

# **A MISSING PERSPECTIVE IN THE HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Purpose**

This paper aims to theoretically analyze if the industrial network perspective can be applied in humanitarian supply chains strategies. In particular, if strategies have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian logistics.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

This conceptual paper proceeds by reutilizing academically known facts, policies and managerial aspects in the humanitarian logistics context. Specifically, taking the approach of “a missing perspective” from the industry field into the logistics strategy settings. A closer look will be given to three main concepts; the network as independent variable, focusing on the nature of the relationships; the network as dependent variable, impacting the relationships activities; and the network as transaction between the motivations and the response of the actors.

### **Findings**

Theoretically adopting the industry network strategy approach, into the humanitarian logistics strategy context can have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the supply chain. Recognition of the importance of networks in the strategy settings of humanitarian logistics is vitally important to their success.

### **Practical implications**

The concepts and ideas concerning networks that are presented in this paper have practical implications in humanitarian logistics strategy settings. This paper takes up the policy aspects involved in deciding whether networks can be managed, improved, or even prevented in humanitarian situations.

### **Theoretical implications**

This paper concludes that further research is needed to understand the ways in which actors, activities and resources are related to each other in the networks structures involved in the humanitarian logistics strategy.

### **Original/value**

While the concept of “a missing perspective” (the industrial network perspective in the strategy settings) has been researched and is mentioned in literature developed over a large period of time, this perspective has not been previously applied to the challenges in the humanitarian logistics context. This issue must be considered since it has an important impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian logistics.

*Keywords: Humanitarian Logistics, Network in Strategy, Industrial Network Strategy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have yet to prove that successful logistics relationships in business networks make an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster relief. This is important for humanitarian actors, since private businesses actors have been increasingly collaborating with the objective to help improve humanitarian work since 2000, emphasizing the need to develop their relationships toward effective networks (Tomasini & Wassenhove).

Before discussing different approaches for humanitarian performance, it is essential to provide a definition of the term “logistics”. Since this paper focuses on logistics in the humanitarian context, the chosen definition is suitable and adopted from Mizushima and Thomas (2005, p. 60):

“The process of planning, implementing and controlling the efficient, cost-effective flow and storage of goods and materials, as well as related information, from point of origin to point of consumption for the purpose of meeting the end beneficiary’s requirements.”

The challenges of humanitarian logistics have become an academic issue lately and have the potential to change in future discussions, as the area continues to develop among the international academic community. Nevertheless (Kovács & Spens, 2009) explain that there are still urgent challenges for humanitarian logisticians that will continue into the future since humanitarian logistics has a different criteria for success;

*“While the incentives for private companies are measured by the core metric of profitability, humanitarian organizations could measure their performance in human lives.”*

For instance, developing a link between the industrial network strategy and the humanitarian logistics strategy is considered to have an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the supply chain. That could be achieved, by using concepts developed for use in business areas. In this discussion therefore, the terms, supply chain management and logistics are used interchangeably - a perspective that is shared by the common logic in the business field, Axelsson and Easton (1992); Håkansson and Snehota (1995).

Suggesting that opportunities for network building ought to consider different perspectives, (Kovács & Spens, 2009), those should be established with consideration of the growing need to develop metrics for the efficiency and effectiveness of the supply chain. In that context a key challenge is the development of effectiveness so that humanitarian performances can be more easily understood. A suggestion for meeting this challenge is the use of e.g. “quality of life” metrics, borrowed from the medical field (Tatham, Huges, & Hughes, 2011).

An important question for the field of humanitarian logistics is whether commercial actors can take a central part in the humanitarian logistics contribution, streamlining flows and reducing the number of actors in catastrophes areas. When disasters are a factum and humanitarian needs appear, it is already too late to reach for solutions not previously anticipated. This accentuates challenges in establishing relationships between business entities and humanitarian actors. These challenges are parallel to the growing need of changing perspectives in the interaction between organizations (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). Despite this humanitarian actors appear to have failed to coordinate their processes in the areas of disasters. This indicates that humanitarian organizations have only recently started dealing with the uncertainly focusing on supply chain structures (Tomasini & Wassenhove, 2009a), and that logisticians can learn from their commercial colleagues (Larson & McLachlin, 2011) when it comes to better coordination.

There are reasons that suggest the need for more drastic changes, which have been widely discussed outside the scope of this paper, but are important to mention here. The need for humanitarian response is growing, challenging the world political standpoint and leading to a greater recognition of the strategic importance of a united humanitarian policy (Steels, 2009). Although those issues are of importance for the creation of future business relations in the humanitarian logistics, the issues must be agreed upon with efficient representation of truthful and profitable actors. The result must be to support the humanitarian system in order to avoid duplications, to prevent gaps, and to be better managed.

Obviously there is a need to learn more about the network perspective in the strategy setting of the humanitarian logistics. This paper suggests dealing with the discussion of strategy from a point of departure of the industrial network perspective, is an ideal way forward. The industrial network perspective in strategy discussions is originally presented in the prominent work of Axelsson and Easton (1992). More precisely, the network perspective is presented under the label of "*a missing perspective*" in (Axelsson, 1987). This refers to the diverse perspectives in the industrial network. This perspective explicitly leads us to a possible connection between the industrial network in strategy settings and the humanitarian logistics strategy. Providing a solution to major changes required due to the lately inefficiencies and mistakes of the humanitarian supply chain performances. This provides justification for the claims for a more reactive, adaptable and agile response.

### **1.1. Methodology**

This paper theoretically analyzes the industrial network perspective's possible application to humanitarian supply chains strategies. In particular, if these strategies have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian logistics. As methodology, there have been three basic ways of approaching the discussion:

One way has been, to focus on the nature of the relationships, based on the contribution of Axelsson and Easton (1992). The "missing perspective" has justified the impact of network on the effectiveness and efficiency of firms. The perspective discusses how three networks in specific interact and help each other. These networks are the network of actors, network of activities and network of resources. This helps to connect the discussion of networks to the views of Tomasini and Wassenhove (2009); about the importance of shifting focus away from traditional relationships. Instead the focus should be encouraged to be a more networks oriented relations with commercial actors. When dealing with commercial actors other issues and assumptions are brought up such as; Kovács and Spens (2009) profit issue, and Breyer (1964) assumptions of maximizing long-term profits. Their debates become helpful subjects providing support to the network intention as part of in the strategy of humanitarian logistics.

The second approach is based focusing on the variables impacting the relationships. Those are explained in the work of Håkansson and Snehota (1995). A more precise corresponding perspective is one based on the impact of effectiveness and efficiency. The discussions in this approach outline the context of the relationships rather than designing its future set of activities. Since those are assumed to have an impact on the positioning of the actors within the supply chain its needs to carefully be managed.

The third approach is to view the network as a transaction between the motivations and the responses of the actors. This approach can be modeled in suitable sets of relationships. The discussions within this approach focus on motivating the connection of the network aspects to the strategy of the humanitarian logistics.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. The network perspective

In this context networks are emergent, cumulative, and look different for all actors and for all situations. Networks are not permanent arrangements, not agreed or planned; the actors do not have mutual goals, collective actions are therefore not planned (Axelsson, 1987).

The industrial network strategy has been applied to the particularities of the industrial life. Early discussion of industrial network strategy recommends a traditional alternative of economics. Recently a more business cost approach has been used. While stability is usually seen as the opposite to change and development, in the model of industrial networks stability is presented as vital for industrial development and delivers the basis for studies of the roles of actors, and sets of actors in development processes., This is assuming a relation among industrial stability and development (see figure 2.1)

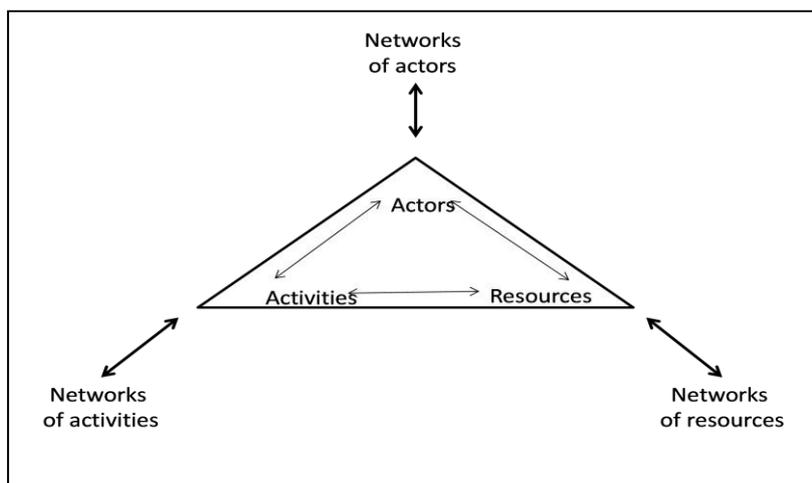


Figure 2.1 Sources: Håkansson and Johanson, (1988)

With the model's simple modules, desires relate to the activities and resources of actors and their relations to each other in the general structure of industrial networks. Actors are defined as those who have achieved activities and/or control resources. In activities actors use certain resources to adjust other resources. Resources are mainly used by actors when they achieve activities. Through these circular descriptions, a network of actors, a network of activities and a network of resources are related to each other.

A number of general ideas for coping with effectiveness have been suggested. (Torvatn, 1996), argues that efficiency can only be measured when a clear limit is defined since it is outlined as the percentage between output and input, and which obviously demands a boundary around the entity subject to the analysis. Another view is that the efficient performance varies depending on which of the three possible boundaries are approached, (Robinson, 1967). These three boundaries are:

- *Efficiency in a single transaction* can be estimated in terms of its benefits and costs. The reason for conducting this type of transactions analysis is to increase the awareness of the cost and benefit drivers strictly related to each contract.
- *Efficiency in a series of transactions with a specific supplier* can limit the relationship, i.e. a series of trades with one supplier. Important here is that activities appearing over time

are related, therefore, efficiency of a relationship is to be related to costs and benefits to time since it is discussed that relationships are only profitable over time.

- *Network efficiency* means to work with all the diverse types of efficiency at the same time, because they are often inconsistent. Each actor has to reflect on all efficiencies when performing as a network actor, and each firm involved in developing its supply has to associate a number of efficiency principles and find techniques to achieve compromise between them.

## **2.2. The “missing perspective” issue in the strategy discussion**

As previously discussed, there is reason to believe that the concept of “a missing perspective” challenges what makes organizations successful in their interaction with their environment. In this concept, any attempt to manage the behavior of organizations will require a change of perspective. (Axelsson, 1984), suggests that organizations should look away from how they structure their internal resources and instead look for a way to relate their own activities and resources to that of the other party. For instance, processes in the organization’s context can be managed, concluding that networks are emergent, cumulative, and look different to all actors and for all situations. Suggesting that accessible perspectives involve a different view of the meaning of organizational effectiveness becomes a paradox when compared to the arguments of (Håkansson & Snehota, 1987) and their view of more strictly management of the relationship building.

The discussion is of course, how the different theories and models relate to the environment of the companies, how they deal with the actors, and how they treat their relationships between the environment and the actors. In recognizing the importance of those questions, efforts are placed on strategies in the industrial networks settings. When developing this argument, differences in perspectives are presented as “a missing perspective.” This characterizes the context of the emerging perspective, in which the discussion of power could belong. In order to provide a simplified analysis this shortened version of network perspective will be used to prove that humanitarian supply chain managers should consider having the missing perspective in their logistics strategy discussions.

## **2.3. The humanitarian logistics**

Humanitarian logistics includes very different operations at different times, and as a response to a countless variety of catastrophes. All those operations have the common purpose to aid people in their survival. Thus, two main streams of humanitarian logistics can be differentiated, continuous aid work and disaster relief (Long, 1997). Usually, the word disaster relief is reserved for sudden catastrophes such as natural disasters (volcano, floods, eruptions etc.) and some few man-made disasters such as terrorism acts. Relief can be foreign intervention into a society with the intention of helping local citizens (Douglas C. Long, 1995). For this paper the focus of disaster operations is to: “design the transportation of first aid material, food, equipment, and rescue personnel from supply points to a large number of destination nodes geographically scattered over the disaster region and the evacuation and transfer of people affected by the disaster to the health care centers safely and very rapidly” (Barbarosoglu, Ozdamar, & Cevik, 2001, p. 118).

## **2.4. Actors in the humanitarian network**

In regard to the importance of shifting focus with the actors and their inter-relationships, this has an impact on the humanitarian network as a whole (Kovács & Spens, 2007). More exactly, the focus has moved from traditional relationships into increasing cooperation with

commercial actors, in order to maximize their long-term profits. A situation such as rapid onset disaster (e.g. the aftermath of a hurricane or earthquake), since the collapse of numerous existing functions, will test the reactivity of the humanitarian arrangements in the disaster. (Tatham & Houghton, 2011) argue that; disasters, from the point of departure of the network, stress the capacity of actors to work closely together. Weak ties are often used as channels, providing actors with no incentive to work together towards solutions that include governments, military, civil society, and humanitarian organizations. In contrast, according to Evan (1966), these ties will need to be strategically chosen to consider activities that complete networks, bridge resources, and facilitate companies to manage and plan their activity sets over time.

The actor is generally an unclear concept often recognized with the juridical element or the firm. Another opinion is that of a resource-controlling element. In network discussions, actors are defined as those who accomplish activities and/control resources and are in different organizational levels (Axelsson, 1987). The first and essential difference is the motivation for improving the logistics process. In the case of humanitarian logistics this motivation must go beyond profitability (Kovács & Spens, 2007).

However the frustration among humanitarian actors is now based in what used to be the domain of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Major donors have their own institutions as well as polices for humanitarian response. Multilateral agencies and NGOs are more often joined by military and profit organizations when delivering humanitarian relief. To deal with the growing institutional diversity, mechanisms of coordination have been created, particularly, OCHA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). In 2006, the estimate of the amount of resources of total humanitarian assistance was according to Steels (2009) of USD 14.2 billion; of this amount, government contributions stand for USD 9.2 billion. These developments, when combined with the slowly increasing effectiveness among humanitarian agencies, has led to striking results (Steels, 2009).

In contrast, humanitarian actors around the globe face essential opportunities meeting challenges in a more collaborative way. For the sake of this discussion, a good example is the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (U.S.) that have, during the past decade, recognized the need of effective emergency relief, and based on joint networks of diverse actors. This is significant since together they provide nearly two-thirds of global humanitarian funding. Through their participation, the EU and U.S. are helping to shape the norms and practices of the global humanitarian system. By working closely together, the EU and the U.S., networks in the humanitarian context, allow for coherent policies and division of labor, avoiding unnecessary duplications of costly activities and enhancing the recognition of a humanitarian policy in the global political platform (Steels, 2009).

## **2.5. Activities in the humanitarian network**

Current developments closely related to activities in the area of disaster, are setting the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality neutrality and independence under pressure, reducing the humanitarian space. While these principles are seen as the basis of humanitarians, recent developments have undermined them (OCHA, 2010). This due to the dilemma created by converting the principles of humanity and impartiality into practice, using networks as formal performers, and management into indicators for growing collaboration (Steels, 2009). Another aspect in addition to the activities discussion, is that network strategies among firms usually refer to terms of formal arrangements (Morris, 1988). Therefore, more focus has been placed on partnerships between member states, regional organizations, civil society, and the private sector, performing preplanned activities in areas of

disaster. One of the objectives has been to arrange networks with those that demonstrate both willingness and operational capacity to support the logistics activities (OCHA, 2012).

However, in the discussion here it is assumed that there are potential complications of taking business into humanitarian response activities. Executing agencies and international organizations have generated many sets of guidelines for their work with business partners. For instance, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and OCHA, created a set of guiding ethics to backup public-private relationships in humanitarian work in order to address some concerns (2007). However, announcing weaknesses; as the principles covering only non-profit engagements, advised no instrument to develop the humanitarian networks strategy (Johnson, 2009). Similar conditions are extremely ineffective, because with no common understanding and agreement, industrial networks have no incentive to take activities to ensure their development.

The narrow definition of humanitarian response in non-profit oriented arrangements causes difficulties with the notions of serving the public good within an overall profitable network strategy (Stoddard, 2009). This is in part, due to what sets the nature of the type of an emergency situation, usually the magnitude of the catastrophes taken place and the logistics operational needed. Understanding this, members of the humanitarian environment are creating ways to execute their mandates together with profit actors (Kovács & Spens, 2007). In the near future this will mean developing a mutual strategy that aims to retain (and/or understand) the humanitarian principles as well as the profit requisite, towards a more functional network of activities performing the requirements of humanitarian logistics.

## **2.6. Resources in the humanitarian network**

While discussing humanitarian supply chain ties of actors, attention must be taken to clarify the explicit relationships sharing of resources as unique incentive. Those implying increasing awareness, becoming well prepared for the next disaster, and gaining access to information on the current needs, and the security in the field (Larson & McLachlin, 2011). Resources can also be viewed as channels helping weaker ties to cover larger areas without making large investments (Evan, 1966). These will classically include organizations that have a fundamental understanding of the environmental facilitators such as; compatibility of commercial cultures, compatibility of management, processes, philosophies, techniques of mutuality and the stage of balance between the parties (Lambert, 2004 ).

Those assumptions become significant if the discussion of industrial networks strategies is adapted to the humanitarian logistics. The basic principles for managing the flow of resources into acquired activities must build parallel with required information and solvent finances vital for the performing of humanitarian logistics (Kovács & Spens, 2007). Features of cooperation and conflict between actors have been found to exist in the environment of business relations. There is an integral conflict affecting the sharing of resources goal and that is about the division of benefits from a joint project. Håkansson and Snehota, (2006) argue for the keeping in house part of the relationship between two firms. In the humanitarian logistics there are, however many actors that are not linked to the benefit of holding and sharing resources in house waiting for a satisfying demand. That is due to suppliers having different motivations and consumers not creating a voluntary demand, promising repeat purchases. It is therefore important to keep in mind, the difference is the fact that the customer in the humanitarian supply chain has actually no choice, and subsequently, true demand is not possible to be generated (Kovács & Spens, 2007).

### **3. CONCEPTUAL DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1. The “missing perspective” contribution to the humanitarian logistics**

In the concept of “a missing perspective” a useful synopsis has been offered by suggesting that is better to discuss how to express and describe industry networks strategies rather than to impose those to specific corporate settings. This means that networks limit but also offer opportunities, reduce uncertainty and allow specialization, provide cooperation but not control. However, during the last twenty years, interest has increased among academics and practitioners dedicated to network strategy and business relationships fields. The increase in interest is attributed to the attempt at recognizing what makes an organization successful in its interaction with its environment and its management of processes.

Moving those aspects into a humanitarian logistics context has provided a new way to understand the network. Firms engaging in the humanitarian logistics presumably must focus on partnerships based on essential motivations for engaging in the network. Research shows an expanded scope and size of business engagements recently, in both voluntary and commercial ways. Yet, contribution to positive branding and motivated staff drives companies to strategically engage in humanitarian work. When engaging business actors in disaster relief, three drivers are discussed as fundamental. One is the ethical driver, where engagement is not purely humanitarian, but a mere showing of sympathy with public feeling to their employees. This starts with voluntary contributions, in which employee contributions are harmonized by the employer to a certain extent. The second driver is for stakeholders and is the desire to maintain a good reputation, particularly in times of increased criticism about widespread capitalism. This starts by meeting the expectations of their stakeholders, in order to increase employee motivation and represent the firm as an attractive employer. The third driver is the internal corporate driver, where profit considerations become the foundation of a business. This and starts by engaging in humanitarian relief efforts, with the goals of entering new markets and improving their relationships with state and civil society actors. Those drivers may lead firms to business opportunities, unless there is resistance from the public, shaping NGO campaigns (Rieth, 2009).

This indicates the trend of non-commercial companies in the humanitarian logistics response seems to be broken. This shows that networks of firms are building on mostly public relations and campaigns in which relationships with other are required. Awareness that companies gradually compete on commercial basis with humanitarian actors seems exaggerated. On the contrary, more often strategic discussion of partnerships with a business network is carried out on basis of expertise, activities, and actors; in which a certain amount of competition is good for keeping the level of quality. Development of durable relationships takes time and determination. Therefore, partner choice for the humanitarian should be based on the identified needs of skills and capacities and the ability to manage the partnership. Despite this, commercial firms should not limit themselves to disasters or prestigious cases. Instead, firms should be more transparent about their volume of contributions to the humanitarian logistics, whether their engagement is based on a profit or non-profit concepts (Binder, 2007).

#### **3.2. Managing the networks in the humanitarian logistics**

Network strategies explain managers as having a complex reality to handle. This is due to the key issue of all network thinking; “others” need to be involved (Gadde & Håkansson, 2001). Thinking in network terms creates possibilities to capture the most important organizational aspects of reality. Network thinking can be used, for instance, for recognizing options in a strategy and for calculating potential consequences. Network concepts are significant for the outcome of the supply chain network strategies of a buying firm, and their central assignment

is to influence the network concepts of others, (Johanson, 1992). Nonetheless, there is never a “one and only” network; which also motivates the problematic, when identifying a balance between diverse measures.

Looking back at the initial question of whether the network perspective can be adapted to increase the humanitarian logistics efficiency and effectiveness, Axelsson and Easton (1992), found enough improvement while charting the elements of the missing strategy, from the point of departure of networks, to argue that each element in the network strategy, is challenging in one way or another. Therefore, the “missing perspective” as part of the humanitarian logistics strategy, must to be a subject of further development. While the challenges discussed in this paper are based on examples from the humanitarian field, it seems unlikely that a single strategy will be appropriate. Instead the purpose of this paper is to suggest that a specific strategy with networks settings may be more applicable on case by case basis, to the humanitarian context. Due to the profitably aspect in humanitarian purposes, Stoddard (2009) concludes that, traditional actors, donors and other representatives in the humanitarian work, share an understanding of the advantages and risks of building network with business firms, but those are still problematic in practice.

Thus, humanitarian response can harmonize the operational support for donors and/or donor implementing partners, by directly connecting firms that normally are agreed by NGOs, international organizations and/or UN-agencies. This should be evaluated as part of the humanitarian logistics strategy, since this strategy allows for efficient and effective networks (Stoddard, 2009). For managers it is suggested that the strategy taken should not be limited to any specific firm, but instead it should be used as part of the networks to which the firm is associated to. Lambert (2004) advises, managers at firms to map consistency to commercial cultures, management, and techniques. Those are essential facilitators, which will increase firm’s possibilities to predict how actors can be convinced to follow an intended strategy even within a humanitarian context.

### **3.3. Is there “a missing perspective” in the humanitarian strategy?**

There is a reason to believe that the “missing perspective” is the need of recognizing tendencies and trends in the network development. For instance, the expansion of a network is, to a great degree, a matter of accidental events outside the control of individual actors. Axelsson and Easton (1992) suggest that partnerships could elect to stay where they are and wait for the right occasion, or to get involved, increasing exposure to opportunities in certain circumstances. These tendencies have been highlighted in humanitarian research, showing that unintended often successful help from organizations not connected to the humanitarian response, have gotten donors to be more willing to search into the private sector for response roles in emergencies, and business firms are more willing to take an active part exposing their core business to new demands. Specifically, this enables working relationships between entities not traditionally working with humanitarian response and humanitarian organizations. Stoddard (2009) assumes that engagement is most probably difficult due to humanitarian’s uncertain working environments and conditions (large-scale, sudden onset etc.). Conditions in the field of operation could represent advantages or challenges for a firm’s willingness to engage in the network.

One of the major conclusions of this discussion so far; corresponds partly to the humanitarian logistics, allowing the discussion of networks as part of the strategy. The analysis provides initial indications that NGOs are now flexible and moving towards meeting commercial providers with profit incentives for delivering humanitarian logistics as part of the network. It must however be noted that development of network will always diverge depending on the

situation and over time (Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, & Snehota, 2003). Therefore, it must be assumed that there are no standard solutions to a perfect network in the logistics strategy. Relationships require diverse combinations of cooperation and competition to be effective and efficient.

## **4. IMPLICATIONS**

In this discussion several implications of the network applicability to the humanitarian logistics strategy have been brought up. In this section of the paper the discussion will continue and cover how networks can be, managed, improved or prevented in the strategy settings of humanitarian logistics. The focus here is only on a few important implications, but there are far more implications to consider if a network is meant to take central part of the strategy settings. As noted earlier, a network impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian supply chain, despite the difficulty in measuring the humanitarian performance. There is a differing view between the industrial network strategy and business strategy when it comes to the degree of control of the network as part of the strategy setting. There is a need for more investigation about the impact of managers assuming more control of the networks in the humanitarian system. An analysis should be carried out regarding the impact of the network perspective taking an essential place in the humanitarian logistics strategy.

### **4.1. From inter-agency to a network approach**

While the inter-agency perspective is slightly different from the view of the network perspective, there are also parallels. Specifically, power is an essential issue in all the viewpoints. Within the humanitarian supply chain, for instance, logistics are assumed to require greater attention. Kovács and Spens (2007) discuss that, while in collaboration, aid agencies, suppliers, and local/regional actors, are often operating with their own techniques. In order to stabilize the conflicting objectives of flexibility and efficiency it is advised that disaster response tests the capacity of actors to work together and that in an excess of competing interests, there are few or no strategies, other than what could be described as a pre-estimated level. A platform would be to know that there might be reasonable pressures about deliveries of food, in the outcome of a disaster to the disaster area. At the same time, governments may try to force the population into particular locations in order to ease their problems. The international total network will need to manage the conflicting strategies of the two objectives and suggest the needs and methods of collaboration concerning the logistics in the response.

At inter-agency level there is fairly slight pressure of the competitive sort. Kumar *et al.* (2009) reflects that improving a supply chain network, must deal with sharing common resources and building up networks. Those networks should include collaboration with non-profit NGOs, in order to effectively manage and deliver in the global supply chain. Agencies should also collaborate with resources and share risks. This aspect would give an idea of where to find latent conflicts. In other words, it reveals that agencies are not making profit, and that there is a near endless elasticity to enter in the market. There will always be more people in need of provision than there is the capacity to deliver; there is therefore, no need for inter-agency competition. One possible solution could be to re-design the activities, and make partners in the network equally important, by assigning and managing their position in the supply chain.

### **4.2. Humanitarian principles impact on the network strategy**

This study offers several implications for practitioners trying to manage networks and the impact of the humanitarian principles. In specific, the impact on a supply chain network. First

the findings suggest that the process of generating positions in business environments usually occurs gradually and through the performing of everyday tasks. Those processes could be conducted in a more or less skillful, visionary or conscious way. Every single step might be part of a network in strategy settings. That partly summarizes the idea of the network perspective. Axelsson and Easton (1992) suggest that achieving agreements between a larger numbers of actors strengthens the supply chain and creates incentives to improve performance. This can be also applicable in the humanitarian logistics context by giving credit to private sector for having and improving their relationships with suppliers and service providers. In particular, by working in disasters supported with negotiated agreements. Tomasine and Van Wassenhove (2009) argue that by implementing tools that enable efficient and effective planning and forecasting, relationships could be built and improved. This could be seen as strengthening already established agreements with several groups.

However, the humanitarian principles must also be adopted in partnerships (Larson & McLachlin, 2011). According to the Global Humanitarian Platform, the principles of equality, transparency, result-oriented attitude, responsibility, and complementarity should characterized the humanitarian network. This paper however has focused on the industrial network strategy's applicability in the humanitarian logistics context. Of particular concern is for principles to function, as they are characterizing the humanitarian supply chains network. There are other discussions threatening the strategy network development. Those are regarded as the boundaries between members in the humanitarian system, since they are operating in environments where their mandates have difficulties being executed. Tomasini (2009) argues that, obstacles in the interactions make it difficult for suppliers to effectively operate in disaster areas. At the same time, defaulting for commercial or/and military involvements in humanitarian response due to organizations' cultures. Logisticians in disaster areas struggle with the conflicting interests of stakeholders and with unpredictable demands. They are sometimes bringing the wrong type of assistance to displaced persons, in that way worsens their situation and their respect for international norms, and possibly even prolonging conflicts (Gordenker, 1995).

As argued previously, the humanitarian assembly as a whole is huge and, in terms of developing a network perspective in the strategy setting of logistics, firms must work with an excess of interested actors that will differ from catastrophe to catastrophe. It would be unwise to suggest answers to the challenges humanitarians face. The obtained knowledge through the discussions is that adding in "a missing perspective" regarding the network development would be helpful in the discussion. Network perspective must become an essential part when discussing strategic settings in the humanitarian logistics, as this perspective has a lot to offer. Within this approach the ability to discuss strategies and settings from the point of view of network is central for achieving efficiency and effectiveness in the humanitarian supply chain.

### **4.3. The challenges of theory and practice**

Given that the elements of "a missing perspective" have been charted from the point of departure of industry network strategy, every part has been shown to be in the way of another aspect. Despite this, enough improvements have been made to justify the development of "a missing perspective" in the humanitarian logistics strategy. A key theme here is to understand that relationships are relevant particularities even from a business perspective. To a significant extent, it is important to identify the variables that interfere in the development of relationships because they are affecting the main goal elements of the business issue such as; efficiency and effectiveness, profits, growths potential and innovativeness.

Bergman (2008) concludes that whether research aims to change the existing differences and/or imbalances, will depend mainly on a researcher's own objectives, rather than on the

practitioners' experiences collected from real life. It is significant to assume that business researches and humanitarian researchers are frequently studying in separate fields and with distinct priorities. That is of course not always the case, as researchers can also become synergetic. In response to those trends and predictions, humanitarian researches are accurate in looking for more academic guidance (Balkin, 2011).

However, this paper discusses relationships providing the aspect of "a missing perspective" in the strategy discussion of the humanitarian context. Of great significance here is the issue of ethics in a competitive environment. A gap constitutes the common understanding of the network arrangement as part of the humanitarian logistics strategy. This gap can inspire development, and in that way, researchers argue that firms involved in humanitarian work should be directly linked with each other, in sets of competition standards and cooperation mixtures, embodying all the firm's relationships. Firms are forced to assess their opportunities in the humanitarian network logic and analyze if the struggle to foresee how other actors will respond to their initiatives is justifiable in their business context (Axelsson, 1987).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The idea of the industry networks in the strategy discussions was constructed on the primacy concept of building relationships and managing of business assets. However, network strategy in humanitarian logistics requires more precision. While analyzing the humanitarian current situation, practical solutions evolve into adaptable strategies requested mostly, on a case by case basis. This means that time and anticipation will be required to prove firms' reactions in responding to logistics needs in disasters. And more significant, is the need to measure the humanitarian performance in which efficiency and effectiveness become ensured. To be able to move on will require motivation for firms to engage on humanitarian premises, and for humanitarian organizations to more flexible adapt to the private incentives of profit.

An important conclusion is that the network has been underestimated in the strategy discussions, missing great business opportunities. Suggesting the expansion of a network was a matter of accidental events outside the control of single actors. Whereas, the conclusion here is that, there are finally three views in which relationships strategies might not have been expressed yet; service activities, deliveries and subcontracting, and that those require to be closely managed while positioning the humanitarian supply chain. Of specific concern is the fact that the industrial network strategy makes a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness. This is proven by the gains lately while sharing resources and risks in business agreements responding to the humanitarian logistics. Therefore, it seems possible to conclude that there are great challenges for the humanitarian supply chain, the creation of networks and sharing resources and risks. With this awareness, this paper has charted a number of lines of the network in logistics strategy concluding its needs of further development. However, it has not been possible to deliver a distinctive answer, since each catastrophe will require a different adapted solution and setting. Finally, despite these difficulties, humanitarians could be of support to industries when presented with an emergent and uncertain world and industries could provide the humanitarians a better understanding of business experiences.

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