LUND UNIVERSITY

Department of Service Management and Service Studies,
Campus Helsingborg

A “practice” perspective in Logistics Management

A practice theory approach in a “two-case” case study in Greece

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Tsimtsilis Panagiotis

Supervisor: Hjort Klas

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Abstract

Keywords

Practice, Practice theory, Supply chain and Logistics, Management, Logistics manager, Managerial work, Shadowing, “Two case” case study, Greece

Thesis Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to provide a deep insight into the logistics managers’ work practices as well as to introduce, apply and contribute in the development of a new theory in the service management domain, which is the practice theory. The researcher’s objective is to supply with information as well as to shed light on how logistics managers cope with their daily duties and why they perform in such a way. In order this to be achieved, the practice theory is applied, as this is the only way to study the productive and reproductive managerial behavior and extract essential and primary data about service management. Two Greek logistics managers are being studied and explored thoroughly, assisting the effort for managerial practices’ explication.

Research Method/Methodology

For the completion of this thesis, an abductive qualitative research process with “two case” case study methodology has been applied. The empirical data were gathered through shadowing the respective logistics managers for four weeks in total, conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the two participants as well as with document analysis. The first two methods are actually the main sources of data, as they provided a deeper understanding of the managerial work and practice. The findings are analyzed, interpreted and then compared, in order to be emphasized the similarities and differences.

Findings

The findings from the “two case” case study are introduced and analyzed for each logistics manager separately. With this way, an explicit, coherent and thus a more completed illustration of each manager’s practice is provided, which is carried out based on the seven components of practice. The findings are a nexus of managers’ principles and beliefs, understanding and routines as well as daily activities and priorities, all substantial elements of a practice. The cross case comparison, highlight and summarize the key patterns as well as provide additional details, relevant to the research question.

Value

The empirical findings and the results that this thesis provides about the managerial behavior and practice, can hardly be found in the management literature. This is mainly

due to the alternative point of view that the practice theory advocates as well as due to the fact that this theory is not adopted often by the social researchers in the service management domain. Hence, these data can be used as an educational basis for novice managers in the service management domain or even as a further contribution in the effort to develop the management practice theory.

Preface

It should be admitted that, this master thesis would not have been accomplished without the assistance, the support and the encouragement of some people, and by mentioned them at this point, is the least thing that I can do in order to express my appreciation to them.

First of all, I would like to thank the two companies and the two managers for their essential help. It should be mentioned and acknowledged that both of the managers put their best, and I want to thank them very much not only for helping me with my research and my empirical data with their knowledge, but also for making me feel welcomed in their work environment and thus to enjoy this two weeks' process very much! I would like also to thank the Managing director of the first company for being very positive and supportive all the time, as well as Ioannis Antoniou and Stathis Panagotas for their vital help.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The inquiry for world understanding which in essence contributes in knowledge creation, is undeniably a laborious procedure not only for the ordinary people, but for the scientists as well. It can be said, that knowledge is not a matter of fact, but something that can be constructed, and very often references about knowledge are vague and all-embracing (Schreyögg and Geiger, 2007). Social research is the only way to understand the human nature and epistemology as well as ontology, are two philosophical branches that are concerned with the knowledge and understanding of human settings. Epistemology questions how we can gain knowledge, whereas ontology focuses on the nature of reality, the nature of being (Guba, 1990). So both, aim to lighten the multifaceted and complex social life of humans, and the content of both, depends whether the researcher's view on reality is objective or subjective (Arlbjørn and Halldorsson, 2002).

A part of humans' social life however, that have gained a general interest in the last forty years, is the environment of work and more specifically the managerial work. By studying managerial work, not only contribution to the in-depth knowledge about management can be achieved, but also confluence in its evolvement. Organizations are social constructed contexts, in which managers have a multiple role to perform, being literally responsible for their well-functioning and sustainability (Tengblad, 2012). Yet, even though the fact, that researchers were familiar with the notion that organizations are socially constructed, the most prevalent approach, notably in the logistics research is still positivism (Mentzer and Kahn, 1995; Kent and Flint, 1997; Arlbjørn and Halldorsson, 2002; Gammelgaard, 2004). The renowned POSDCORB from Mintzberg's work (1973), which stands for planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting, has been followed by many researchers along the years, in an effort to describe what managers actually do (Nicolini, 2012). Although, this acronym has inspired many scholars and has bestowed a broader perspective about managerial work, represents only one way of conducting research.

The existence of many catalogues of what managers do (Nicolini, 2012), actually confirms the fact that, the positivistic approach implies that reality is objective, tangible and fragmentable (Mentzer and Kahn, 1995). But what about the subjective aspect of reality? Since all the individuals are thinking in a different way, their understanding about the world is different and thus their way of behaving; studying management as phenomena in natural sciences instead of ontologically, it seems that a managerial work's point of view, is neglected (Tengblad, 2012). There are many questions that should be answered, however it is of vital importance of what it is asked (Gammelgaard, 2004).

1.2 Problem description and research question

The necessity for managers have been increased in the last decades, not only due to the globalization and the increasingly demand requirements, but also due to the acceleration of processes as well as the simultaneity of events (Brose, 2004). Hence, managerial work is directly connected with complex and interrelated events, but many scholars argue that the managerial training and education that it is provided from the instituitions, is detached from the reality and the managerial practice (Mintzberg, 1990; Corradi et al., 2010; Tengblad, 2012). In other words, there is a gap between the theory of managerial work and the actual practice, mainly due to positivist approach as well as the descriptive tendency that has dominated. Yet, practice theories provide an opportunity to shorten this gap.

The factor "individual" that is involved, performs and thus affects the everyday activities as well as the point of view into practice, have been neglected from the social researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Näslund, 2002; Johannessen, 2005). The inquiry for managers' everyday life, the way they adapt in the contemporary, turbulent and full of expectations environment, their understandings, knowledge and capacity, way of thinking, background, habits, priorities and emotions, objects and resources, as well as individual and organization's philosophy and other dynamics that shape the management practices, should not be in the sidelines. Ethnography, or "ergonography" according to Czarniawska (2007), can provide a better insight in all the above. Ethnography, is that kind of study that, by gaining access into the lives of the individuals which are studied, attempts to describe people's life and capture the human behavior (Smith, 1998; Näslund, 2002; Czarniawska, 2007). Due to the fact that work is only one part of people's life, Czarniawska (2007), named it "ergonography". So, the call is for detailed descriptions of the work life and thus conceptual and not only empirical contributions (Barley and Kunda, 2001).

In the logistics domain more specifically, where great strides have been achieved in all levels, the factors "individual" and "practice" are also often excluded (Tokar, 2010). The discipline of logistics is undeniably getting more and more complex, not only because of the rapidly changing technology and the general sense of uncertainty due to the unpredictable events, but also because of the need for integrated functions and processes in both, within the organization itself as well as in the supply chain in which the firm pertains. Logistics managers need to coordinate their everyday practices in order to meet the requirements, and by decoding these daily practices, an alternative view, closer to the real logistics managerial work, techniques and behavior, will emerge.

Therefore, a better comprehension about the practices of logistics managers is a prerequisite, and thus the need for conducting more qualitative research through case studies, is where logistics research should be oriented (Näslund, 2002). This paper has exactly this orientation, to highlight as well as to provide a deeper understanding about the practices that are performed on a daily basis, by two logistics managers and more specifically, by two warehouse managers in Greece. Hence, the research question that directs this study, is:

How do logistics managers accomplish and cope with the everyday requirements that their work encompasses, and why are they doing it in such a way?

Findings from this question will be an essential contribution to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The answer in the research question will allow to become acquainted as well as to derive insights from the managers' individual thinking, interpretation and subjective point of view. Furthermore, the character of the research question is both descriptive and exploratory, indicating the conduction of a deeper inquiry by including more aspects as far as the "individual" and his/her working life are concerned, in the managerial processes; and not just simply quoting "obvious" roles and tasks.

All the above knowledge, can be used not only for determinate educational reasons in the service management area, but can also be considered as a significant confluence in the effort for the practice theory building.

1.3 Purpose

Having as a unit of analysis the "practice", the purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to supply with essential information about the integration as well as the combination of activities and thus practices that are needed to be performed in the everyday logistics' managerial work in Greece; thereby to give its empirical perspective. The above information will be regarded as the core, since it will provide background in order to be explained: how a logistics manager achieve the completion of different types of practices efficiently, by taking into consideration the complexity, uncertainty or even the habitual nature of the logistics domain; and why a manager acts and performs in that way, giving an aspect not only in the personal character or the competences of the manager, but also in the necessity and the prioritization of some practices. Secondly, comparing the two individual case studies, conclusions about the arising similarities and dissimilarities will be drawn, which intent to bear a benefit into the logistics' management practice theory development, and thus lessen the existing gap between theory and practice.

1.4 Focus

The focus of this research is on the everyday logistics managers' practices and thus, on the activities that complete a practice, as well as managers' daily behavior. This paper is not a descriptive catalogue of the managerial roles, nor timed actions nor daily activities nor even an evaluation of them, as all these can be easily found in the literature. The research makes an effort to investigate as much profoundly as feasible, to bear new insights and thus to increase the understanding regarding how are practices, in ordinary and/or urgent conditions, performed by the managers and why in that way.

1.5 Thesis outline

In this section, the master thesis outline is briefly presented:

Chapter 1 – Introduction. In this chapter, the background and the problem description which are related with the logistics managerial work, are presented. The research question that directs this study as well as the twofold purpose and the focus of this thesis are introduced, in order the reader to be informed and prepared for the content of this paper.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework. In this chapter the theoretical framework is presented, which does not only supports the purpose and the analysis of this paper, but also aims to acquaint the reader with the terminology and the notions of practice and practice theory, the logistics and the supply chain as well as to present some of their features.

Chapter 3 – Methodology. In the chapter of methodology, the research approach, the unit of analysis and the research methods that were performed, are presented. Furthermore, the author makes an effort to illustrate the factors that influenced him to take some essential research decisions as well as ethics considerations, ending with a reflection discussion on that methods.

Chapter 4 – Case findings and analysis. The paper proceeds with the description of the two cases, the focal companies and the respective logistics managers. The presentation of the findings from the research and the analysis for each case separately, are coming next.

Chapter 5 – Results and discussion. In this chapter the research question is answered. The findings from the two cases, which were presented in the previous chapter are compared, in order to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities and thus to pinpoint the key patterns.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion and further research. In this final chapter, a summary of the study along with the contribution of this thesis are discussed. The paper ends with a reference to the limitations of this study and by providing recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

The aim of this master thesis, is to acquire an understanding about the work of logistics managers using the "practice theory" in two case studies. This chapter, has as objective to provide to the reader information about what is considered as "practice" and "practice theory" or "theory of practice" in the social science, in order to comprehend the terminology that it is used throughout this paper as well as to be aware of the importance of this theory in business management.

This chapter is divided in two parts: the Practice section and the Logistics and the Supply Chain Management section.

2.1 Practice

The discussion in this section starts with the conceptual framework of practice and practice theory as well as with their connectivity with the management.

2.1.1 Towards a practice theory

The philosophy of social sciences has played a crucial role, in the effort to explain the world and to describe it, in a plain way that all people can comprehend. Researchers have tried to simplify the world, but I would agree with the argument of Nicolini, that a good social science makes the world more complex than straightforward, as its role is to enrich our perspectives and our knowledge about it (Nicolini, 2012). Social sciences can provide alternative ways of thinking about the human and the society in general, but the main challenge is the criteria that a researcher should take into consideration for the selection of these particular ways (Smith, 1998). So, questions like "What I want to study?", "How am I going to approach my research?" or "Where can I perform my search?" and other such questions which are of high importance, should undeniably be made by the researcher with contemplation.

However, the thought of the social researchers and the way of making these essential decisions, have substantially changed and matured throughout the years. From the positivistic wave, which was mainly based on the way that natural scientists were using to generate knowledge, to the point where scientists have considered notions that are more connected with the way that humans act or even thinking, such is culture. In an endeavor to define culture, someone can be concrete and general in the same time, as "When we think about the possible meanings and uses of the word culture, we walk into a maze of interpretations and associations" (Smith, 1998, p. 262). Yet, the quest for the notion of culture, which is in a ceaseless process of change (Smith, 1998), as well as the emergence of culture theories, started from the end of the eighteenth century, in order to explain action together with social order and were primarily influenced by Foucault and Bourdieu's work in structuralism and semiotics, as well as phenomenology and hermeneutics, which was fundamentally developed by Schütz (Reckwitz, 2002).

For Reckwitz (2002), the culture theories, that they were conducted in the previous years and their objective was to explain human action and social order, can be based on two congruent models which are the “homo economicus” and the “homo sociologicus”. The “homo economicus” model, explain the human action in a more “utilitarian” and rational perspective, claiming that individuals act according to their own interest, in an effort to fulfil their single needs, purposes and goals, whereas, in the “homo sociologicus” model, individuals act more collectively, according to moral principles which are related with the social “ought” (Reckwitz, 2002; Boudon, 2006). However, both these models have left out another aspect that is also pivotal for the social understanding named as “homo practicus”, which has to do with the individual’s knowledge and its being as a “carrier” or else “agent”, who “carries” and “carries out” social practices (Reckwitz, 2002).

Thus, what it can be deduced from the above, is that the challenge of simple questions like, “How am I going to approach my research” or “What do I want to show”, are not as simple as they look like, as it can deeply differentiate the purpose, the meaning and the outcome of one study. This conceptual tactic, is what can also differentiate a practice theorist from a cultural theorist. Both, practice theories and culture theories have as objective, to study how individuals act in a specific context. Furthermore, practice theory is a part of culture theory (Reckwitz, 2002). Nevertheless, the angle from which one practice theorist “investigates” an individual, has not the same focus as in culture theory. To put it more plainly, knowledge, meaning, human activity, language, intuitions, mind, objects and processes, are all not only aspects but also components in the field of a practice theorist (Schatzki, 2001), where the unit of analysis is not on the discourse, interaction or the mental quality of the agent, but into “practice” (Reckwitz, 2002).

What is “practice” and “practice theory”, as well as the variety of beliefs among the social researchers about this approach and why it should be applied, especially in the managerial domain, will be analyzed further on, in the next subsections.

2.1.2 The notions of Practice and Practice Theory

Many authors such as Schatzki (2001; 2002) Reckwitz (2002), Rouse (2001; 2007), Miettinen et al. (2009), Corradi et al. (2010), Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) and Nicolini (2012) have suggested that this “practice turn”, from “homo economicus and homo sociologicus” to “homo practicus”, or else this shift from the standpoint from which social researchers have used to approach the social action, should be done. Furthermore, they argue that this turn can provide a more complete picture about the individuals, something that the first two models did not accomplish (Nicolini, 2012). Some of the authors believe that this era have already started in social sciences, whereas some others that have not yet. However, at this point it is crucial to depict what it is considered as practice and practice theory.

The view that Schatzki has, is that practice is: “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding” (Schatzki, 2001, p. 2). In an effort to describe the notion of practice as a way of execution, he summarizes it as a "Practice as performance" (1996). However, because of the fact that the implementation of a practice by an agent is "a nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 1996, p. 89), he moves further to another notion which is interconnected with the performance and he calls it "Practice as coordinated performance" (1996). He argues that a practice is also constituted or can be divided in the understandings, the rules/principles and the tasks, purposes and beliefs (1996, p. 89), or else more succinctly in three categories of (1) understandings, (2) procedures, and (3) engagements (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2007; Warde, 2005; Magaudda, 2011).

Other perspectives about the sense of practice are, "Practice represents an emphatic term to describe the whole human action" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249), "is thus a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). Latour gives another standpoint about practice: "… is not done under the full control of consciousness; action (practice) should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled (Latour, 2005, p. 44). In practice theory, the notion of practice, is considered as a routinized type of behavior, which can produced and reproduced from the "agent" many times and is the result of the involvement of several elements such are the body, mind, knowledge, language and discourse, processes and the individual itself (Reckwitz, 2002), and affect as well as is affected by other practices, so it should be studied relationally (Nicolini, 2012) and analytically (Llewellyn, 2008). Thus, practice is something that the agent does in a regular base, intentionally or unintentionally by integrating all the above and using them as means for the accomplishment of this action/behavior. Furthermore, according also to Wenger, since a practice is taking place in a specific time and place is not considered as private but always as social: "It is doing in historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what people do. In this sense, practice is always social practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). Examples of practices can be cooking, reading, walking as well as shopping or even working.

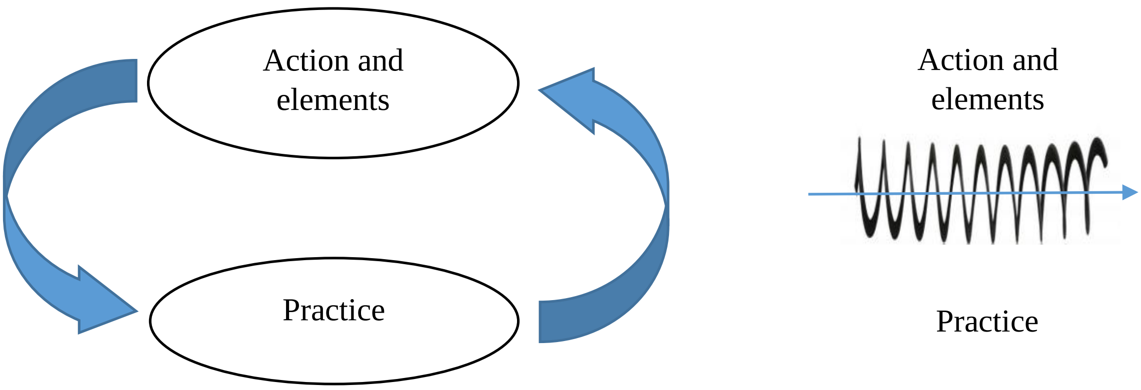

Figure 1a The continuation of the "practice" (Goldkuhl, 2006), 1b The spiral interplay

What is more, every agent has its own perceptive, understandings and routines and thus the individual can act on their own way. It should also be taken into consideration, that even though a practice is regarded as a "routinized" action and has a continuation (see Figure 1a), it might has small variations during time and this can be explained because of the dynamics that contexts have, due to the existence of other agents, materials and elements, which affect this "routinized practice". This can be perceived as the evolvement or else the innovation process (Warde, 2005; Shove and Pantzar, 2005) which contribute to the continuity of the agents within the world. Routines have the capacity for reflective monitoring of the performance (Giddens, 1984, p. 60) and can have a shape of spiral interplay (see Figure 1b).

Nevertheless, it is not easy to recognize, observe or even define a practice, since it is hidden and tacit (Corradi et al., 2010). In addition, practice theories and the notion of practice, hardly have a coherent approach (Schatzki, 2001; Nicolini, 2012); and this is mainly because practice theory as all the other social theories, is an attempt to depict the world, where contingency, different meanings and boundaries are taking place (Barad, 2003). Hence, it is of outmost importance that the researcher/observer that uses the practice theory for the knowledge creation, to have both a coherent approach that unites theory with method (Schatzki, 2002) and multiple cycles of observation, analysis and reflections (Nicolini, 2012).

By saying coherent approach, this, can be liken according to Nicolini as a "package": "The idea of package of theory and methods emphasizes that, for studying practices, one needs to employ an internally coherent approach where ontological assumptions (the basic assumption of how the world is) and methodological choices (how to study things so that a particular materializes) work together" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 217). A researcher can gain a greater perspective about a practice in a specific context, by applying this system of approach, which is composed by two different phases: (1) Zooming-in, where the researcher is trying to acknowledge not only the boundaries of the actual context but also the repetition the reproduction of a practice and (2) Zooming-out, in which there must be a correlation of this practice with the time and space that takes place as well as its interrelationship with other practices (Nicolini, 2012). Both of these phases should be implemented over and over again for a period of time, where the practice theorist contemplates the findings and "re-zooms", by taking into consideration the assumptions from the prior observations, in order to gain a deeper understanding of a practice (Nicolini, 2012).

Furthermore, practice theorists should be also aware of the traps that the practice theory might conceal, as"… its approach might seem relatively close to everyday talking about 'agents' and their behavior" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). The objective that practice theories have, as well as the social researchers, is to provide a social-theoretical vocabulary by focusing and studying the individuals' actions, habits and routines that produce and reproduce in their social contexts (Tengblad, 2012). As it was mentioned above, the focal point that the practice theories have as a unit of analysis, is "practice" and this is not the only characteristic that make them distinguishable. Ethnomethodology or social constructionism for instance, do not take into consideration the substantial role that the items (Schatzki et.al, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002) and the body have (Nicolini, 2012), in the creation of actions and behaviors respectively. Thus, the objects, the body and the aspect of the "routinized" can also be regarded as distinct.

The seven components of a practice according to Reckwitz's (2002) theoretical framework, will now be depicted (see Figure 2) and briefly described as they considered in practice theory:

Figure 2 The components of practice (adapted from Reckwitz, 2002)

- Body: It is performing daily routinized actions for the agent, which include not only movement like walking, but mental activity and emotions as well.
- Mind: It is closely interrelated with the body and conduce to the routinized performance, as it is the center of understanding.
- Things: Are the means which the agent utilizes in order to carry out a practice and thus affects it directly and indirectly.
- Knowledge: It is associated with the mind as well as with the understanding of the agent and the know-how.
- Discourse/Language: It is the verbal and nonverbal (body) communication which is used in a routinized environment.
- Structure/Process: The structure is assumed as temporal and the process as a routine activity.
- Agent: Is perceived as a non-autonomous but unique body/mind existence which "carry" and "carries out" social practices.

2.1.3 The Effect of Practice Theory

It is obvious until now, that the theory of practice takes for granted that, its' smallest unit of analysis which is the practice and thus all of its components, are "routinized activities", therefore known, from the agent that performs. Nonetheless, someone could ask that, since it is known what the agent does, why should the practice be the subject of analysis? What is the value of applying theories of practice?

As it was mentioned above, the models of “homo economicus” and “homo sociologicus” can be characterized as two congruent models in the evolvement of the culture theories. Even though, they had different frames of reference, their point of reference was the same. To put it more plainly, for both models the epicenter was the individual and how she/he responds according to the stimulus that the context, in which they appertain, evokes, or else individual’s praxeological thinking, from the utilitarian or from the collective aspect respectively. Thus, these intellectual attempts were to create a vocabulary of how the agent act-react, affect as well as contribute to the construction of the social structure. So, mental qualities, discourse and interaction were the base of the social theory and analysis (Reckwitz, 2002).

The “homo practicus” model however, advocates another perception. The unit of the social theory and analysis here, is “practice” (Reckwitz, 2002). “Practice” or “Praxis”, is a term that describes the whole of human action (Reckwitz, 2002). Thus, when it is said that the base of the analysis is the practice, it is meant the way that an agent actually performs actions that she/he is acquainted with. In addition, the notion of the practice theory equals with the conception that the agent and all the other components of the practice are routinized, except the structure which is characterized as “temporal”. As it was mentioned above, a practice is considered as social, since it happens in specific time and place. So, the structure is continuously altered, which might be due to the space, time or even the actions from other agents, and through its evolvement, the practice is changing (see Figure 1b). Actually, practice is dynamic operation with its own logic, where individuals adapt, improvise and experiment (Warde, 2005), as well as it is affected but also influences the context; and thus other practices too.

Coming back to the questions about the focus and the value of the theory of practices, the answer is twofold. The practice theory provides not only a new framework, a new area that needs further research in the social science (Warde, 2005), but also an opportunity for a profound “self-understanding” enhancement (Reckwitz, 2002). The new framework, is based on the way of “seeing” an agent acting in a specific context when the center of its vocabulary, are the practice components (Reckwitz, 2002). Within this context, the agent has determinate behavior and actions, which are performed for a certain reason that only the agent knows, as every agent is distinctive and has her/his own unique practices and routines (Reckwitz, 2002). Additionally, the judgment of performance for every practice are made internally by the agent, based on the goals as well as the aspirations of the practice itself (Warde, 2005).

Thus a better self-understanding enhancement can be achieved by studying an agent individually, in order to comprehend how and why a practice is performed. Because of the fact that a practice is produced and reproduced by the agents as they want to accomplish a certain goal, the researcher needs to observe or according to Czarniawska (2007), to conduct shadowing, a technique that can permit the researcher to “see” further than the positivistic perspective allows. Hence, the way of shadowing should be a continuous reflective procedure (Nicolini, 2012), where all the components of the practice are studying simultaneously and not just being described.

2.1.4 Practice and Managerial Work

There have been several perspectives, methods and approaches of how the managerial work should be studied in order to gain knowledge of what managers actually do. Some researchers have used the quantitative method, in an effort to explain what the daily activities that the managers perform are, and how much time they spend. However, quantitative research seems not being the suitable one to explain and present empirical phenomena such as the managerial practices (Nilsson and Gammelgaard, 2012), since it has a more descriptive character by simply quoting the manager's every day activities (Nicolini, 2012), and thus fails to acknowledge the context dependent and processual nature of practice as well as the complexity, uncertainty and performance pressure that managers face at work (Tengblad, 2012). For discerning how the social, physical and cultural context as well as how the elements of a task shape the managerial work (Shin et al., 2007; Dierdorff et al., 2009), a qualitative research implementation seems better method. Qualitative researchers are more interpretive and subjective and thus they can understand and gain better insight of the managerial behavior and practice (Näslund, 2002). The researcher should spend time within an organization, as this is the way of gathering "first-hand" information (Näslund, 2002) about the role of the managers as agents and individuals, and thus can contribute to the knowledge creation about practice.

But what are the main traits that contribute to the complexity of the managerial work, characterize it and are not so visible when a quantitative method is conducted? Which are those elements that affect the practices and the daily behavior of managers? In the work of Tengblad (2012), DeRue and Ashford (2010), Holmberg and Tyrstup (2010) as well as this of Mintzberg (1973; 1990) and not only, someone can distinguish some common similarities grouped in three categories:

Fragmentation: Managers are in general working many hours and in an unrelenting pace. This is mostly because of the fact that, there is a variety of tasks and processes as well as many people, in which they are in charge of. Some tasks are performed in a regular base and can be accomplished automatically, whereas other tasks need further effort by the managers. Furthermore, it is a common trait in their daily work, to have frequent interruptions as well as to switch rapidly activities and tasks.

Uncertainty: The managerial work, is essentially an aggregation of many obligations, which are affected by other individuals and the certain context in which they occur. The uncertainty can be divided in internal, which originates from unforeseen circumstances inside the organization and external, which arise from other factors and conditions outside the firm. Time pressure, shortage of information, risk preventive measures and increased complexity of the process, are some just of the elements that can describe such a condition. Under such emergency cases, a manager has to adapt and use the knowledge that have been acquired from previous similar occasions, as well as her/his intuition.

Collectivity: The nature of the managerial work presupposes contact with other individuals. Being available all the time as well as verbal communication, are of vital importance, as it is a way for exchanging essential information, explaining expectations and requirements as well as allocating duties. However, the way that managers think and judge or using their intuition for each situation together with the allocation of duties process, which is performed aiming the efficiency, are also within their daily tasks. Furthermore, managers should develop and maintain good business relationships with the other individuals, process that among others encompasses, display or hide emotions, informal acting and negotiations or even gossips and soft information. Last but not least, the legitimacy that it should be kept in all of the procedures, such are the way of speaking and writing, is also a hidden aspect of management that it is difficult to be visible by using quantitative methods.

By taking into consideration all the above and in an effort to categorize all of the management work practices, Tengblad (2012) creates a matrix of four types of managerial types, which is comprised by two dimensions (see Table 1). The first dimension make reference to the intentional practices that a manager performs, or else the activities that a manager knows and does in advance as well as activities that refer to uncertainty or else response activities; whereas the second dimension refers to formal work behavior such are meetings or speeches and informal management activities, like habitual actions and intuitive decision-making (Tengblad, 2012). The outcome from the "mix" of these two dimensions, is the four types of management. Type A refers to those practices that are taught by business professors and researchers and exists in textbooks, like strategy formulation, planning and forecasting, while type B, describe this management practices that are connected with the trial and error activities, or else the process of amelioration, like economic planning and fulfilling customer's problems and complaints (Tengblad, 2012). Type C management, is actually all these activities that a manager performs every day in a habitual manner considering of what "ought" to be accomplished and the potential disturbances, like habitual decision-making, networking and information exchange, while type D management is connected with the complex, uncertain and unexpected situations, where the necessity for an immediate and sufficient solution is vigorous (Tengblad, 2012).

	Work with intentionally driven activities (deliberate)	**Work with activities that arise from unintended events (reactive)**
Formalized work behavior (systematic)	A: Classical Management	B: Disturbances and Crisis Management
Informal work behavior (habitual)	C: "Muddling-through-management"	D: Management of ambiguity and constant disturbances

Table 1 Management work practices (Tengblad, 2012)

From the above matrix, it can be deduced first of all, that managerial practices and a practice in general, is a unique process and a subjective matter for every manager (Warde, 2005). Each manager perceive the reality and the respective conditions differently and this can affect the practices of the other agents within or outside the organization. The behavior of a manager is a link, which its outcome, is not only because of stratification factors, like organization's ranking, but also manager's competence, understandings, interpretations and motivation (Warde, 2005). Second, a practice is comprised by many, which might not be identical, performances/activities, with different significance of each (Warde, 2005). There might be a "hierarchy", a priority or inferiority in some practices which should be understood (Warde, 2005). For instance, for a habitual completion of a weekly or monthly report about the stock in the warehouse, a warehouse manager might start with the most important components and then with those that are minor, by checking the system, the archives that keeps in the computer or asking the individual who is in charge of. So, a practice can be a grid of many other activities. Finally third, types C and D of management practices are more relevant to the practice theory application, as they consider more the importance and existence of uncertainty and complexity in the contemporary managerial context, than for instance type A and less type B (Corradi et al., 2010; Tengblad, 2012).

To sum up, practice and practice of theory is a tool, which can be used for the creation of knowledge about the managerial work, by studying not how a task should be accomplished, but how the individuals perform the practice:

"The practice perspective on management avoids the scientists' yardstick prescriptions on how managerial work should be completely performed. Instead, the practice perspective uses the behavior and activities of successful, experienced and skillful managers as primary data for theorizing about good management. (...) Instead of evaluating management techniques according to their internal logic and systematic qualities, the practice perspective is interested in how widespread certain management practices are, how they are performed in everyday work, and what their outcomes are. In viewing management as work practices, the attention often shifts from formal management techniques to rule-of-thumb and behavior patterns." (Tengblad, 2012, p. 350).

The practice theory is used in this paper as such, in order to gain a deeper understanding in the logistics managerial work. At this point, and before moving on to the next chapter, it would be essential to be discussed the differences between logistics and supply chain, as well as the existence and the role of strategy, automaticity, contingency and complexity in this domain.

2.2 Logistics and Supply Chain Management

Undeniably, the domain of logistics and more broadly speaking this of the supply chain, has become such a "hot topic" in the latest years, as in almost every magazine or newspaper, someone can find an article about these topics (Ross, 1998). This is mainly because of the fact that the research in logistics and in supply-chain management in the last decades have been intensified (Arlbjørn, 2002), as the global trade has boomed. However, until nowadays, someone can notice a vagueness about what the concepts of logistics and supply chain or supply chain management represent (Arlbjørn, 2002). The definitions about both logistics and supply chain have been changed and evolved over time, and in the majority of cases the notions of "supply chain" and "supply chain management" are considered of being identical. Supply chain management nowadays, is commonly used and concerns the integrated nature of logistics (Rushton et al., 2010).

"Supply Chain Management is defined as the systematic, strategic coordination of the traditional business functions and the tactics across these business functions within a particular company and across businesses within the supply chain, for the purposes of improving the long-term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole" (Mentzer et al., 2001). Thus, a supply chain can be interrelated as a coalition, among at least three independent firms, or else a triadic scheme (Sandberg, 2005; 2007), which can be composed by the supplier, the focal company and the customer, with continuous forward and reverse flows of information, finance and material resources (Mangan, et.al., 2012),(see Figure 3). At this point it is crucial to be noticed that, an organization can be a part in more than one supply chain (Mentzer et al., 2001), which means that it can influence the processes as well as the performance and thus the success of every company and the whole, sometimes global, supply chain likewise (Cooper et al., 1997; Johannessen, 2005).

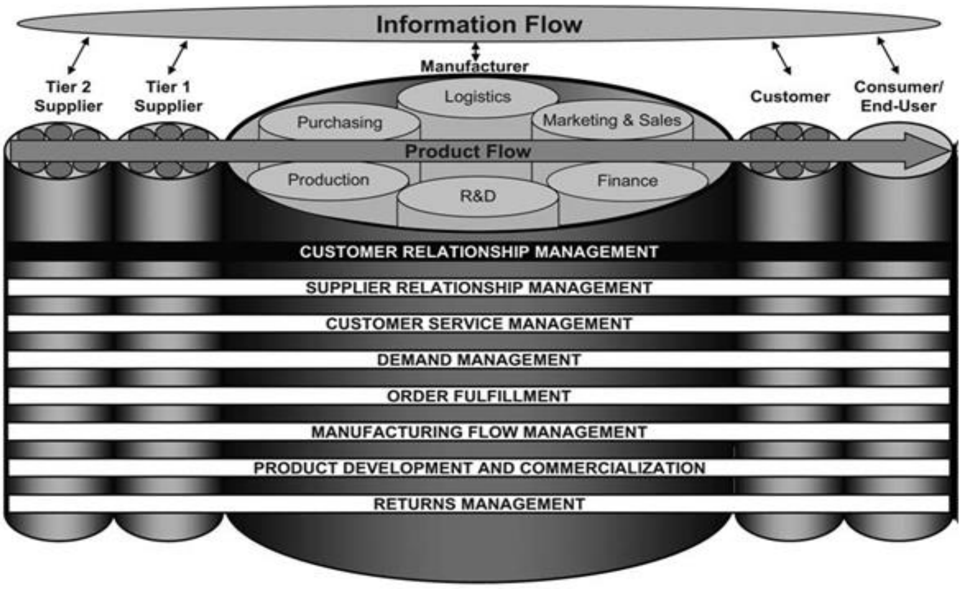

Figure 3 Supply Chain Management Process (Croxton et al., 2001)

The objective of a supply chain, is through the collective endeavor in the operations of all of the entities that synthesize this system (Arshinder and Deshmukhv, 2008), to ensure present as well as future continuity, by not only reducing the costs and thus increase their profit, but also by meeting the customer demands and expectations (Croxton et al., 2001). Hence, in order to be this aim achievable and constantly enhanced, the firms should not work in isolation with the other entities which are in the same supply chain (Lummus and Vokurka, 1999), but to be in line with the strategy of the whole system and according to this, to integrate their processes within as well as among the organizations (Lambert et al., 1998; Croxton et al., 2001; Mentzer et al., 2001; Lummus et al., 2008).

Logistics however, is not so broad sense and it can be considered as a part of the supply chain. In an effort to define logistics, the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP, 2011) almost coincide with the definition that Stock and Lambert (2001) gave as: "Logistics is that part of the supply chain process that plans implements and controls the efficient, effective flow and storage of goods, services and related information from the point of origin to the point of consumption in order to meet customers' requirements". What can be deduced from the above definition, is that logistics, encompass coordinated activities which are occurring inside a company (Madhuri, 2013) and there is, as in the supply chain, a ceaseless effort for coordinating and optimizing procedures according to the market needs.

Logistics, have also material, information and finances flows (Arlbjørn, 2002; Goetschalckx, 2011), and some authors argue that logistics management has to do with the product flow (Arlbjørn, 2002) and availability, or else "getting the right product, in the right place, at the right time" (3R), (Fernie and Sparks, 2009). However, the latter description that represents the logistics functions, is considered by the author as very simplified.

The "logistics mix" in which the logistics management should focus, according to Fernie and Sparks (2009), includes five components which are intertwined and thus they should be taken into consideration simultaneously: (a) storage facilities, that can be warehouses or distribution centers, (b) inventory or else stock levels that should be kept in every site, (c) transportation matters, like the inbound and outbound shipments, fleet management as well as the form of the transport mean that it will be used in every case, (d) utilization and packaging, as many products are transported in bundle and in the majority of cases it is needed to be re-packed, and lastly (e) communication, as it should be transparent not only the customer demand, but also the supply levels and capacity that an organization has in order to fulfill the customers' requirements. Consequently, the core function of logistics it is not only to facilitate and coordinate the operations as far as the flow continuity of materials is concerned, but also to provide services, such are for instance, the inventory of raw and finished goods as well as the packaging and transportation diversity and capacity.

However, logistics cannot be seen as a separate domain within an organization (Rushton et al., 2010). According to Johannessen (2005), the activities that are performed in an organization, or in a cluster of businesses as a supply chain is, can be better understood and enhanced, when there is a holistic view about their interaction and their effects in the whole. Some authors have argued, that it is a prerequisite the functional integration of logistics with the other departments within an organization, such are these of marketing, sales or even purchasing; and the existence of a holistic perspective (Mentzer et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2006), for more efficient functioning. The view that had been remained, was that logistics have a definite role to perform, which can be detached from the other departments' functions and costs (Nilsson, 2006), but as claimed by Stock and Lambert (2001), the logistics success is the outcome of the cooperation and coordination within and between the firms.

This cooperation is essential in both, strategic and operational levels (Sandberg, 2007), as the environment of logistics has undeniably changed over time and it is gaining increasingly broader range of functions. Info-technological improvements, products' variability, increased customer demands and expectations, customization, shorter delivery cycles, maintaining low inventory levels as well as just-in-time and postponement strategies, are just some of features that compose the turbulent contemporary environment of logistics. The key in such unpredictable and unknowable conditions, is to foresee and designate the future demands and trends in order to have the time to act, than to just react (Johannessen, 2005).

Supply chain is a complex and dynamic system (Prater et al., 2001) and logistics in essence, has a fundamental role not only for a company itself, but for the other businesses as well, as it links each node in the network of the supply chain (Lummus and Vokurka, 1999) and it is of outmost importance the decisions and activities that are taken from the logistics managers to be in line with the whole (Stank and Goldsby, 2000).

2.2.1 Strategy and Automaticity

A practice is the outcome of both technology (machines and things) and human beings (Czarniawska, 2007) but simultaneously, these are also the barriers for collaboration (Sandberg, 2005) in both supply chain and logistics. Additionally, from their above definitions about logistics and supply chain, it became clear that the success of the whole, is about "coordination" and 'tactic". Thus, technology and human beings should have a "strategy", which aligns the actors and the organizational identity with the heterogeneity within the organization as well as in the supply chain, in order to be achieved the desirable integration of processes.

A well-defined strategy, has the capacity not only to explicate the macro or the micro-perspective and direction in which an organization or an individual should focus on, but also to solve emerging problems (Mintzberg, 1987). In the managerial domain, "strategy is a unified, comprehensive and integrated plan … designed to ensure that the basic objectives of the enterprise are achieved" (Glueck, 1980, p. 9). Thus, strategy is a way of suggesting what the actors should do (Sandberg, 2007), or where they should orient their activities (Mentzer et al., 2001) or even how an individual should behave. According to Mintzberg (1987), a strategy is designed before the occurrence of the actions as well as is evolving continuously and in conjunction with them (see Figure 4). Terms like plan, ploy, pattern, position and perception (Mintzberg, 1987), are all relevant and can describe the multifaceted nature of the notion of strategy in the organizational environment, yet, it can be also argued that the existence of a strategy is aiming in the standardization of the operations and thus to the automaticity of practices.

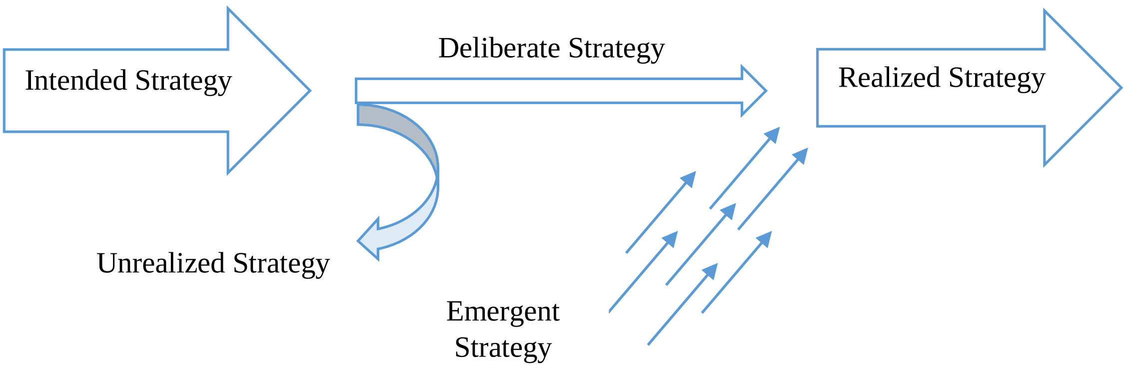

Figure 4 Strategy development (Mintzberg, 1987)

"Automaticity refers to control of one's internal psychological processes by external stimuli and events in one's immediate environment, often without knowledge or awareness of such control; automatic phenomena are usually contrasted with those processes that are consciously or intentionally put into operation" (Bargh and Williams, 2006, p. 1). Thus, automaticity is directly connected with the unconscious of mind as well as with the structure, not only the social (Bargh and Williams, 2006), but also this of a process. When for instance, a logistics manager is used in performing a particular task or is accustomed with a daily programme or even a setting and "enters" in it, the individual has the cognition to be automatically adjusted in that routinized situation (Bargh and Williams, 2006), in order behave as she/he "ought to" effectively.

In the domain of logistics, there is the need and the expectation sometimes from the managers, to make decisions in an "irrational" manner. Due to the fast pace that the nature of this domain has, logistics managers have to decide speedily, and the automaticity of the procedures in conjunction with their previous experience, help them to judge a case quickly. Experienced managers have the capacity and the cognition to correspond in complex situations without conscious thoughts (Argyris, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Dane and Pratt, 2007) and in many cases they do not have the ability to explain their decision making process (Tengblad, 2012). This competence and cognition, stems not only from their professional experience, but also from the routinized way of everyday performing and that is why logistics managers should be approached with the use of a practice theory (Tengblad, 2012). It can provide a better insight about how this routinized behavior from the logistics managers is produced and reproduced, as well as how this affect their decision making process (Warde, 2005; Tengblad, 2012).

To sum up, strategy and automaticity, both encourage the occurrence of non-conscious activities and thus conduce to the practice routinization, which undeniably affect the way that an individual acts. Decision making as well as strategic planning, are often both spontaneous activities and can illustrate the confusing nature of the managerial work (Tengblad, 2012). However, contingency and complexity are two more constituents in the logistics domain, which play a crucial role.

2.2.2 Contingency and Complexity

The way of living, especially in the western societies, have changed radically nowadays, without leaving intact the sector of logistics. In contemporary societies can be acknowledged three features: the acceleration of everything, like shorter life-cycles of products, rapid prototyping or higher pace of innovation, the shortening of time scopes and lastly the increasing simultaneity of events or the appearance of rapidly varying events (Brose, 2004). These characteristics have contributed profoundly to the market alteration as well as have increase the uncertainty and the complexity in the supply chain (Prater et al., 2001).

The notion of contingency is used broadly in the logistics managerial work lately. Shorter lead times, minimization of inventory, reverse flow of materials, geographical dispersion of the organizations and the supply chains in which they are part of, IT technology, just in time and postponement strategies and many more elements increase constantly the possibility of an unexpected event to happen. However, it is not only the area of systems, but also this of actors (Gammelgaard, 2004), that uncertainty exists. Nilsson (2006), in order to portray a more comprehensible and compact picture of the current situation in logistics, groups the logisticians' perceived areas of uncertainties in four dimensions: (a) customer demands and expectations, (b) internal processes, (c) human factors and (d) general trends. He also argues that the challenges that logisticians are facing now, are the shortage of holistic perspective, sensitivity to details among customers and employees, and understanding the right information as well as sense making, claiming that the difficulty in logistics work has to do with the behavior, the soft factors and their integration with the systems and the whole (Nilsson, 2006).

Contingency theory accepts that there is no best way for managing, organizing and deciding (Wooton, 1997; Grötsch et al., 2013). There must be a variety of approaches, a "transition strategy" (Wooton, 1997) and thus shifting and reformulating ideas or even taking into consideration the likely threats, are all a part of the process (Tosi and Carroll, 1976) in order to transcend the uncertainties and reach efficiency. In this way, contingency management is a perspective towards the change (Wooton, 1997) and managers are called upon to adapt and not act with automaticity, like reading a textbook or a manual (Tengblad, 2012). As Barad (2013) argues, a practice theory is an attempt to illustrate the world where contingency transpires as well as denotes complexity.

The notion of complexity in the organizational work, is based in the emergence and the existence of many different factors in a situation or a context, making the process of "rational" deciding and performing for managers, even more uncertain. As it was mentioned above, the role of the strategy is to make clearer the objective and keep the operations in the supply chain and within the organization integrated. Automaticity, is also essential, as it can direct to efficiency (Sandberg, 2007), whereas contingency is ubiquitous and increases the complexity of functioning even more. Additionally, logistics are integrating increasingly new tasks, the need for faster and more accurate information and understanding is also becoming more demanding whereas great strides have been achieved in the technology improving steadily the services.

Hence, it can be deduced that the domains of logistics and supply chain are facing an increasing complexity in their functions (Nilsson and Gammelgaard, 2012) and the need for a deeper understanding, is requisite. The practice theory is a key perspective and provides the opportunity by observing and interviewing an active participant in contemporary logistics, to get a deeper understanding that could contribute to the further evolvement of the logistics discipline (Nilsson, 2006).

3. Methodology

The process of designing a study, as well as finding the appropriate methodological framework that might has the potentiality to result in well-grounded findings, is undeniably both, intensive and challenging. Each method and approach has advantages and disadvantages (Yin, 2009), however the attributes and the objectives of each study, are those that delineate the structure and the "tools" that should be adopted by the researcher. The purpose of this paper, is not only to explore and describe the managerial work of warehouse managers, but also because of the shortage of adequate knowledge, to contribute into the refinement of the existing theories. The nature and the scope of this paper require individual cases, from where information can be yielded and analyzed, hence the case study research method was selected.

In this chapter, research methods, approaches and procedures as well as ethical and quality matters, relevant to the scope of this paper will be analyzed further. Reflection about the decisions and the procedures that were followed by the author, will also be included.

3.1 Research approach

Many methodological discussions have taken place about the objective and the subjective point of view that a researcher and thus the respective study can adopt. This matter, is undeniably interconnected with the nature of a research, quantitative or qualitative, as well as the researcher as individual and her/his perspective and presumptions.

This differentiation can be affiliated with the two opposite schools of epistemology, empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism on the one hand, is a perspective on research that supports the view, that the facts exist and can be gathered in the world, independently of people's interpretation and personal beliefs (May, 2011). Rationalism on the other hand, emphasizes the essential role of individuals in the theory development, which according to Kant, is a "synthesis" of thinking and observable experiences (Smith, 1998). Thereby, empiricism talks about the objectivity perspective, where everything exists and can be explained without having any human conscious or unconscious intervention, whereas rationalism is connected with the possessed cognition and thus with the subjectivity of individuals, which affect the way that knowledge is constructed. What can be deduced from the above is, that objectivity and subjectivity are two different perspectives which can have opposite sides as far as the validity of both, the acquired data and the respective study are concerned (Czarniawska, 2007).

The terms of quantitative or qualitative research are associated with the above perspectives. Actually, they signify divergent assumptions about the nature and the processes of a research and not only the way of gathering data (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Bryman, 2004). Surveys and experiments are the methods where a quantitative research is mostly based in order to bear generalizations, whereas qualitative research utilize mostly observations, interviews and document analysis. The decision of what is the most appropriate way of conducting a research and the methods that can be followed, needs further contemplation and it should be in conjunction with the purpose of each study (Bryman, 2004; May, 2011; Silverman, 2013). However, the "ostensibly safety" about the validity that quantitative research provides due to its objective aspect, is a motive for many researchers. But what can be argued about the validity and the subjectivity in the qualitative research?

Very often it is argued that qualitative research is personal and full of bias (Näslund, 2002). Czarniawska denies the accusation that qualitative research is subjective, or less objective than a quantitative. According to her:

"… only beings with consciousness are able to construct knowledge and have opinions; 'subjectivity' is therefore the necessary requirement for any kind of knowing. On the other hand, if by 'objectivity' we are to understand that many objects are used to gather information, such objectivity is both obvious and desirable. I would guess that many authors speaking of 'objectivity' have in mind either 'neutrality', or 'avoiding idiosyncratic views and opinions'. The latter is easily amended by comparative analysis […] comparing many views reveals those that are typical and those that are deviant" (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 18).

Thus, since the results of every quantitative or qualitative research are repetitive, can be considered as accurate and thus been objective. For instance, when an experiment has the same results every time that it is conducted, it means that these results are verifiable. The same can be claimed for a qualitative research that is based in observations or interviews, as the existence of regularities increase the confidence of a well-grounded study (Ellram, 1996).

The main purpose of the ethnographers is to provide a detailed descriptions of the settings that they investigate and in general, qualitative researchers want to step further than this description (Bryman, 2004). Given the intention of this thesis and the nature of its research problem, as well as the need for more qualitative research in the logistics domain (Ellram, 1996; Näslund, 2002; Gammelgaard, 2004); and in the same time, adopting the same standpoint with Czarniawska about objectivity, the qualitative research seemed more appropriate. Furthermore, studying about logistics practices, which has not drawn the corresponding attention of many researchers in the social science, the call was for both exploratory and descriptive case study. Since there is not much information about the practice in logistics, the intention of the author was to obtain more accurate knowledge about this area by spending time in two different organizations, in order to both, investigate and shed light on new aspects of the warehouse managers' everyday practices and conduce to the existing theoretical framework and knowledge. According to Näslund (2002), this is the best way in logistics research for gathering valuable information and thus getting a deeper understanding of what is going on.

Furthermore, induction and deduction are two methods of reasoning, that link or else describe the evolvement of the relationship between theory and research, during the conduction of a study (May, 2011). In the induction approach, the research is the first step which has as objective to produce theory. That is, from specific findings to produce knowledge. The deduction approach is actually the opposite, from the general to specific, where the research is conducted according to the theory that exists. Both approaches refer to theory and research as two different steps that coexist in the same study, and for the study completion the first step should have been finalized. At this point it should be noticed that, the inductive and deductive approaches are applicable in empiricism and rationalism respectively (Svennevig, 2001).

However abduction, the third and more contemporary method of reasoning, is a more creative approach, which in essence interrelates theory and research. In the abduction, theory and research are integrated and thus are both evolving gradually and simultaneously. It can be considered as the combination of the above two, an in-between approach. Abduction is suitable for interpreting individual phenomena within a specific context, aiming a new way of understanding and even though its necessity in the logistics research, the term abduction, rarely is used in logistics research articles (Kovács and Spens, 2005). The research procedure that this thesis adopted due to the nature of its twofold purpose, was the abductive. The author started by revising the notions of practice and practice theory, however finding theoretical knowledge about practice in the logistics managerial work was extremely difficult. Observation of two Greek logistics managers in conjunction with theory matching was the next step. The author had to contemplate and reflect on the data from the observations and the interviews back and forth during the data collection process, not only for getting a deeper understanding of the actual process, but also for ameliorating the theoretical framework. This thesis was finalized with the description and presentation of its findings from each case separately as well as the results from their comparison (see Figure 5).

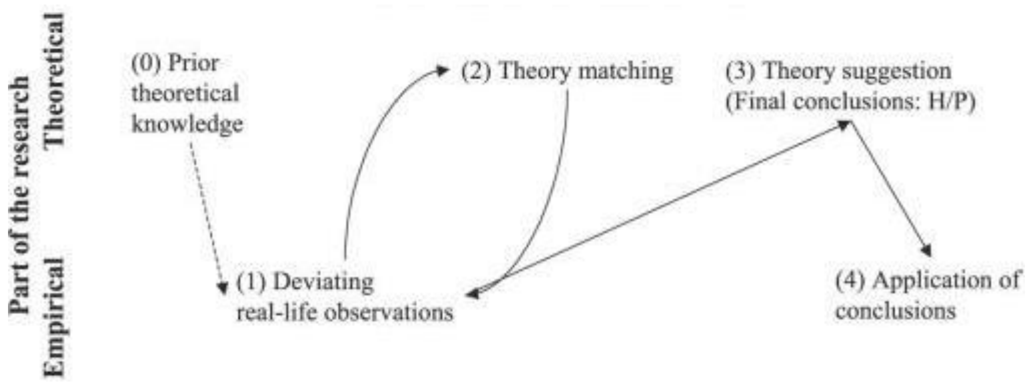

Figure 5 The abductive research process (Kovács and Spens, 2005)

What is more, in the work of Arbnor and Bjerke (1997), it can be found a methodological framework with three approaches that can be applied in business studies. The first one is the analytical approach, in which a positivistic and thus objective perspective about the reality is adopted (Gammelgaard, 2004). The second one, is the systems approach, which is rather prominent in the logistics domain. In this perspective, the researcher tries to disentangle the reality in order not only to understand it, but also to improve it; and to parallelize it within logistics, to solve current and potential logistics problems (Gammelgaard, 2004). The exceptional growth and effectiveness that contemporary logistics has achieved in the last decades, is due to the adoption of this approach by many researchers (Lambert et al., 1998; Gammelgaard, 2004). Lastly, the third approach is the actors approach, which actually relies on the concept that reality and knowledge are social constructed (Gammelgaard, 2004). Each individual with its knowledge and actions, not only affects the social context but also is affected by the other individuals' motives and intentions. This loop is continuous and conduces into the humanity evolution. As it was mentioned above, work is only one part of humans' life and logistics managers have these traits. In order logistics practice to be understood, the researchers have to observe and interpret how and why something is done, so the preferred method is the qualitative one (Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997).

None of the above three approaches can be said that is the best. Each one is serving different perspectives and purposes. Yet, the actors approach is recommended in logistics, as it can supplement the other two (Gammelgaard, 2004), in order to have a more holistic view about logistics and thus to have more potentialities for increasing its future efficacy.

3.2 Case study research

Studying the society as a whole in order to understand its phenomena, is admittedly something impossible, and a case study can offer a vantage point to facilitate this procedure (May, 2011). Many authors have interpreted the case study as strategy, technique, approach or even design (May, 2011). It can be also considered as a heuristic process (Eckstein, 1975; Mitchell, 1983), which assists the understanding of dynamics within specific contexts (Eisenhardt, 1989), or else according to Yin, as a method that "allows to investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as individual life cycles, small group behavior organizational and managerial processes" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). In addition, it is preferred for an in-depth research (Baškarada, 2014) of contemporary events, but when those behaviors cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009).

Case studies, as the other research methods like experiments, surveys, history or even archival records analysis, can be used to answer different questions and consequently, serve different purposes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 2009). Starting with the questions, there can be found a variety of categories like what, who, where, how many, how much, how and why. As far as the purpose is concerned, according to Eisenhardt (1989), exploratory are the case studies that are conducted before the definition of the research question or hypothesis, whereas descriptive, are those that try to describe a phenomenon in its context. Both of them are mostly used for theory development. Explanatory case studies, are used to investigate causal relationships and thus for theory testing. In sum, case studies can provide theory development, theory test and description.

Since the focus is on a contemporary event, as logistics managerial practice is, and the purpose of this paper is to answer "why" and "how" questions, the call is for empirical research and case study. Questions of "why" and "how" are not relevant with the frequency of an event, but are more connected with operational links that should be acknowledged over time (Yin, 2009). Schramm argues that "…the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm, 1971, p. 6). This argument is close related with the purpose of this paper, especially if the word “decision” replaced with the word “practice”.

Case studies however, as all the research methods, have some sensitive points which the investigator should have into consideration during the design and the conduction of the research process. According to Yin, a case study in often regarded as a “soft” research, because the investigators do not have to follow systematic procedures (Bryman, 2004; Yin, 2009). The fact of not following a specific process, can influence the point of investigator’s view, the conduction of the research as well as the findings and conclusions (Yin, 2009). The outcome is undeniably a low-valued research. Thus, it is of vital importance the pre design of how the research will be implemented, not only to facilitate the investigator with the appropriate procedures, but also to increase the value of the study. A second point that should be acknowledged, is that case studies can last too long, and in the majority of cases, they end up with massive and unreadable data (Yin, 2009). The researcher should be selective and focused on the unit of analysis, and to reflect on her/his data during the conduction of the research. This fact can contribute not only into having less amount of data, but also by reflecting and thus redesign the research frequently, to have more quality and deeper understanding of the case in question. Lastly, the third point is based on the controversy if the findings from a single case study can be generalized (Mitchell, 1983; Yin, 2009). As it was mentioned above, a case study can be replicated again and again, as in the experiment method, in order to corroborate the founded regularities, and of course, an overview of the procedures and the decisions that were followed in the previous studies, could help in the replication process (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, case studies aiming to develop and generalize theories, (analytic generalization), by comparing empirical results with previous theory and/or studies; and not generalize results and frequencies, (statistical generalization), as experiments for instance do (Yin, 2009; May, 2011; Silverman, 2013). To put it more plainly, the actual scope of the case study is to generalize a theory in order to be verified and thus to claim for theory building; and not to plea for a definite finding.

So, it can be deduced that one crucial decision that should be made with contemplation, is the selection between single and multiple case study. A single case study is usually preferred due to its uniqueness and representativeness (Mitchell, 1983; Yin, 2009; Silverman, 2013), and it should be searched in-depth for providing substantial conclusions (May, 2011). A multiple case study though, can have a comparative character, which allows the corroboration of the findings form each case and thus increase the validity of the study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Thereby, a case should be selected in such a way that it either predicts similar and contrasting results, as well as in conjunction with the sources and time that is required (Yin, 2009).

Due to fact that a single-case studies are more vulnerable (Yin, 2009) as well as the scarcity of previous theory relevant with the purpose of this thesis; and since the scope of this paper does not share the belief that there is representativeness, but every logistics manager can be a potential case, the selection of multiple case study was the only way. Furthermore, two case studies, can provide more research data, perspectives, experience and cognition about logistics practice than one case. Lastly, the notable advantage that a multiple case study has, is to compare different but in the same category cases, increasing the potentiality for more accurate conclusions and higher quality. This fact, was an essential incentive that supported the selection of "two-case" case study even more.

3.3 Case study design

Undeniably, the case selection is one of the most essential and challenging tasks in the conduction of a research as the suitability of a case affects substantially the data collection process and thus the whole research. Hence, the investigator should be confident that the case is relevant with the research purpose as well as its unit of analysis and that it will provide adequate amount of data.

As it was mentioned above, for this thesis, the "two case" case study was considered to be the best option. The objective was to shadow the practices of two warehouse managers in their workplace. The reason for attempting to find two managers with similar positions, in a same size company, was because the author wanted to collect data that could be comparable, could increase the validity and could answer the questions of how and why. However, the process of selecting and finding two such cases, requires to take key decisions about crucial issues.

One of those decisions, was where these two companies should be located. The first option was for Sweden, yet due to the fact that the author was not well acquainted with the Swedish language, the decision was to take place in Greece. This fact, actually increased the validity of this study, as the author was able to understand everything during the shadowing process. Another decision that the author had to make, was about the companies that the shadowing process will be done. The barriers for this decision was the access and the factor of time, though the author obtained permission to shadow two managers from two different multinational companies in the area of Athens in Greece. During the shadowing process and against to what it was believed at first, it was realized that the size of the companies was not similar, as the first company was much smaller than the second one and thus the job description that the two managers had, was not completely identical. However, this fact did not influence the whole study, as it allowed to be discerned a few more aspects of the work of logistics managers and thus it provided satisfactory results.

The period of the fieldwork was eighteen days, for both managers, for a total of almost 150 hours. The two managers were informed almost a month before the starting of the process and during that time, general clarification questions were answered by the author. In both cases, the first day was devoted to get both accustomed with the presence of the other so as both to feel more comfortable. There was a conversation about an hour with each manager, in a relaxed way, explaining the nature of this research as well as personal details. Then the managers gave details about their company in general, and their job with more details. The shadowing process started from the first day, as this could conduce to the quicker familiarization for both, with the process. There was not a serious problem with the access and the "fit-in" in the environment of the managers, as both were informed and thus prepared beforehand, as well as both were cooperative and positive with the research. Furthermore, during the first days, the employees that had direct connection with the managers were informed for the conduction of the research, fact that facilitated the shadowing. It was obvious, especially in the first 2-3 days, that the managers were affected by the presence of the author, but the frequent communication, through the unstructured interviews, contributed substantially towards enabling this issue to be gradually surpassed. Additionally, even though they were informed that they could have their privacy whenever they wish, it was asked only once by each manager, fact that contributed significantly in the collection of primary data. Lastly, after the completion of the shadowing, in the last day, a semi-structured interview which was recorded, was conducted. The questions of the final interviews were not all common and some of them were preordained, in accordance with the scope of the research (see Appendix 1). Thereby, it can be said that the data collection process was mainly divided into two stages, the shadowing and the semi-structured interviews.

In addition, during the observation the goal was twofold, to be unbiased and active, as the need was to see, feel, and listen the two managers as well as to take detailed notes of the practices that were performed, the incidents that were occurring and write down the impressions that were created and perceived too. At this point it should be mentioned that, it took time for the researcher to puzzle out the performed practices, as the process required to firstly understand what the managers do, in order to get a better apperception of the practice and thus to collect the evidence that could answer the questions of how and why. In the first days, the amount of data and the receiving information was enormous, so inevitably the process of taking notes of what was relevant for the study, was very demanding. However, during the last days of the observation it became apparent that the investigation was reaching closure, as there was a recurrence of the same performances by the managers. Except the first two days of shadowing, all the other notes were kept in English, as this could save time for the author not only to translate them in order to be used for the analysis, but also to be saved in the data base of this study and to be provided on request.

It is also important to take into consideration, the role of the researcher during the whole process and thus the research ethics. Having in mind the difficulties that the shadowing and the conduction of interviews encompass regarding bias, the author's intentions were to diminish the possibilities of affecting the two managers' behavior and responses. The first day's conversations as well as retaining a mutual respect and enthusiasm during the whole process were very essential factors, however as it was mentioned above, it is believed that it took two to three days for the managers to get used with the author's presence and the general process of shadowing. After these first days, it seemed that they felt freer to behave, yet this fact did not had a big impact for the in hand thesis, as the author was trying to understand what the managers actually do at first, and then to search deeper, for the how and why answers. As far as the interviews are concerned, the author tried not to influence the interviewees with the questions, but make them feel comfortable in order to unfold themselves and express generously their thoughts and beliefs.

Yet, despite the effort to be objective and to diminish the potential bias during the data collection, inevitably the authors' personal background, knowledge as well as perception, affect this qualitative research not only in the way of seeing, perceiving and interpreting the data during the fieldwork, but also in the way that these data are presented and how the text is composed in order to be understood.

Concluding, due to the fact that a case study is actually “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 73), when a researcher gains access in a company and in the private life of a manager, consequently becomes a receiver of sensitive information. Hence, the in hand thesis will keep the anonymity of the two companies in order to be protected. Additionally, for defending the privacy and confidentiality of the two involved managers and their respective companies, from now on, they will be called as “A” and “B”, as this fact does not have impact in the scope of this thesis.

3.4 Unit of analysis and data sources

The unit of analysis denotes what the case is about (G.A.O., 1990; Yin, 2009) and thus is very crucial to be stated. Yet, a review in qualitative case studies that had as focus the managerial operations and were conducted from 1992 until 2007, revealed that only 17% of the articles stated clear their unit of analysis (Barratt et al., 2011). Practice, is the unit of analysis for this thesis and the data collection was based on this. By analyzing the daily practices that a logistics manager performs, essential knowledge, which is difficult to be found in the literature, can be emerged.

Case studies can combine several methods for collecting data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). The in hand thesis have used observation, interviews and document analysis (see Figure 6), which will be analyzed further on, in the next subsections.

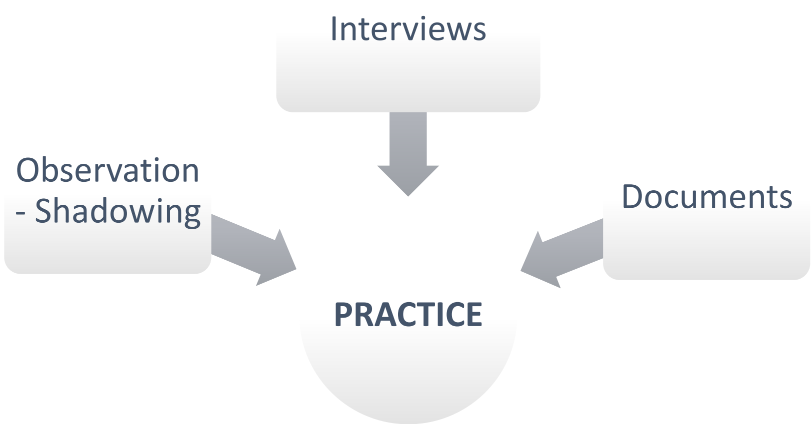

Figure 6 Sources of evidence (adapted from Yin, 2009)

3.4.1 Observation - Shadowing

There are two methods in social research that can be used for data collection: “asking questions” and “hanging out” (Dingwall, 1997). However, understanding practice which is embedded in individuals’ life and work, “hanging out” or else “fieldwork”, is the only way, as the field is where people live, work and practices and activities are created and produced (Czarniawska, 2007). Furthermore, for the organization understanding, time within the organization is required (Näslund, 2002), thus, observation and more specifically shadowing, was the technique in which this thesis was mainly based on, for data collection.

According to Czarniawska (2007), there are two types of observation: the indirect and the direct observation. The indirect observation is performed with the use of hidden cameras or one-way mirrors and sometimes is conducted without the knowledge and approval of the observee. This type of observation was rejected by the author, not only for the ethical considerations (Czarniawska, 2007), but also because it could not serve the properly the requirements of this study.

The direct observation can be divided into participant and nonparticipant observation. Starting with participant observation, it is a mode in which the researcher is not a passive observer, but is having an active role in the process or the event that it is studied (Yin, 2009). On the other hand, nonparticipant observation is further divided into stationary observation and shadowing. Stationary observation is actually the video recording. This kind of observation might be considered convenient from an investigator as it can be effective in time and cost. However, the author believes that the use of cameras and videos in general, is not the appropriate for the purpose of this thesis for two reasons. First, the researcher cannot feel the emotions, like intensity, satisfaction, or even interaction and subjective reflection into a practice as well as the role of individual's knowledge and experience in the daily work of a logistics manager. Second, applying this type of observation the researcher does not have the capacity to follow the observed person everywhere (Czarniawska, 2007) and film everything.

Shadowing is actually "following people in their everyday occupations for a time" (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 17). Thus it provides both, mobility and potentiality for sense detection. This type of observation, allows the researcher to have a more holistic perspective about the case and thus gaining several aspects about the unit of analysis, as the observer exists in the same context with the observed person, being focused on the study's objective, without performing any role that might distract her/his attention, as in participant observation for instance. Even if the shadowing technique seems easy to perform, it is not, as according to Czarniawska (2007) there are some practical challenges for the potential researcher. Access is the first and the most crucial challenge. The investigator should negotiate not only in the primary design phase of the case study in order to be accepted, but every day, especially in the first days of shadowing, as very often the person that is observed is getting tired or feeling uncomfortable due to the continuous presence of the researcher. The experience that the observer possess is a key component (May, 2011), as the previous knowledge can facilitate substantially the above difficulty. Another challenge is the taking notes process, which can be rather difficult, especially if you are constantly on the move. At this point, it should be also highlighted the significance of the constant focus of the researcher in the unit of analysis, in order to collect data that are direct connected with it. Finally, the "fit-in" of the researcher into the shadowed person's environment and broader context, for example dress code or behavior, is also a difficulty that should be surpassed.

Undeniably shadowing, provides the opportunity for gaining a deep understanding of what is going on in the field, and the researcher should be more active not only during but also after the daily observation. The process that it was followed for this thesis, was related with the concept of "observe, think, test and revise" (G.A.O., 1990) or else according to Nicolini (2012) "zooming-in and zooming-out". Actually, the collection of data in the "shadowing phase" was divided in two parts. The first part was the note taking through observation of the logistics manager, whereas the second part was the reflection on the collected notes. The second part, was equally important with the first one, as an effort both to categorize practices and the needed activities for a practice completion as well as to examine the appropriateness of the notes compared to the unit of analysis, was made. This activity had a triple effect: first, it could give a more explicit picture and thus answer to the questions of "how" and "why" a practice was accomplished by the manager, second, it could provide a guide in which the next day's shadowing could "delve more into" and third, it kept the center of attention into the unit of analysis during the four weeks of observation.

Due to the fact that shadowing is related with the investigator's interpretation as well as in the majority of cases the factor "time" is suppressive, the need is for more research methods to be included. The utilization of several methods contribute both to the amount of collected data as well as their triangulation (Yin, 2009) and verification (G.A.O., 1990), and interviews was the second method that it was used.

3.4.2 Interviews as a source of data

Interviews can yield rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, values, attitudes as well as feelings (May, 2011, p. 131) and provide an opportunity for the researcher to "get into the heads" of particular groups of people, in order to understand how the things are from their "point of view" (Silverman, 2013, p. 201). Thus, there are one of the most important source of information for case studies (Yin, 2009, p. 106), especially if there is the need to corroborate the data that were collected from shadowing and gain more details in order to comprehend a particular performance, as it was in this case.

According to May (2011), there are four types of interviews: structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews and focus group interview. In the case of a structured interview, the questions that interviewees are asked, are standard, aiming to elicit specific information and not personal views. It is mostly used to examine patterns and responses from a population in order to be statistically analyzed. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are more open than structured interviews, prompting the interviewee to "reveal" personal perspectives, enabling the researcher to probe beyond the answers. The interview has a more conversational character, yet the interviewer should be prepared with specific questions in order to maintain the flow and the context of the interview. Unstructured interviews is the third type, in which the interviewees have plenty of room to speak and express themselves. The questions have an open-ended and unscheduled character, encouraging the interviewee to have a talk with the investigator, rather than the notion of a formal interview. Very often, this type of interview has short duration, in comparison with the other types, and is preferred as can provide rich details for a particular issue. Closing, focus group interviews are conducted by asking questions into a group of people, aiming a discussion and reflection into the subject by the members of the event. The benefit from this type, is the interviewer can explore norms and dynamics as well as to gain different perspectives and broader-deeper knowledge about the discussed topic.

Interviews can provide rich details and explanations about particular issues, and the experience of the researcher is also important in this phase of data collection. First of all, the establishment of rapport between interviewer and the respondent (May, 2011; Baškarada, 2014), can contribute substantially into the effectiveness of the process. The aim of the investigator is to “get into the head” of the interviewee, and rapport can conduce essentially to it. Second, the interviewer during the whole process should have in mind and follow the line of the inquiry as well as to ask “conversational” questions that serve the purpose of the study (Yin, 2009). The questions should have the format of “how” rather than of “why”, as these kind of questions can be more formal (Yin, 2009) and furthermore, they can evoke the emergence of different perspectives of the unit of analysis as well as to elicit more knowledge free of prejudice. Hence, the questions should be constructed in a way that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” (Perry, 1998) or brief and vague responses (Baškarada, 2014), and the interviewee is encouraged to talk.

For the completion and the corroboration of data, the in hand thesis used semi-structured and unstructured interviews. To start with, the unstructured interviews were conducted on a daily basis, during and after the shadowing process when it was needed. The reason for that, was mainly for the verification of data that were collected during the day, as well as to gain deeper aspect and more insights for the implemented, by the logistics managers, activities and practices. Having everyday unstructured interviews was very effective for two reasons: (a) the manager could have “fresh” in his mind what it was performed during the particular day, so he could reflect profoundly on it and (b) the level of understanding as well as of communication was getting better and better, contributing indirectly in the quality of the study even more. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the shadowing process and they were two, one for each manager. The reason for having those interviews at the end of the shadowing process for each case, was for corroboration of the data, for further explanations about unsolved issues, for “zooming-out” the whole process by getting the manager’s broader point of view, as well as for understanding how the managers themselves make sense of what they are performing (Barley and Kunda, 2001). The two semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded and since they held in Greek, they were translated and transcribed into English in order to be analyzed. Both of the managers were informed about the audio-record device and asked for permission to use. It should be mentioned, that with the use of record device not only the process was facilitated, but also the quality of the interview was increased, as the interviewer could be more focused in the frame of the interview (verbal) as well as in the behavior, emotions and body language (nonverbal) of each manager.

3.4.3 Document as a source of data

Documents are also useful for extracting and corroborate data. Letters, e-mails, administrative documents, previous studies and many more can be potential study objects. The use of documents can provide crucial information about organizations, processes and events, however they should not be approached as neutral artefacts as the reason of their creation is usually different than this of a specific study and there is a possibility of bias existence (Yin, 2009; May, 2011). In addition, internet is an abundant source of documents, but the investigator should be cautious and selective into the most pertinent with the case, information (Yin, 2009).

As a complement to shadowing and interview methods, several documents were collected before and during the observation procedure from the focal companies and the internet. Having all the above in mind, documentation about the managers' job description, general information about the respective organizations as well as archival records and photographs of physical artefacts were gathered, not only to increase the validity of this thesis, but also to facilitate the completion of the analysis.

3.5 Research Quality

Admittedly, the establishment of quality in every research method is of vital importance. The quality of empirical studies, like case study, depends on four tests: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2009; Edmonds and Kennedy, 2012). According to Yin (2009) there are several tactics that can be implemented in different phases of a research, and the author have adopted many of them, to increase the quality of this thesis.

The first test, which is construct validity, is direct connected with the subjectivity of the research in the collection of data. It means that the data were not collected or interpreted with presumptions or bias from the investigator. In order this to be achieved, the in hand thesis used multiple sources of evidence. Shadowing, unstructured and semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis were conducted for the data collection. Furthermore, very frequently, during the day and in the end of each day of shadowing, the author had unstructured interviews with the logistics managers that were studied, in order to corroborate the respective daily collected data. Through this process the benefit was triple: (a) the validity of the data were increased, (b) more in-depth information about practice and activities could be extracted by interviewing the manager in an unstructured way and (c) it contributed essentially into overpassing the psychological barriers and the "distance" in communication that was discernible during the first days.

The second test is internal validity, which is concerned with justifying causal and effect relationships. However this test, it is not applicable to exploratory and descriptive case studies (G.A.O., 1990; Yin, 2009).

External validity, which is the third test, deals with the problem of knowing whether the findings from a case study can be generalized. As it was mention above, case studies aiming for analytical and not statistical generalization (Yin, 2009). Thus, one case study can be considered as sufficient, yet more than one can demonstrate more accuracy

(Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The decision that was made for this thesis was to use two case studies, for two reasons. The first reason was that the author could search for patterns by comparing the two independent cases, fact that would increase the external validity of this thesis. The second reason was to get a broader perspective about practice in the logistic domain.

Finally, the reliability test, which is concerned with the probability of obtaining the same results from the same case study, by another investigator. The rationale of reliability is to minimize possible errors or biases that might exist in a study and thus, it is prerequisite the existence of a case study database, in order the second investigator to be able to conduct the investigation (Yin, 2009). All the data that have been collected for this thesis, have been saved in a database that the author have developed and possess, in case of being requested for reliability testing.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis, is the task in which the investigator is called upon to examine the case findings, to categorize or even tabulate the volume of data that was collected as well as to test them in order to display sufficiently all the relevant with the case collected evidence, fact that will conduce not only in the high quality of the analysis but also to draw and verify empirical conclusions (Yin, 2009). Analyzing the data can be a continuous process that it might performed during as well as after the completion of the data collection. There are multiple techniques and tools for its accomplishment, however an investigator has to approach, focus and apply on those that answer the research questions and thus serve the scope of the respective study (Yin, 2009).

The analysis of this thesis was performed in several stages. During the data collection process, the author tried to make a first categorization of the data based on the purpose of this research. After the completion of the fieldwork, the field notes were revised again, trying not only to narrow down the volume, but also to finalize the categorization. Furthermore, the interviews that were translated and transcribed, were reread several times, and key words as well as division of each parts into related topics and patterns was implemented, in order to be combined with the field notes and the collected documents.

The in hand thesis applies the “within-case analysis” (Eisenhardt, 1989). According to Eisenhardt (1989), this kind of analysis approaches each case separately, as distinguished entity, by providing pure descriptions of each site. This process provides richer and more insightful aspects and hence, not only enables the researcher as well as the reader to become familiar with each case to a great extent, but also makes more evident essential points and patterns that can be used for the cross-case comparison (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009).

Thus, the paper begins with the detailed presentation of the findings from each case and a cross-case comparison chapter complements the above analysis. The aim of this comparison, is through the utilization of particular dimensions, such as the components of a practice, to probe deeper and to highlight the similarities and the differences between the two managers as well as to attain the purpose of this study.

3.7 Reflection on the methods

Admittedly, the implementation of shadowing is a very demanding and time-consuming procedure (Mintzberg, 1973; Czarniawska, 2007), however, it might be considered as a suitable method for data collection, as it allows the researcher to study the managerial work very close (Tengblad, 2012) and to collect data of a great value. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews were also indispensable and beneficial for the completion of this thesis. With hindsight, as the researcher has not done shadowing before, there are some points that could both increase the value of the findings even more and facilitate the whole process:

- The conduction of a pilot study prior to the actual research for a short period of time, could prepare and organize the researcher better in both, the shadowing and the note taking procedures.
- The researcher should have informed the managers from the first day about the existence of the recording device, as this could allowed him to use it more frequently, especially during the conduction of the unstructured interviews, when all the details were explained. Actually, it could save effort, time and thus it could increase the quality of the observation and probably, it could provide the opportunity for more data collection.
- The conduction of shadowing for almost four consecutive weeks was extremely intensive. However, the shortage of time and the fact that the observation was in Greece, were suspensive factors.
- A preferable design for this study, it could be to diminish the days of the observations with the two managers, in order to have time for a third case. The existence of a third manager could not only increase the possibility of finding more similar and contrasting results, but it could also provide the capacity for the researcher, to select the most appropriate cases, if one of those was not pertinent. Nevertheless, searching for a potential case and gaining access in a company, are also demanding and time consuming procedures.

All in all, it is believed by the author that the methodology that it was followed, is applicable when practice is studied and it can provide very rich information, which can benefit the investigator not only for the completion of a research but for her/his professional career and life in general. The shadowing process even though strenuous, is very unique and enjoyable experience as well as remarkably rewarding, especially when the researcher is very active and ready to keep notes on everything, even for her/his feelings!

4. Case findings and Analysis

In this chapter more details about the "two case" case studies will be provided. The chapter is divided into two sections, one for each case, and each section starts with a brief presentation for every focal company, including information about its activity, history, infrastructure, economic results and philosophy. Then, an introduction about the respective warehouse manager follows, where background, position in the company and other general information are mentioned. All these details, will enable the reader to get a better understanding of the context and the circumstances in which the empirical data were collected as well as the findings that were derived from this thesis.

4.1 Case "A" description

In this section the "A" company and therefore the "A" manager will be described, before the presentation of the case's findings.

4.1.1 The case organization

Company A, is an affiliated company of a multinational corporation located in Europe and it was founded in Greece, in 2005. The multinational corporation develops, installs as well as operates mainly wind energy and solar photovoltaics plants, and is one of the leading organizations in the production of electricity from renewable sources. It is active mainly in European and in North America countries, with eagerness and capacity to expand more. In 2014, the corporation achieved almost 940 million € of consolidated revenues, before interest and taxes (EBITDA) and 114 million € net income (group share), occupying more than 3000 employees worldwide. In addition, the corporation communicates sensitivity in the environmental issues and the carbon dioxide reduction as well as interest in keeping the safety standards due to the field of activity, which was considerably obvious during the days of shadowing.

The electric energy which is produced in Greece from both, wind and solar energy, exceeds 1000MW and due to the increasing need for park servicing, the company initiated in 2011 an independent organization within the company, for the service provision and support/maintenance of the wind turbines' activity. It is noteworthy, that this service organization, which is actually a company itself and is located in the surrounding area of Athens, is a pilot project for the whole Europe. The philosophy is directly connected with the general framework of the main corporation, as it shares the vision and the environmental context, regulations and consciousness, as well as put the same emphasis on safety standards in the conduction of all the operations, and is certified with ISO 9001 in Quality Management Systems. The fieldwork, occurred in this organization in both, the main facilities and a wind turbine site.

The facilities of the service organization are consisted from the main offices and the central warehouse. The area of the central warehouse which is 1840m2 in total (2160m2 with the offices), (see Appendix 2), accommodates offices and storage place for about 1100 codes. The capacity of the warehouse is for more codes and quantity, as the company is aiming to expand in Greece in the next years. The codes are comprised by spare parts, consumables and tools, all used for the service and maintenance provision. Currently, 30 people are employed and 14 of them are working in the main warehouse. The age of the majority of employees varied between 25 and 40 years old, and are occupied in managerial and technical positions.

This pilot project, from 2011 when it started until nowadays, has been considered as successful and the service organization is in a continuous evolvement. The service provision in the parks as well as the parallel activities for the expansion of this project is the desideratum at this period of time for the company.

4.1.2 The identity of manager "A"

The manager who was shadowed and interviewed from the "A" company, was a man with the age of 38 years old. The job title that he is currently bear is "Logistics Coordinator" and he is employed in the company since the October of 2011. He is one of the employees that was hired from the establishment of the service organization and he contributed considerably in the warehouse's current format. From his early days in the company until recently, he was responsible for both, the logistics and facilities operations. Yet nowadays, his responsibilities were decentralized due to the growth of the company and the increased job requirements. His experience as manager is six to seven years and he has changed 3-4 jobs in his professional career.

Among other duties, according to the job description (see Appendix 3), he is responsible for keeping the stock levels of the spare parts and the consumables in the desired levels with the use of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) business management software that is provided, for the transportation towards and from the central warehouse to the respective parks (clients), integration of the new spare parts into the ERP software and then in the storage area, daily contact with the park managers and technicians for administrative and demand matters, being able to provide adequate information to his director for the inventory cost, the three-month stocktaking, the "dead" spare parts and other particularities by using the ERP software or personal archives when required, as well as to create a network of transportation and general suppliers that are required for the activities' completion and thus for the company's functionality.

Additionally, the logistics coordinator should take into account of all the quality, environment, health and safety (QEHS) procedures as these have been defined by the company in the operations that he accomplishes, as well as to report QEHS incidents and participate in QEHS meetings, which both will contribute to the improvement of those procedures.

Closing, the A manager reports to the Operations and Maintenance Country Manager and he is the supervisor of the facility manager.

4.1.3 Findings

In this section the findings for the manager A will be presented based on the seven components of a practice: agent, body, mind, knowledge, discourse/language, things and context/processes. The components have been categorized in three groups, in order to be provided a more coherent and precise description for both managers.

4.1.3.1 Agent, Body and Mind

The agent, body and mind components, can be considered as the most "active" constituents in a practice performance, as are those that "carry out" the practice (Reckwitz, 2002). Actually, are those components that can expose the philosophy-strategy, beliefs and way of thinking, emotions, routines, habits and other details that constitute the profile of a manager and thus his practices.

To start with, the philosophy that manager A holds about working, is that an employee should try to give the best she/he can in order to both, company and individual, benefit. It is not just doing what an employee ought to, but something more:

"…can help you a lot, as well as to be engaged and passionate with what you really do …for sure to be focused but except this, to be completely given in what you are doing. Not just do something because you have to. I believe that it is very important for the life of every employee."

"… as I have said, there are currently many parks and thus wind turbines, the demand is higher and we must be ready to serve them immediately, to facilitate them. (…) It is not only the technician, but it has to do with the way the whole company is organized, as if the technician does not have the spare part, if he does not have the whole team to help him, we cannot solve a potential problem."

Or when he did a task that it was someone else's responsibility, he responded:

"Actually, this is not my job, but we all do something more in order to finish the work properly."

He acknowledges the value of the shared vision, commitment as well as teamwork, and therefore he believes that the contribution of an employee is an important component. This perception was obvious also during the shadowing. Firstly, every day during the two weeks of the observation, the manager was among the employees that were in the company very early in the morning and he was leaving almost last. There was no obvious pressure to leave early and his priority was to finish the work in the way that he was satisfied, fact that can also demonstrate an increased sense of responsibility. Furthermore, he was always available to provide help when it was needed or to listen and propose solutions. He was in close cooperation with four people in the warehouse and all the managers and the technicians in the parks. Even if he was working on something else, he was interrupting his in-progress activity in order to help his colleagues and thus conduce to the company functioning. Due to the fact that he is employed in the company since its establishment, he has the knowledge of the majority of the required processes and hence, he was very frequently interrupted in order to give information or even to explain how a whole procedure should be done. One day for example, he was explaining to the facility manager a process for thirty minutes, and even though he was busy, he did not complained but he tried for the best. Acting in that way, can have an essential impact in his daily practices, as his practices are connected with his colleagues. The outcomes and rewards of having this perspective, was to obtain respect from his colleagues, not only for his knowledge but because he was also respecting them, to maintain a good business relationship with them, to get help when there was a need and especially in a contingency, as well as to communicate and encourage the teamwork and the benefits from having a shared vision.

Manager A could be described as a sociable person, as he tries to keep a good business relationship with his co-workers. This is not only an outcome from the help that he is providing, but also his willingness to be in touch. For example, every morning he was greeting the majority of the employees, having always something funny to discuss with, being all the time in a good mood and having a sense of humor. Furthermore, during the lunch that it was taking place in a specific area in the company, he was trying to approach everyone, superior or subordinate and have a talk with them. All the above were also contribute in the revitalization of the cooperation among the employees and thus among the different departments within the company. It was obvious during the shadowing that he strongly believes in cooperation and discussion, as well as in each individual's competencies, regardless her/his position within the company:

"As far as the storage spaces and the setting of the warehouses I am responsible, and I am doing it in cooperation with the technicians, which are responsible for the parks and are also using the warehouse, as well as the area managers. I am always in direct communication with them and the in charge technician, we check what the needs for each park are together and which the optimal way to set the warehouse is. (…) this is the most basic, always with discussion and dialogue, each one is free to express his/her opinions and proposals, (…), we as warehouse, we are doing our proposals since we have experience, we listen the technicians and the responsible mechanic in each park, and in cooperation with the mechanic that is in charge for all the parks, we made our decisions of how to proceed."

"There is close cooperation among the departments in the company, no one can do something oh his own (…) you should of course be in cooperation with the mechanics, as you have to discuss the stock that the company should keep, you should have meetings with them (…) We should also discuss for itineraries that can be combined with other procedures and this requires communication and cooperation with the managers that are responsible for the parks and other colleagues, or the technicians (…) for the completion of all these, we need to cooperate, to discuss, we can discern the optimal way through the discussion, and this is the way that we work."

It is also noteworthy, that during the whole semi-structured interview, he was describing activities, processes and beliefs using "we" instead of "I", something that can be considered also as a hint about his perspective as far as the cooperation and equality are concerned.

Moreover, he expresses the "my company" mentality as well as he embraces the adopted values of the company, as for example the environmental sensitivity is. To put it more plainly, in whatever he was performing, his view in regard to company A, was like he was the owner. This could also be observed during his daily activities, the way that he makes sense of it, and cost reduction can be considered as one example:

“In the next shipment that will take place, the warehouse manager is responsible to check the shelves in order to be sent both, the spare parts and the other stuff that might be there from the other colleagues, so that we can avoid unnecessary transportation, like courier etc.”

Or, in a trip that we had in one of the company’s wind parks using a company car, he expressed himself as:

“I am not going fast with the car not only for saving my fuel but also for reducing pollution.”

This kind of behavior, which is directly connected with his commitment to the company, it could be said that it was originated from his personal traits and his perception about the values of self-esteem and satisfaction. In the activities that he was performing every day, his objective was to find the optimal mode of execution, as this would benefit both, himself and the company in general. This fact could be interpreted as a stimulation or else a motive for himself to be always effective, as the company allowed him to have a certain “freedom” of choice in certain occasions.

Even if he demonstrated this kind of mentality about the company, during the two weeks of shadowing, no indication of authoritative attitude was noticed. He was not offensive neither in his mode of using the language, which it will be presented subsequently, nor during the communication-cooperation, as his modus operandi was to listen and reflect. Furthermore, he did not expressed extreme emotions to his superiors as well as to his subordinates, even if some occasions evoked this kind of behavior, but he was trying to solve the problems alone and without accusations, respecting the time and the work of his colleagues. For example, in a case of mistake:

“When I spot a mistake, I am trying to solve it immediately, and if I cannot solve them, I ask for advice from the accounting department, if the problem has to do with accountancy, or a mechanic.”

At this point, it should also be acknowledge that manager A was more than 1.90cm tall, fact that could affect negatively the way that he was perceived by the others in the context of the company, by also taking into consideration, his position in the company. However, the way that he was controlling his language, verbal and nonverbal, keeping low profile, as well as the fact that he always trying to promote equality, to be open, approachable and available to the others, conduced substantially in working in close liaison with his colleagues.

Additionally, in the daily programme of Manager A, someone could find patterns of performing and routinized behavior, even if this is difficult to be implemented, due to the turbulent nature of the logistics domain. He has developed a predetermined mode or strategy of working, in order to cope with the job requirements and necessities. For example, in the morning he usually works with the undone, urgent or the in-progress tasks that should be accomplished. After finishing with these, he does the administrative and secondary work and in general he is available for the parks' needs, for the completion of all the other activities that emerge as well as for urgent situations. Before leaving the office, he always checks for potential urgent issues as well as tasks that need to be finished and he prepares himself for the next day. Managing his time it is very crucial as there is always something new:

"(...) there is a plan about it. That is why we have emails, we keep notes, (...) there are some activities that take time, which are evolving throughout the week and you should judge which one is more important. I do not have every day the same operations to do. Every day there is something more to do, except the standard processes, like to check the spare parts etc."

The outcome of having this routinized behavior is twofold. First, he maintains the control of all the tasks and thus he is prepared, as well as the performance of an activity can be more efficient as he has the time to check and double-check it. Second, he retain his alertness in a contingency, as he is aware of the complexity not only of the circumstances but also this of the procedures that should be followed. This attitude was not only obvious and expressed during the shadowing, but also during the semi-structured interview:

"They could do this procedure on their own and this would facilitate them more. However, we are performing this, in order to have the control of what is going on."

"We are doing this know, in order to be prepared for Thursday"

"(...) we might have urgent incidents every day. Actually this can shows how efficient we are, (...) how fast we can react in an urgent incident."

Another example that can illustrate a combination of a habitual behavior and contingency, was the last day before the trip to Kefallonia in one of the wind turbine parks, for a new warehouse installation. There was an uncertainty even in the last day if this trip would be feasible. However, during that day he followed his ordinary programme, but in the same time he was organizing himself for the trip, until finally the company informed him at midday that he would go. There were many unfinished activities, however he continued working on this day's priorities and issues and he stayed until 7 o'clock at night in order to prepare himself. Determination, integration of processes as well as cooperation with individuals, being well organized, working fast but with confidence and making decisions quickly, thinking all of the potential aspects, staying calm and being focused are only some of the manager's A competencies that became apparent from that day of shadowing. Behaving in that way, was also of vital importance due to the existence of complexity, as:

"This was something exceptional and not something that you do it every day, but it takes time to organize it, as it was far away from our main offices and warehouse, so if it was not organized well, the outcome would have been not only to spend more money than you have firstly thought, but also the project could not have been completed."

Concluding, it could be said that manager A likes his job and when he is working, he puts 100%. He has winning mentality and he is not afraid to take the responsibility of an essential mistake. He is open in new challenges and he is actively involved into his company's development. All the above, in conjunction with his good ethics, contribute in his general image and thus how he is perceived as an individual from his colleagues, fact that undeniably influence his practices.

4.1.3.2 Knowledge and Discourse/Language

Knowledge and language are also essential in the performance of a practice and are directly connected with the agent, body and mind category. Nothing from the above could be accomplished, without the co-existence of knowledge and language. Understanding and the know-how are fundamental attributes of a practice, which are originate from the experience and the background of the manager.

As it was mentioned above, manager A have changed 3-4 jobs in his life, including the fact that he was a company owner and he was one of the first employees in company A, fact that affects substantially the efficiency of his performance. He was one of the employees that started to problematize, think, reflect and propose solutions for emerging problems, processes as well as functions' amelioration and development. Knowledge and experience have helped him not only in making sense of what is required in every occasion but also to rapidly decision making in both, automatized and urgent or complex circumstances. For example, during the shadowing it was observed that, he could identify a mistake from another colleague and automatically he was correcting it, without asking the respective employee about it:

"I think that every person after some years of working has some experience which helps very much in those situations. There are some things that you can identify based on the experience that you have gained and some people, which they do not have this experience, they might not be able to see them. And when we talk about experience, is not only in the specific job that you are doing, but in general the experience that you have gained from your previous life and your general background. (...) And if we speak for me, due to the fact that I was employed since the company has started its activity, I know how everything works, as it was me, of course with the help and contribution from my director, that we created some processes-operations."

So, having the positional knowledge can enhance the manager's ability, perception and thus competence in not only to discern what is required but also to make conscious and unconscious decisions in ordinary or urgent incidents. Without doubt, unconscious decisions occur in automatized processes profoundly known from the manager, whereas a conscious decision is a distinctive feature of a contingency. In addition, possessing knowledge in conjunction with experience, are indispensable factors in operational efficiency, like planning and organizing, as well as problem solving in less amount of time which are pivotal in the logistics domain, together with building and maintaining self and business confidence which are undeniably fundamental, as a manager should perform not only as leader, but also as a motivator and inspiration provider for both, his team and company. As it was mentioned above, company A is a pilot project for the whole Europe and its success depends in the performance of each manager's practices separately. Thus possessing the knowledge can be considered as the base for innovation and advance.

Furthermore, manager A appears to know exactly the desirable operational objective that his company has set and thus, this "general" knowledge is used from him to cope with the fragmentation and the complexity of his position' requirements. He is also based on this, for the integration and the prioritization of the daily activities, which is very crucial in urgent situations:

"*After three and a half years working for the company, I have put some things in order. The company has set as a priority, the right and immediate support of the parks. This is exactly what we are doing. The role of the company is to provide service, this is our job and we should have spare parts available, as if we do not have spare parts, we cannot provide nothing. So, the first priority of the warehouse manager is, to be able to have always available spare parts. Except this, there are more operations that have to do with this or not."*

Even though manager A seems to have the requisite knowledge about his position, the perspective that he holds is that there is always a margin for personal improvement. From the shadowing procedure it became apparent that he is used to searching a lot, not only for new suppliers but also for how to enrich his knowledge as well as the fact that very often he was asking for advice from his colleagues. It was also obvious, that there was a conscious willingness to consider new ideas and thus to self-improve, which could benefit both, himself and the company, as he could enhance his capacity and thus his readiness for the future challenges:

"As far as the software that we use is concerned, I have been trained and I am trying every day on my own, to find solutions in order to be more efficient in my every day activities and not wait for help from someone else, as this is also loss of time."

"(…) for sure, from a training that you might have for a software, that it can help you in your everyday work, you cannot learn and they cannot show you everything. If you do not search it on your own, you will not be able to use it correctly. For sure there is a plan and based on this you improve yourself."

However, this continuous effort for learning and humbleness was also observed in his mode of using the language. First of all, as it was mentioned previously, one distinctive feature in his way of communicating was the jokes. In informal occasions during the completion of the daily routinized activities, the usage of jokes was very frequently as it could contribute not only in the heartening of business relationships but also in the equilibrium restoration, notably in stressed and demanding conditions. Second, manager A was always speaking in an informal way, using the first name during a conversation, not only with his subordinates but also with his superiors:

"We are colleagues and we do not have to speak each other in plural form."

Yet, this attitude was also encouraged by the company, which wanted to promote respect and equality among its colleagues. Another characteristic of manager's A use of language, was the tone of voice. The shadowing process allowed the researcher to observe manager's A activity as a participant in a company's meeting, it would be interesting though, if there was a chance to observe him as a leader in a meeting. During the conduction of a meeting, he was always using low tone of voice, especially when he wanted to propose an idea, usually asking for permission first. Low tone of voice was also used when a colleague was asking for a clarification, direction or even help provision in a procedure, during the day. With hindsight, by taking into consideration his position in the company, the fact that he was comparatively tall and thus his nonverbal communication was negatively affected, the possessed knowledge about the company's processes, his general knowledge in accounting as well as that he was in close cooperation with many colleagues lower in the hierarchy, low tone of voice could be regarded as a technique or strategy in order to remain himself congenial and approachable.

Last but not least, was his linguistic ability and his perception about the information significance. In his speech, someone could discern traits such as clarity, concision and codes of communication that were used mostly for internal information sharing. Not only he applies, but he also gives weight in the fast and accurate conveyance of information, both in the routinized daily interaction as well as in urgent circumstances, as unexpected problems and costs can be avoided:

"In an urgent incident, it is very important as you can go in a park with the wrong spare part and thus to lose time which equals to money. What I mean by saying time equals to money, is that if a wind turbine stops working, it means that does not produce electricity, so we lose money, as well as lost man-hours, so again money and the money that were used to cover the expenses like the accommodation, food, etc. So, it is very important to have the correct information."

4.1.3.3 Things and Process/Structure

The resources or else the objects that a manager possess and use, undeniably affect the practice as a whole. Procedures and things are also contributing into manager's understandings and it could be said that actually frame her/his practice.

The objects that contribute into the manager's A practice accomplishment are, his office and the physical surrounding, a computer which provide access to the internet and to the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, a smart phone and a land phone, three electric and manual clark forklifts, clothes/shoes/helmets which are provided from the company in order to keep high standards as far as safety is concerned, as well as other objects that can be used from the whole company, such as company cars.

Manager A shares his office with the facility manager (see Appendix 7), fact that has an effect on the completion of an activity and thus of a practice. Manager A is responsible for receiving all the incoming consignments as he has also administrative role, and many of those need to be temporarily stored in his office. So, the possibility of potential space problems some days during the week, is high. Furthermore, it was observed that very frequently manager A was distracted from his work, mainly due to the noise, especially when the facility manager had a phone call or a conversation with a colleague. Thus, be well organized and have the capacity to remain focus on thinking and executing a task, is of vital importance for being on time and do not affect the other' colleagues practices.

In addition, mobile phone, computer and ERP software, were used for the processes execution. A manager should have the capacity to operate all the above simultaneously as well as to know their potentialities, as this can facilitate his daily practices. The ERP software and more general speaking, the computer that manager A was using, was aiming in the standardization or else the automatization of the company's procedures. So, simplicity and control convenience are the outcome of their usage:

"This is our "compass" (...) if we did not have the statement of inventory from our software, actually we cannot work. From the system someone can see from where the spare part left, where it was sent, in which warehouse is stored and the stock that every warehouse keeps. This is very essential. We cannot do something without it, probably we could have an excel paper for example, which is not automatized and there would be more mistakes, so we would not be able to organize ourselves."

Thus, we can deduce that manager A is seeking for the standardization of the processes and this became also apparent during the interview, as he put emphasis in the automatization of the procedures. The ERP software could diminish possible mistakes and was conducive to the legitimacy and the transparency of all the operations within the company, as the manager was obligated to follow the operations, as these were set from the company, as well as he could see other employee's archives in order to take the required information and to upload the needed information too.

Consequently, the ERP software was used by the manager A as a compass for the flawless execution of the required activities, for being aware of what is needed for every activity and when it is considered finished, as well as for control maintaining. It could facilitate him with the complexity and the fragmentation that his job enclose, as well as it could provide support in a contingency, which was very essential for him. However, his perception about the standardization of the processes was that it should be in a continuous reproduction as well as improvement, through the detection of the new necessities that emerge from contingencies and the constant changing criteria of efficacy:

"Every day we search for new ways of performing in order to improve the procedures. All the processes that we have in the company, are in documents. Since the date that the company started its activity in Greece, of course with the help of the parent company but also through our everyday experience, continues to create and improve procedures. This is undeniably very helpful, especially in a stress condition or when there is a vagueness, it can show you the correct way of performing a specific process. And not only the correct way, but also who is responsible for the execution of this procedure and how this should be done. So, for all the activities that are taking place in the company, there are specific procedures. If a process does not exist, we discuss about it and we create one. As a said, this is very important as every employee knows exactly and it is explicit what he should do and until which point he can reach. This is very essential as it helps in the functionality of the company."

"(...) we add in there procedures and different tools, aiming the simplification of our job by automatize it. By automatize a process, actually you save time which is very crucial (...) so, the company is aiming to automatize some activities and processes in order to benefit time and thus money."

However, the enhancement of the procedures has as an outcome the creation of new automatized mechanisms. Manager A wanted always to promote and to be informed about new processes and those mechanisms too. During the learning process as well as in the meetings, he was always keeping notes and he was asking questions in order to fully understand and to be ready to implement a new procedure.

From the above it is also apparent that manager A insists in the job allocation and the responsibility that each employee should bear for the completion of every process. The use of email and diary were considered of great importance by the manager and thus both had a leading role in his practices. Manager A was using the email function for both, as a main way of communication with his co-workers avoiding to use his mobile phone frequently, and as mode for assigning and taking over tasks. Furthermore, the use of mail could maintain him always informed about the progression of a task, and as an archive could provide him the capacity for both, information for previous incidents and for organizing his daily agenda in order to be always prepared:

"Using mail for sure is very helpful, as it can works as a record/archive of all the matters, so someone can follow the issue that he wants, its evolvement, whenever someone wants or is interested. Of course, when we have an issue that can be solve in one-two minutes, we use the phone. However, when we have an issue and you want to follow it, to see its evolvement, it is good to do it through mail, so that people who are not direct interested for this topic to get informed, like our director. So, people can get easily informed and see when and how something was or can be completed."

"There are some ways that you can remember things, like by writing down notes e.g. in a diary, it also helps the outlook and the mail. You can use the calendar function that there is in the mail. (...)I personally write down in my diary what activities I am doing on a daily basis. This can help me a lot, especially in the occasions when we are searching for something, so I can search in my notes and find it."

Finally, the manager was putting great emphasis on the safety standards. The company itself, had as a priority the compliance on the safety regulations. Thus, safety was a parameter that had great importance for the manager A regarding the decisions that he had to make and the way of accomplishing a task. Insisting constantly on safety, the manager could also increase the sense of responsibility and the mutual trust and respect among his colleagues:

We are not going to rush or to run with panic, fact that might increase the possibility of an accident for an employee/colleague, in order to find a spare part. It is not going to happen. We are going to do everything that we can, up to the point that no one will be hurt. This is not only what the company demands from us but what we all call for, from each other. We must have always this in mind. We never put in danger not only our life, but our colleague's life, who works with us. (...) There are continuously training seminars where we are getting informed and get trained about new methods *and new information about accidents that might happen and how to act in order to avoid them. For sure the equipment is very important. It is compulsory when we are in areas that we work, like in the warehouses or in parks, everywhere that someone is working, to wear safety shoes and if it is needed, helmets (...) we have the whole equipment that is needed (...)"*

4.2 Case "B" description

The paper proceeds with the "B" company and thus with the "B" manager case description and findings' presentation.

4.2.1 The case organization

Company B, is one of the biggest and older companies that commercialize Japanese automobiles in Greece. Its' current workforce is around 400 employees in total, it was founded in 1961 and it was a landmark in the history of the Japanese firm, as it was its' first stop for the whole Europe. During time, the company has gain an essential percentage of customers, increasing its' sales and establishing the automobile firm in one of the most successful in Greece, by selling more than 600.000 new cars in the whole country. In the last five years, company B is among the first six places/firms in sales of new cars per annum in Greece. The main facilities of the company are located in the surrounding area of Athens and there are 78 private representatives/dealers and thus also clients, of the brand in the whole region. Except trading new cars, the company sales secondhand cars as well as spare parts and accessories.

As far as the spare parts and accessories are concerned, the company possess two warehouses which are located in Athens and Thessaloniki. However, the main distribution center for the whole Greece, not only for cars, but for spare parts and accessories too, is this in Athens, with 38.300m2 area in total. The area of the main warehouse is 4.718m2, including the receiving and packing-shipping areas (see Appendix 4, 5). The active items that are accommodated in this warehouse is around 47.100. The net sales only for the spare parts and the accessories for the fiscal year 2014, were almost 9 million € and the receiving and shipping line items for the same year were almost 300.000. The availability for the spare parts for the year 2014 was 94,1% and for the accessories was 95,3%. The workforce for the warehouse operations are 13 employees in the depository and 8 employees in the warehouse's offices, 21 in total. The distribution center in Athens was built in 1993 and this is the place that the fieldwork for this study occurred.

The company B is also certified with the ISO 9001 in Quality Management Systems and has environmental awareness and processes. The implementation of the operations within the warehouse are accomplished mainly by human resources. Closing, the clients for the spare parts and the accessories can be from Greece or other neighboring countries.

4.2.2 The identity of manager "B"

The field data for the second case were collected also through a close research of the B manager, a man in the age of 64. The job title for the B manager is "Parts and Accessories Manager" and he is employed in the company since 1972. When he was hired, he was working in the accounting department as he possess a degree in accountancy. However, after some years the company made him responsible for the whole warehouse. When the main distribution center in Athens was building in 1993, he was the warehouse manager, position that maintains until nowadays. Hence, he was one of the main contributors and coordinators not only for the installation of the warehouse and all the procedures that this activity encompass, but for its' current setting and arrangement. He is also responsible for the maintenance of the whole area of distribution center, which includes the area of Pre-Delivery Inspection (P.D.I.), the area that the new cars are stored, the main warehouse as well as two smaller warehouses with other function. His experience as a manager is more than thirty years, being employed only by company B.

According to his job description that was collected (see Appendix 6), he is responsible for analytic statements and statistics, analyses, inventory control, control of the spare parts and accessories' prices using the ERP software and personal archives, as well as responsible for the imported and exported merchandise and sales goals. Additionally, among other duties, he is responsible for keeping informed and have frequent communication with the domestic network, the dealers, as the seasonal campaigns, discounts or policies that the company runs, need personal communication and not only through the ERP software that is in use. Moreover, he should be in contact with the supplier in Holland and with clients from the neighboring countries, when required.

Concluding, the B manager is actually in charge for the general management and the proper functioning of the distribution center as well as for the flawless completion of the operations regarding the spare parts and the accessories. He supervises the work of the other 20 employees in the distribution center and he reports to the After Sales Manager.

4.2.3 Findings

Being responsible for the optimal function of a warehouse with more than 47.000 active items and 20 employees, as well as having the mission to supply the whole Greece with spare parts of a successful automobile company, by taking into consideration also the fast pace of this branch in the market, is not a straightforward task. The coordination of all the components of practice, is a prerequisite. This paper proceeds by giving a description of manager's B principles, understandings, beliefs and tasks that constitute his daily practice.

4.2.3.1 Agent, Body and Mind

Consequently, after working in the company for more than forty years, manager B has adopt the perception that "I run my own business". This was very obvious not only during the shadowing process but also during the final interview. To start with, for the manager B, having good work ethics is very significant. For example, he is always well-dressed and polite as well as he is the first employee in the company and the last person who leaves the building every day, being always available to his superiors, his colleagues as well as to his clients. This behavior is repeated, not only because he wants to be accessible to his employees in case that they wish to discuss with him or to be respected from them, but also to be sure for the result at the end of each day and thus to eliminate the occurrence of a contingency without being in the company. Organizational commitment, diligence and the willingness to have the control of all the incidents, are the elements of his perception about his job:

"I never leave my office if I have not solve all of my abeyances and problems. I never leave. This means that I might leave on time or after two hours. I will stay until I find the solution. The last thing that I do is to inform my director, to send to him the statement with the daily sales. This is when I leave. (…)

"When I am at work I feel relaxed. I really like being here."

This answer is also indicating his increased sense of responsibility, determination, confidence and passion about his job. It becomes apparent that he is ready to do more than he "ought to" in order to help the company and his employees in demanding situations. Hence, he respects both the company and his co-workers, and with this attitude he also promotes teamwork and the shared vision. Furthermore, he want to have personal contact with both, employees and spare parts:

"(…) I want to be in touch, to have contact with the warehouse and our products, as it is vital. (…) when a new product comes, you should have direct contact. You cannot work with it just from screens. You should see it, you need to touch it, to smell it if this is possible, (…) you need to understand what this is. In the majority of times, we are going downstairs in the warehouse to check some spare parts."

This standpoint shows his eagerness to know everything that his job encompasses as well as to be in personal contact with both, colleagues and spare parts or accessories, in order to enhance his competence and knowledge continuously. During the shadowing, it became also apparent that he is not the manager who wants to stay all day long in his office, but he wants to be with his colleagues, next to them, in order to provide support and motivation when it is needed. Even if he is 63 years old, he is very active, creative and passionate with his job, desiring not only self-esteem and personal satisfaction, but most of all recognition of their teamwork efficacy and their willingness to contribute in company's success.

Even though manager B is the person with the most power and authority in the distribution center, his philosophy does not embrace the conception of "I am the boss here". During the observation the manager did not show authoritative behavior to his colleagues, but an advisory, friendly and open character. For example, every day he has very often short walks in the whole area of the distribution center. One day he saw a group of people sitting and discussing and he just passed and greeted them. Neither the group of people nor him, seemed to be bothered from that incident. He expressed himself as:

"If I see anything wrong, which bothers me, I will express it. However, for me it is just a need to get out from the office, it is just a walk."

It became obvious that he wanted to have the trust of his colleagues and he was also feeling as one of them. It could be said that there was a nonverbal communication and understanding among the manager and his colleagues, and along with his excellence coordination of all of the components of practice, which is the outcome of his more than 22 years of experience, resulted in the effective control maintaining without influencing the autonomy and the creativity of the individuals.

The overall impression was that manager B, has set the context of how everyone should work and execute an operation in order to be all efficient, and this is exactly what it was performed. This phenomenon could be also interpreted as trust and thus commitment as well as respect from his colleagues to the manager B, which was not only due to the fact that he was the oldest in the company or because of his position, but also due to his efficacy and his preceding achievements. In order this commitment and thus cooperation to be attained and maintained, manager B tries to remain a close relationship with his subordinates by having informal discussions when it is needed, which could exceed the conceptual framework of work and could "touch" sensitive areas:

"It is very crucial to know the personal issues that everyone has. This will help you to find the key to help him and to communicate with him. To keep the balance (...)"

His belief is that by sharing a problem, he can "decode" the person and thus he can communicate better. Being a receiver, thereby a "carrier" of the same problem in order to find together a solution, undoubtedly invigorates the interpersonal relationship between the two. Additionally, it allows to keep the balance, not only on daily basis but notably in urgent situations, where the requirements are high and the emotions might be intense:

"I can check you but I am a friend of you as well."

However, this is not the only thing that manager B does in order to remain this friendship. During the short walks that were mentioned above, he was always greeting everyone and he had a chat with some of the employees. A short visit of 1-2 minutes in his co-workers offices with a relaxed mood and jokes, is another way to stay in touch, especially with those employees that he is in direct cooperation. Lastly, and due to the fact that the employees are not authorized by the company to have lunch break and thus to have some free time to discuss, manager B arranges events:

"In the past and still now, we arrange some events, like eating at my place, going to the cinema or having a drink all together and discuss (...) I am trying to be friend with all and not to be afraid of me. I am a human and that is how I want them to see me. We are like a family here as you can see, as I see more hours my colleagues than my family every day. It is not that I am pretending, but this is me. I want to be approachable."

Thus, manager B not only perceive his co-workers as a family, but also he is promoting it with his actions. He tries every day to be approachable, available and open to all. It is noteworthy, that the statement of "we are like family here" was also mentioned by his colleagues during the shadowing, fact that reassure the establishment of quality ties. Having all good business relationships, it seems that is a priority for the manager B as the outcome can be threefold: (a) having a favorable work environment, (b) remaining the control of both humans and processes and (c) being efficient or even increase productivity when this is needed. Yet, this requires the mutual respect to values, common aspirations and cooperation from both sides, colleagues and manager:

"(…) the relationships with the people that you work with, they should be good. In this company, our colleagues and of course the whole network, we work-act as friends, as through the meetings that we have during the time, we are trying to keep and refresh our friendship, (…) with lunch that we have all together, through other events or even trips that we do with the company, even if I do not participate very much lately, we are trying to be in touch. So, with jokes and other things, we are trying to reflate our relationships in order to achieve what we want, when we ask for it. And it is usually achieved. Of course, it is of vital importance, that I satisfy the needs and the requirements of my colleagues and the other people. If I will not do this, then I will fail, as they will not satisfy my needs as well. So, I am trying to help them and I expect (…) help from them as well."

In order to keep the desired balance however, not only with the team but also with the clients' relationship, emotions handling is a very substantial constituent. Manager B acknowledges this significance and its influence in the daily practices:

"It is very essential to know how to manage it. Yet, the truth is that you do not get over it internally fast and in some situations never, but the thing is not transfer your feelings and the anger that someone from the phone gave to you, to your colleagues. You should not do this. If you do this, you will make your people angry. You should keep your calmness. This is what we are trying to do."

Due to the nature of his job, manager B has to be in direct contact with many different people, colleagues and clients. Hence, he has enhance his capacity in order to have the control of a situation and to cope with the fragmentation, by managing his feelings. He can easily surpass an unpleasant incident and continue with the next operation, which was also noticed during the shadowing with a phone call:

"It is easy. For me it is easy. The customer that I was talking to was rude, (…) that is why a got a bit angry. But when I closed the phone, I forgot it, I made a step forward."

In addition, manager B has his own strategy of how to cope with his daily job requirements. A routinized daily behavior was also observed for this manager, with visible patterns of attitude. Manager B is fond of working early in the morning very hard, especially with his administrative obligations, in order to have the time and thus be able to react efficiently in a contingency:

"I like working very hard and completing all the tasks in the morning. Now we are waiting for something to come up."

"The first thing that I do when I am coming in the morning is to extract from the system and print out the statistics from the previous day and to send them to my director (through mail). These statistics show the purchases, the sales and the sales in an analytical way for the network (of customers) that we have, and of course the statistics from the previous month in order to compare the results and draw conclusions not only from my director and the management team but from me as well. The second thing that I do is to check the personnel, if everyone is here and working, I have a chat with the warehouse supervisor, the salesmen and then I start checking the daily orders from our system. Every day in the morning, I have a (phone) conversation with my director, about the daily plan, and then I am standby for any contingency situation. Except these I execute some orders that are coming from our dealers that I judge what I should do it, in order to have a better picture of the general situation."

The above quotation, makes also clear that manager B wants to ascertain and comprehend the requirements of each day from early in the morning, by being in touch with all of his colleagues. This can have as an outcome to lessen the possibility of a determinant mistake occurrence and thus to diminish considerably the development of an urgent situation, as well as to be prepared in order to manage and achieve his goals. Another incident which also attests that the notion of readiness is a constituent of manager's B philosophy, is the fact that he always keeps two suits available in his office. He wants to have the proper outward appearance in the case of an unscheduled superior's visit or more general, in an unexpected occasion, which requires formal wear.

Due to the fast pace of his work, manager B has also deploy practices that can resulted into the finding of adequate and vital time for reaction or to be prepared in an urgent incident. During the shadowing, he appeared to be well-organized, methodical in his approaches and well-informed of all the on-going activities. Time management seems to be very essential for him, as the fast solution in a contingency is the desideratum. Two examples for this, could be the usage of the phone, which help him to communicate and have an immediate result, as well as his habit in checking his mails from his home:

"Yes, I use more my land phone because the majority of the orders that I give, they should be immediate. Due to the fact that I know, that the reaction to mails from my colleagues is sometimes a bit slow, I prefer to use the phone. Of course, for important matters, both I insist from the others to mail me and I am sending mail. If I want to just give some orders or instruction, I use the phone."

"I usually do it from my home, yes. From my home, I check my mails but I do not reply of course as I do not have data in my personal computer, very rarely I reply and it is in cases that I know, by heart, but I am trying to be informed in order to be prepared for the next morning. So, this is what I am doing in the morning, I am trying to find solutions in these problems and mails."

Concluding, manager B is trying to keep an honest and sincere attitude to his co-workers as well as to his clients. He does not only believe in the development of real friendships within the work environment, but also in the quality of being clear and thus in transparency. The harmony of sayings and doings was not only observed but also expressed by manager B:

“I like to do what exactly I am saying.”

4.2.3.2 Knowledge and Discourse/Language

As it was mentioned above, manager B is employed in the company since 1972 and he is responsible for the main warehouse of this automobile company for more than 22 years. This fact, has undeniably conduce to his capacity enhancement in both processes and human resources. It became apparent from the observation, that he possesses the knowledge of what is expected to be delivered and how. Maybe this could be also the explanation, why he maintains the same position for so many years.

To start with, manager B has a particular attitude towards knowledge and experience. His belief is that a manager should be a proficient not only with his routine tasks and the assigned tasks of his colleagues, but also well-informed for the on-going and the potential projects too. A manager should have the competence and the experience to identify each case’s requirements in order to both, organize or even facilitate the procedure of its completion as well as to control and supervise its evolvement:

“First of all, as you saw and as I explained to you during the previous days, when a project runs, the manager should first of all know it, should do it, and after to assign it to the others.”

“When you assign to an employee a task, you should know beforehand this task in order to be in position to check. This was my job in the past.”

As he was the one who started and contributed in the creation of the distribution’s center proper functioning, he has executed all the processes and during the years there was a decentralization of his duties. Thus, having the knowledge of all the required procedures, a manager can be more flexible in an emergence of a problem, due to the complexity nature of logistics, or in a contingency. It can substantially conduce to the facilitation of the conscious decisions or to provide inspiration for new ideas. However, this is directly connected with the mutual loyalty between the company and the manager and thus with the freedom of speech and choices that the manager possesses:

“(…) the manager should know the limits, and to have the authority to surpass them when it is needed it.”

“Thus, the manager should have knowledge and should make maneuvers. When I am saying to know, I mean that when the question-mail comes, he can search for information from the system and check this specific commodity. For example he can check the date that this commodity was purchased, if this can be sold, if it has future or not. And if this is “dead stock”, then he should sell it no matter what.”

During the observation, it was discernable the freedom that manager B had and it could be said that, it was like he was running his own business. He could make and implement decisions and proposals or he could move on in great discounts for some spare parts, but he was always trying to keep his superior informed, without taking advantage of this mutual trust.

Furthermore, due to his acquired knowledge, manager B could identify mistakes before their occurrence as well as he could foresee a future critical situation. This fact could allow him to retain an advantageous position and thus to protect not only himself but his colleagues too. In an unexpected incident that was observed during the two weeks, manager B was trying to give detailed instructions in one of his colleagues, of what to do and say to a customer, being able to predict even this customer’s reaction. Thus, having the perception of how to deal fast with a problem, can contribute in the coordination of how to confront that problem, and thus to readiness and efficacy. It was also noticed that manager B is methodical, not only in the mistake identification but also in how to avoid the emergence of further careless errors, from a particular mistake to occur.

Aside from the above, manager B considers that all the employees should be familiarized with all the operations of the department that they belong, like the warehouse, sales or ordering departments, not only for being more efficient, but also for facilitating the replacement of an employee when it is needed as well as in the assignment of a task. Thus for him, knowledge exchange among the employees is very crucial:

“(…) when we started here, 22 years ago, in 1993, we were 43 employees to do the same job that we are doing now with 21 employees. Of course this phenomenon of decline is also due to the economic crisis that we have in the recent years in the Greek market. There is a decline in the demand, but we have decrease the number of the employees dramatically, also due to the fact that we have been trained very well, we have been organized better in order to be more efficient and productive.”

What is more, manager B was appeared to be humble, as he was always asking for help or clarifications from the colleagues that he was in direct cooperation, especially for new processes or computer programs. He has willingness to learn and to participate in new projects, however his main intention is to maintain the efficiency of the current procedures and standards.

The usage of language was informal in this case too. There was no strategy of communication among the manager and his superiors or his subordinates. It could be said that, this fact contributed also to the relationship building and thus to strengthen of trust as well as in the accuracy of the shared information and the fast internal communication, which are considered of vital importance from manager B. Equal significant for the manager, is to be fast and concise or to use standardized words that could be easily understood from the other colleagues, especially in peak periods or in urgent situations:

“You should speak fast and answer clearly in their questions”

“There are some phone calls that are standardized. I do not remember exactly this phone call, but (…) ok, I am calling the accounting department in order to inform them for something. They know the language that we use and with just two words for an invoice for example, they can understand exactly what I am talking about. This is the direct information. When we are busy, we do not have time to say something more. When we have time, (…) we might say a joke or something (…).”

"It is very important to have this way of communication, especially when you want to get the results, to be efficient."

Expressing exactly what he wants without second thoughts, using very frequently tone of voice and making jokes, were also applied in both face-to-face and through telephone conversations. Actually, it could be said that tone of voice and jokes were the two predominant constituents of manager's speech. With the usage of jokes, the manager could maintain a pleasant and friendly conversation which could increase the quality of communication, whereas with tone of voice, the desired message and required actions were more easily transmitted.

4.2.3.3 Things and Process/Structure

The resources that company B provides to the logistics manager, is his office with a personal computer and a car. The office that manager B possess (see Appendix 8), is the bigger in the distribution center, probably due to his position. Since it is his own office, he has a big desk in order to have plenty space for the performance of his daily activities as well as to remain his physical and mental comfort. There is also another smaller desk that it is used only for meetings and the view from the office is panoramic, as someone can see the whole area of the distribution center. It was also observed that there were many photographs with his family as well as with colleagues and certificates. The office setting, could give the impression that it accommodates an important for the company person, and the existence of many family and company's photographs as well as the fact that the door was always open, could denote the existence of a friendly and family work environment.

In order to cope with the complexity of the procedures, manager B is using as a base the ISO certification that the company bears. It seems that ISO, has contributed essentially into manager's daily routinized behavior and its simplicity, as it can provide a guide not only of what, but also of how a procedure should be implemented. Besides that, by having clear goals, which are also known from his colleagues, the logistics manager has set a context of operations and objectives, not only for himself but for his co-workers as well. In a question about the goals and the activities that he performs on a daily basis, his answer was:

"This is the standard operation procedure, which through the ISO let's say, are the procedures that I have to do every day. The processes that I accomplish every day are standard, except the contingencies that we might have during the day of course. The goals that we currently have are: the high availability of the spare parts, the immediate service of our network and of our customers in general, and to have reasonable prices, the price policy which is implemented from me, but always under the instructions of the company and of course with my proposals."

"My goal is to fulfill our customers' requirements. Otherwise we will have problem."

Except the clear definition of goals, as it was mentioned above, manager's B standpoint is that all the employees should know more tasks to perform than their position demands. Additionally, he has designate which employee is responsible for whom, in a case of absence, and the allocation of the duties. This fact, does also influence the effectiveness of the processes, as the job rotation can provide to the manager the potentiality to make the most of his colleagues, surpassing demanding situations without losing valuable time, especially in urgent incidents and to retain the control, as there is a standardized procedure of what an employee should perform under these circumstances.

In the standardization of the processes, has also contribute the usage of the ERP software in conjunction with the excel application. To start with, the ERP software, is a combination of many interrelated functions and facilitate the daily work of manager B. Through this, he could make orders, check availability, prices and the record of the spare parts, put and extract essential data, import and export commodities from the warehouse, execute administrative/accounting tasks and many other functions that were visible for the whole company. Thus, the ERP software is perceived by the manager B as a tool with automatized potentialities which facilitates all of the procedures and diminish the possibilities of a mistake, like in the ordering process:

"As far as the spare parts from the company and the accessories that we import from abroad, as you saw, there is a specific form and formula of the way we order, in which all of the parameters are considered, it is automatized and they propose to us what to order and for the next week, every day, we process this proposal, we add or we remove items where it is needed, to check the urgent cases, and then to send the order once a week, every Thursday."

Except the ERP software however, the application of excel application is also highly regarded by the manager. Actually, it allows him to organize and keep track of certain data. It provides him the capacity to create reports, and the results of these reports can be reviewed as well as compared with preceding results or demonstrate the efficiency of some procedures, like the mode of transportation or a project-campaign (see Appendix 9). The process of building an excel report is also interrelated and automatized with the ERP software, making the usage and the renewal of these reports very fast and simple:

"I have the everyday excel that I keep and renew on a daily basis and are very useful "weapon" for me. These include the invoices and the general shipments that are coming from Holland, which have to do with our ordinary orders and might be shipments by trucks or by airplanes, or ODS, Overnight Delivery Services, all these orders are recorded from the date that the order was sent until the date that we receive the respective order. This helps us to follow and to know the time that is required for an order, the lines that this order includes, the cost of these spare parts, the cost that we have to pay for the transportation, like freight cost or fares or other general costs, in order to have a picture about it and thus to deduce if this benefit us or not. Because all of these, contribute, directly and indirectly, in the immediate service of our customer."

"We keep update this archive every day, in order to know what we have achieved during the day, which spare parts we have sold as well as to check and compare our efficiency as far as the previous month, or the same month in the previous year or the

last three years are concerned, as we keep data from the last three years in order to be able to draw our conclusions and results."

"(…) we want to keep and follow these data, as they have great value. In order to run a campaign, the budget is very high, as you need to inform your customers through the television or the radio. Therefore we need to know that this activity pays back. (…) So, we must keep the data in detail and every month we should send those data to our main office in order to understand the condition."

Manager B in cooperation with the After Sales manager which is his superior, utilize these excel archives as indicators, in order to draw conclusions of vital importance and highlight the problematic areas. These data are very often used in meetings, as they can reveal the strategy that the company should proceed with, in order to gain profit. It is noteworthy, that the ERP software and the excel application have a fundamental role in the manager's daily practice. For him, these tools are requisite, as they can provide guidelines as well as ensure accuracy and thus take the pressure off:

"We have tried and achieved to standardize some orders that we make, after a long time, and this was because we wanted to be sure that they are executed with 100% or let's say 99% correctly. This is why we did it and we saw that it works."

Except the effort to standardized processes, there is also a willingness for improvement by manager B. The reproduction of the same processes in an ever-changing context, create new needs and after discussion and contemplation with his co-workers, they proceed with the necessary improvements:

"Of course, when we receive proposals for improvements from the employees that are working in the warehouse as well as from other employees, we are doing it."

Last but not least, is how manager B copes with the processes prioritization and their complexities. As it was mentioned above, the immediate service of the network is one of his objectives. The emails play a crucial role in his daily behavior, however they are only a part of his daily duties. It could be said that his main role is to provide quick solutions in emerging problems as all the clients should be served in 24 hours the latest. The manager tries not only to solve the emerging issues directly, but also to interfere and check, if what it was said, was also performed:

"As you have understood from the days that you are here, I am trying in general to solve the problems or the issues immediately and not leave them for later on, this is my type and my way of working, (…) so, this is what I am doing."

"(…) do you mean that (…), if you mean that, when I am giving an order if afterwards come back in order to confirm what I said or to speed up an activity, or to clarify some things, I am doing this of course, in order to be sure that it will be executed correctly, to be done what I want.(...) by being aware of the customer's need, I interfere and I prioritize this order, to be sure that it will be shipped on time."

Thus, there is a time pressure on the execution of the processes due to the nature of this job. The strategy that manager B follows, is to communicate fast in order to maintain the control. Hence, he mainly uses the telephone with both clients and colleagues, and thus mails for important occasions. He does not use diary at all, but he has always a notebook in front of him, to keep brief notes for daily on-going issues, which are a matter of time to be solved.

5. Results and Discussion

The objective of this chapter is to provide a more explicit and understandable illustration of the logistics managers' practices in their daily activities. In the previous chapter, the findings of each case were presented and analyzed separately, as distinguished entities. These findings, will constitute the base for the cross-case comparison which it will be carried out in this chapter, aiming to point out key patterns and differences between the two logistics managers. The results from this comparison, will be interpreted as well as discussed throughout this process.

5.1 Cross case comparison and research question

The real managerial work integrates many different operations and tasks, and for this reason, the work practices can be easily associated or even categorized by the researchers with labels, like leadership, strategy and many others. However, the aim of this thesis is not just to report, but to provide an analytical description and thus a deep understanding for the production and the reproduction of a nexus of managerial actions, which have a particular objective and meaning, as well as to highlight the similar and the differing daily work practices, that can form the base for further managerial work research and theory development, through the corroboration or invalidation of these results. Thus practices, need to be studied and presented analytically and not descriptively (Llewellyn, 2008) in order to be better comprehensible and then comparable.

The research question for the in-hand thesis is:

How do logistics managers accomplish and cope with the everyday requirements that their work encompasses, and why are they doing it in such a way?

In order this question to be answered, the author has tried to classify the daily practices of the two logistics managers, in three main categories: (a) Philosophy and strategy, (b) Interpersonal relationships and (c) Daily performance. Given the interrelated nature of the notion of practice, it is hard for someone to designate groups or categories in order to cover and interpret efficiently the work practice. Yet, with these three categories, it is believed that an integrated view of all the aspects of practice is provided, with regards the strategy and automaticity as well as the complexity and contingency, concepts which constitute the current logistics domain.

Moreover, as it has been mentioned from the first chapter, this research question directs this study. Both of the two chapters 4 and 5 actually contribute in the effort to answer the above question, as chapter 4 presented a richer insight into practice, whereas the role of this chapter is to compare and summarize the key patterns, without yet avoiding to provide additional interesting aspects related to the research question.

5.2 Results and key patterns

In this section, both similarities and dissimilarities between the two managers will be presented for each category starting with manager's philosophy and strategy.

5.2.1 Philosophy and strategy

The way that managers think, their understandings, their perception about the social and the organization in which they work for, as well as their standpoint about the values and the intrinsic motivation, are all main features that affect their daily practices and thus their colleagues' practices. From the previous chapter, it became apparent that many of these features were almost coincided between the two managers.

To begin with, the attitude and mentality that both managers hold, is that they are not just employees in their company but they run their own business. So, both they are prepared and available to do more than it is expected or "ought to" be performed. Someone could say that this is due to the position that both have, yet from the shadowing and the interviews, it was discernable their passion and commitment. Their belief is that a logistics manager should be given in her/his job in order to be efficient. Furthermore, according to them, a manager should be eager to work more hours when it is needed, should be the person who will find the solution in an urgent or unforeseen incident or should be cautious for her/his performance as well as of her/his colleagues and many more. Consequently, it can be conduced that a logistics manager has a dominant position and hence, she/he should be passionate as well as determined. The persistence and the continuous eagerness of a task completion in an optimal manner, should compose her/his character, in order to deal with the hectic and relentless pace of logistics work, otherwise performance weaknesses and deficiencies might come into sight. The manager must be pleased with her/his work in order to not only cope with the demanding nature of logistics but also to be effective. The standardization of the daily procedures actually facilitate their daily work and conduce to their efficiency, however the fragmentation, pressure of time, complexities and contingencies are also experienced very often.

In addition, it is acknowledged from both, that a manager must be intimately acquainted not only with the tasks that she/he is responsible to accomplish, but also to be informed with the tasks that the other colleagues are performing. Both of the managers were adept with many procedures and this capacity could contribute not only in the facilitation of their own or their co-workers activities and thus practices, as they possess the know-how and were continually keen to share it, but also could conduce to the quick identification of mistakes and thus save time or even money as well as to be prepared and therefore maintain the control of the processes.

This fact could also allow them to make decisions as well as proposals for the amelioration of the processes, something that it was very frequent. Both were observed to be all the time ready to act and share their thoughts, however the freedom of the speech and choice that the company and the superiors allow to them, is also very crucial. As it was mentioned above, they have both the knowledge and the experience to discern and propose improvements, as both of them were employed since the very start of the warehouses' establishment, yet they did not have the same influence nor the same aspirations. To put it more plainly, manager A is comparatively younger and newer in the company A, than the manager B in his company. Manager A is more enthusiast with his work and what motivates him is the notion of self-esteem, satisfaction, personal improvement and recognition. He is in a continuous pursuit for finding different solutions in unsolved problems, in order to improve processes as well as to contribute actively in his company success. His aspirations and his expectations from himself, are higher than the second manager. Manager B on the other hand, has different priorities. This is not only due to the fact that the he is employed in the company for more than 40 years and he is close to finish his career, but also because he has more people under his supervision. Manager B is also searching for solutions and improvements, but not so actively. It seems that, his high priority is to retain the good interpersonal relationships with his colleagues, but he also regards as important to maintain the relative standards of the processes. Furthermore, manager B acts with more autonomy in his daily practices and his opinion has more influence. Undeniably, his successful career has substantially contribute on this and what motivates him, except his passion about his job, is self-esteem and satisfaction too, but also recognition of the team efficacy especially in urgent incidents.

Additionally, both of them are trying to give instructions and solutions fast when this is requested from superiors and subordinates, with full responsibility. The unconscious decision making in ordinary conditions, is undeniably much easier than the conscious decision making in contingencies, however both being based on the tools-processes that are provided and on their own experience, surpass efficiently these demanding moments. Both of the managers, A and B are always available even if they are not at work, and they are trying to facilitate all of their colleagues operations, giving always priority to them regardless their own workload when a problem occurs. They are also consistently the first employees that reach the company every morning, which actually helps them to know from early in the morning each day's requirements and the last who leave, in order to be sure that everything is completed.

This particular behavior, in conjunction with the fact that both are doing exactly of what they are saying, can have beneficial results. First of all, this behavior can promote teamwork as well as shared vision. The managers encourage their co-workers to act collectively and being eager also to help, as this is what the other employees receive from them, invigorating the business relationships as well as the commitment, and thus their perception about their common goals, positively. Second, this behavior can also demonstrate the importance of equality and respect. Both showed respect, not only for their superiors but for their subordinates likewise. At this point, it should be also mentioned that except the above behavior, it is also of vital importance the image of the managers in order to be respected. During the shadowing, both of them were typical and tidy as far as their external appearance is concerned, as well as they own good normative ethics and they appeared to be humble all the time. Third, retaining the control and thus being prepared, can also be the outcome from this behavior. Having frequent cooperation with all the colleagues as well as being early in the morning at work, the managers can be informed for all the occurring and potential issues for both, the human resources and the work incidents. The habitual behavior of checking and double-checking that became apparent from both of the managers, can conduce also to maintain the control and thus to be proactive and prevent potential mistakes and problems.

All the above, can undeniably conduce to the adaptability and the flexibility of the logistics managers in their daily performance, yet in order to maintain the control and to keep the balance, a manager should be also a diplomatist. What it is meant here, is that a manager should know what to say in every occasion and of course to keep confidential sensitive information, which might be related with on-going projects, processes or even persons. Both of the managers that were observed, were very capable on this, notably the manager B who is responsible for 20 employees. Their strategy as well as their willingness to know, was aiming for help provision, protection and to keep the balance, rather than to be engaged in gossips. However, this can be also considered as a part of the interpersonal relationships, which it will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Interpersonal relationships

From the shadowing process as well as the interviews, it became apparent that both of the managers consider that the human relationships are of great importance for the daily practice completion. The work environment can be regarded as a small community, a part of the society, in which all of its members are seeking for acceptance. This is what both of the managers are trying to achieve on a daily basis, not only for themselves but also for all of their colleagues, as this fact can substantially contribute in collaboration and thus in the company's functionality.

Feeling as friends, as a team, or even as a family as it was for example in the case of the second manager, is something that both of the managers desire and endeavor for. Both of them, are trying to be approachable and open with all the employees in the company's hierarchy. This is achieved by showing their respect and equality on a daily basis, with their frequent visits in their co-workers offices during the day in order to have a relaxed chat for 1-2 minutes, by greeting everyone in the morning and before leaving, or even by always informing their colleagues timely in a case of absence or the emergence of an urgent incident. Other daily practices that both managers perform, is to leave the door of their offices always open or even to participate actively during the lunch time, which is actually an opportunity to speak with everybody.

However, as it was mentioned above, in company B is not allowed the lunch break, so the manager B is trying to arrange very often events and gatherings for all of his colleagues. These events can actually provide more quality time among the co-workers which is not possible during the working hours, making them more outspoken, as they have the opportunity to discuss not only for their work and their misunderstandings but also talk over their personal lives, refreshing their interpersonal relationships even more. Another difference between the two managers which is also due to the fact that manager B is in charge for 20 people, is the one-to-one informal conversations that he has with his colleagues. Manager B considers that being aware of each employee's problems, is an indispensable factor for retaining a good and respectful relationship as well as to communicate effectively, resulting the moderation of the complexity that the human relations encompass. Thus, when he realizes a problem with an employee, he seeks for a discussion with her/him, in order not only to be informed, but also to provide support and help. This behavior also maintains a favorable work environment for all, as well as manager B can be regarded as friend and mentor or even inspiration provider from his colleagues, fact that not only encourage them to talk with him more, but also make easier for manager B to retain both, trust and control.

Hence, it can be concluded that the two logistics managers have also the need to feel accepted from their co-workers, but they have also the duty to keep the balance and control. Both of the managers appeared to be available and helpful, expecting however to receive the same behavior from their colleagues when it is needed and especially in contingencies. Furthermore, they were not rigorous with their colleagues' mistakes, but they were trying to give solutions, sometimes on their own and other times with the help of the respective employees. In a case of a serious mistake however, there was a discussion between the manager and the individual, of how to avoid the occurrence of the same error again.

Thus, there is a reciprocal respect among the employees and the managers, with the latter though, to have always in their mind their managerial role. What it is meant here, is that even though the two managers are aiming the mutual respect as well as to be sociable and have a friendship with all, their role encompasses to check constantly their subordinates as well. It was observed that, the two managers were checking the way that their subordinates were accomplishing a task very frequently, and without being noticed, by using for example the ERP software or by just observing them. Yet, they did not intervene in the procedures, unless it was requested to do so or there was a possibility of making a crucial mistake. The role of inspecting their subordinates, was more to retain the control of the processes and thus to ensure the proper functioning and performance of the department, rather than to restrict their autonomy and thus to discourage their initiatives and creativity, which are very essential not only for the completion of the daily activities and practices, but also for the long run and the sustainability of the department and the company. Yet, it is noteworthy that during the four weeks of observation, none of the managers made a positive feedback in their subordinates' efforts in order to encourage them more. It could be said that this was an unexpected finding that both did, but it can be attributed in managers' perception about the job and their subordinates' obligations.

Apart from the above, two fundamental factors which also affect the interpersonal relationships, are the language and the emotions. Both of the managers appeared to be very good networkers with their business partners, customers and suppliers. As far as the language is concerned, multiple techniques were applied. To start with, the informal discourse with their superiors and their co-workers, was a main attribute. It seems that, it is not only the strategy of the two logistics managers to use a relaxed and unofficial style of language, but a policy from their respective companies too. This fact actually mitigates the notion of hierarchy, encouraging and retaining good relationships, as well as contribute to the communication efficacy. In addition, using a simple lexicon or calling someone with the first name, can make the employees more sincere and thus the language more straightforward, facilitating substantially the information exchange, so in one-to-one conversations as during the meetings. The efficiency of information sharing, can also be achieved with concise and standardized messages, which were also applied by the managers in their phone conversations as well as in their emails, speeding up the procedures especially in busy and urgent occasions. As far as the customers and the suppliers, both of the managers were using more formal language, except some cases in which there was close acquaintance with them.

The use of tone of voice and jokes are also techniques that were very frequently employed. The strategy that manager A has, is to speak with low tone of voice retaining his low profile and asking for permission before expressing his ideas, whereas manager B uses the tone of voice more “actively”, emphasizing words and expressions in order to make himself understood. Manager B is comparatively more dynamic in his way of expressing himself, which it might be due to the fact that he has to organize, coordinate or even to motivate 20 people, yet his manner, is neither offensive nor authoritative. The linguistic capacity of both is high, fact that enable them to transcend communication difficulties and thus to cope with the complexity and the fragmentation, features that are common in the managerial work, since a logistics manager has to cooperate with a lot of people simultaneously. Both of them have also great negotiation skills, fact that conduce to their efficiency in reaching satisfactory agreements with customers and suppliers. Furthermore, jokes and well-intentioned teasing were used very often during the day from both, as they could also conduce to a relaxed and pleasant business environment.

However, favorable business environment cannot exist with nerves and tensions. Both of the managers were very attentive with the exhibition of their feelings. Emotions handling is considered as a key point by both of them, especially in demanding situations. This is mainly due to the fact that words or reactions that they can take place when someone is angry, might be very difficult to be overcome by the co-workers during time and this can affect the relationship, communication and thus individuals’ effectiveness. During the shadowing, no conflict incidents were observed but there were some intense and stress moments. Both of the managers had the capacity to handle and put themselves back in their initial state which they were before the incident and continue their job as usual, like nothing happened. It could be said, that this is one of the most difficult practices, as the manager should be able to keep her/his internal balance, where the notion of passion and thus emotions are conflicting with how a manager is expected to behave, to the external stimuli.

5.2.3 Daily performance

For the completion of their daily duties, like the way of handling their daily stressors and their time management, it could be discerned also similarities between the two logistics managers. Yet, it is not only the similar manner that they execute their daily agenda, but also their almost identical perceptions about the usage of the resources, like the ERP software or the excel application.

To start with, it was observed that both of the managers have a routinized daily behavior or else a predetermined specific order of working in order to cope with the complexity and the contingencies that their job encompasses. In the morning, except of greeting their co-workers and being informed for each day's issues or priorities, they are dealing with their administrative and accounting duties as well as with the mails that can be accomplished fast. Undoubtedly, in a case of an urgent incident early in the morning, they put priority on it. After the completion of the ordinary and thus known activities, like financial reports and accounting tasks which actually they want to be finished early, they focus on the day's necessities and contingencies. Both of them are aware of the turbulent nature of their job, hence they are aiming to have sufficient time for making their "conscious decisions" in order to respond quickly and effectively. In the third part of their day and before leaving, they usually accomplish their administrative responsibilities, check and complete their emails and search for potential problems. As it was mentioned above, routinely they leave last from their office.

It can be said that this regular pattern can interpret the perception that both managers hold, as well. To put it more plainly, both have as an objective to work with the habitual or easy to solve tasks, when they retain the control of their day, in order to be ready or have adequate time in an unexpected event. They believe that the importance of these situations is high, for three reasons: (a) since it might be the first time that they face this contingency, they might not have the sufficient knowledge, or even adequate information in order to make a quick conscious decision, (b) their efficacy and response, admittedly affect the activities and thus the practices of their co-workers and (c) from these demanding conditions, the top management can evaluate the managers' performance. Hence, both are aiming to prioritize the urgent or the complex phenomena, which in the majority of times are interrelated with other colleagues' procedures and thus critical, and when there is time to accomplish their habitual tasks. The desideratum is to maintain the control and each manager has developed his own practices according to his strategy and position's expectations. For example manager A uses very much his diary and emails as he wants to keep track of what is unfinished or accomplished, as well as to retain these records as archive, whereas manager B uses emails but mainly the land phone, as the expectation of his position is to give solutions quickly since his role is rather to coordinate and supervise.

Furthermore, the ERP software as well as the excel application that each company provides, are considered very essential for the completion of their daily activities, by both of the managers. As it was mentioned previously, the ERP and the excel application were characterized by both of the logistics managers as "compass" or "weapon" due to their benefits, and hence are mainly used throughout the day. As a matter of fact, the ERP and the excel can deliver automaticity and transparency in the daily procedures and thus make easier the production and the reproduction of the same processes. By saying automaticity, it means that the managers can accomplish a task without conscious thinking and specific cognition, but by just applying the required knowledge for the ERP and excel operations, whereas transparency, means that all of their co-workers have access in these sources which contain valuable information.

Additionally, it became apparent that these systems can provide accuracy, legitimacy as well as rapidity, factors that are very vital for a logistics manager's performance. Both of the companies as well as the managers are seeking for the standardization of the processes that the ERP software and excel can provide, as with their utilization the managers: (a) can save time, (b) can be aware of what is required for every occasion and how to be executed in order to be legal and valid, and finally (c) are confident that a process has been executed correctly. Thus, the managers are using these systems as a "map" or else as a "procedures' context", in order to cope with the fragmentation and the prioritization of the everyday processes, fact that facilitates their performance in contingencies, lessen the work pressure and maintain the control. Managers A and B are willing and aiming for the continuous improvement of those systems which are directly connected with the constant amelioration of the automatized procedures and thus with managers' daily practices.

However, the managers' daily performance requires also the ability of making fast and beneficial decisions. Except of the ERP software, the excel or even the ISO certification, the two managers are based on their experience and knowledge as well as on the company's objectives and standards for the decision making process. To start with, the background and the experience that they have obtained throughout the years of being employed in their companies, conduce substantially not only to the demanding day-to-day decisions but also to their long term estimations and choices. Their knowledge in conjunction with the resources that were discussed above, help them also to foresee and preempt on a daily basis potential issues, which is very essential so in habitual but especially in the conscious decisions. Finally, by having always in mind the goals that their department should deliver, the two managers can both make decisions and implement their strategy. Being aware for the company's as well as the department's goals, rules and standards, the logistics managers develop and adapt their daily behavior according to this context, in order to ensure the optimal completion of the processes as it is for instance, the safety standards for manager A, the immediate service of his network for manager B, or even the environmental sensitivity for both.

6. Conclusion and further research

Due to the steady increment for competent managers in the last decades, the endeavor and the interest to decode the managerial work and behavior by the social researchers, has been more intense than ever. This thesis has focused in the logistics domain, obtaining qualitative data from two logistics managers in Greece, by applying the practice theory. The paper has provided a thorough description and interpretation of the two managers' daily behavior, having as unit of analysis the practice, in an effort not only to approach and study the logistics managerial work with the alternative lenses of practice, but also to bear a deeper insight and answer the research question about how and why the logistics managers perform in such a way.

Therefore, the research has emphasized and pointed out the way that logistics managers are thinking and acting, their sense-making and strategy, why there is a productive and reproductive daily pattern, habits and interpersonal relationships, their motives and reactions, as well as the essential role and the influence of the particular context in which a manager takes action. Yet, in contrary to the author's expectations, more similarities than differences have been identified between the two managers, even though the job descriptions and positions expectations are not identical. Similar patterns of behavior and activities as well as all the relevant aspects that compose the daily practice of experienced logistics managers, is undeniably cognition of great value and can be considered as fundamental, as novice managers can not only be aware of what is required or expected from them or how they can cope with the intensive nature of management in order to be effective, but also they can acquire knowledge about styles and approaches from different logistics managers and thus to adopt and adjust practices according to their personal character. However, this is only one part of this thesis' major contribution.

The other part is directly connected with the practice theory implementation. Practice theory is new in the area of service management and this master thesis has made an effort to lessen the gap between the theory of managerial work and practice. Moreover, the paper's findings and results can constitute the base for further research in order to be corroborated or invalidated and thus provide substantial generalizations, fact that will undeniably both enrich our cognition about managers' practice as well as service management and contribute further in the practice theory development.

A limitation of this qualitative study, could be regarded the fact that the two logistics managers were studied only by the author of this thesis, and not by another researcher. The conduction of the same study, with the same managers, in the same time period by another researcher, could provide additional validity in the results of this thesis as well as diminish the possibility of the existence of bias and personal presumptions in the findings, that might exist. Another limitation is that the study was conducted only in one country, in Greece, and the results cannot be considered as generalizable for all the logistics managers. That is why it is recommended above from the author further research, not only in Greece but in other countries as well in order more primary data to be collected and compared.

Besides the comparison of this thesis' results with managers' practices from the same or different countries, further research that would be beneficial is:

- In multinational work environments. Due to the fact that logistics managers are collaborating with many employees from all of the departments of a company, it would be interesting to be discussed how individuals from different cultures affect and compose logistics managers' daily practices.
- The focus on specific areas of managerial daily practices. Studying the managerial behavior and actions in particular situations, as in urgent incidents or how meetings are conducted by a logistics manager, would provide a more targeted and insightful perspective of managerial practice.

Finally, it could be said that if someone would like to summarize this thesis with tags, these might be the planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting or else Mintzberg's POSDCORB (1973), together with terms of managerial roles like able administrator, problem solver, communicator, mentor or even coordinator and many more. Yet, this is a positivistic, objective and it could be said a simplistic standpoint. Studying the managers by taking into consideration the individuals' subjective norms and perceptions, a researcher can extract rich and of great significance data about the managers' daily practices. There are many unexplored aspects of management practices from this perspective and this research made an effort to illustrate only some of them, which are difficult to be found in literature.

However the work behavior and management science, are just one part of individuals' social life, which undeniably need to be profoundly investigated. In order to understand not only the managerial work but the world and the social life of humans in their contexts, it is a prerequisite to be approached and examined from every aspect. So hopefully, this master thesis will provide inspiration and encouragement for the social researchers to continue exploring the human nature based on alternative theories and perspectives.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1- Interview Guides for the semi-structured interviews

1) Interview Guide with manager A

How many years are you employed in the company?

What is your title and which are your responsibilities?

Stocktaking. In how many warehouses you are in charge?

- How often do you do stocktaking? Why?
- How this process is performed?
- How crucial is the transparency for you and how/which are the processes that you follow in order to be achieved?
- Who is responsible for the warehouse setting? Who makes the decisions?
- Who decides for the service levels? Is it connected with the cost of the spare parts or their demand?

Inserting spare parts, consumables and tools into the software (new and used).

- What is the process? What is the reason of taking pictures of the spare parts?
- Does the software that you possess helps you? How?

Can you explain to me the process of putting spare parts and consumables in the main warehouse?

Can you explain to me the process of transporting spare parts to the parks?

Is there any cooperation with the other departments in the company?

- Which are the most frequent reasons?

How do you keep track of all the activities you have done and the activities that you have to execute in the future? (diary, software?)

- What type of information do you prefer to keep? Why?
- Why you keep track? (Does this helps you to be prepared? Does this allow to double-check?)
- How often do you exceed the working hours? Why?

How do you prioritize tasks/activities?

- Do you have any projects to accomplish? How do you plan them?

How do you communicate with your colleagues and your superiors? (mail, phone?)

How crucial is it for you to have “efficient” communication with your colleagues? (accurate, fast)

How crucial is safety for you? (To diminish accidents?) (clothes, training, procedures)

Is there any automaticity in your daily activities?

- Is there any evolvement in those activities that are automatized?

Is there any urgent situations in your job?

- How do you manage them?
- How do you prioritize them?

Is there any specific way of working?

- Do you have any personal strategy?
- How do you apply it?

How crucial is the software that you are currently using for the completion of all the processes?

2) Interview Guide with manager B

How many years are you employed in the company?

What is your title and which are your responsibilities?

How do you organize an ordinary day? In the morning, in the midday and before leaving? (list?)

How can you remember the activities that you have to perform every day?

Do you have any goals – strategy that you follow?

- How is this connected with the goals that the company has?
- How do you apply it?

How do you prioritize tasks/activities?

- Do you have any projects to accomplish? How do you plan them?

Is there any automaticity in your daily activities?

- Is there any evolvement in those activities that are automatized?

How do you communicate with your colleagues and your superiors? (mail, phone?)

How crucial is it for you to have “efficient” communication with your colleagues? (accurate, fast)

How crucial are the interpersonal relationships within the business environment?

Is there any urgent situations in your job?

- How do you manage them?
- How do you prioritize them?

Stocktaking. In how many warehouses you are in charge?

- How often do you do stocktaking? Why?
- How this process is performed?
- How crucial is the transparency for you and how/which are the processes that you follow in order to be achieved?
- Who is responsible for the warehouse setting? Who makes the decisions?
- Who decides for the service levels? Is it connected with the cost of the spare parts or their demand?

How do you make orders? What is the process?

What is the process of receiving a consignment?

Can you explain me how do you use the excel in the whole process?

How do you use the software that you possess for the spare parts and the accessories?

How crucial is the software that you are currently using for the completion of all the processes?

Appendix 2- Pictures from the main warehouse of company A.

Appendix 3- Manager's A Job description

2. <u>JOB ASSIGNMENTS:</u>

- Manage all tasks of logistics in the central O&M base (stock and tool transfer) needed for planned interventions
- Manage spare part, consumable and PPE stock using dedicated ERP software
- Follow-up deliveries of purchase orders and characterize delivery notes and invoices
- Use of forklifts and stackers for the placement of spare parts and other equipment on the shelves of the warehouse(s)
- Organize facilities according to the company's QEHS procedures with the support of the QEHS engineer and ensure the proper maintenance of all facility equipment

- Inspect central and local facilities with the support of the QEHS engineer and organize the necessary regulatory controls, electrical or other
- Report any deviations or alarms for lack of parts from the dedicated ERP software on a weekly basis
- Reconciliation of delivery notes with goods received and purchase orders and characterization of goods (spare part(s), tool(s), consumable(s)) – notification to vendor in collaboration with purchaser
- Regular recording of physical inventory and allocation of outgoing stock items to cost centers based on registered use in electric power production plants
- Organize integration of (new) goods into the dedicated ERP software: take photos, attach barcodes, introduce serial number(s) if parts serialized, store at the right location
- Back-up of the purchaser in case of absence
- Organize the follow-up of all company vehicles: service, tires, etc.
- Ensure waste management under the supervision of the QEHS engineer
- Take monthly contact with the Site Managers to arrange pick-up of waste and/or parts for repair
- Take daily contact with local teams to issue delivery notes for spare parts used
- Create a network of transportation partners

This list is not exhaustive and can evolve according to the company's needs.

3. HR ENVIRONMENT & PROCEDURES

3.1 Job position within the Company

3.1.1 *Organization Chart*
Cf. Organization Chart

3.1.2 Hierarchy
The jobholder reports to the O&M Country Manager.

3.1.3 Functional interaction
The jobholder collaborates closely with the department of logistics and purchases in France for eventual needs for spares or tools.

3.1.4 Direct reports
None.

3.2 Annual evaluation

The jobholder is evaluated annually regarding the quality of his/her services on the missions undertaken and the success on the individual and collective objectives proposed and commonly agreed during the annual interview with the hierarchical supervisor.

4. QEHS

While employed in the Company, the jobholder must:
- take care of his/her health and safety as well as those of others in his/her working environment.

- respect the health and safety measures and regulations defined by the Company
- follow all precautions and company procedures so as to protect the environment.
- participate actively and propose improvements of existing QEHS procedures
- report QEHS incidents
- help identifying risks
- participate in QEHS meetings

5. REQUIREMENTS :

5.1 Training - Education:

- Qualification in management disciplines (or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience).

5.2 Experience

- At least three (3) years of experience in logistics management.

5.3 Skills and knowledge

- Strong sense of organization and planning
- Working knowledge and excellent understanding of industrial safety practices/protocols
- Good level of physical fitness and good health
- Ability to work with pallet carriers and reach trucks
- Good level of computer literacy
- Demonstrated ability in clear written and oral communication and comprehension in English
- Valid driver's license

Integrity	o Honorable, trustworthy, fair and honest o Persistent, determined and resilient
Involvement	o Highly motivated individual with excellent management skills o Create a working environment of safety, autonomy and trust

Health & Safety Responsibilities

Managers and supervisors carry both legal and company responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety of their employees, those under their control and those who might be affected by the work undertaken, i.e. public, visitors and employees of other organizations. This includes briefing individuals working for them and ensuring there is the necessary understanding, competence and application of requirements to work safely and without harming the environment.

Employees are responsible for ensuring they fully understand the health and safety risks involved in their work activities and their responsibility to apply the controls needed to manage those risks to acceptable levels. Similarly where work activities can have an adverse impact upon the environment, and particularly where there are legal requirements, employees are responsible for understanding those impacts and the controls they must ensure are applied.

Appendix 4- Pictures from the main warehouse of company B.

Appendix 5- Warehouse details

ASPRO PARTS AND VEHICLES DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

TOTAL AREA	38,300 m^2
COVERED AREA	10,600 m^2
P.D.I. COVERED AREA	1,150 m^2
BOND AREA	7.440 m^2
OFFICE AREA	420 m^2
SEMINAR ROOM	200 m^2
WAREHOUSE SPACE	4,218 m^2
RECEIVING AREA	440 m2
PACKING-SHIPPING AREA)	490 m^2

	4,718 m^2
HEIGHT USAGE	7 - 8 m
ACTIVE LINE ITEMS	47,100

PARTS PERSONNEL

OFFICE	08
WAREHOUSE	10
ASSISTANCE	3
	21
P.D.I. PERSONNEL	17

PARTS & ACCESSORIES (2014)

NET SALES	)0 Euro
INTERNAL SALES, CLAIMS	).00 Euro
INVENTORY	).00 Euro
PARTS FILL RATE	94,12%
ACCES. FILL RATE	95,30%
SHIPPING LINE ITEMS	235,000
RECEIVING LINE ITEMS	61,500
NBA OF TRUCKS	67

Appendix 6- Manager's B Job description

Περιγραφή αρμοδιοτήτων προσωπικού Κ.Δ.Α.Α.

Προϊστάμενος Κ.Δ.Α.Α.:

Διοίκηση, αναφορές- στατιστικά-αναλύσεις, έλεγχος αποθεμάτων, τιμών, τιμοκατάλογοι, εισαγωγές από Nissan-Infiniti, ανάπτυξη-πώληση εγχώριων & εισαγόμενων προϊόντων, επικοινωνία –ενημέρωση δικτύου , επικοινωνία με εξωτερικό.

New Models:

Παραγγελίες ανταλλακτικών νέων μοντέλων (Nissan-Infiniti) εγκατάσταση & εκπαίδευση EUROFAST, τεχνικές πληροφορίες από Ολλανδία, τεχνική υποστήριξη Η/Υ, emergency orders & ODS , ετήσιος υπολογισμός ανακύκλωσης συσκευασιών εμπορευμάτων της ΝΙΘ, έλεγχος τιμών.
(Αντικαθιστά τον προϊστάμενο σε περίπτωση άδειας-ασθένειας)

Γραμματεία:

Κάλυψη γραμματειακών αναγκών Κ.Δ.Α.Α, λήψη ηλεκτρονικών παραγγελιών αντιπροσώπων, Claims από παραλαβές εξωτερικού, διαφορές από παραλαβή τιμολογίων, διακίνηση έντυπου υλικού (Διαφημιστικά & prospectus), έλεγχο και έκδοση τιμολογίων σύμβασης ΔΕΗ-ΔΕΔΔΗΕ από δίκτυο προς ΔΕΗ-ΔΕΔΔΗΕ, system clean, περιοδική ανάλυση, ανακοστολόγηση πωλήσεων.

Inventory Control:

Έλεγχος αποθέματος, εβδομαδιαίες παραγγελίες εξωτερικού, ανάλυση B/O, έλεγχος κωδικών (ανταλλακτικών & accessories), τεχνικές πληροφορίες, scrap . Επεξεργασία & καταχώρηση στοιχείων από Ολλανδία (N.O.T.M.S., confirmation παραγγελιών, Price List),προ-εκτύπωση τιμολογίων, εκτύπωση Shelving-Labels, έλεγχος επιστροφών αντιπροσώπων.

Πωλήσεις :

Εξυπηρέτηση αντιπροσώπων & υποκαταστημάτων (επεξεργασία παραγγελιών, τεχνικές πληροφορίες ,έλεγχος-κωδικοποίηση μη ηλεκτρονικών παραγγελιών, τηλεφωνικές πληροφορίες στο Δίκτυο, έκδοση τιμολογίων σύμβασης ΔΕΗ-ΔΕΔΔΗΕ από δίκτυο προς ΔΕΗ-ΔΕΔΔΗΕ.

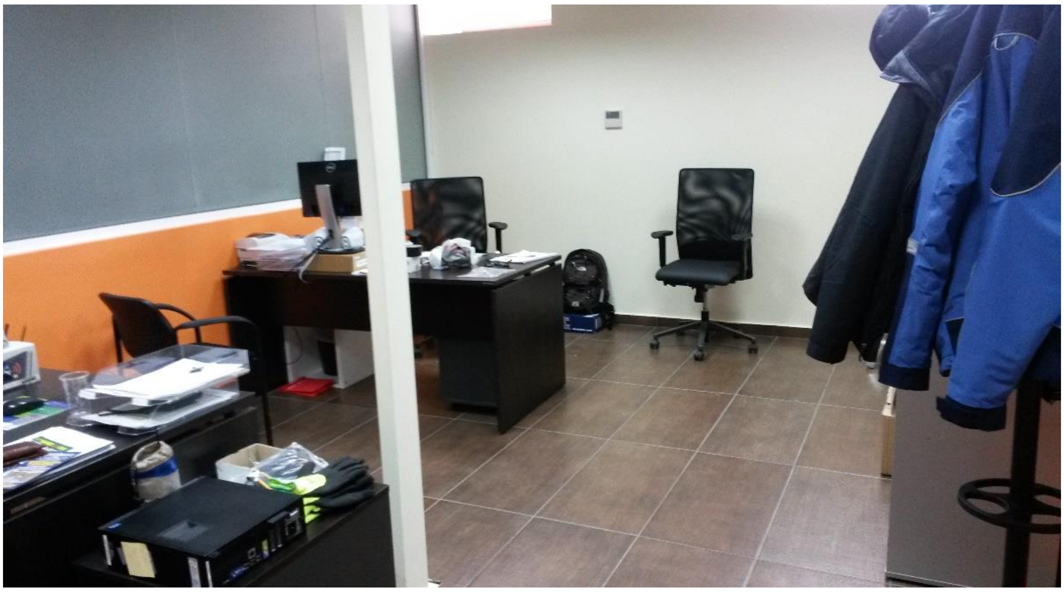
Τιμολόγηση:

Έλεγχος & εκτύπωση τιμολογίων, τήρηση Αρχείου, έλεγχος & έκδοση επιστροφών αντιπροσώπων, ηλεκτρονική αποστολή τιμολογίων αντιπροσώπων.

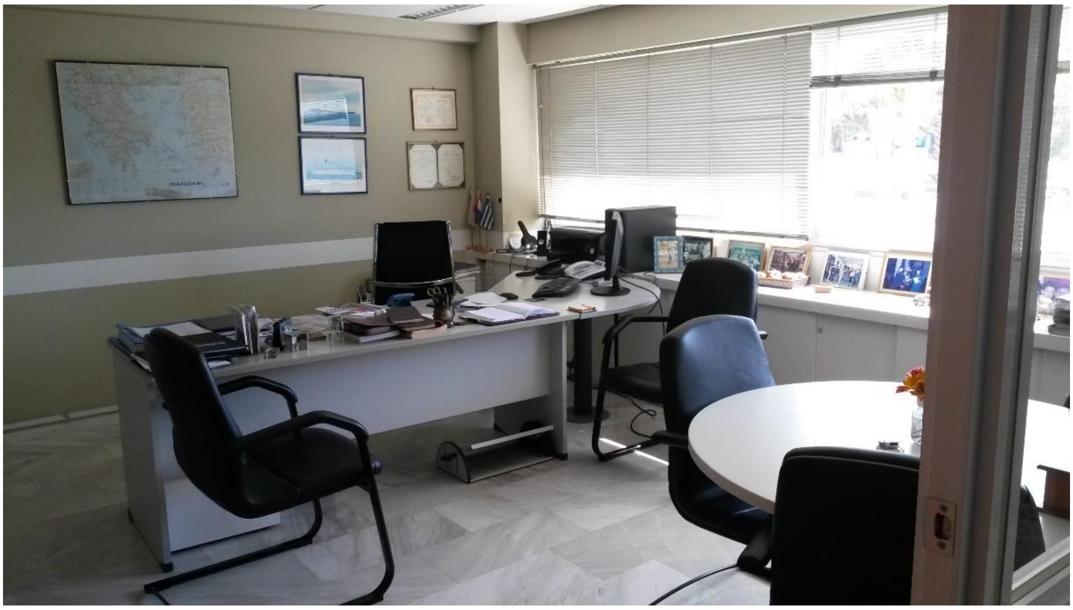
Reception:

Υποδοχή, εξυπηρέτηση τηλεφωνικού Κέντρου για Κ.Δ.Α.Α. & P.D.I., τήρηση Ταμείου & ταμειακών Καταστάσεων (Ημερήσιο φύλλο συναλλαγών), έλεγχος πιστωτικής δυνατότητας πελατών (άνοιγμα-κλείσιμο πλαφόν) .

Appendix 7- Manager's A office



Appendix 8- Manager's B office



Appendix 9- Example of excel archive

INVOICES VIEW SHIP ORDER

ORDER NBR	LINES	INVOICE NUMBER	CONTAINER NBR	ORDERING DATE	INVOICE DATE	ARRIVAL DATE	SHELVING DATE	LEAD TIME	EURO FOB	Total amount	FREIGHT+ OTHER EXP	Freight %
399	1209	DI184	TRUCK	19/12/12	28-Δεκ-12	8-Ιαν-13	9-Ιαν-13	19				2,43
403	966	DI433	TRUCK	28/12/12	7-Ιαν-13	15-Ιαν-13	15-Ιαν-13	17				2,73
403	711	DI627	TRUCK	28/12/10	10-Ιαν-13	17-Ιαν-13	18-Ιαν-13	739				3,18
409	1400	DI957	TRUCK	10/01/13	16-Ιαν-13	24-Ιαν-13	25-Ιαν-13	14				2,22
409	177	DI970	TRUCK	10/01/13	17-Ιαν-13	24-Ιαν-13	25-Ιαν-13	14				10,70
413	1125	DJ331	TRUCK	17/01/13	24-Ιαν-13	4-Φεβ-13	4-Μαρ-13	17				2,67
420	1222	DJ636	TRUCK	24/01/13	31-Ιαν-13	11-Φεβ-13	12-Φεβ-13	17				2,37
425	1187	DJ962	TRUCK	31/01/13	6-Φεβ-13	14-Φεβ-13	15-Φεβ-13	14				2,46
425	146	DK035	TRUCK	31/01/13	7-Φεβ-13	14-Φεβ-13	14-Φεβ-13	14				11,84
431	1576	DK253	TRUCK	07/02/13	13-Φεβ-13	21-Φεβ-13	22-Φεβ-13	14				3,36
437	1117	DK711	TRUCK	14/02/13	21-Φεβ-13	28-Φεβ-13	28-Φεβ-13	14				3,04
449	1067	DM050	TRUCK	21/02/13	28-Φεβ-13	11-Μαρ-13	11-Μαρ-13	20				2,64
441	5	DM098	TRUCK	21/02/13	1-Μαρ-13	11-Μαρ-13	11-Μαρ-13	20				0,00
450	919	DM393	TRUCK	28/02/13	7-Μαρ-13	22-Μαρ-13	22-Μαρ-13	22				2,86
460	1561	DM717	TRUCK	07/03/13	14-Μαρ-13	22-Μαρ-13	26-Μαρ-13	15				1,31
460	232	DM728	TRUCK	07/03/13	14-Μαρ-13	22-Μαρ-13	27-Μαρ-13	15				8,39
471	1012	DN098	TRUCK	14/03/13	21-Μαρ-13	3-Απρ-13	3-Απρ-13	19				2,81
473	917	DN409	TRUCK	21/03/13	27-Μαρ-13	9-Απρ-13	9-Απρ-13	18				3,54
477	948	DN624	TRUCK	28/03/13	4-Απρ-13	11-Απρ-13	11-Απρ-13	13				3,92
483	1925	DN991	TRUCK	04/04/13	11-Απρ-13	23-Απρ-13	24-Απρ-13	19				1,76
491	1049	DO279	TRUCK	05/04/13	17-Απρ-13	25-Απρ-13	26-Απρ-13	20				1,75
492	200	DO381	TRUCK	11/04/13	18-Απρ-13	25-Απρ-13	25-Απρ-13	14				7,02
497	1104	DO706	TRUCK	18/04/13	25-Απρ-13	8-Μαϊ-13	9-Μαϊ-13	20				4,02
503	957	DP044	TRUCK	25/04/13	8-Μαϊ-13	14-Μαϊ-13	15-Μαϊ-13	19				3,33
509	1172	DP329	TRUCK	01/05/13	10-Μαϊ-13	17-Μαϊ-13	20-Μαϊ-13	16				3,19
518	1155	DP677	TRUCK	08/05/13	16-Μαϊ-13	28-Μαϊ-13	29-Μαϊ-13	20				4,43
528	946	DP922	TRUCK	15/05/13	22-Μαϊ-13	30-Μαϊ-13	30-Μαϊ-13	15				4,48
536	1279	DQ308	TRUCK	23/05/13	30-Μαϊ-13	7-Ιουν-13	10-Ιουν-13	14				3,44
545	1073	DQ680	TRUCK	30/05/13	6-Ιουν-13	18-Ιουν-13	19-Ιουν-13	18				2,57
548	269	DQ734	TRUCK	30/05/13	7-Ιουν-13	17-Ιουν-13	17-Ιουν-13	17				6,97
562	1306	DQ970	TRUCK	06/06/13	12-Ιουν-13	26-Ιουν-13	27-Ιουν-13	20				2,56
562	319	DR099	TRUCK	06/06/13	13-Ιουν-13	27-Ιουν-13	28-Ιουν-13	21				5,43
569	966	DR424	TRUCK	13/06/13	20-Ιουν-13	9-Ιουλ-13	10-Ιουλ-13	26				2,75
578	825	DR771	TRUCK	20/06/13	26-Ιουν-13	10-Ιουλ-13	12-Ιουλ-13	20				3,70
578	275	DR784	TRUCK	20/06/13	27-Ιουν-13	10-Ιουλ-13	11-Ιουλ-13	20				4,45
587	1000	DS166	TRUCK	27/06/13	4-Ιουλ-13	15-Ιουλ-13	16-Ιουλ-13	18				2,85
587	198	DS225	TRUCK	27/06/13	5-Ιουλ-13	16-Ιουλ-13	16-Ιουλ-13	19				9,86
599	1279	DS533	TRUCK	04/07/13	11-Ιουλ-13	18-Ιουλ-13	19-Ιουλ-13	14				2,86
599	117	DS545	TRUCK	04/07/13	11-Ιουλ-13	22-Ιουλ-13	22-Ιουλ-13	18				16,91
612	1409	DS901	TRUCK	11/07/13	18-Ιουλ-13	25-Ιουλ-13	26-Ιουλ-13	14				2,57
616	1044	DT169	TRUCK	18/07/13	24-Ιουλ-13	24-Ιουλ-13	5-Αυγ-13	6				2,95
622	1192	DT542	TRUCK	25/07/13	31-Ιουλ-13	6-Αυγ-13	7-Αυγ-13	11				2,06