be limited to the companies listed in the second article, and be drafted with the top four humanitarian organizations to whom the companies have seconded staff over the past five years in the context of the LETs partnership. As for the

ethnographic research, that would require a formal engagement with a humanitarian organization willing to send a researcher to a disaster relief operation. More than time and money, this would also raise methodological issues about the position of the researcher in the context analyzed, the influence of his participation in the organization and operations, and potential biases. All these could blur the line between action and case study research, so it would require a detailed and careful description of how the ethnography is carried out and integrated in the study.

From the managerial angle, for the framework to be fully operational, it should be tested in its original setting and then further translated into other areas. The Labadens example cited here showed some promising, yet limited results. Further research should be conducted on the methods to integrate into the company the lessons learned by the seconded individuals in the field and link them to the return on investment of the partnership between the company seconding staff and the humanitarian organizations hosting them. An alternative and equally enriching avenue for further research would be to adapt and test the framework but from the humanitarian organization's perspective rather than just the private side as done here.

Finally, a wide range of profiles seconded has addressed. In a second attempt to produce the framework I would be very interested to focus on the differences and issues related to the seniority of the individuals seconded, and on the expected length of their career in the company sending them. There may be some interesting issues to analyze about how the secondment can help more junior people evolve in the organization, and how some more senior people may be sent as a reward for their efforts without a clear plan for their future in the company.

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APPENDIX 1 LABADENS INTERVIEW SUBJECTS (ANONYMOUS)

List of interviewees performed in 2011

Five individuals seconded to Labadens missions were interviewed upon return from their secondment missions. The list includes:

a financial analyst (FA),

an investment analysis (IA)

an investor relations manager (IRM),

IT manager (ITM),

and merger and acquisition manager (MAM).

APPENDIX 2 THE ESSAYS

Essay 1: How do partnerships develop in disaster relief operations?

Tomasini, R. M. (2012). "Humanitarian Partnerships—Drivers, Facilitators, and Components: The Case of Non-Food Item Distribution in Sudan". In Kovács, G., & Spens, K. M. (Eds.), *Relief Supply Chain for Disasters: Humanitarian, Aid and Emergency Logistics*. pp. 16-30.

Essay 2: How do partners interact during a disaster relief operation?

Tomasini, R. M. (2012) "Humanitarian Private Partnerships as Events Based Networks". Book to be published by the Academic Council of the United Nations. Palgrave.

Essay 3: What can seconded managers learn from secondments to disaster relief operations?

Tomasini, R.M. (2011), "Helping to Learn? Learning Opportunities for Seconded Managers", *Journal of Global Responsibility*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 46-59.

Humanitarian Partnerships: Drivers, Facilitators, and Components.

The Case of Non-Food Item Distribution in Sudan

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ABSTRACT

Through the use of a case study, this chapter discusses the design of a partnership between humanitarian organizations to understand what the drivers, facilitators, and components of the partnership are. This research has been designed using a topical literature review and a case study. The practical implications include a discussion and guidelines for designing partnerships under high uncertainty and limited resources.

INTRODUCTION

Delivering aid in an emergency situation is a complex process given the high levels of uncertainty, capacity and resources that characterize the needs. Humanitarian agencies work hard to fulfill their specific mandates and ensure that beneficiary needs are met in the quickest and most efficient way. Doing so requires in many circumstances joint efforts (partnerships) between different agencies to achieve the common goal. Partnerships between humanitarian agencies can take many forms ranging from informal agreements, to memorandum of understanding, or formal contracts.

The literature on partnerships between corporations is rather extensive. However, little has been written about partnerships in the supply chain among humanitarian organizations to respond to emergencies. Studies in commercial supply chains have explained the benefits of partnerships to mitigate uncertainty or foster collaboration. However, these differ from the focus of this research in that the final recipient is not the only customer. In the humanitarian supply chain there are two customers: donors and beneficiaries at opposite ends of the supply chain. They each bring high levels of uncertainty for the humanitarian organization at the onset of the operations. In other words, it can take days, if not weeks, until a good picture of how much will be donated from which donors for an inaccurate number of beneficiaries.

Researchers have begun to look into inter-organizational collaboration in the humanitarian supply chain (Samii, 2009; and Schulz, 2009) though a lot of questions remain unaddressed regarding formalized multiparty partnership agreements among humanitarian agencies. Formal partnership agreements from humanitarian organizations have been more the subject of researchers looking at cross-sectoral partnerships (i.e., humanitarian-private, humanitarian-military, humanitarian-governments), still a greater understanding of why these partnerships emerge between humanitarian agencies in logistics remains to be discussed.

The focus of this chapter is on the initial phase of Darfur crisis in 2004 when the humanitarian organizations made the decision to partner for the delivery of aid and the steps and decisions taken to create this partnership. In the case presented here this phase corresponds to a ten-months (February-November 2004) period during which humanitarian agencies present in Sudan became aware of the rising needs of large numbers of people in the Darfur regions. Unable to access the region, yet

aware of the logistical challenges they would encounter in responding to such a massive operation, managers from different humanitarian agencies worked together to plan and decide which tasks would be addressed collectively and under what conditions. The result was a set of inter-agency initiatives meant to create cost savings and efficiency. This chapter focuses specifically on the partnership designed to deliver non-food items through a common pipeline.

The arguments are developed as follows: Section 1 explains the context of humanitarian logistics and partnerships. Section 2, describes the methodology used to design and analyze the case study presented in section 3. Section 4 combines the literature to analyze the case and discuss the drivers, facilitators and components for the partnership between the different humanitarian agencies focusing on Darfur. Section 5 lists limitations and recommendations from this research. In closing, section 6 provides some recommendations for future research, and section 7 provides a set of concluding remarks about the application and relevance of this research to the evolving field of humanitarian logistics.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

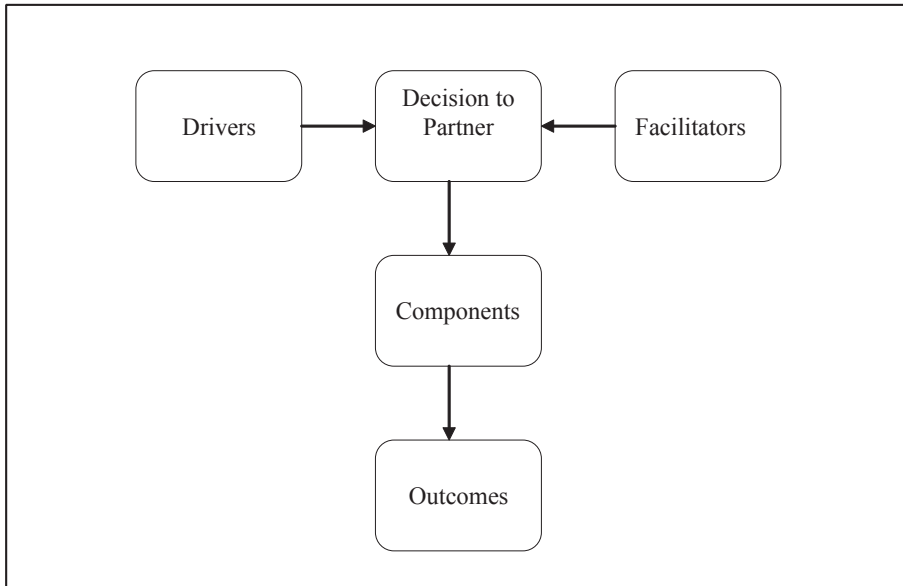
Humanitarian logistics is a relatively new academic field of study and emerging research (Kovacs and Spens 2007) with evolving definitions and concepts. The main difference with commercial supply logistics is that companies aim their “logistics at increasing profits whereas humanitarian logistics aims to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable people” (Thomas and Kocczak, 2005). Unlike actors in a commercial supply chain, humanitarian actors are required to go beyond the profit logic (Ernst, 2003), as this logic is actually absent and replaced by the concepts of speed and cost (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). Moreover, humanitarian actors are driven by efficiency given the limited resources as long as performance does not compromise their legitimacy or license to operate as neutral and impartial organizations.

The second most salient difference would be the multiplicity of actors involved. Actors may come from different ideologies and motivations (i.e., United Nations agencies, non-profit organizations, community organizations, religious and faith based organizations, military, governments, media, volunteers, etc), but eventually need to find a way of contributing towards the common goal of meeting the assessed needs of the population. Mandates, organizational capacity, and local expertise combine together to build what Samii (2008) calls ‘virtual organizations’, where a set of agencies work together as one supply chain to coordinate the use of limited resources in a disaster relief operation.

The lack of a shared profit incentive, combined with the multiplicity of actors and their diverse mandates, capacity, and expertise leads to difficulties in alignment for the humanitarian supply chain. For example, some agencies may have mandates that extend beyond the emergency phase on to the recovery phase, while others may only have the capacity to stay in the emergency phase given their funding and limited staff. At the same time, another agency may only be able to provide specialized aid in the recovery phase that follows the initial emergency window. Determining who will be present where, and for how long at each phase is a challenge for each relief operation that affects the success and efficiency of the supply chain.

Following a longitudinal study of different partnerships, Lambert and Knemeyer (2004) states that most supply chain partnerships failed due to un-aligned expectations and undetermined levels of cooperation. Together they propose a model “developed under the auspices of Ohio State University’s Supply Chain Forum from lessons learned from best partnering experiences of that group’s 15 member companies”. The partnership model for supply chain proposes that there are a set of ‘drivers’ (compelling reasons to partner), that combined with set of ‘facilitators’ (supportive environmental factors that enhance partnership growth) lead to a decision to partner. The partnership is then composed of ‘joint activities and processes that build and sustain the partnership’ to meet a level of performances that matches the expectations of the partners in the first place. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Partnering Process (based on Lambert and Knemeyer 2004).



The Lambert and Knemeyer model has interesting implications for this research given its focus on supply chain performance and the definition of partnership. While the definition is not explicitly stated by the authors, they explain that rather than a supplier-selection tool, a partnership “is a way targeting high potential relationships and align expectations around them” (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004). Such explanation fits well the intent of the humanitarian agencies in this research who intended this partnership to be yet another interaction point for them to implement their programs in Sudan. Their definition of partnerships presented is not time bound. This is also in line with the humanitarian managers in the non-food items (NFI) pipeline for whom the duration of the partnership was a secondary issue. Instead, the humanitarian managers focused on high-potential relations and alignment as described by the Lambert and Knemeyer model (2004).

METHODOLOGY

Research for this article has been conducted following case study methodology suggested by McCutcheon *et al.* (2002), who adapt Yin (1989) and Eisenhardt’s (1989) case study methodology to the field of operations management. McCutcheon *et al.* (2002) also sustain that “case-based research represents the intersection of theory, structures and events” while allowing the researcher to “explore concepts in the real world looking for patterns that are insightful, interesting, and offer the possibility of providing predictive, explanatory power or understanding”. Case-based methodology is deemed appropriate for this research as “there is no control over the behavioral events, and the focus is on contemporary events” (Yin 1989). More specific to the context of operations management case-based methodology enables the researcher to observe in complex environments the different factors at play and assess their impact on the outcomes (McCutcheon *et al.* 2002) as it was done through the data collection and analysis. Given the type of research purpose and question, Handfield and Melnyk (1998) suggest that an in-depth case study be used to uncover and explore the topic and uncover areas for research and theory development. The case study here serves to provide an understanding of a complex subject matter (Meredith 1998) for the analysis and recommendations.

The instrument chosen to gather the data (i.e., study protocol) was a questionnaire designed using the theoretical propositions of the Lambert, Emmelhanz, and Gardner (1996) partnership model. Through open ended questions managers from humanitarian organizations and donor agencies operating in Sudan were interviewed onsite to understand “compelling reasons to partner, the supportive environmental factors that enhanced the partnership growth, the decision to partner, activities that sustained the partnership, and the extent to which performance met expectations” (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004).

Interviews were carried out in person for approximately one hour each. The list of participants, totaling 40 humanitarians, was initially set to 20 and increased in sets of 10 twice until no new issues were identified in the responses. Participants can be divided into two groups: a focal group was made up of 5 organizations (World Food Program, UNICEF, UN Joint Logistics Center, Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs, and Care International) involved in the design and delivery of the partnership; and an extended group included additional 7 organizations that joined the partnership after it was formed and contributed or benefited from its operations (USAID, DFID, ECHO, World Vision International, Save the Children, Medair, and ADRA) . The latter could be considered “clients” or “users” rather than core members as those in the focal group.

Participants were provided with an overview of the research during a weekly meeting that assembled all the partners for updates, and they received a project brief through email prior to the interview meeting. Interviews were transcribed and shared again for corrections and additional comments from the interviewees. To ensure construct and internal validity, interviewees were prompted to provide additional data in the form of support material such as quantitative and qualitative internal reports, bulletins, and opportunities for observation in the field. These investigative observations proved to be useful in validating the focus of the research and the selection of additional participants. Some examples of observations include attendance at coordination meetings, warehouse loading and offloading activities, field visits to the distribution sites, and donor coordination meetings.

Interview transcripts were then analyzed to draw out the drivers to partner from the different organizations and the facilitators to making the partnership work. Comments and quotes from the participants were categorized and coded to develop a list of recommendations for future partnerships of the same type.

Following a period of data analysis the compiled data was shared with the participating organizations in a plenary meeting onsite in Sudan to validate assumptions before drawing final conclusions. Feedback was collected and integrated into the final analysis to describe the benefits of the partnership and critical success factors for its development.

Finally, the results were disseminated in a managerial report to all the agencies which served as an evaluation of the implementation phase of the partnership. Further analysis has been carried out through a more in-depth review of the literature for the purpose of this article.

CASE STUDY: NON-FOOD ITEM COMMON PIPELINE FOR DARFUR (SUDAN)

Early 2004, humanitarian agencies began to focus again on Sudan in anticipation of the signing of the peace treaty that would bring to an end to the long standing battle between South Sudan and the government of Khartoum (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2007). However, the eminent needs in Darfur made everyone switch focus to a different crisis out west where the urgent needs of approximately a million people, and rising, were suddenly made public. Rumors about violence in Darfur began to circulate in the spring. However, humanitarian presence in the area was too small to confirm the magnitude of the violence. Humanitarian agencies based in Khartoum required a travel permit from the government to travel to the region, which in some cases could take weeks if the purpose was not properly justified and agreed by the government. The bottlenecks and restrictions were eventually lessened as the rumors gained the attention of the international community and the UN Security Council began to pressure the government of Khartoum to collaborate. From one week to

the next the number of victims escalated from an initial 200,000 victims to nearly 2 million people by the summer when the international community finally got the details of the fighting and crimes against humanity taking place.

Douglas Osmond, UNJLC Officer in Charge during the initial phases of the Darfur operation, pointed out during an interview for this research in Sudan, that the mere magnitude of the crisis was beyond the operational capacity of the humanitarian agencies present to respond. He explained that “internally displaced people (IDP) were scattered through a large area with very long distances to travel. These distances were unprecedented. Even in Goma/Bukavu, one of the largest IDP operations in the history of the African region, the people were closer to each other. At the end, resources were exhausted in movement alone.”

As most agencies in Sudan were staffed to conduct long term development programs they lacked the capacity to do emergency response as required in Darfur. “Development programs focus on capacity building, using the national staff, cost savings, low budgets and long time frames, where as emergency relief programs are the opposite in all respects” explained Osmond. Staffing highly skilled, qualified, and experienced personnel in short notice was a problem for most agencies resulting in long delays to provide technical and administrative support on the ground.

The sudden emergence of this unanticipated crisis came to test the reactivity of all the humanitarian agencies. On one side, there were lots of bureaucratic bottlenecks by the Sudanese government that made getting information about the nature and magnitude of the crisis difficult. On the other side, humanitarian agencies lacked the readiness and preparedness to roll out such a large program overnight considering the unprecedented scale and intensity.

The combination of these issues created an unanticipated ‘preparation phase’ during which humanitarian agencies were unable to become operational and were forced to discuss a collaborative strategy. This phase raised the expectations of the donors who aware of the magnitude and complexity of the needs were also encouraging innovative solutions to target the needs in Darfur.

At least half of the interview participants explained the added value of the delays. For example, unlike most emergencies, under restricted operational capacity and limited access to resources, the humanitarian actors present had no other choice but to sit down, share information, and collectively plan. They felt the pressure of the donors and the international community who had been lobbying for the Sudanese authorities to give them access. To some extent humanitarians feared they were not ready for the day that access would be granted and felt the obligation to be as ready as possible for that day. In emergency situations, such planning is less frequent than desired due to the urgency of the task, the lack of anticipation, and funds. The preparedness phase ended with Sudanese authorities issuing travel permits to foreigners to access the Darfur region and ramp up their operations and assist violence victims grouped in the camps.

Through the joint planning discussion it became obvious that NFIs such as mattresses, plastic sheets, blankets, soap, jerry cans, etc. would be a common concern for all agencies given the lack of a leader for its sourcing and distribution. None of the humanitarian agencies or NGOs present in Sudan had it in their mandate to provide NFIs to IDPs, let alone funding or the capacity to do it. Even if one agency had the mandate, the magnitude of needs, volume of recipients, and the complexity of the environment revealed that no single agency could undertake the whole responsibility of sourcing, storing, transporting, distributing, and reporting.

In the interviews all donors expressed that by April 2004 they had funded rapid response agencies and had not seen any action or results¹. Having exhausted the traditional operating channels innovative approaches seemed more promising. Donors took the lead in recognizing that the best solution was interagency collaboration and promoted it by placing their resources in that direction.

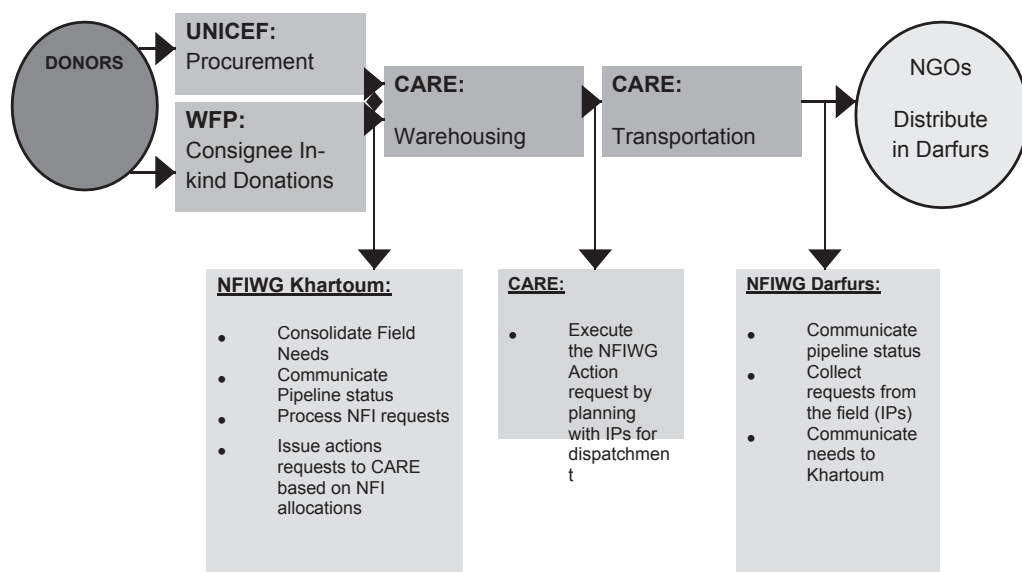
Actors on the Non Food Items Common Pipeline

As the main coordination agency for the humanitarian community, the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the donors requested United Nations Joint Logistics Center² (UNJLC) support to address the NFI concerns. At the time, this de facto partnership could be defined as a symbiotic relationship between OCHA's mandate, funds, and administrative capacity with the UNJLC's logistics field expertise and experience, access and presence in the field.

Reflecting on their initial conversations with UNJLC, donors and OCHA explained that NFIs demanded significant logistical planning and support, which is UNJLC's core function. UNJLC was staffed with seconded senior logistics staff from other agencies with ample experience in complex emergency and population movement in the region.

The first steps came after a series of negotiations and meetings between OCHA/UNJLC, the donors and the rest of the agencies to sign a few agreements that would set the blueprint for the common pipeline. Under these agreements, UNICEF assumed responsibility for the procurement of the goods for the common pipeline; WFP became the consignee for all in-kind donations; CARE provided warehousing in the Darfur capitals and distribution to the implementing partners at the camps. The agreement meant that agencies in Darfur could request items that had been previously identified as a priority at no cost and receive them from CARE on-site. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Information and Material Flow



UNJLC and OCHA assumed joint responsibility to chair NFI working groups (NFIWG) in Khartoum and in the three capitals in Darfur (Nyala, Geneina, Obeid). The working groups were open forums for collective decisions attended by donors, UNICEF, and NGOs doing distribution in the camps (also known as implementing partners or IPs). See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Map of Sudan

(from <http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/sudan.html>)



In Darfur NFIWs collected information about beneficiary figures from the field, estimated requests, pending needs, and analyzed the data to suggest priorities per camp to the NFIWG in Khartoum. Then the working group in Khartoum met weekly to identify priorities per state based on the field reports, the participants' input and stock movement reports. Upon reaching consensus on the priorities the working group in Khartoum communicated them to UNJLC/OCHA, who would adjust the quantity of the needs and set the priorities based on the pipeline status.

Having communicated the stated priorities to the rest of the humanitarian community, the IPs issued a request to UNJLC/OCHA to receive the items at a particular camp for distribution. The NFIWG in Khartoum reviewed the requests, sought clarification and assessed adjustments where necessary. Upon satisfactory completion of the review process, the NFIWG would issue an "Action Request" to CARE to dispatch the items to the IPs. The action request was issued within a day. See Figure 2 for a detailed illustration of the material and information flow.

Participant Benefits

For the implementing agencies, having the common pipeline in place allowed them to focus and invest their resources on their core activities. Basically they did not have to worry about procuring their own goods (UNICEF), finding a consignee for in-kind goods (WFP), nor warehousing or transportation to the camps (CARE). Their main concern was to be as ready as possible to distribute the items when they were needed and dispatched.

Donors understood the benefits of the model, and did their utmost to support it. Financially, they funded administrative and operating costs of all the agencies, including the secondment of staff to UNJLC and OCHA. They also provided both in-kind donations and funds for procured goods. Politically, they exercised their power on the authorities to remove bottlenecks and reinforce the urgency. In practice, they collectively took a strong stand on not funding independent initiatives that would compete with the common pipeline. For example, if an appeal came through for an item that is available there, the appeal would be rejected and redirected to the common pipeline. Donors recognized that overall the common pipeline helped to reduce the duplication of efforts thus creating a number of opportunities for cost savings. First, they would fund less administrative and operational

activities, by centralizing the activities among just a few agencies. Second, they would minimize redundancies and excesses since they operated with a common assessment of needs, and not each agency's estimates. Third, they reduced the transaction cost of processing the appeals since all NFIs were handled by the pipeline. Lastly, donors increased the impact of their donations by funding more capacity building and reducing lead times for delivery.

In general, the common pipeline instilled some best practices like the standardization of goods whose benefits go beyond the mere logistics, procurement, and inventory management. Having common standards for procurement³ and in-kind donations⁴ ensured that all implementing partners had access to uniform quality of goods regardless of supplier. It also ensured uniformity of the goods distributed in the region.

Additional benefits from the common pipeline included increased visibility in the supply chain, the possibility to postpone procurement and distribution, and the potential to scale operations according to needs. By consolidating demand from the regions and agencies and matching it with the sourcing process the UNJLC managed to improve visibility in the supply chain for the items in the common pipeline. Under a different set up, each agency would have lacked the incentive to share their information and parallel pipelines would have developed leading to a duplication of efforts and competition for resources like warehousing, transport, and volunteers. Shared information also enabled postponement of distribution from the main warehouse to each of the regions contributing to a lower transportation cost and ensuring that aid was meeting highest ranking needs. Similar arguments hold true regarding postponement for the appeals for donations or procurement since both of these processes were triggered in response to the gaps in the pipeline rather than mere estimates. Having this type of visibility and structure in place provided the delivery agencies with the flexibility to expand and reduce the amount of investment they had allocated for the distribution of the NFIs at different times of the year (i.e., rainy season vs. dry season) and to focus on their core activities.

DISCUSSION: DRIVERS, FACILITATORS, AND COMPONENTS TO PARTNERING

Even though interviews in 2004 were too early to validate the benefits of the common pipeline and to quantify them, most participants indicated positive outlook for the benefits of the collaboration. In relation to the Lambert and Knemeyer model, the collaboration in Darfur can be assessed in terms of the drivers, facilitators and components of the common pipeline to better understand the partnership design.

Drivers

The drivers to partnering were clear and consistent from the beginning of the operation. The magnitude of the needs, the size of the territory to be covered, the distances and cost of delivering aid to Darfur were impossible for one agency to assume alone. Intuitively aware that the length of the crisis would also be significant, all organizations agreed that they needed to find an efficient system to provide aid that could be sustained over time. Some respondents even mentioned that Sudan would not be able to raise enough funds from the international community over the following few years to cover the expenses of meeting the humanitarian needs in the area. This proved to be true as soon as the Indian Ocean tsunami took place shifting donor attention away from Darfur. Consider as well, as some respondents pointed out, that Darfur had limited infrastructure to operate locally and that population was very dispersed, so beyond the costs of getting to the region there was a significant cost involved in warehousing and distributing aid regionally. Clearly, from the onset the consensus was to find a cost-effective and sustainable way to provide aid to Darfur which would require combining resources among the different agencies.

Facilitators

Convinced that a partnership was necessary to overcome the challenges, the humanitarian agencies worked closely to define and agree on a set of elements (facilitators) that would help the partnership

to grow. In retrospect, based the analysis of the interviews, these facilitators were senior level support from each of the participating organizations, donor support to finance all the activities, clear role definitions for each participating organization, and consensus on the items carried by the pipeline.

Senior Level Support: Humanitarian agencies realized the need to express senior level support, preferably in writing, to the agencies (particularly those in a coordinating function) agreeing on their roles. This could be the endorsement of the humanitarian coordinator, agreement by the country directors of the participating agencies (i.e., tri-partite agreements), or special mandates from headquarters. As the most important criterion, support must be given from the initial stage of the crisis to avoid further complications as a result of late deployments. Any lack of support on behalf of the related parties should be formally documented to isolate the effects of the bottlenecks on the whole system. Data from the interviews showed that the initial conversations for the NFI Pipeline were taking place at a rather senior level within each of the organizations, engaging managers who had the capacity to commit their teams for the long run with resources under their responsibility. For the most part these managers were national head of agencies, reporting directly to their regional or global headquarters.

Donor Support: It was also noted the importance of having donors agree and support the model from the beginning. This meant providing funds and staff commensurate to the needs for the pipeline. For example, one of the donors hired and seconded trained staff to the UNJLC directly. In a different case, they funded the cost of staff at one humanitarian agency who were dedicated to the common pipeline activities. In general the approach by the donors was to minimize the budget impact of the staff for each of the organization participating in the common pipeline. Funding also included the cost of operating the pipeline at its different stages, which one donor claimed would be "cheaper to cover the cost of only one pipeline than funding and monitoring requests from several different agencies which would then compete for staff, trucks and warehouses." Another humanitarian praised the support from the donors "to reinforce funding policies" referring to the fact that if any agency appealed for goods carried by the common pipeline, the donors would automatically dismiss the appeal and request that the agency channel their appeal through the common pipeline system.

Clear Role Definitions: It was also noted the importance of having the roles per agency well defined at all levels (i.e., WFP, UNICEF, CARE, UNJLC/OCHA) with pre-established lines of communication. Each agency should have clear tasks with objectives and indicators per function. These should be communicated to all interested parties to avoid duplication of effort or confusion. For example, in the common pipeline if goods were to move from one point to another, an action request would need to be issued. The latter could only be issued by UNJLC/OCHA to CARE, and CARE is to report on the dispatch to the UNJLC. Having these clear lines of responsibility ensured that decisions were taken by the accountable parties and that other parties would not assume opportunistic behavior to benefit from any confusion in the system. It also ensured that each agency knew what was expected from them (i.e., CARE to do warehousing and transportation), and what level of service was expected.

Consensus on Essential Items: To reduce confusion, some respondents expressed, that it was important from the beginning to define what would be carried by the pipeline (NFI basket) with priority on items that have the highest impact on the livelihood of the beneficiaries. Less recurrent items (office supplies, general equipment) or those requiring special handling (refrigerated drugs, fuel, or hazardous materials) should be processed in a separate model monitored by the agencies⁵. Among the first discussions held by the participating organization was the composition of the NFI basket which defined the scope of the common pipeline.

Components

Having agreed on the partnership terms and conditions, the respondents agreed that the success of the partnership also depended on the routine activities and management of the processes involved. From the respondents a set of partnerships components were drawn such as having a centralized coordination system, developing transparency and monitoring accountability, and keeping the model

open to participation to the different capable agencies.

Centralized Coordination: This enabled agencies to interact with one commonly agreed coordinator as the main interface. To minimize delays and obstacles at the points where goods (for tracking) or information (for reporting) are exchanged, agencies should agree on the reporting criteria among themselves and communicate in a timely fashion to the coordinator. In this case the coordinator was the UNJLC at the different levels, holding regular meeting in Khartoum and the field as well as communicating bulleting and snapshots of the pipeline activity. Having one coordinator also helped to “create a common understanding of the pipeline performance” remarked one respondent, who later explained that as the situation became clearer in Darfur and improvements in the pipeline needed to be made “it was easier to have one focal point to channel the concerns and address them collectively.”

Transparency and Accountability: As a public service to the humanitarian community, there needs to be a system that allows interested parties to audit the pipeline’s performance. Accountability is supported by a reporting system that outlines the agencies’ responsibilities, actions taken (goods tracking), report progress (monitoring performance), and defines inter-agency relations (collaboration, flow of goods and data). The system can be used for transparency by having clear communication output (reports) that support periodic meetings and bulletins at the different levels and stages.

Participatory Model: As the common pipeline became the main supplier, and preferably the only, there needed to be an objective criteria for participation. The goal walls that decision making be as inclusive as possible, based on the priority of the needs, and the implementing partners’ absorption capacity. For example, the prioritization process was done in an open forum by NFIWG. They identified and ranked needs per state and assigned them to implementing partners based on their requests and absorption capacity in the area. Such system prevented larger agencies imposing their agendas or receiving preferential treatment.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that this research embodies several limitations in relationship to the humanitarian sector, and the academic literature. On the humanitarian side the design and implementation of the relief efforts for Darfur was atypical, as previously noted, in that it included a long window of preparedness during which senior staff were solely dedicated to the task. It is a rare occasion for humanitarian managers to be able to invest such time and resources on-site in preparation for a relief operation. It is also worth noting that most of the key actors in the focal group were UN agencies, and that NGOs involved already had a working relationship with the UN members. Similarly, managers understood the long-term potential of their planning and tacitly acknowledged that their joint efforts could have long-term benefits. It could be argued that with a shorter term vision, as it is often the case, managers would have not engaged in a partnership negotiation as described in this article. Instead, a version of the partnership model would have evolved over time at a higher cost to the agencies and beneficiaries.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Further research is also required to confirm the successful implementation of the NFI common pipeline as designed in 2004. Considering that in 2009 agencies were asked to leave Sudan, it would be interesting to understand how this arrangement operated in current day Sudan. Given the opportunity and data availability, a study could be considered to analyze the costs associated with the pipeline to estimate potential savings and efficiencies.

In relation to the academic management literature the discussion here is limited to organizations operating under high-uncertainty and without a profit incentive. Any conclusions drawn from this case study or analysis into a wider context would require further testing for its applicability.

The literature on supply chain management also indicates that competitive supply chains require

alignment, in addition to agility and adaptability (Lee, 2004). An interesting contribution of the partnership model is that it motivates the alignment of the member organizations to form the partnership. Humanitarian supply chains are noted for their agility and adaptability, however the lack of a profit-driven business model seems to present difficulties in creating sustainable alignment between the organizations. It could be argued, and tested through further research, that building high-potential relations could be a substitute for non-profit driven organization to develop alignment. High-potential relations leading to partnerships could be the tool for organizations to discuss their motivations leading to the incentive alignment.

CONCLUSION

Humanitarian agencies are mandate driven organizations whose operational capacities have been designed and adapted to meet the beneficiary needs that fall under their scope e.g., food, medicine, education). As such agencies are specialized in complimentary areas and functions that demand that they interact and work together to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries following a disaster. The need to interact is exacerbated by the limited resources and high levels of uncertainty that characterize humanitarian emergencies.

The mechanisms through which humanitarian agencies interact and set up collaboration have changed numerous times and evolved at different levels. In the 1990s the Department for Humanitarian Action (DHA) was the main body in the UN to foster interagency collaboration. DHA later gained more support and was institutionalized under the UN Secretariat to become the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). They were responsible for the overall coordination of the humanitarian agencies, including liaisons with non-governmental organizations through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). At the turn of the century logistics coordination climbed up in the institutional and political agendas by the creation of the United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) (Samii and Van Wassenhove, 2003). The UNJLC was staffed with seconded staff from different agencies and designed to be activated within 24 hours by the IASC to provide logistics coordination support in large scale emergencies. As part of the humanitarian reform started in 2005 a new coordination mechanism was developed better known as the cluster system. Logistics is one of the nine clusters developed, and is led by World Food Program as the lead agency and incorporating UNJLC as a core member. The research presented in this paper dates to back to 2004 prior to the humanitarian reform focusing on the coordination activities of the UNJLC.

Understanding how partnerships between humanitarian organizations are designed and what are the drivers, facilitators and components for them is a still a relevant questions despite any changes in the coordination mechanism of the humanitarian sector⁶. Most recently we have followed the relief operations in Haiti, where limited resources and efficiency have also dominated the agenda of the participating organizations. The Logistics Cluster, leading the coordination of aid flow, has implemented a similar common pipeline model to the one described here to guarantee the efficient and cost-effective flow of goods into Haiti from the Dominican Republic. They have also worked with a common warehouse system for the humanitarian agencies moving aid into the island. Both examples highlight the importance and relevance of this question and validate that these types of partnerships are an important solution to the management of the humanitarian supply chain.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Accountability - Being able to identify who is responsible for the actions within the processes of the supply chain and how well each of those processes are performed (Tomasini, Van Wassenhove 2009)

Common pipeline – A joint logistical effort in bringing supplies to a disaster area that is aimed at reducing redundancies and excesses.

Internally Displaced People (IDP) - The terms relates to beneficiaries, that affected by crisis, have changed locations but have not crossed the borders of their home country.

Non-Food Items - Essential aid delivered to the beneficiaries during a disaster relief operation, other than food, such as blankets, plastic sheeting, soap, or water buckets.

Partnership - A way to target high potential relationships and align expectations around them (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004).

Partnership Components - Joint activities and processes that build and sustain the partnership' to meet a level of performances that matches the expectations of the partners in the first place (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004).

Partnership Drivers - Compelling reasons to engage in a partnership (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004).

Partnership Facilitators - Supportive environmental factors that enhance partnership growth (Lambert and Knemeyer, 2004).

Refugees - The terms relates to beneficiaries, that affected by crisis, have crossed their national borders seeking assistance.

Transparency - Ability to understand how processes interact within the supply chain to improve performance (Tomasini, Van Wassenhove 2009).

"Humanitarian Private Partnerships as Events Based Networks"

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Introduction

Like the literature on networks, the discussion of public private partnerships (PPP) has been moving from a focus on the actors into a focus on the process and structures that allow those actors to work together in different capacities. This trend leads the discussion into the issue of governance to explore under what kind of circumstances and conditions actors in a network form partnerships, and more importantly are these partnerships efficiently in driving value?

By focusing on the process higher attention is given to events that define which actors will be active in the network/partnership. In this chapter, events are defined as the humanitarian relief operations following a disaster (trigger event). Events will vary in magnitude, nature, and location thus demanding a different set of resources, skills, and actors every time (i.e., Haitian earthquake and Chilean earthquake, or Indian Ocean tsunami and Chilean tsunami). The process focus also places greater attention on flexible agreements between a set of actors including the private sector, rather than one-on-one agreements built around the common interests of the partners instead of the actual needs of the beneficiaries.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss humanitarian-private partnerships for disaster relief as event networks. The purpose is to sustain that event-network are more appropriate in designing partnerships for disaster since these network focus on the specific needs of each event to define the participation of the different actors, rather than the other way around (i.e. the actors define their position in the network based on what they contribute rather than what is actually needed). The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section discusses public private partnerships (PPPs) in the humanitarian sector as form of

collaboration that provides additional and necessary resources for humanitarian agencies to improve their response capacity. The second section describes the relationship between the two sectors as an event-driven network that is continuously refined from the lessons learned in each interaction. The third section explains the methodology used and defines the focal network of companies and humanitarian organizations that the analysis focuses on. The fourth section focuses on the network structure to discuss who are the actors involved, how they interact, and their alignment to achieve a common goal. The fifth section illustrates with a case study the event-network that this research proposes. The sixth section provides a discussion of the arguments by outlining the benefits of this event-network approach for the PPP collaboration. Finally, the seventh section provides some concluding arguments.

1. Humanitarian-Private Public Private Partnerships

Uzzi and Gillespie (2002) conclude that "networks can be used as a special type of governance that facilitates an organization's access to resources". These governance arrangements, usually in the form of contract or memorandum of understanding, are designed "to safeguard and promote knowledge and resource transfer" (Dyer and Singh, 1998). The trust and reciprocity implied in these types of governance agreements can be applied to PPPs which in the area of disaster management can be defined, as done by Elsig and Almaric's (2008) as "task oriented partnerships built around resources mobilization and operational collaboration".

Over the past decade PPPs have increased in popularity for the UN system and the humanitarian NGOs. The Cardoso report to the UN General Assembly on "Strengthening of the United Nations System" pointed out "partnerships have featured in the project-level work of the United Nations for decades, but in recent years they have transcended individual projects in the global programs and policy making." The UN has formalized their intention to leverage private partnership through the establishment of umbrella initiatives like the UN Global Compact and the Office of Partnerships, in addition to the individual initiatives taken by the agencies, programs, and funds like World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Children and Education's Fund (UNICEF), World Health

Organization (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), etc.

Successful PPPs can be framed as delivery agreements in which the humanitarian agencies perform better with the support of the private sector. Many of these examples exist today in the area of humanitarian operations for disaster relief. Agencies like WFP, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR have increased their involvement with the private sector entering into long-term agreements with companies interested in doing corporate social responsibility (CSR). The collaboration between agencies and companies has faced many challenges in the design and implementation of these CSR programs. Following each project and relief operation, both the private partners and the agencies review their involvement and readjust the guidelines of their partnerships and collaboration. Therefore, this research focuses on the role of events in shaping the partnerships between both sectors as they reinforce or loosen their engagement in the network.

2. Events Based Network Model

In this chapter, the network is defined as a sequence of events (i.e. disasters relief operations) that brings together actors from the different sectors to interact for a common goal (e.g., the delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need in a timely fashion). This process approach implies a sociocentric focus on the network, where the analysis looks at the network as a whole, rather than an egocentric focus, where the analysis looks at specific actors and their interactions. This approach acknowledges that the “network changes in potentially predictable ways over time in response to specific industry events” (Madhavan *et al*, 1998).

“A dynamic approach on the network also demonstrates that networks change over time as the network participants take advantage of the opportunities to improve their individual position in the network. An event focus tracks the evolution of events over time by examining structure through the various windows of time, where the length of any window depends on specific events” (Madhavan *et al*, 1998). For the purpose of this chapter events are defined as the relief operations that engage different humanitarian agencies and their private sector partners.

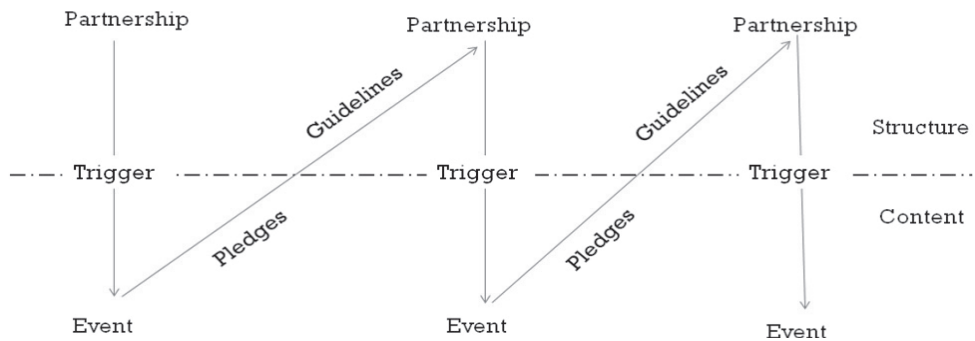
Considering that actors and their role can change from one event (relief operation) to another, this article proposes looking at the humanitarian-private network as a process in which the actors are constantly contributing to the network depending on the needs of the event.

This chapter uses an adaptation of Hedaa and Tornroos's model (2008) model to analyze the network structure and its content as it changes from one event to the next. Their model depicts the relationship between the actors and the events over time to show how events from within or outside the focal network create change and adaptation mechanisms. In the adapted model, each event dictates the needs that determine which actors should be involved. The adapted model is also delimited to relief operations (events) and the boundaries of the partnership to better understand how structure and the content evolve from one event to the next.

Madhavan *et al* (1998) explains that structural change in a network can be structure-reinforcing or structure-loosening. This chapter builds upon that statement to explore how actors learn from each event to become more or less engage in subsequent relief operations.

The adapted model also proposes that changes in the network are subject to a system of pledges between the actors from where lessons emerge to update the guidelines and the structure of the partnership. Events strengthen the partnership structure by generating pledges among the actors. Blakenburg (1999) explains that during critical events the dyad of actors may provide additional support that enhances the evolution of the network partnership. These pledges result in the redesign of the partnership structure setting revised guidelines. These pledges eventually lead to greater commitment in the network among the actors, dependencies, and value creation. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Events Based Partnership Network Model



3. Methodology

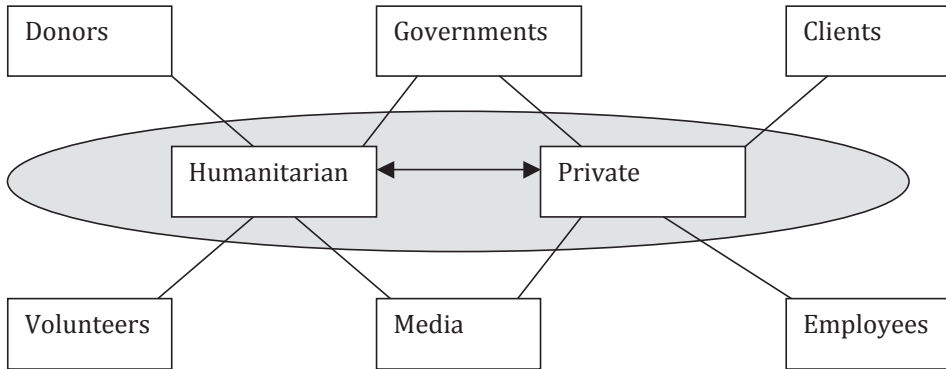
The focus on network theory and case study research raises four major methodological challenges as outlined by Easton (1995): the problems of network boundary, complexity, time, and case comparison.

The problem of network boundary is treated here by separating the actors from the events, and defining under what context the actors in the network collaborate. Actors are “divided into blocks composed of firms that are structurally similar” (Lorrain and White, 1971; Nohria and Garcia-Pontt, 1991). Thus, actors from each sector are combined and treated as individual blocks (i.e., humanitarian block and private block). Such approach also helps to reduce the complexity of the network (Hedaa & Tornroos, 2008) by placing the focus on the interaction between the two sectors rather than the individual interaction between organizations.

The boundaries of the network are limited to the organizations that interact as partners in a PPP in response to a disaster for the relief operations. Within that network specific attention is given to a focal network made up of companies (private block) and the humanitarian organizations (humanitarian block). The distinction between the focal network and the rest of the network acknowledges that there are more actors involved in the relief operations (e.g., military, governments, community-base organizations, media, donors, clients, and supplier). However, these actors outside of the focal network are not

considered to be major contributors to the structure of the network between the humanitarian and the private. See figure 2.

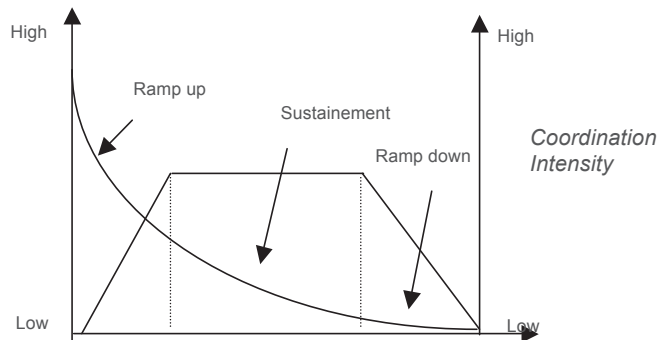
Figure 2: Humanitarian-Private Focal Network (circled)



Complexity has been addressed by grouping the actors from different sectors into blocks and defining which actors belong to the focal network.

Time is defined into different stages related to the context of the network, namely the different stages of relief operations. "Time is attributed to identifiable phases (or stages) within temporal units" (Gurvitch, 1964; Clark, 1985). There are three distinct stages: ramp-up, sustainment, and ramp-down (Tomasini, Van Wassenhove, 2009). See figure 3.

Figure 3: Coordination Stages (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009)ⁱⁱ



By incorporating the notion of time into the network, the analysis lends itself to identifying different objectives and indicators to monitor performance at the different stages of the process. For example, during the ramp-up stage humanitarian agencies are primarily focused on gaining access to the theatre of operations to produce an assessment of the needs and set up their operations. All agencies will attempt to do this simultaneously and adapt their role in the operation as the needs and priorities become more apparent to dictate whose expertise and capacity are most needed. The main challenge during this stage is to overcome bottlenecks as the community, with already limited and impacted resources, experiences a high and sudden peak in demand for information, capacity and services. Most humanitarian resources will be dedicated to the front office, where the main objective will be speed. During this stage private partners can provide support in the back office the humanitarian organizations by making accessible experts, local staff, office/warehouse space and equipment, telecommunications and transportation systems, and cash. This was the case during the Indian Ocean tsunami when TNT and Citigroup provided WFP and the United Nations Joint Logistics Center with on ground support through their regional offices to jumpstart the relief operations and the assessment process.

Finally, case study methodology from Yin (1989) and Eisenhardt (1989) is used to conduct the analysis of the network. The use of case studies enables a rich descriptive narratives using different sources of data (e.g., interviews, observations, data and content analysis) to describe the complexity of the settings and relationships. In this chapter the case study is used as a tool to describe the actors, the stages, the interaction between the actors through the different stages, and the context in which they collaborate. Further case studies illustrating events would be required to complete Yin and Eisenhardt's recommendation for theory generation which is outside of the scope of this chapter.

4. Network Structure

To analyze the network structure this section discusses the multiplicity of actors with different capacities present in the network, the different forms of collaboration that can exist with the private sector, and the need for alignment.

4.1 Humanitarian Actors in a Network

Humanitarian agencies can exist in a great diversity of management structures, actors, funding mechanisms and mandates. Like companies, humanitarian agencies vary in size, core competencies and geographical footprint making it even more difficult to analyze.

However, the diversity also leads to complimentary fits and collaboration in the sector. Thus humanitarian agencies rarely function in isolation, with each agency contributing with their core competencies to the relief operations and development programs. For example WFP is well known for its logistics capacity while the International Organization of Migration (IOM) is better known for their ability to manage refugee camps and population displacements. For certain operations these two agencies may collaborate to serve the nutritional needs of populations in flux in a situation of conflict.

In their explanation of inter-organizational relations Gulati and Gargiulo (1997) support the logic that, like companies, humanitarian agencies are bound to create ties among themselves. They state that "organizations create ties to cope with resource needs that can be met by other organizations and to manage uncertain environments. Inter-organizational ties are viewed as a means by which organizations manage their dependence on specific actors controlling critical resources." For humanitarian agencies, the need for resources and uncertainty peaks during a disaster relief operation. It is at that time when they rely on their network partners to establish the supply chain through which they will deliver the aid and fulfill their mandate.

Provan *et al* (2007) also explain that organizations in a network may "be linked by many types of connections and flows. Connections may be informal or totally trust based or more formalized, as through contracts." In the humanitarian supply chain flows could be material, financial, information or skills (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). For example, agencies rely at different capacity on the actors in the network to move the aid into the affected area for the beneficiaries (material). They will coordinate with the actors in the network to cover the costs and raise funds (financial). They will also exchange information about demand, supply and changes in the operating conditions (information).

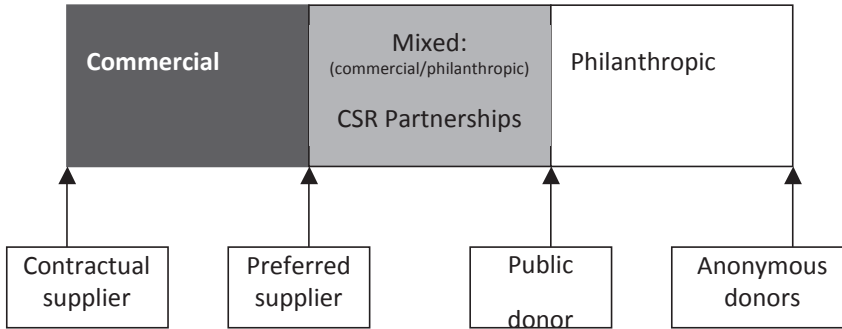
Finally, they will depend on each other's skills and expertise to set up, manage and hand over the operation (skills).

4.2 Private Support: Multiple Interaction Points

Even though the main actors in a disaster relief operation are the humanitarian agencies, this does not exclude the link with the private sector upon which the focal actors in the network will rely on for additional support or capacity. For example, during the Lebanese-Israeli crisis of 2006 humanitarian agencies were having difficulties entering the territory due to security constraints. Severe bombing had destroyed the main infrastructure forcing the aid to be blocked on the Syrian-Lebanese border. Humanitarian agencies consolidated all the aid near the border crossing waiting for the negotiations to give them access. In the meantime humanitarians resorted to private sector for warehouses and transport solutionsⁱⁱⁱ. More examples like this could be listed to show how the private sector can provide support to the humanitarian organizations at different parts of the supply chain.

Support from the private sector could be in different forms ranging from "purely commercial, purely philanthropic, a mixture of both" (Tomasini, Van Wassenhove 2009). Purely commercial relates to contractual agreements where the private sector is just a service provider, while the purely philanthropic refers to the pro-bono donations from companies or individuals without any commercial interest. In this chapter, the focus is given to a mixture of commercial and philanthropic where companies provide support as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) program for the humanitarian organizations. CSR programs are based on a set of voluntary and pro-bono initiatives that the companies engage on with the humanitarian agencies which are linked to a strategic objective of the company and meet the expectations of at least one, or more, stakeholders for the company. These initiatives could be part of a long or short-term program and vary in magnitude and scope. See figure 3.

Figure 3: Engagement Spectrum (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove 2009)^{iv}



On either end of the engagement spectrum, the relationship between the parties can be defined as vertical, in which there is vendor-supplier relation (commercial), or a donor-supplier (philanthropic) relation defined. In the case of CSR partnerships the relationship is altered into a horizontal collaboration in which each party has equal capacities and lack command and control over each other. It is up to the partnership to define how the horizontal collaboration will be managed including the roles and responsibilities of each actor. For example, a company can provide assistance to a humanitarian organization for the front or back office functions at different points in time. While most companies will be inclined to provide assistance during a disaster in the front office, this may not be the most desirable or beneficial situation. Front office activities in relief operations can be rather complex ridden by uncertainty, and often times security constraints. Humanitarian organizations are by nature expected to be neutral and impartial which provides them the license to operate in these complex settings. They have also accumulated experience in dealing with high levels of uncertainty and urgency which may not always be the case for a corporate logistician managing a set line of products from a defined set of location with a pattern of demand. More importantly, humanitarian organizations invest the majority of their resources in the front office attending to field operations on a regular basis. This leaves them with limited resources for the back office functions where a lot of value could be created with best practices from the private sector. Examples of this type of collaboration can be seen in the Moving the World partnership between TNT, logistics

leader, and WFP and their collaboration to redesign the WFP Brindisi warehouse with the support of TNT staff. This type of best practice transfer led to quantifiable savings and improvements to the WFP supply chain, ultimately contributing to their response capacity.

Another important consideration for the horizontal interaction is that one company may have multiple interaction points. In other words, they may be doing CSR while implementing commercial contracts with the same company. This can lead to a conflict of interest if it is not well managed. The case study outlined in the following section will provide a discussion on these issues to highlight the need for to monitor the interaction between these interaction points.

4.3 Alignment

The alignment of the incentives of the different actors in the network is important to ensure that the humanitarian principles are properly observed in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In the cases where the private sector was merely a service supplier, or a donor, to the humanitarian agencies the alignment between their motivations and the humanitarian agencies was clearer. As the private sector becomes more than a donor or service provider, then the question of alignment needs to be revisited. In order to preserve their neutrality and impartiality, humanitarian agencies need to make sure that companies' incentives do not compromise their license to operate. Part of that alignment includes the compatibility of the values and vision of the organizations. For example, companies planning to work with UNICEF will need to abide to the standard procurement procedures as well as meeting all of UNICEF ethical standards to ensure that there is no child labor in the production of any of the goods traded as one of the many requirements.

A chronic issue with humanitarian supply chains has been the push-driven nature of the donations. In 1977 the International Conference of the Red Cross and the UN General Assembly agreed on the “Measures to Expedite International Relief^v”, recommending that “all donors avoid sending irrelevant goods, and to provide notification to consignees of impeding relief shipments, and to educate donors to avoid sending unnecessary relief items” (Fisher 2007). However, operationalizing this recommendation has been a challenge for the humanitarians who are still regularly confronted with unsolicited donations from a

large number of donors that clog the pipeline and create significant bottlenecks (e.g. inadequate clothing, drugs, or food). Many efforts have been put in place over the last decade to empower field agencies to lead the request process and turn the tables around for a pull-driven supply chain where they are able to communicate the specific needs and quantities that are needed in the field to donors. By having an event focus, the attention is given to the needs raised by each event and the needs associated to it. The needs determine the actors and the resources that will play a role in the relief operations.

An event focus requires different agencies, and companies, working together and sharing information which in itself could be a challenge. The ICRC and the International Disaster Response Laws group confirm from one of their surveys that 59% of their respondents reported coordination between international actors to be a major issue, while an additional 36% reported encountering the lack of coordination frequently or always (Fisher, 2007).” To improve disaster relief coordination and include other actors, like the private sector, into the event network initiatives like “the creation of sector clusters with lead organizations responsible for global coordination among the partners in that area” (Fisher, 2007) have been designed following the approval of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 2005. Among the clusters created, logistics, lead by the WFP, is responsible for coordinating the flow of good and use of assets in close collaboration with the military and the private sector.

5. Case Study: Logistics Emergency Teams (LETs)

In 2002, TNT, a global express and logistics service provider, and WFP signed an unprecedented partnership to combine their capacity and capabilities in the fight against hunger. The partnership, better known as Moving the World, was initially signed for five years which were later renewed indefinitely by both organizations. Over the initial five years TNT invested approximately 60 million Euros in knowledge transfer projects, hands on support on disaster operations, and fundraising and awareness.

TNT’s initiative was followed by other members of the logistics and transport sector. Inspired by their pro-bono involvement in the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Pakistan earthquake (2005), and Hurricane Katrina (2005), in 2006 DHL formalized the set up of

"three Disaster Response Teams with volunteer experts in the areas of goods handling, warehouse management, inventory and customs. These teams were strategically placed at the airport premises in Singapore, Dubai and Miami for rapid deployment into the three main disaster regions.

In 2006, following the Lebanese-Israeli crisis another sector leader joined the trend. Agility established the Humanitarian Emergency Logistics Program (HELP), a CSR initiative to provide logistics support to humanitarian organizations in any of the 100 countries where they operate. Support was dedicated for victims of natural disasters and channeled through humanitarian organizations chosen by the local staff based on their capacity to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

Others, like UPS, with ongoing relations with the humanitarian sector decided to revamp their programs. Between 1995 and 2007, UPS had been contributing to CARE International's Emergency Transportation Fund with over one million dollars. While the cash donations provided great and much needed flexibility to the humanitarian agencies, UPS, like the humanitarian agencies, recognized that other types of collaborations could be sought to contribute with non-financial support as well.

Through their individual CSR programs these companies provided humanitarian agencies with additional resources to conduct the relief operations such as airplanes for cargo, office and warehousing space, technical equipment and expertise, local contacts and staff, business relations and additional press coverage, cash donations, etc. For the most part these different types of donations were coordinated by the individual companies directly with a partner humanitarian agency. In several cases, where one humanitarian agency was leading the relief operation, the companies would all contribute to the same cause and agency simultaneously with very little, or informal, coordination among themselves. Humanitarian agencies were quick to defend their neutrality and independence by reinforcing that they would not enter into any exclusive agreements with any company thus retaining the option to accept donations from as many as required. However, the rising transaction costs of dealing with each company separately following every disaster led to a sector wide initiative for the transport and logistics sector to consolidate their

goodwill under one uniform set of guidelines for specific events where speed and visibility where required for the humanitarians to implement their relief operations.

In January 2008 during the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos meeting, the CEOs from TNT, UPS and Agility and representatives from the UN announced the official launch of the Logistics Emergency Teams (LETs). The three “companies agreed to provide logistics specialists (e.g. airport coordination, airport managers and warehouse managers), logistics assets (e.g. warehouses, trucks, forklifts) and transportation services. LETs would intervene for the first three to six weeks following natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or storms.”^{vi}

The initiative was developed at the same time that the humanitarian sector was undergoing a major reform to group agencies and nongovernmental organizations in nine clusters, including one for logistics. WFP, acting as the cluster leader was assigned as the contact point in the humanitarian sector for the LETs companies and responsible for issuing request that would activate the collaboration.

LETs guidelines emerged from the combined experience acquired by the different companies over the previous years supporting agencies in different relief operations like the Indian Ocean tsunami, Darfur, etc. In fact, the idea of LETs had been under discussion at the WEF since 2005 and refined through several rounds of discussions and negotiations. Prior to formalizing the guidelines the LETs companies engaged in August 2007 in a proof of concept exercise with WFP in Banda Aceh. During this exercise they agreed on how to act as one even though in a different context they would be competitors. Part of these discussions included developing joint communications guidelines to make sure that fair recognition was given to each member of LETs and that the focus remained on the delivery of the aid rather than visibility.

In May 2008 the first official deployment took place in response to a category 4 cyclone in Myanmar affecting over 2 million people. In a joint press release, the LET companies explained that their tasks involved using Bangkok as a logistics hub for the operation while the humanitarian agencies were waiting to get clearance from the Myanmar government to have access to the country and conduct the relief operation. During that time, the

companies "provided basic information on transportation, warehousing, and customs clearance support for organizations like the WFP, Oxfam and International Medical Corps, during the start-up phase of the relief operation". On the Cluster's request, Agility and TNT "transformed a commercial operations warehouse into an NGO operation, by implementing inventory and management processes that were compatible with the World Food Program systems. Agility, TNT and UPS worked on a daily basis with the UN to receive and dispatch cargo as efficiently and quickly as possible." Following this successful first deployment several more have been done in response to floods and hurricanes. The member companies working closely with the Cluster are constantly reviewing the guidelines for their involvement after each disaster relief operation to improve the collaboration.

By setting up LETs it could be argued that humanitarian-private partnerships for disaster relief operations shifted from actor-specific one-on-one partnerships, to event-specific partnerships where the sectors are consolidated and driven to interact in response to specific needs in different settings every time.

6. Discussion:

In line with Madhavan *et al* (1998), this chapter adopts the definition of what does not constitute changes in the network. They state that the departure of a few actors or the entrance of new ones does not constitute a change in the network since the focus is on the structural patterns that go beyond the position that individual actors may occupy. This is particularly relevant for the humanitarian-private network because different actors will come to interact in different events as explained earlier in the previous examples. Even in events where the same actors may be present they will each assume different roles and responsibilities based on the nature of the disaster, needs required, and their ability to contribute. The absence of one humanitarian agency or company, or the presence of a new one does not alter the structure of how the sector interacts in the humanitarian-private network. For example, Agility will only participate in countries where they are present before the disaster to make sure they can deliver on their promises with the resources available locally to them. Their absence in a LET's deployment in a country that does not fit their criteria does not imply an exit from the network.

They also state that the network also does not change merely because the activity increases or decreases (Madhavan *et al*, 1998) since the focus is once again on the pattern of relationship and the rules that govern it. For example, during the 2010 Haitian earthquake, WFP requested from the LETs company Spanish speaking logisticians to be seconded to the operational base in the Dominican Republic. While all three companies were extremely motivated and committed to providing relief support, not all of them were able to contribute to the same extent and capacity. UPS provided the majority of the Spanish speaking staff over the first month given their commercial presence in the region. TNT assisted with airlifts and warehousing. Agility, remained present and active in the network with donations and facilitating the communications with external parties. The different levels of engagement per actor goes to show that they all remain part of the network, and most important for this chapter, that the characteristics of the event determined demand to define who and to what extent should be involved in the relief efforts.

The fact that events vary in frequency, intensity and magnitude may affect the amount of interaction between the members of the network, but does not alter the structure of the way they interact. Even if some events (i.e., disaster relief operations) may be more intense than others, what is affected in the level of interaction between the actors rather than the structure of the network. Going back to the example of Haiti, companies like UPS and TNT were relatively more engaged with WFP during the relief efforts. However, Agility remained involved in all meeting and communications. In a different disaster, the order and level of engagement per actor may shift and change again depending on the needs.

In this chapter the focus is on the changes in the structure of the network such as the nature of the relationship (i.e., commercial, CSR or philanthropic) and the rules for activating such a network. A proposition would be that those changes result from the learning that the actors gather from their interaction at different events. Hedaa & Tornroos (2008) explain that event networks are "related to time and space as fluidly ongoing processes existing in the past, present, and future." The past-loadedness of the event network induce the learning that the actors acquire as they move on in time through the network from one event to the next. This distinction is important in practical terms

because it implies that a change in the network would be a situation where a commercial supplier becomes a CSR partner.

The literature on networks is very limited on the issues related to the dissolutions of partnership. A deeper event-focus analysis could lead to a better understanding of the condition that bring networks to an end, or in the case misalignment or conflict of interest, how does the network behave.

7. Conclusion

Humanitarian agencies are bound to interact and develop networks regularly to respond to disasters relief operations globally. Over the past decade those networks include private companies acting in the network as CSR partners. The example of LETs companies provided in this chapter illustrates that the network can be interpreted in terms of the events, or relief operations, that bring the humanitarian agencies and companies together rather than focusing solely on the interaction between the actors.

The event focus provides several advantages for the relief operation. Rather than focusing on what the actors can provide and will profit from their interaction with other members of the network. The event focuses on the inverse to determine who needs to be involved in each event and what each actor can provide. This focus is more suitable for relief operations where time is of the essence to assist people, and resources are usually limited.

However, this focus raises a series of questions that demand further research about the fluctuating role of companies that can be present in the network as CSR partners while engaging in commercial operations at the same time. It also raises questions about governance and accountability, given that companies are not humanitarian organizations and thus not held accountable by the same value and principles of the latter. This article suggests that using case study methodology further analysis be carried out to better understand how these networks evolve from one event to another, how they adapt their focus, and how do they end or dissolve themselves.

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ⁱ UN General Assembly A/58/817

ⁱⁱ Tomasini, Van Wassenhove, Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ INSEAD Case Study on Lebanon and Agility.

^{iv} Tomasini, R., Van Wassenhove, L. Humanitarian Logistics. Palgrave MacMillan . London 2009.

^v The Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary General to the United Nations General Assembly*, Annex II, UN Doc. No. A/32/61 (May 12, 1977).

^{vi} <http://www.agilitylogistics.com/PressReleases/Pages/Reliefnit.aspx>



Helping to learn? Learning opportunities for seconded corporate managers

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Abstract

Purpose – Humanitarian disasters strike overnight causing urgent demands for assistance in complex environments. Attending to the needs of the beneficiaries requires highly trained and knowledgeable staff. However, humanitarian agencies can neither afford, nor keep on standby full-time staff with a wide range of knowledge and expertise to meet all possible needs. Some agencies have gained access to additional trained staff through partnership agreements with the private sector. These secondments augment the capacity of humanitarian agencies placing corporate managers in a different setting where they can test their knowledge and skills. The purpose of this paper is to provide arguments to build a business case for corporate managers to be seconded to humanitarian relief operations.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper uses case study research and academic literature.

Findings – The paper provides a list of the managerial roles of humanitarian logisticians to identify the learning opportunities available to seconded staff operating in disaster relief operations. The list of roles may be considered learning opportunities for corporate managers in a different context and setting.

Social implications – The paper shows that there is a possibility to augment the response capacity of humanitarian agencies with corporate managers during a disaster.

Originality/value – The paper focuses on the value of learning during emergency operations for corporate managers.

Keywords Managers, Disasters, Secondment, Action learning, Partnership

Paper type Case study

1. Introduction

Over the last decade a number of partnerships have been documented between the private and humanitarian sector that combine commercial and social interests under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Many of these partnerships have focused on logistics, which is estimated to be one of the activities consuming the most amount of resources during a relief operation (Van Wassenhove, 2005). Companies commit to provide expert knowledge, capacity, and funds to their humanitarian counterpart when a disaster takes place.

The academic literature on these partnerships focuses on the motivations and opportunities for both sectors to collaborate, and on the different models of interaction (Twigg, 2001, 2002; Thomas and Fritz, 2006; Warhurst, 2006; Binder and Witte, 2007; Beamon and Balcik, 2008; Samii, 2008; Schulz, 2009; Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). Through out the literature knowledge transfer recurs as one of the motivations for companies and humanitarians to establish these partnerships (Thomas and Fritz, 2006; Binder and Witte, 2007; Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). However, most case studies show that the focus has been on what private companies can teach humanitarian organizations and how humanitarian organizations can benefit from the best practices, skills and competencies of the private sector. A gap remains in the academic literature



on the opposite direction to understand what companies can learn from the humanitarian organizations. This gap could be an important clue to determine what value CSR partnerships bring to the companies investing in them, and if so, how that value should be captured to create value within the company.

To address this important gap, this article examines managerial roles performed by humanitarian logisticians during disasters to highlight the opportunity for managers from partner companies to learn from their secondments. It also suggests that these learning opportunities may be a source of value to the company.

2. Corporate-humanitarian partnerships

As noted earlier, over the past decade there has been a rise in the number of companies in the transport and logistics sector investing in long-term CSR partnerships with humanitarian organizations to provide pro-bono support for disaster relief operations (Binder and Witte, 2007; Warhurst, 2006). These companies have committed to second experienced managers as part of their support to their humanitarian partners, and to transfer knowledge and best practices from their commercial operations to the humanitarian organization. Among the top examples of these partnerships in the transport and logistics sector are TNT, DHL, Agility, and UPS.

In 2002 TNT, a global express and logistics service provider, and World Food Program (WFP) signed “Moving the World”, an unprecedented partnership to combine their capacity and capabilities in the fight against hunger. The partnership agreement was initially signed for five years, and then renewed indefinitely by both organizations. Over the initial five years TNT invested approximately €60 million in knowledge transfer projects, hands on support on disaster operations, and fundraising and awareness[1].

TNT’s initiative was followed by other members of the logistics and transport sector. Inspired by their pro-bono involvement in the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Pakistan earthquake (2005), and Hurricane Katrina (2005), in 2006 DHL, another leading global logistics service provider, set up three “disaster response teams” around the world near the main disaster regions. These rapid deployment teams were staffed with volunteer managers, and worked out of the Singapore, Dubai and Miami[2] airports to provide support on goods handling, warehouse management, inventory and customs.

In 2006, following the Lebanese-Israeli crisis, another sector leader joined the trend. Agility, headquartered in Kuwait, established the Humanitarian Emergency Logistics Program, a CSR initiative to provide logistics support to humanitarian organizations in any of the 100 countries where they operate. Support was dedicated for victims of natural disasters and channelled through humanitarian organizations chosen by the local staff based on their capacity to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

Other players in the transport and logistics sector, like UPS, with ongoing relations with the humanitarian sector decided to revamp their programs. Between 1995 and 2007, UPS had been contributing to CARE International’s Emergency Transportation Fund with over one million dollars. While the cash donation provided great and much needed flexibility to the humanitarian agencies, UPS, like the humanitarian agencies, recognized that other types of collaborations could be sought to contribute with non-financial support as well.

Through their CSR programs these global companies provided humanitarian agencies with additional resources to conduct the relief operations such as airplanes for cargo, office and warehousing space, technical equipment and expertise, local contacts and staff,

business and press relations, and cash. For the most part, the individual companies directly with a partner humanitarian agency coordinated these different types of donations. When the relief operation was lead by one humanitarian agency, the companies would all contribute simultaneously with very little, or informal, coordination among themselves. Humanitarian agencies were quick to defend their neutrality and independence by specifying that they would not enter into any exclusive agreements to be able to accept donations from as many companies as required. However, the rising transaction costs of dealing with each company separately following every disaster led to a sector wide initiative for the transport and logistics sector to define a set of guidelines to combine their donations and respond with speed and visibility to the urgent needs of relief operations.

In January 2008 during the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos meeting, the CEOs from TNT, UPS and Agility along with representatives from the UN announced the official launch of the logistics emergency teams (LETs). The three companies agreed to provide support during the first three to six weeks after a natural disaster with logistics specialists (e.g. airport coordination, airport managers and warehouse managers), logistics assets (e.g. warehouses, trucks, forklifts) and transportation services.

The initiative was developed at the same time that the humanitarian sector was undergoing a major reform to group agencies and nongovernmental organizations in clusters, including one for logistics. WFP, acting as the logistics cluster leader was assigned as the contact point in the humanitarian sector for the LETs companies and responsible for issuing request that would activate the collaboration.

LETs guidelines emerged from the combined experience acquired by the different companies over the previous years supporting agencies in different relief operations like the Indian Ocean tsunami, Darfur, etc. In fact, the idea of LETs had been under discussion at the WEF since 2005 and refined through several rounds of discussions and negotiations. Prior to formalizing the guidelines the LETs companies engaged in August 2007 in a proof of concept exercise with WFP in Banda Aceh. During this exercise, they agreed on how to act as one even though in a different context they would be competitors. Part of these discussions included developing joint communications guidelines to make sure that fair recognition was given to each member of LETs and that the focus remained on the delivery of the aid rather than visibility.

In May 2008, the first official LETs deployment took place in response to a category four cyclone in Myanmar affecting over two million people. In a joint press release[3], the LETs companies explained that while the humanitarian agencies were waiting to get clearance from the Myanmar government to have access to the country and conduct the relief operation, the companies set up a logistics hub in Bangkok to preposition the aid. During the start-up phase of the relief operation, the LETs companies assisted humanitarian organizations with basic information on transportation, warehousing, and provided customs clearance support. On the logistics cluster's request, Agility and TNT adapted a commercial warehouse to the needs of the needs of the humanitarians, by implementing inventory and management processes that were compatible with the WFP systems. Agility, TNT and UPS worked on a daily basis with the UN to process cargo in the most efficient way. Following this successful first deployment several more have been done in response to floods and hurricanes. The member companies working closely with the logistics cluster are constantly reviewing the guidelines for their involvement after each disaster relief operation to improve the collaboration.

3. Business managers for humanitarian causes: secondments to disaster operations

As the example of LETs described these CSR partnerships and sector wide initiatives are implemented through the exchange of trained and qualified staff assigned to special project teams. Among them, and of particular interest to this research, are the corporate response teams (CRT) for emergency relief which second business managers into humanitarian agencies for sudden onset operations. Mariam Al Foudery, Vice President of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility, supports the idea of secondments by explaining that when a disaster strikes humanitarian agencies need highly skilled and knowledgeable staff to respond to complex emergencies overnight. Global companies can make those staff available to the humanitarian agencies and allow the humanitarians to benefit from the companies' local capacity and knowledge as well as their deep understanding of the business network and social issues in the affected areas (Tomasini *et al.*, 2009). Examples of this type of collaboration were very popular during the Indian Ocean tsunami, and during the relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina for which many companies aligned their capacities to support the humanitarian activities.

These CRTs are made up of managers and executives with supply chain management experience in senior level positions. During their secondments these managers provide support to the humanitarian organizations in the immediate response phase (24 hours – three weeks) matching their company's capabilities and resources with the needs of the humanitarian organizations (e.g. allocate in-kind airplanes or vehicles for delivery, investigate local solutions for commercial warehousing, facilitate the use of equipment such as forklifts, or make available technicians and experts such as air traffic controllers). They are not expected to assume operational roles or make decisions on behalf of the humanitarian organizations, though they will make decisions about how their company will engage and recommendations within their fields of expertise and knowledge. For example, during the reconstruction of the transport network in Southern Sudan managers from TNT were seconded to the UN to help decide how the transportation network could be improved. Rather than deciding which roads and bridges should be rehabilitated, they built a model that served to calculate different scenarios that would be useful to decide on how to best invest the money in the roads to lower the overall cost of aid delivery (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2010).

These seconded managers hold significant experience in the company to be able to assess, how their company can contribute to the relief operation. In terms of skills and competencies they are among the best trained in commercial supply chain operations and thus able to provide educated suggestions as solutions to the humanitarian organizations. At the same time, they are on the upper end of the learning curve within their company and could benefit from a different setting and challenges to refine their skills. For the company, these managers represent a significant investment of resources in terms of their salaries, the financial impact of their absence during the secondments (i.e. impact on on-going commercial projects, and opportunity cost for business opportunities while on secondment). A better understanding on how their secondment could provide value the company while contributing to the humanitarian organizations would help to build more solid business cases for these types of partnerships, as well as for the academic literature.

4. Managerial roles: theoretical discussion

To better understand the potential value of seconding managers to humanitarian managers, it is important to understand what managers, regardless of the sector or organizations, actually “do” and how. The question of in which context they do it will be explored later in the discussion about learning.

Consider that over the past four decades, managers have been the subject of many scholars trying to understand the role of a manager and their characteristics. Perhaps, the most influential of these scholars has been Mintzberg who in 1973 presented, *The Nature of Managerial Work*, a set of theoretical assumptions and structural conditions that determine managerial behavior. Since then many scholars have replicated his methodology and arrived at similar results with minor discrepancies, while others have argued that managerial roles have evolved as corporations adapt to changes (Tengblad, 2006). The academic debate has helped to refine the notion of managerial roles, in which Mintzberg’s (1973) work remains to be a solid foundation.

As Barley and Kunda (1992) explained, Mintzberg’s traditional roles fit with a view where “the role of executives was primarily related to the quest for rational administrative behaviour” (Tengblad, 2006, p. 1439). This view, also known as “systems rationalism”, identifies leadership as a managerial role in relatively administrative terms. Tengblad explains that a later evolution shifts away from “systems rationalism” to view top executives as “leaders that communicate visions and transform organizations” (p. 1439). This view was reinforced by others who explained that managers keep the status quo (Zaleznick, 1977), while leaders promote change (Burns, 1978). Kotter supports the distinction by highlighting that “management is about coping with complexity while leadership is about coping with change” (Kotter, 2001, p. 86). He presents this argument by explaining that when companies decide on what needs to be done, the manager plans and budgets while the leader sets a direction. When companies develop their human capacity, the manager organizes and staff while the leader aligns the people. Finally, when a company wants to accomplish a plan, the manager controls and solves problem, while the leader motivates and inspires.

As leadership found a place in the role of the managers, so did a better understanding of the factors and structures that affect managerial roles first presented by Mintzberg. Kanter (1989) expands the role of a manager beyond the boundaries of the organizations to incorporate the increased acceptance of new technologies and the impact of globalizations. She explained that technology increased customer demands and competitive pressures to change the traditional roles of organizations, and that the new role of a manager:

[...] consists of looking outside a defined area of responsibility to sense opportunities and of forming project teams drawn from any relevant sphere to address them. It involves communication and collaboration across functions, across divisions, and across companies whose activities and resources overlap (p. 92).

Her definition, which we adopt for the purpose of this article, supports Mintzberg’s (1994, 1998) original idea that the managerial work is a combination of several managerial roles, which he has continued to validate over the decades through numerous studies with managers from different sectors.

4.1 Managers at work: what they do and how

After nearly 30 years of work on the subject Mintzberg (1994) reorganized managerial role in a comprehensive model that distinguishes the roles inside and outside the organization,

and describes how the manager uses information, people and action to achieve his job. In 2001, he applied the same model in a number of different settings to explore the assumption that we know what managers do but are less clear on the variety of ways in which they do it. The latter included a set of humanitarian managers from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) confirming that the roles are comparable to those of those of a corporate manager, even though humanitarian differ in the way they gets tasks done. Like most companies, the IFRC is also concerned about “how the increasingly fast paced demands and complex networks may influence managerial roles as they try to find the balance between building internal capacity and staying reactive for emergencies” (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003, p. 56).

Through his observations of several humanitarian field workers, he confirms that there are six managerial roles to explain the way in which managers get things done (Table I). These are: communicating, controlling, leading, linking, doing, and dealing (2001). These six roles can be used to describe the tasks performed by humanitarian logisticians operating in the field for sudden onset disasters, and discuss the learning opportunities for seconded staff going to the field.

To identify the work carried out by humanitarian logisticians in emergency operations a set of 30 case studies by the INSEAD Humanitarian Research Group focusing on humanitarian logistics were selected as the sample (list of cases and abstracts available upon request). These cases were produced from field interviews, activity reports, bulletins, observations and internal evaluations at the different events and agencies. They were primarily designed to illustrate a pedagogical objective for courses dealing with supply chain and operations management in humanitarian organization.

A second selection from this list of cases was made to focus only on cases narrating sudden onset relief operations and described specific tasks carried out by humanitarian managers in response to the bottlenecks and need in the theatre of operations. These tasks were extracted and listed in a table to better understand the role of a humanitarian logistician. This second selection lead to focus on 13 cases studies (list available upon request). It is worthy to note that by the seventh case no new tasks were coming up in the cases increasing our confidence in the completeness of the list. To further validate the list, we have checked the job descriptions of humanitarian logisticians from a selection

Roles	Definition	Internally	Externally
Communicating	Seeking or receiving information and sharing with others (spokesperson)	X	X
Controlling	Using information to control the work of insiders (directives, structures, applying systems, and procedures)	X	
Leading	Encouraging and enabling people within the unit managed to take action with individuals or groups	X	
Linking	Establish a network of contacts and using it to represent the needs of the unit and influence the people and efforts of the unit externally		X
Doing	Supervising action and handling disturbances and crisis	X	
Dealing	Engaging in negotiations and executing agreements with outsiders		X

Note: Inspired from Mintzberg’s definitions

Table I.
Managerial roles

of UN and NGO humanitarian agencies. This confirmed that a comprehensive list of the responsibilities and expectations of a humanitarian logistician had been achieved.

The list produced 130 different tasks performed by humanitarian managers in the field during sudden-onset disasters. These tasks have been coded by hand using the six roles defined by Mintzberg on his study of IFRC managers (Table I). The tasks, presented by role in the following section, describe a list of potential learning opportunities for corporate managers participating in a secondment.

4.2 Humanitarian Manager at work: roles in the field

As mentioned earlier, Mintzberg (1994, 1998, 2001) explains that managers have three means to manage: information, people and action. By using information as their mean, managers can assume the role of communicators or controllers. The communicator can focus internally and externally, where the controller is an internal role. In the role of a communicator managers “seek or receive information and share it with others internally and externally” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). The list of tasks analyzed described humanitarian managers in the role of communicators executing the following tasks:

- Design a rapid assessment process to gather and communicate beneficiary needs.
- Anticipate what information is essential to different parties involved.
- Consolidate and disseminate demand (and shortages) from all different humanitarian agencies.
- Anticipate peaks in demand using general knowledge of the area, people and information from a disperse network of informants about conditions in the field, beneficiary needs, and funding requirements.
- Consolidate information to be the central hub for all logistics related information and produce regular (timely and accurate) bulletins that facilitate logistics planning (capacity and prices), avoid bottlenecks, update demand, and security conditions.
- Communicate needs externally to raise funds for the operation (i.e. donations, assets, and funds) including a list for immediate request.
- Update donations and provide visibility into the pipeline through a system that tracks movement of goods (donations and purchases from different sources).
- Manage press coverage and scrutiny from donors.

In the role of controllers managers “use information to control the work of insiders through directives, systems and procedures” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). The list indicates that humanitarian managers as controllers were noted to be engaging in the following tasks:

- Define goals in a rapidly changing environment.
- Define roles and responsibilities in a context where there is no command and control.
- Activate relief plan and adjust as information triggers into allocate funds, people, and goods.
- Assign priority to each items based on the needs of the population and set up a cargo planning and prioritization system using information about transport capacity.

This could be to match excess capacity from different players with cargo from a larger number of actors, or to monitor perishables (risk of spoilage) and enforce regulations regarding donations of drugs, and specifications.

- Analyze pipeline reports to identify gaps and bottlenecks in the distribution. This should be the basis to work with locals (truckers who knew the terrain and security perspicacity) to develop alternative solutions and contingency plans.
- Deal with information overload (i.e. 22 assessments from different agencies on the ground).

In the cases where managers resort to people as their mean to accomplish goals, managers can act internally as leaders, or externally as linkers. Leaders are expected to “encourage and enable people within the unit managed to take action with individuals or groups” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). For humanitarian managers the examples include:

- Be readily deployable (within 12-24 hours) and able to adapt to local requirements, demands and ideologies. This includes working with little sleep, stress, pressure, and little supervision and high uncertainty.
- Channel motivation and rotate exhausted personnel.
- Establish credibility among the different actors and gain trust.
- Build high-performance teams with specialists and volunteers.
- Ramp up without support (office, phones, computer, and staff).
- Ability to work remotely and manage team from a distance since not everyone may be onsite, at the same place, or even on the ground (when situation is too dangerous).

Linkers are expected to “establish a network of contacts and use it to represent the needs of the unit and influence the people and efforts of the unit externally” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). Examples from humanitarian managers include:

- Liaise with regional informants for updates (country offices and staff).
- Establish communication with distribution centres led by volunteers to track needs.
- Develop a network of informants who voluntarily provide updates (i.e. web site).
- Work with the locals to find domestic solutions to beneficiary needs.
- Broker partnerships to exchange public data working with low-tech solutions or users (paper dominates when technology is unreliable or incompatible).
- Break information silos between agencies that are self-sufficient and those who need information.
- Negotiate collaboration with the military and government authorities.
- Build a network of suppliers overnight (warehouse and trucks).
- Foster local alliances to promote the role of volunteers.

Finally, managers who meet the actions criterion assume the role of doers at the internal level, or dealers at the external level. Doers are expected to “supervise action and handle disturbances in crisis” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760). For example, the list points out to humanitarian managers assuming the following tasks:

- Operate with damaged infrastructure (airports, roads, water pipes, and electricity) and overcome the challenges to access beneficiaries.
- Minimize the impact on bottlenecks caused by security to avoid stock build up, shortages at the beneficiary level, and disruptions in the cold supply chain.
- Manage several hundred of items with unpredictable demand, and their delivery to the field.
- Consolidate donations from multiple donors and sources and implement quality controls (expiration dates, quality of food and water) to filter and discard unsolicited donations.
- Coordinate with donors and commercial/in-kind service providers logistics for transportation/supply/warehouse network/volunteers/telecommunications.
- Switch transport modes, sudden repositioning and re-routing of aid with limited information about where demand moves and unreliable infrastructure.
- Find temporary solutions for the communities such as shelters for earthquake victims with volunteers (using the exhibition centre).
- Work without control of the budget.
- Adapt to unpredictable external delays (administration, politics, security, and scarcity).

Dealers “engage in negotiations and execution of agreements with outsiders” (Mintzberg, 2001, p. 760) as is noted in the following tasks:

- Negotiate donor expectations and funds as situation changes in the field.
- Set up and enforce pre-negotiated supplier agreements in emergencies (prices, quality, and service), and special agreements with customs and government authorities to ensure flow of goods.
- Develop a distribution network in collaboration with government and local organizations, and negotiate to augment port and warehouse capacity.
- Compete with partners for resources (funds and personnel) while partnering without trust or confidence (political parties post-civil war climate).
- Coordinate the use of civil military assets with the armed forces to clear roads, air traffic control, and monitor security, as well as airlifts and movement of cargo.
- Seek alternatives for rejected aid (milling) and for new sources of aid (local procurement).
- Define an exit strategy and organize handover to locals.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The descriptions of the managerial roles of the humanitarian managers are in line with earlier descriptions of the humanitarian sector where disaster managers deal with supply and demand uncertainty, urgency, operate without command and control, and coordinate without a profit incentive (Van Wassenhove, 2005; Tomasini and Van Wassenhove, 2009). Building upon our assumption that managerial roles remain consistent between the two sectors and that the main difference is the context, it is worthy to discuss how

the humanitarian context presents opportunities for learning for CRT assuming humanitarian tasks in a disaster relief operation.

Though learning is not the main goal of these secondments for the companies sending their managers, it could be one of the secondary goals from where value is drawn for the company. These secondments automatically place managers in a different context and demand them to use their skills and competencies in a different setting and under different conditions. This type of unstructured, and experimental learning is what Marsick and Volpe (1999) define as “informal learning” which ranks higher than formal learning opportunities, and accounts for over 70 percent of the learning that takes place in the workplace (Day, 1998; Enos *et al.*, 2003; Ellinger, 2005; Leslie *et al.*, 1998; Lohman, 2000; Marsick and Watkins, 1997; Skule, 2004). Many companies have recognized the value of exposing their managers to different settings and invest regularly to create the setting for such informal learning to take place. For example, PriceWaterhouseCoopers developed a leadership program that includes sending managers to developing countries to work in small teams to address a social issue in conjunction with NGOs, social entrepreneurs, and international organizations:

This cross sector collaboration is intended to be mutually beneficial with project partners receiving pro-bono access to the knowledge and expertise of highly skilled professionals and the program participants getting access to work and learning environment that forces them out of their comfort zone (Pless and Maak, 2009, p. 61).

While there is no scientific evidence to validate or quantify the value from the learning opportunities to the companies seconding their managers to humanitarian organizations, this research suggests that the learning opportunities do exist and could be an important source of value for the companies. Skule (2004, p. 14) proposes seven learning conditions most conducive to informal learning at work all of which are met during secondments by managers immersed in a humanitarian operation. These include:

- “High degree of exposure to change with frequent changes in technology, processes and working methods” (p. 14). Disaster response operations demand high degree of adaptability. In practice, this means a lot of changes at all levels. Organizational structure and collaboration agreements evolve over time as the needs and the matching resources become clearer through the needs assessments. Processes are constantly evolving as aid, staff, and money starts to arrive.
- “A high degree of exposure to demands from multiple actors” (p. 14). Another distinguishing factor of disaster relief operations is the multiplicity of actors involved and their varying levels of engagement and responsibility. For example, there may be UN agencies working with civil society and military at the same time trying to coordinate aid from the private sector. Each of these actors may have different responsibilities based on their resources, local knowledge, and availability. Also consider, that staff turnover is very high in the humanitarian sector, thus staff is frequently rotated as new experts and volunteers become involved for different amounts of time.
- “Managerial responsibilities in decision making, project management and team work” (p. 14). Seconded managers are deployed with a specific tasks or terms of reference based on their competencies and company’s resources. Inherently, these tasks include managerial work where there is high interaction with

different actors who rely on the manager to contribute with knowledge and decisions, and not just money.

- “Extensive professional contacts through participation in forums, occupational networks, and interactions with members from other organizations” (p. 14). As mentioned above, interaction among members of the network is a significant part of managing a disaster relief operation. This is particularly obvious in terms of coordination for which the different humanitarian actors need to attend and exchange information regularly in meetings and virtual platforms.
- “Superior feedback on direct results from the activities” (p. 14). The feedback loop for decisions and actions taken during a disaster relief operations is rather short, especially for those operating in the field. Proximity to the beneficiaries enables the managers to see and evaluate the immediate impact of their work on the operation and the community. Given the dynamic nature of these types of operations it can be hard sometimes to discern whether a decision was useful or not. However, in hindsight usually these complex issues unravel for a better understanding.
- “Managerial support for learning based on the amount of time and resources invested in providing the learning opportunities” (p. 14). Having the opportunity to be seconded in itself is a strong sign that your management appreciates your skills and competencies and is ready to share them for greater good. The novelty of it, for first time goers, and the operational challenges are an explicit sign that learning is an opportunity during the secondment.
- “Reward of proficiency, be through salary, public recognition, allocation of more interesting tasks or improved career opportunities” (p. 14). Most secondments, especially those considered here, take place as part of a CSR initiative that is a source of pride for the company. Participating in it is for many managers an honor and an opportunity to be known differently within their organizations. Though there are no clear signs among the logistics companies reviewed (TNT, DHL, Agility, and UPS) that managers or companies send their staff as part of a career development towards a promotion or salary raises, there are a few signs that indicate that managers who have participated in secondments are able to differentiate themselves among peers for their experience and knowledge acquire in non-traditional setting (i.e. disaster operations). This has also been noticed in consulting firms with pro-bono agreements for the UN and the Red Cross Movement.

The application of the learning opportunities to the corporate supply chain remains to be explored as the subject of future research. In the meantime, feedback from practitioners points out that lessons from humanitarian supply chains can be applied to commercial supply chains affected by major disruptions due to externalities or *force-majeur*. They could also be applicable to new ventures where there is no precedent for the product, service, clients, or partners. More specifically, learning to manage a supply chain with high levels of uncertainty can be useful for companies working with highly volatile markets, unreliable or large number of suppliers, distribution networks vulnerable to disruptions, unstable economic or political environments affecting regulations, etc. Sense of urgency creates a context that puts to the test the leadership, capacity and processes of any team or organization. Learning to deal with it and adapt can help

to minimize the negative consequences of pressure and stress. It can also serve as a preventive measure to induce a reflection about what processes need to be in place to be able to scale up and down operations as demand, pressure and stress vary.

The lack of command and control could be applied internally and externally in any team or organizations as soon as we are ready to acknowledge that not all formal ties dominate our decision-making processes or ability to respond and deliver. Internally, every organization may have invisible but existent command lines, or managerial pressures that influence performance such as team compositions, collocation, inter-personal relations, professional and personal affiliations, affinities and discords, all of which are present in the virtual teams that develop with humanitarian managers and volunteers at the onset of a disaster. Externally, consider that many companies are still learning to manage their relationship with different stakeholders that traditionally did not figure in their business model such as advocacy groups, academia, civil society, non-governmental organizations, etc. Finally, the latter example is also valid to show that not all actors need to interact with a profit incentive, where the indicators are clear and shared. Learning to establish communication, manage the relationship, create sustainable commitment and sustain engagement over good and hard times is yet another important management skills that is crucial to the success of every disaster relief operation and that could be beneficial for companies entering new markets, developing new ventures, engaging with new stakeholders, or repositioning their strategy.

6. Limitations

This research primarily focuses on examples from the interface between transport and logistics companies with the humanitarian sector. A similar model of exchange could be applied as well to the other sectors participating in emergency relief operations. There are numerous examples from companies with corporate rapid response teams such as Veolia (water), Ericson and Nokia (telecommunications), etc. for whom the same arguments could apply.

Another consideration is that the collaborations described in this case have been designed around CSR initiatives. There is increasing number of companies motivated by social entrepreneurship business models developing corporate rapid response teams for disasters as well. In those cases, the main difference would be the presence of a profit incentive for participation.

Finally, the subject of this study has been the learning for managers going on secondments as a source of value to their home organizations. To fully capture the learning opportunities emerging from these secondments, further research should also consider the learning opportunities within the company as a result of the absence of those managers, and the difference after their re-integration post-secondment.

Notes

1. www.movingtheworld.org
2. Later on moved to Panama.
3. www.agilitylogistics.com/PressReleases/Pages/ReliefInit.aspx

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ROLANDO TOMASINI

INFORMAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR SECONDMENTS: LOGISTICS LESSONS FROM DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS

Disasters challenge and destroy growth and socio-economic achievements. They are often communicated in the media with heartbreaking images of suffering, destruction and despair. They tend to inspire a wave of generosity and compassion among those who feel vulnerable, concerned, touched. Individuals manifest their solidarity through donations, collections and by sending money, goods, foods, medicines, and other essential items. Like individuals, companies are increasingly moved to act upon their sense of compassion and generosity, and contribute with skills, capacity, and of course money. These initiatives are welcomed by employees who are ready to put their knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the greater good, on behalf of the company.

When a natural disaster takes place, humanitarian organizations activate all their response mechanisms to assess and respond as quickly as possible to the rising needs. However, everything is uncertain, and only time can provide the answers as information becomes available about the level of impact, the number of people af-

ected, the resources available and the type and length of aid required. Among the difficulties faced by humanitarian organizations is getting access overnight to trained and available staff who could implemented such sophisticated and life-saving logistics.

This thesis takes a look at the secondments from different companies to disaster relief operations. It develops a framework for informal learning during secondments which can be used by managers to ensure that the secondment can be a fruitful learning experience for the seconded manager, in which he or she can further their knowledge by applying their skills set in a different context. Through the development of the framework, and the three essays, the thesis addresses three main questions:

1. How do partnerships develop in disaster relief operations? (Essay 1)
2. How do partners interact during a disaster relief operation? (Essay 2)
3. What can seconded managers learn from secondments to disaster relief operations? (Essay 3)



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