

# Chapter 8:

## Conclusion of the study

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Introduction to the study

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internationalization

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**Conclusion of the study**

Aims:

- Synthesis study
- Conclusion – contribution to extant literature, managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research

## **8.1 Introduction**

The topic of progression in the internationalization of industrial service providers complies with calls for further research in the field of services on the one hand and international business on the other. The main aim of this dissertation is improving insight in the internationalization process of service firms. The exact topic is further demarcated by particularly focusing on progression in internationalization in order to refine extant theories by incorporating the dynamic and non-deterministic character of the process of going and being international. The dominant Uppsala internationalization process model is selected as the basic model enriched with three additional research fields. Furthermore, the focus is put on industrial services that despite their importance in terms of GDP and employment did not receive a lot of research attention yet. In particular, internationalization processes of nine logistic services providers in the Benelux are studied by means of a comparative case study research.

This chapter is further structured in four sections. In section 8.2 we summarize the approach and findings of the study. Next, contributions to extant services and international business literature are discussed in section 8.3. In section 8.4 managerial implications are put forward. Finally, we end with limitations and suggestions for further research in section 8.5.

## **8.2 Summary study**

The core research question guiding the study is: “How and why does progression occur in the internationalization process of industrial service companies?” To answer this question, the study is organized in two parts containing 6 chapters. First, in the conceptual part that includes 3 chapters, extant research is thoroughly reviewed and used to design a theoretical platform that guides data collection and analysis in the second part. In particular, the theoretical approach starts with an elaborate literature review of services and internationalization reported in Chapter 2 in which particular attention is paid to the various topics studied, the findings and the underlying theoretical frameworks. Apparently, literature on the internationalization of services is scarce in terms of the conceptual and methodological approach to the subject. In particular, current studies tend to fail in providing a univocal insight in the process of service internationalization. On the basis of the literature review, we identify three particular challenges to improve upon previous research that are used as starting-points in this dissertation.

A first challenge concerns the explicit acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of services as a group. In addition to narrowing the group of services down to industrial services, the emphasis on the process of internationalization requires to distinguish between different service types with respect to the way in which they are delivered internationally. Consequently, a useful classification is searched in Chapter 3. Unfortunately, scrutiny of eight existing classifications reveals that various problems hinder them to capture diversity in the internationalization behavior of companies that differ with regard to the service types offered. As a result, not one of the eight classifications is adopted as our first starting-point. Contrarily, we explicitly adopt Hill’s (1999) definition of services and introduce a new classification scheme that puts the emphasis on the

knowledge contribution of the service provider and client in the service delivery. As such, the crucial interaction between the two parties involved is stressed as main service characteristic. Figure 8-1 represents the four types of services that are distinguished to study diversity in service internationalization processes.

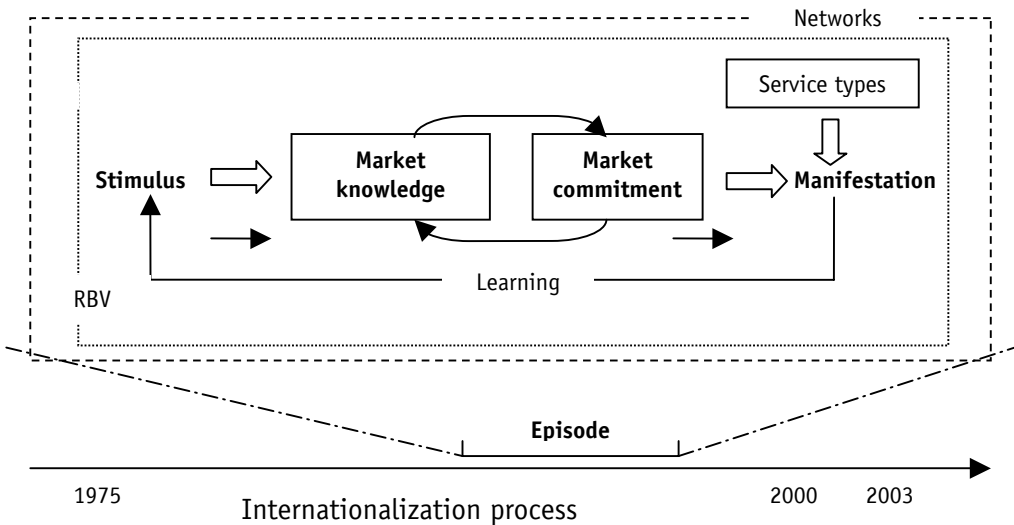
**Figure 8-1: Four service types in the new classification**

	<i>Customer's knowledge contribution</i>	
<i>Service provider's knowledge contribution</i>	Simple (mainly explicit knowledge)	Multifaceted (combination explicit – tacit knowledge)
Standardized (explicit knowledge)	<p><u>Type A</u>  <u>Routine Services</u>  <i>(limited number of standardized interactions during a short delivery process)</i></p>	<p><u>Type B</u>  <u>Modular Services</u>  <i>(high number of standardized interactions during a longer delivery process)</i></p>
Customized (mainly tacit knowledge)	<p><u>Type C</u>  <u>Expert Services</u>  <i>(limited number of customized interactions during a longer delivery process)</i></p>	<p><u>Type D</u>  <u>Co-Developed Services</u>  <i>(high number of customized interactions during a long delivery process)</i></p>

The second challenge follows from the insufficient reliance on strong theoretical frameworks in extant service internationalization research, which leads to contradicting and inconclusive findings. The literature review indicates that future service internationalization studies require an explicit theoretical foundation that can guide data collection, analysis and interpretation. In this dissertation we endorse the contention by scholars such as Javalgi et al. (2003), O’Farrell et al. (1998) and Boddewyn et al. (1986) that manufacturing-based research provides a fruitful foundation for services as long as the uniqueness of the service context is accounted for. Consequently, in Chapter 4, the Enriched Uppsala model is introduced which combines the basic logic of the Uppsala internationalization process model of Johanson and Vahlne (1977; 1990) developed in a manufacturing context with three additional fields. More specifically, insights from the resource-based view, organizational learning and

the industrial network view are used to enrich the core assumption that internationalization is a matter of learning. In particular, in line with Johanson and Vahlne (1977; 1990), internationalization is generally assumed to progress because of the interaction between knowledge and commitment in the organization. Figure 8-2 depicts the preliminary theoretical platform that guided the empirical study. More precisely, Figure 8-2 portrays our focus on an episode of progression in the internationalization process in order to unravel the interaction between market knowledge and market commitment after receiving a stimulus that is ultimately responded to in a manifestation.

**Figure 8-2: Focus on episodes of progression in internationalization**



The third challenge concerns the practical research approach that is the starting-point of the second part that presents the empirical study. The literature review shows that extant research on services and internationalization often lacks methodological rigor that can be compensated by the guidance of a strong theoretical framework complemented with a transparent set-up of the research process. In [Chapter 5](#) we elaborately account for the ontological, epistemological

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and methodological tenets of the study. In particular, the comparative case study design in nine logistic service companies is accounted for of which the results are presented in chapter 6 and 7.

In Chapter 6, the nine case companies are introduced by means of their reconstructed internationalization processes. The process of each case company is depicted on a timeline that gives an indication of the foreign countries entered over the years with particular services, the operational structure that supported these service activities, and the internal and external context in which these developments occurred. Furthermore, the internationalization of the nine logistics companies is briefly discussed with regard to particular findings concerning the internationalization issues identified in the introductory literature review; i.e. motives to internationalize, country/market selection and entry mode choice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the impact of the service types on the internationalization processes. Although the service packages of the nine case companies contain one, several or all four service types distinguished in the classification put forward in chapter 3, the impact of the different service types on the companies' internationalization was found to be rather small due to strong industry recipes.

In Chapter 7, the mid-range theory on progression in internationalization processes presented in Figure 8-3 is developed and discussed in three layers. On the basis of fourteen cases of progression in internationalization represented by a particular stimulus and ensuing manifestation, four underlying steps could be delineated in an episode of progression. A cross-case analysis of the fourteen cases throughout the four steps revealed that companies realize progression in internationalization according to one of six ideal-typical scenarios that differ with regard to the underlying organizational learning processes.

Figure 8-3: Mid-range theory on progression in internationalization processes

Empirical layer	Descriptive layer	Explanatory layer
<b>Step 1: Perception and validation stimulus</b>		
<p><b>Step 1a:</b> Observation of an environmental stimulus that originates within or outside the environment of the organization.</p> <p><b>Step 1b:</b> The initially perceived stimulus is found challenging in an extra round of information gathering. This implies that additional knowledge results in a change of the organization's commitment towards its internationalization in the market under consideration.</p>	<p><math>\Delta MK IK</math></p> <p><math>\Delta C IK</math></p>	<p>Exploitative <math>\longrightarrow</math> <math>S5</math> <i>institutionalization</i></p> <p>Exploitative <math>\longrightarrow</math> <math>S6</math> <i>institutionalization</i></p>
<b>Step 2: Awareness stress</b>		
<p><b>Step 2:</b> The organization perceives a disturbing discrepancy between what they want to do in the market at issue and what they are actually doing there.</p>	<p><math>S =  IC - TC </math></p>	<p>Exploitative</p>
<b>Step 3: Search for a response</b>		
<p><b>Step 3a:</b> A search for eliminating the perceived stress starts. The organization's first reaction is to consider a change in its investments to rematch its beliefs concerning the market at issue with the current situation in terms of financial and institutional commitment.</p> <p><b>Step 3b:</b> The search for a solution continues. The lack of a clear solution within the familiar routines and norms calls for their readjustment. The question becomes whether the perceived stress is disturbing enough to change the organization's institutionalized procedures.</p> <p><b>Step 3c:</b> The preparedness to change the common procedures leads to the question whether renewing the norms with regard to internationalization is accompanied by the creation of a new solution.</p>	<p><math>\Delta TC IK?</math></p> <p><math>\Delta IK S?</math></p> <p><math>\Delta IK \&amp; \Delta TC ?</math></p>	<p>Exploitative</p> <p>Exploitative</p> <p>Exploratory</p>
<b>Step 4: Implementation response</b>		
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Depending on the outcome of the assessments in the previous steps four responses to eliminate stress are perceived; in two situations action is taken in terms of investments (behavioral responses), whereas in the two other situations, the organization readapts its beliefs (attitudinal responses).</p>	<p>Four responses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <math>\Delta TC IK</math></li> <li>2. <math>\Delta IC IK</math></li> <li>3. <math>\Delta IK \&amp; \Delta TC</math></li> <li>4. <math>\Delta IK \&amp; \Delta IC</math></li> </ol>	<p>Exploitative <math>S1</math> <math>S2</math>      Exploratory <math>S3</math> <math>S4</math></p>

### **8.3 Contribution to extant research**

The study of progression in the internationalization process of going and being international of nine logistic services providers offers contribution to two research fields; i.e. services and international business as explained below.

#### **8.3.1 Contribution to services**

Contribution to the research field of services is made in three respects.

- First, the extensive literature review reported in Chapter 2 offers an up-to-date overview of studies on services and internationalization over the past decades. The review takes a rather broad approach and includes studies that examine topics about the way in which and/or the reason(s) why service providers internationalize. Particular attention is paid to the variety of topics studied, their findings and the underlying theoretical frameworks used. Compared to the reviews of Bryson (2001) and Knight (1999), this literature study covers a broader range of studies in the sense that no restrictions are made with respect to geographic focus of the studies (e.g. Europe), time period (e.g. 1990-2000), or particular research topic (e.g. entry mode choice). In brief, the literature review supports the idea that service internationalization is indeed insufficiently studied and more research is appropriate.
  
- Second, the search for a classification of 'international services' in Chapter 3 contributes to the study of service internationalization in three ways. First, the scrutiny of extant service classifications reveals that the characteristics used to discriminate service categories are multidimensional leading to various problems that seem to hinder the widespread adoption of any of the classifications in current research. Second, the scrutiny also reveals that the



activities included in extant service classifications contain 'non-services' with respect to the definition of Hill (1999). In this study, 'non-service' activities are eliminated from the universe studied. Third, we decided to introduce an alternative classification of services. Although we designed the classification to suit studies of service internationalization, the classification can be used for other purposes as well. The crucial issue is that the classification emphasizes the knowledge contribution in the interaction between the service provider and client during a service delivery process.

- Third, the in-depth study of nine logistic services companies contributes to a better understanding of internationalization in this particular sector of industrial services. Despite the importance of the logistics sector, previous studies on international expansion in this sector are found to be scarce. Apparently, other service sectors such as software, consulting, insurance, banking, retailing, advertising and lodging were preferred. Nevertheless, this study suggests that strong industry recipes dominate the internationalization of logistics providers in the Benelux. More insight is offered in the motives underlying international expansion of the companies studied, their country/market selection, and entry mode choices. Unexpected findings with regard to the impact of the service types provided on the internationalization strategy suggest that internationalization in this sector still offers a lot of opportunities.

### **8.3.2 Contribution to international business**

Contribution to the field of international business is primarily made via the enrichment of the underlying logic of the Uppsala internationalization process model.

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- First, Chapter 4 offers an up-to-date literature review of the Uppsala internationalization process model complemented with a discussion of three potentially enriching fields. In line with Johanson and Vahlne (1990), the resource-based view, organizational learning and the industrial network theory are specifically discussed with regard to their ability to improve upon the original explanation of Johanson and Vahlne (1977). As such, the study complies with contemporary calls to approach the multidimensional internationalization process from multiple theoretical perspectives in order to better grasp its complexity.
- Second, the mid-range theory presented in Chapter 7 contributes to the explanation of current internationalization processes in various ways. The basic assumption is supported that internationalization is a matter of learning, and that progression is the result of interactions between market knowledge and market commitment. Nevertheless, the up-grade of the two basic concepts into four pillars – i.e. market knowledge, internationalization knowledge, tangible commitment, and intangible commitment – next to a broader conceptualization of learning enables a richer explanation of both mainstream and more extreme internationalization processes. Additionally, the mid-range theory, which conceptualizes internationalization processes as sequences of any combination of the six ideal-typical scenarios, accommodates managerial discretion, departs from the assumption of uni-linear internationalization routes and captures the dynamic nature of the process. Overall, the mid-range theory goes further than previous improvements of the Uppsala logic that merely aim at refining the underlying concepts. The conceptualization of progression in six scenarios further refines the concepts and explicitly addresses their relations in the four delineated steps.

## **8.4 Managerial implications**

In this study, internationalization is conceptualized as a continued forward momentum, which implies that as time passes, organizations are assumed to progress in their internationalization process. Consequently, companies need a conscious approach to respond to the abundant and continuous stream of environmental stimuli that insinuate potential challenges. In this section, several managerial implications are discussed that follow from studying the internationalization of nine logistics providers.

With regard to managerial implications that particularly relate to the sector of logistic service providers in the Benelux, the main issue concerns the acknowledgement of the strong dominant logic that seems to characterize the sector. More precisely, the internationalization of the case companies studied is found to be firmly affected by common sector interpretations. Hence, we fear that management of logistic services companies might insufficiently question the value of solutions dictated by these industry recipe. For instance, with respect to the composition of the service packages, we did not find different approaches concerning entry mode choices for the diverse service types offered. The companies studied were found to mainly rely on rather uniform entry mode choices that reflect the general corporate internationalization approach colored by strong industry recipes. Nevertheless, we believe that special approaches for specific types of services should get more attention.

Although developed in the context of nine logistics companies, more general managerial implications can be formulated on the basis of the flowchart that captures six ideal-typical progression scenarios. Three particular suggestions appear. First, the flowchart depicts several moments of decision throughout the four steps in an episode of progression. Top management must facilitate this

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decision-making. More precisely, the required knowledge gathering and interpretation at these points should be allowed and even encouraged. This means that time and resources should be reserved to permit making the best decision at every moment to come to the most suited response. People with particular expertise should be engaged and teams should be put together if necessary. Important to note, case evidence showed that valuable information not only enters the company via aimed-searching by higher management. To the contrary, crucial information often enters the company by means of rather coincidental intra- and inter-organizational encounters at higher and lower levels in the company. Top management should acknowledge and use these knowledge sources by developing a knowledge management system that enables regular and smooth knowledge flows between all levels within the organization.

Second, in step 3 of the flowchart, the organization is assumed to search for a response to the validated stimulus. Case evidence shows that initially the organization relies on exploitative learning as analogies with previous situations are looked for. However, when the current norms and routines are found inadequate to lead to a suited answer, a switch to exploratory learning might be needed. Top management has to allow exploratory learning even though it causes instability and raises uncertainty. The cases in which frame-breaking initiatives were taken, management emphasized that they felt ill at ease to deviate from familiar procedures. Nevertheless, they realized that frame-breaking knowledge gathering and interpreting, and even action was needed to benefit from the validated stimulus.

Third, in the flowchart, stress is depicted as the crucial turning point that triggers further learning to find a response to the challenging stimulus. However, top management should realize that eliminating stress – i.e. finding a response – should be a means in developing the organization's

internationalization and not an end in itself. Merely eliminating stress to restore organizational stability can lead to sub-optimal situations that bring relief in the short run but that cause more stress in the future as the discrepancy between the organizational resources and capabilities and environmental needs increases. However, at the same time, top managers should keep over-eager middle managers from responding to each potentially challenging stimulus. The aim is to find the delicate balance between change and preservation in progressing the organization's internationalization.

## **8.5 Limitations and suggestions for further research**

Doing research requires making choices, and making choices sets limitations. In this final section, attention is paid to particular empirical and theoretical restrictions of this study that we would like to use as openings to make suggestions for further research.

Sampling of industrial service companies – In consultation with international trade experts, the logistics sector was chosen as particular research context to study service internationalization. The sector of logistic services in the Benelux appeared to be a very interesting industrial services sector that is confronted with daring challenges in terms of internationalization. Nevertheless, as an industry focus offers the benefit of control over context variables, at the same time it restricts the findings to one sector and as such a replication of the study in other sectors becomes advisable. Especially comparative studies of sectors that offer similar service types will contribute to Lovelock's (1983) call for cross-industry studies.

Furthermore, convincing companies to engage in the study turned out to be quite difficult. Eventually, nine case companies with interesting internationalization processes were found prepared to cooperate. Nevertheless, their selection did not fully occur according to preset criteria. In particular, we were not able to select companies that predominantly offer one of the four service types defined in chapter 3. However, the sampling procedure does not seem to be the sole reason for the selection of service providers that mostly offer Type A – Routine services. Apparently, the logistics sector in the Benelux is still very much focused on offering routine transportation services although numerous attempts are made to diversify their offer towards more value-adding services (van Hoek,

2000). Further research is needed to get a better insight in the service types offered and their impact on the company's internationalization.

Building the mid-range theory – In building the scenario-model various choices were made and consequently various routes are left open to improve upon the logic put forward. The perspective from which episodes of progression are discussed offers three specific opportunities for further research. First, the scenario-model is developed and presented from an organizational perspective; i.e. the organization is assumed to perceive and respond to environmental stimuli. Nevertheless, it is the people in the organization that make things happen. Further attention is needed to capture the complex interactions between individuals and groups of individuals that drive the process underlying episodes of progression. Coalitions are continuously formed during the knowledge gathering and interpreting. Eventually these coalitions have to come to a shared understanding about what the next step in the process should be. The power of individuals in these coalitions, open-mindedness of the people concerned, communication structures and styles all affect the course in which an episode develops. For instance, in the case companies studied, the founder/CEO often had the last word affecting the process studied. More theoretical work is considered necessary.

Second, the scenario-model built concentrates on an episode of progression within one single business unit. Further attention should be paid to progression in the internationalization process of multi-business organizations. Although we expect the internationalization process of these organizations to be a complex mix of complementary chains of scenarios, further theoretical work is needed to capture the interaction between the simultaneous scenarios. Maybe a super-process will show that is missed in this study.

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Third, in studying progression in internationalization, the focus was put on an episode that is defined as a short period with a clear beginning (stimulus) and clear ending (manifestation). Nevertheless, a broader focus like Kutschker et al.'s (1997) discussion of evolution, episodes, and epochs that zoom in on shorter versus longer time spans in the internationalization appears to be interesting. In particular, a study of series of scenarios is considered worthwhile as we expect that the sequence of scenarios following a scenario in which the internationalization knowledge is restructured will be different from a sequence of scenarios following the mere confirmation of the company's internationalization knowledge.

Additionally, further research is needed to further refine learning as the generative mechanism driving the interaction between knowledge and commitment throughout the process of an episode of progression. More precisely, the switch from exploitative to exploratory learning when the organization acknowledges the inadequacy of its current internationalization knowledge needs further exploration. Case evidence suggests a rather smooth transfer from exploitative to exploratory learning once management is convinced of the importance of the challenge. Only in one case studied, power play and conflict between top and middle management prevented exploratory learning and as such the restructuring of internationalization knowledge. More theoretical work seems appropriate on the way in which agreement is reached on the necessity of a switch, and the particular realization of it.

Finally, the scenarios need further empirical validation with respect to mainstream as well as more extreme internationalization processes. Especially, empirical studies in diverse industries may learn that the impact of some context variables is more dramatic than expected here. This may require the explicit adoption of these variables into the model.



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# Appendices

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# APPENDIX I

## Topic list: Interviews managers within case companies

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### General characteristics company

1. Turnover – number of employees
2. Data of establishment
3. Current service activities in service package
4. Current international presence
5. Current organizational structure

### Chronology internationalization process

1. Start international activity
2. Nature first and subsequent international service activities
3. Motive underlying first and subsequent international service activities
4. Organizational structure used to provide international services
5. Impact network contacts
6. Resources needed

### Progression

1. Basis selection
2. Time span
3. Trigger
4. Manifestation
5. Parties involved
6. Development decision within company

### Nature service package

1. Knowledge contribution service provider
2. Knowledge contribution customer
3. Nature relationship

# APPENDIX II

## Topic list: Interviews clients

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### General characteristics company

1. Main activities
2. Client of case company

### Logistic activities

1. Own activities versus outsourced activities
2. Main reasons for outsourcing logistics
3. Outsourcing since

### Outsourcing

1. Involved with how many parties
2. Criteria to choose these parties
3. Nature of service bought – knowledge contribution
4. Nature relation with service provider
5. Nature interaction with service provider

### Internationalization service provider

1. Impact on internationalization process
2. Impact international character of service provider

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Description of nine case companies**

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Nine logistic service companies that agreed to participate in the investigation of service companies' internationalization processes are included in the analyses. In this appendix, the nine case companies are briefly introduced. More specifically, each description starts with an overview of the company's activities at time of establishment in comparison to the content of the current service packages. The present service package is briefly typified according to the new service classification introduced in chapter 3. Furthermore, the profile of the targeted segment is described next to the way in which the current client portfolio is obtained. Then the geographical presence of the case company is sketched, to end with the organizational structure in which this presence is organized. Table A-1 summarizes the key characteristics of the nine case companies.



**Table A-1: Introduction nine case companies**

Case company	Since	Annual turnover in EUR (2001)	Service package	Current geographical scope	Operational structure
C° AAA	1979	9.000.000	Transport Distribution Logistics	Benelux, Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, North-France, United Kingdom	2 sites with storage capacity in Belgium, and an administrative office in Eastern-Germany
C° BBB	1976	23.000.000	Transport Logistics	Benelux, Germany, Denmark, France and Italy	2 sites with storage capacity in Belgium
C° CCC	1962	46.000.000	Transport Forwarding Distribution	Europe	1 site in Belgium, subsidiaries in Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and Georgia
C° DDD	1993	3.000.000.000	<i>Distribution Transport Forwarding Logistics</i>	World, first priority is Western Europe, with decreasing priority in Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific, America and Africa.	18 sites in Belgium, subsidiaries in 35 countries and agents in numerous other countries with a total representation around 500 offices all over the world
C° EEE	1944	600.000.000	Transport Logistics	Europe	30 sites throughout Europe i.e. the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, France, Hungary, Poland
C° FFF	1928	100.000.000	Transport Distribution Logistics	Main focus Belgium but daily groupage to and from Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom	7 sites in Belgium, subsidiaries through JV in Italy, Germany and Great-Britain
C° GGG	1987	2.500.000	<i>Logistics Transport</i>	Just-in-time delivery for companies doing business all over Europe with a focus on Belgium, the Netherlands, France, & Germany	1 site in Belgium
C° HHH	1995	<i>12.160.000.000</i> (total Belgian subsidiary)	Logistics	Mainly Europe but increasing markets in North America, Latin America, and Asia	warehouses in Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Italy, USA, Singapore, and Mexico
C° III	2001	Unknown	Forwarding	Europe, Asia, North and South America	offices in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal

## **A-1. CASE COMPANY AAA**

Company AAA is a family-owned Belgian transporting company that started with road haulage in 1979. Initially, the founder began on his own with one truck working as a subcontractor for a large transport company. Today, the fleet counts 75 vehicles and although subcontracting is still one of the main client-seeking approaches with carrying out transport assignments for transport brokers and forwarders, C°AAA also directly works for industrial shippers.

C°AAA mainly focuses on transport of general cargo that includes both non-dangerous and dangerous packaged goods for shippers operating in a wide variety of industries (e.g. food, furniture and printing). The fleet contains various vehicles that are suited for national and international transport, distribution and express deliveries. Additionally, C°AAA has specialized equipment to transport liquid gas, coils and paper.

As the fleet description indicates, the transport services include the administrative organization and execution of national and international transport of both full and partial truckloads, and distribution and express deliveries in the Benelux. Since a few years, the service package has been enlarged with value-adding logistic services. In particular, C°AAA offers storage, handling of goods, and regular stock management. Seventy percent of turnover can still be attributed to the transport activities but attempts are made to increase the importance of the logistics services to obtain a fifty-fifty ratio. The service package of C°AAA contains services that can be classified as a Type A services that require a simple knowledge contribution of the client and standardized knowledge contribution of the service provider, i.e. C° AAA. Attempts to offer more tailor made services are made but until now the expansion of the service package with logistic services remains within the category of Type A services.

With respect to the international activities, C°AAA offers daily rides to and from Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, France and the United Kingdom. Clients are Belgian located firms with international transport demands. However, offering international transport is only interesting if the trucks can return loaded. Belgian located clients seldom demand to bring back loads. Therefore, C°AAA needs to continuously search for return cargo at the foreign destinations.

In general, the current client portfolio follows from an active client-seeking policy with participation in trade fairs, regular mailings, and company visits to industrial shippers, forwarders, and transport brokers both in the domestic and foreign markets. Additionally, the portfolio is complemented because C°AAA responds to clients that take the initiative and call upon C°AAA with unsolicited orders. Nevertheless, the majority of clients is the result of an active search by C°AAA. The main explanation is that competition in the segment of transport of conventional cargo is very high. Shippers have a wide variety of transporting companies to choose from which requires the transporters to adopt an active and dynamic approach in attracting clients.

Currently, the organizational structure of C°AAA consists of two sites in Belgium with storage facilities and an administrative office in Eastern Germany. In 2000, original headquarters were complemented with an extra Belgian site and an office in Eastern Germany. Today the founder-CEO is of the opinion that the organizational structure sufficiently allows C°AAA to exploit the opportunities in the market.

## **A-2. CASE COMPANY BBB**

Company BBB is a Belgian transporting company that is still family-owned and currently run by the children of the founder. C°BBB was established in 1976

offering transport services of conventional cargo to local industrial producers. Over the years, C° BBB diversified its service offer with respect to the sector in which clients are approached, the particular service activities, and the geographical areas covered.

Initially, local producers were approached that needed transport of general cargo, i.e. packed goods in a wide variety of industries (e.g. textiles, glass, plastic). In the early eighties, the needs of producers of plastics shifted from transport of bagged cargo to bulk cargo. Complying with this new need required a serious investment of C°BBB in bulk vehicles. After losing important clients, the company decided to take the risk and an expansion into bulk transport especially for plastic producers occurred. Today a distinction is made between a first market segment that contains shippers of conventional cargo and a second segment that is represented by plastic producers. The clients in the first segment operate in a wide variety of industries with the commonality that they want national and/or international transport for their packed goods. Both full and partial truckloads are taken care of with a current trend towards more partial loads. The second market segment contains plastic producers that want national and international transport of their goods in bulk.

The two segments require different client searching tactics. Whereas the conventional cargo segment demands a very active market-seeking approach because of the high competition from other carriers; the bulk segment has a client-portfolio that is the result of both active market-seeking next to responding to unsolicited orders. The bulk segment is a very concentrated market with a limited number of plastic producers next to a limited number of bulk carriers. Consequently, the two parties find each other rather easily under the condition that the carrier has an impeccable reputation.

With regard to the service activities offered, in the early 1990s, the service range of C°BBB was complemented with value-added logistic services particularly aimed at the bulk segment. Next to the possibility of an elaborate supply chain management, C°BBB's logistic services concern storage, packing, and handling of granules. These extra services are quite knowledge intensive. C°BBB continuously invests in improving the extra services. The clients value the efforts of C°BBB and participate in the studies set up by C°BBB which leads to an intensive knowledge exchange between the two parties. Nevertheless, when new procedures are adopted the knowledge contribution of C°BBB becomes rather standardized although the contribution of the client remains rather complex. Therefore, C°BBB logistic services are considered type B services. The transport services are classified as type A services. These services require a standardized and simple knowledge contribution of the service provider and service client respectively.

C°BBB is geographically present in the Benelux, Germany, Denmark, France and Italy because it offers daily rides to and from destinations in these countries. Clients are Belgian located industrial shippers next to foreign industrial shippers. C°BBB receives assignments for backloads directly from industrial shippers or from colleague-carriers. Assignments via transport brokers are avoided because these intermediates only stress the transport price and have no interest in quality. C°BBB has an active market-seeking policy in the targeted foreign markets in order to obtain high load factors for the backloads.

Presently, the organizational structure of C°BBB consists of two Belgian sites with spacious storage facilities. In 2001 C°BBB temporarily opened an office in Italy to be able to approach the market from a local outlet. Despite the good circumstances, the office did not become a success and was closed 6 months after its opening. Nevertheless, management of C°BBB feels that with current

communication techniques, there is no strict need to have branches in each targeted country. Besides, especially in the bulk segment, there is currently a trend towards centralizing the authority to negotiate logistics. As such, the logistic service providers must be able to get through to these centralized decision-making centers, which does not require setting up local establishments.

### **A-3. CASE COMPANY CCC**

Company CCC is a family-owned Belgian company founded in 1962 in which the founder is still in charge. Today, C°CCC has more than 400 trucks and trailers. Over the years, the road haulage carrier has steadily grown in terms of geographical presence and range of activities. At present, the service offer of C°CCC contains three core activities. First, C°CCC offers national and international transport services for conventional cargo in full or partial truckloads. Although the majority of the loads is transported over the road, C°CCC invested in swap bodies to allow intermodal transport solutions by using road, rail and short-sea. Second, C°CCC offers forwarding services across Europe. The transport solutions that the forwarding department suggests include transport service carried out by C°CCC but often involves the services of colleague-carriers as well. Third, C°CCC offers distribution services, but due to cost reasons; these services are restricted to the Benelux.

The clients of C°CCC are active in a very diverse range of sectors (e.g. cosmetics, chemicals, beverages, and tires). The transport and distribution departments of C°CCC get assignments through two canals. On the one hand, industrial shippers directly approach C°CCC with transport or distribution needs. On the other hand, after the approval of the clients, the forwarding department passes on particular assignments to the distribution or transport departments. Due to its activities in the market of conventional cargo, the client portfolio is largely the result of an active market-seeking approach both within and across the Belgian borders.

C°CCC's service package can be classified as type A services. The knowledge contribution of the two parties is rather straightforward. A thorough problem definition is needed to deliver the requested service but C°CCC relies on standard processes to provide the demanded services. The entrepreneurial approach, with ensuing flexibility, still dominates the company giving the clients the impression that they receive customized services. Nevertheless, standardization with simple knowledge contribution from the client side characterizes C°CCC's services.

C°CCC is active in Europe with headquarters located in Belgium. The distribution activities are limited to the Benelux but the transport and forwarding activities are offered throughout Europe. For the transporting services, C°CCC uses own trucks and trailers to carry out assignments. Additionally, C°CCC is member of a network of an exclusive European family-owned business in order to be able to offer a wider range of destinations at competitive prices. Foreign clients are actively searched and found to guarantee backloads. Market-seeking occurs mainly through the various wholly-owned forwarding subsidiaries set up across Europe. More particularly, C°CCC has forwarding offices each with limited warehouse capacity in Sweden, France, the United Kingdom and Georgia. In these markets, sales people actively search for clients with transport needs to and from these destinations.

#### **A-4. CASE COMPANY DDD**

Today, company DDD is a large Belgian transport and logistics company. Founded in 1993, the activities of C°DDD originally concerned express deliveries of parcel services. Express deliveries of small parcels within the Benelux are still one of the core activities of C°DDD, however, the service range is expanded with national and international rail, road, sea and air transport, forwarding and value-added logistics. The strength of the service package concerns the various modes of transport and the wide-reaching network that can be used to organize and

execute a whole range of logistic solutions including shipments to destinations all over the world.

C°DDD directly works with industrial shippers that operate in a wide variety of industries (e.g. healthcare, automotive, events). Generally, the clients require a logistic services provider that can handle a worldwide range of destinations. Furthermore, C°DDD clients appreciate the one-stop shop possibility; diverse shipments with diverse transport needs can be taken care of by one service provider. Within the organization, C°DDD make a distinction between three core activities. First, the road and rail activities containing door-to-door services for shipments of all sizes, parcels to full loads, by means of road or combined transport. Second, air and sea activities consisting of international forwarding. C°DDD focuses on organizing the transport of air and sea freight either under its own name or through its agents and partners. Third, logistic activities consisting of a wide range of services associated with the management of freight flows and related information exchange. The varied client portfolio is the result of both active market-seeking and unsolicited orders.

C°DDD offers the whole range of service types defined in the new classification. The one-stop-shopping logic underlying the width of the service package leads to the inclusion of very standardized to very customized services from the perspective of C°DDD for which knowledge contributions of the service clients are required going from simple to very complex. The sectors in which the services are offered affect the particular service type. For instance, examples of type C and D services that require a customized knowledge contribution of the service provider are offered in knowledge intensive sectors like engineering or construction whereas A and B services are offered to shippers of conventional cargo.



The widespread geographical presence of C°DDD is the result of an intense acquisition policy since the late 1990s. Since the start of C°DDD, management has been convinced that the strong position in the Belgian market could be expanded in other markets by buying complementary companies. This policy led to the current situation in which C°DDD is active in 35 countries. Particularly, C°DDD has fully owned subsidiaries in 14 European countries, 11 Asia Pacific countries, 8 American countries, and 2 African countries. As such, C°DDD built a worldwide network of own establishments enriched with various partnerships with independent parties. However, the service package offered in these countries is different, with the most complete package available in Europe and an emphasis on organizing and executing air and sea transport in the other continents. At the moment, the existing structure in the other continents is not strong enough to present the same road and rail activities or logistic solutions in these markets.

Hence, the international character of C°DDD is not only due to the intensive and active client searching activities across Belgian borders to make use of the Belgian facilities for setting up European Distribution Centers. The international character is reflected in the numerous foreign subsidiaries that were acquired the past 5 years. Headquarters are located in Belgium. All financial responsibilities and decision-making power is kept in Belgium. At this stage of growth and rapid expansion, the idea within C°DDD is that managing the wide variety of companies requires a strict policy from headquarters.

#### **A-5. CASE COMPANY EEE**

Company EEE is a Dutch family-owned company that was established in 1944 with a single truck and regular runs to one destination. Today, C°EEE has a capacity over 3000 trucks, 6000 trailers and containers, 350000 square meters of warehousing space, 325 storage silos, rail service centers and several tank cleaning stations. In C°EEE a distinction is made between three types of loads

and as such three different markets are targeted. In particular, C°EEE approaches clients with transport and logistic needs for packed goods, liquids, and bulk goods. Within these three markets, clients in particular sectors are approached (e.g. automotive, electronics, food, petrochemicals, plastics). The client portfolio is the result of permanent active market seeking by C°EEE's sales managers, although a more passive client following mode also affected the current client portfolio to a large extent. The chronology of C°EEE's international expansion clearly showed that cooperation with particular clients is often expanded over country borders. C°EEE values the direct contacts with their clients.

The service package of C°EEE contains two main services, transport and logistics. Again a distinction is made between the three sorts of loads for which specific equipment is used to transport the goods on the one hand and provide logistic services on the other. For instance, for packed goods, C°EEE offers volume transports and specialized warehousing services. For bulk and liquid goods C°EEE uses special silo and tanker trucks respectively for road transport or specific containers for rail and/or sea transport. For logistics services in these two sectors, C°EEE invested in storage silos in case of the bulk goods, whereas for the liquid goods on site logistics is offered.

The service package of C°EEE includes type A and D services. The transport services are usually type A services whereas the logistic services concern type A or D services. Standard logistic services like the mere storing of bulk goods illustrate type A service. Type D services typify the service offer in the sense that C°EEE sets up projects with a limited number of clients. In these projects, a close cooperation occurs between the two parties over a longer time to organize the intense knowledge exchanges.

C°EEE is active in Europe. Originally, the expansion within Europe was mainly focused on the neighboring countries of the Netherlands, as such regular rides were offered to Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, and France. Later, Spain and Italy were added to the targeted markets. Over the years, various establishments were set up in all these countries. Today, the focus lies on Eastern Europe. The first subsidiaries in Poland and Hungary are opened to get a better access to that market. Foreign clients are clearly part of C°EEE's client portfolio. These foreign clients are the results of active market-seeking efforts because the cost-driven nature of C°EEE strives for high load factors which implies that full backloads are considered indispensable for each ride.

With respect to the organizational structure, C°EEE has 30 offices throughout Europe. In particular, C°EEE has subsidiaries in Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, Hungary, and Poland. Headquarters are still located in the Netherlands in which various other operational sites are in use. The organizational structure is the result of slow organic growth that characterizes the beginning of the international expansion whereas the later international extensions occurred through acquisitions.

#### **A-6. CASE COMPANY FFF**

Company FFF is a family-owned Belgian logistics company that was founded in 1928. Today C°FFF is a prominent logistic services group with an own fleet of more than a thousand units. Over the years the transport and distribution activities were complemented with value adding services such as warehousing, handling, and assembly. C°FFF works in different sectors offering transport, distribution and logistic solutions. More particularly, the transport and distribution activities are aimed at shippers with partial or full truck loads of conventional cargo; the logistic activities are targeted at sectors with packed

goods that want to outsource their outbound logistics; and specialized logistics are designed for the polymer and automotive industry.

C°FFF directly works for shippers with transport and/or logistic needs. Additionally, the close cooperation with other transporting companies in a European network implies that C°FFF gives and gets numerous transport assignments via partners in a dense network. The current client portfolio is the result of both an active and passive approach. C°FFF's reputation and ensuing positive word-of-mouth leads to a situation in which a substantial part of the clients approach C°FFF. Moreover, C°FFF's business development team constantly approaches potential clients to introduce their company and service package. Leads for these company presentations often come from the network of contacts with extant clients, professional organizations, governmental institutions, etceteras in which C°FFF invests heavily.

Generally, the services that are offered by C°FFF can be classified as type A, B and type D services. First, transport assignments of packed and bulk goods are examples of type A services. The knowledge contribution of both parties is very straightforward. Secondly, the services offered to the automotive sector can be classified as type B services. In this sector, the logistics services contain very specialized and innovative activities that include a part of the assembly of the products that the shipper hands over to C°FFF. In these cases, the knowledge that needs to be contributed by the clients is rather complex, as they need to reveal parts of their assembly process to the logistic services provider. For C°FFF, the knowledge contribution to the service delivery proces is rather standardized. Carrying out the required service processes is captured in standard procedures that are to a great extent developed by the client. Thirdly, some of the warehousing and logistics projects can be classified as type D services. In these

projects, the two parties need to cooperate closely and contribute a lot of expert knowledge to make the collaboration a success.

C°FFF is geographically active in Europe with regard to the transport assignments through its participation in a widespread network of transport companies. C°FFF offers a wide variety of logistic services in Belgium, but the international activities of C°FFF are mainly limited to road haulage. To respond to the international transport needs of their Belgian located clients, C°FFF acts as a forwarder, subcontracting most of the international transport assignments to partners. A first exception is made in Italy where C°FFF has a coordinating office that supervises the transport assignments that are partly organized via rail transport. Another exception to C°FFF's restricted international scope are the activities in the automotive sector, for which C°FFF has participated in a joint venture with a North-American partner. This partner brought its establishments in Germany and Great Britain into the joint venture. Nevertheless, C°FFF is considered an internationally active logistic service provider because of three reasons. First, C°FFF needs to invest permanently in contacts with foreign partners in the transport network that requires active foreign market-seeking efforts; second C°FFF's cooperation with the foreign partner in the automotive sector; thirdly, the international shippers in C°FFF client portfolio.

The organizational structure of C°FFF is mainly located in Belgium, although the joint venture in the automotive sector gives C°FFF joint establishments in two foreign countries. However, C°FFF is able to provide international transport services by relying on a network of partners to carry out transport to a wide variety of destinations. Until now, C°FFF does not experience any need to set up foreign offices to improve the services offered.

## **A-7. CASE COMPANY GGG**

Company GGG is a Belgian family-owned company that was established in 1987. Originally, the main activity of C°GGG was the import and export of detergents that were bought and sold all over the world. Soon, the organization of transport and distribution were added to the range of activities. In the early 1990s, the general attitude towards the protection of the environment started to change, leading governments to issue all kinds of safety rules and licenses. C°GGG saw this trend as an opportunity and decided to extend its limited storage facilities with building a new warehouse according to the new regulations and to go for each additional permit. Trading in detergents was gradually diminished while a new segment was targeted. More specifically, companies with storage and distribution needs for highly toxic and/or dangerous products that did not have the licenses themselves became the prime target group.

Over the years, C°GGG's services further developed into a highly specialized logistic service range such as storage, packaging, repackaging, labeling, etceteras of very delicate chemical and pharmaceutical products. Next to building a warehouse in which these specific activities could occur, C°GGG invested in a fleet of vehicles that are fully equipped for the distribution of dangerous packed goods. For long distance transportation, C°GGG relies on specialized partners for air, sea and/or rail transport. C°GGG has consciously restricted the target group to producers and users of packed dangerous chemicals and pharmaceutical products. Dangerous bulk goods remain out of C°GGG's scope. As such, C°GGG works in a niche which implies that the total number of potential and actual clients is rather limited.

The client portfolio is the result of both active market-seeking complemented with responding to unsolicited orders. The segment in which C°GGG works is very concentrated and a good reputation is key to attracting clients. Therefore,

C°GGG is quite particular in choosing clients. For instance, clients with one-off needs for transport are not accepted, C°GGG wants to sell integrated service packages of transport combined with warehousing.

The service package of C°GGG can be characterized as a combination of type A, B and D services. In the majority of the service encounters, the knowledge contribution of the clients is complex due to the specialized nature of the goods that require logistics. The particular service determines to what extent the knowledge contribution of C°GGG is more standardized rather than customized. For instance, the mere storage of dangerous goods according to the appropriate rules and regulations is an example of a type B service whereas a cooperation in which C°GGG takes over the organization and management of the complete stock of a company's chemical raw materials is an example of a type D service. Type A services complete typifying the service package, as some services offered require a very simple knowledge contribution of both parties.

C°GGG is active in Europe with a main operational focus on Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Germany. Generally, C°GGG provides services for diverse European establishments of several multinationals. The commonality is that the clients require storage of their goods somewhere centrally in Europe from which and to which diverse transports occur. The client's goods come from anywhere in the world and after handling and storage in C°GGG's warehouses, they go to destinations all over Europe although the majority is sent to the neighboring countries of Belgium. Due to the specialized nature of C°GGG's services, the Belgian market has always been too small. Consequently, C°GGG's client portfolio has been international from the very beginning.

Until now, C°GGG organized, coordinated and delivered the highly specialized services from their only site in Belgium. The central location in Europe proved

to be ideal and no need was felt yet to build extra facilities such as warehouses in other countries.

#### **A-8. CASE COMPANY HHH**

Case company HHH is not really a company but an independent business unit of a global holding active in the sector of rolling bearings and seals. In the early 1990s, the top decided to establish an autonomous unit to optimize the worldwide warehousing and transportation services for the group which led to the formal start of C°HHH in 1995 with an European Distribution Center in Belgium. A year later, the project was fully implemented and well adopted by all parties involved. In 1999, C°HHH decided to provide integrated logistics services to external companies. Their wide experience in industrial logistics, the spare capacity in the warehouses and a positive customer response convinced C°HHH to expand their services into a new external market. Hence, the worldwide distribution network and logistic services were opened to other suppliers of spare parts or industrial goods.

C°HHH consciously targets suppliers of complementary goods in order to fully exploit their experience. Choosing for suppliers of other industrial goods has the advantage that they often have the same clients than C°HHH's group. Consequently, various goods ordered from different suppliers can be delivered at the same address which increases the efficiency of C°HHH's distribution activities. Furthermore, choosing for similar products implies that C°HHH can make use of their extensive warehousing experience. C°HHH felt that in the expansion to the external market, attracting customers was the most difficult issue. Previously, seeking clients was no problem as C°HHH worked for the group and as such the logistic services were delivered to the manufacturing sites, sales companies, dealers and distributors of the group. Currently, the client



portfolio is the result of active market-seeking and reactive responding to unsolicited orders.

The service packages that C°HHH offers to the new external market contains logistics. C°HHH relies on third parties for the distribution of the goods. Third parties coordinate and carry out the transport activities following the close instructions of C°HHH. The logistic services are carried out by C°HHH and include a wide variety of value added services such as storage, handling and supply chain management. Despite the specialized nature of the services for industrial goods, C°HHH services towards the external market can be classified as type A and type B services. For C°HHH, the services require a standardized knowledge contribution. C°HHH used the setting of its own group to optimize and standardize the procedures to provide the different services. The knowledge contribution of the C°HHH's clients depends on the particular service demanded. Some clients merely want cross-docking services which are an example of type A services, whereas others outsource all warehousing and distribution activities to C°HHH which is an example of type B services because of the rather complex knowledge contribution by the client.

C°HHH's group is mainly active in Europe due to its Scandinavian origin. Nevertheless, over the years, the attention has shifted overseas to America and Asia. Hence, logistic services are needed to support this global approach with daily flows of goods to and from destinations all over the world. This affected the services of C°HHH. In 1996, C°HHH started to open facilities in the USA, Mexico and Singapore next to their extensive infrastructure in Europe. Since 1992, the logistics in the European market were reorganized around four international warehouses that are located in Sweden, France, Italy and Germany and a European Distribution Center in Belgium. The goods are transported from the numerous manufacturing sites to the warehouses in the eight countries. By

means of a central computer and transport system, the goods are divided over the different facilities to be sent to the group's clients in the most efficient way. C°HHH uses the same systems and facilities to service the goods of their external clients.

### **A-9. CASE COMPANY III**

Company III is not an independent company but the Belgian subsidiary of the business unit integrated logistic services of a French container-shipping group. The new business unit was set up in 2001 with the overall objective to offer cargo-owners – traders, importers, and exporters – access to international forwarding operations and the organization of a full range of logistic services in extension to liner shipping offered by the group. The forwarding services contain the organization of air, sea and intermodal transportation whereas the logistic operations include the organization a wide variety of activities such as warehousing, handling, distribution of the goods of cargo-owners. Important to stress, the subsidiaries in the new business unit like C°III in Belgium have a strictly organizing and coordinating role, all services that their clients want, are subcontracted to specialized logistic service providers. Therefore, in Table Appendix – 1, we classified the service package as containing forwarding services only to stress the organizing character. The logistics service providers to which C°III subcontracts the services are usually Belgian medium sized companies that are for instance specialized in warehousing, road haulage, inland shipping, and rail transport.

The clients of C°III operate in a wide variety of industries (e.g. clothing, toys, household goods, florist materials) that demand extensive logistic support in importing or exporting packed goods. C°III works in a very international context, they negotiate with the party – importer, exporter or trader – that decides how the transport is going to be organized and carried out. For C°III

this often means doing business with European companies that buy goods in the Far East and that want to make use of the port of Antwerp to import these goods in Europe. Indeed, sea transport is always a part of the service package. The trajectory Far East – Europe is the most common one for the flow of goods that C°III manages. Nevertheless, the broad network of the group to which C°III belongs facilitates other trajectories but most of C°III's clients require support from or to Europe through Belgium.

All clients in C°III's portfolio are the result of active market-seeking efforts of C°III. Although C°III can rely on the good reputation of the mother company, the market in which the integrated logistic services are offered is rather new. This means that C°III has to approach potential clients to inform them about C°III's existence and hence of the possibility to outsource the logistic services to C°III. The services that C°III offers can be classified as type A and B services. C°III's objective is to capture the procedures to offer tailor made logistic solutions in formalized modules. As such, C°III's knowledge contribution in the service delivery processes is standardized. The various subsidiaries of the integrated logistics business unit all rely on the same information systems to uniformly follow shipments in the outsourced supply chain. The particular needs of the client affect their knowledge contribution. A simple knowledge contribution is needed when the service package contains straightforward service requirements. A complex knowledge contribution is necessary when the requested service package contains many activities that need to be highly customized. The success of C°III's services is dependent on C°III's capability to capture the needs and expectations of their clients in order to translate these needs into clear assignments for the subcontractors that have to carry out the services that lead to the requested solutions.

As stated above, C°III is focused on clients that need support for the flow of goods between the Far East and Europe with an entrance in a Belgian port. Usually, these clients are medium sized European companies. Only 2,5% of C°III's assignments concerns cross trade which means that the transport and logistic support of goods is organized between two destinations far away from Belgium. With respect to the majority of C°III's assignments, 40% of the goods that arrive in Belgium are distributed to final customers (e.g. retailers) in Belgium or Luxemburg. The remaining 60% of the goods mainly go to France, Germany, Spain and Greece.

With regard to the organizational structure, C°III is the Belgian subsidiary of the business unit integrated logistic services of a large container shipping group. Next to the Belgian establishment, subsidiaries have been set up in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and China. However, in the rest of the world, the group has many subsidiaries and agents that can represent the new business unit in case clients are interested and want to make use of the new services. The objective is to expand the number of subsidiaries to obtain a presence all over the world. Particular preparations are made for setting up subsidiaries in for instance the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Egypt, Australia, and Malaysia.

# Samenvatting

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De algemene doelstelling van dit proefschrift is een beter inzicht te krijgen in de internationalisatie van dienstverlenende bedrijven. Ondanks het toenemend belang van diensten in termen van tewerkstelling, BNP en internationale handel, is er namelijk weinig geweten over de manier waarop dienstverleners internationaliseren. Om de studie een duidelijke focus te geven werden er twee beperkingen gesteld. Ten eerste wordt er specifiek gekeken naar de groep van *industriële* diensten. Ten tweede wordt er ingezoomd op *periodes van voortgang* in het internationalisatieproces. Vanuit dit standpunt werd de volgende centrale onderzoeksvraag geformuleerd in hoofdstuk 1: “Hoe en waarom wordt voortgang gerealiseerd in het internationalisatieproces van een industriële dienstverlener?”

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, is er een studie opgezet in twee delen. In het eerste theoretische deel, is de bestaande literatuur grondig doorgelicht. Hoofdstuk 2 bevat een literatuurstudie rond diensten en internationalisatie. Dit hoofdstuk bespreekt een honderdtal studies via een samenvatting van de onderzochte onderwerpen, de voornaamste bevindingen, en de onderliggende conceptuele modellen. We hebben daarbij vastgesteld dat de literatuur over diensten en internationalisatie schaars is in termen van de gehanteerde conceptuele en methodologische aanpak. Huidige studies slagen er niet in een eenduidig inzicht te geven in het internationalisatieproces van dienstverlenende bedrijven. Bijgevolg zijn er drie uitdagingen geformuleerd op basis waarvan toekomstig onderzoek zoals deze doctoraatsstudie kan vertrekken.

De eerste uitdaging gaat over het expliciet erkennen van de heterogeniteit van diensten als groep. We gaan er van uit dat de internationalisatie van een

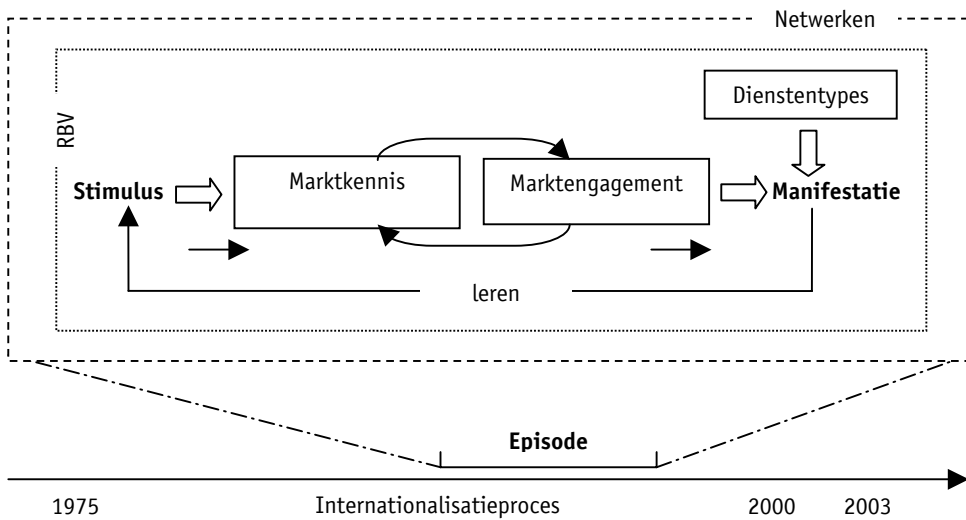
dienstverlenende organisatie beïnvloed wordt door het type dienst dat aangeboden wordt. Om de heterogeniteit in rekening te brengen, werd er gezocht naar een classificatie van internationale diensten. Een grondige doorlichting van acht bestaande schema's in hoofdstuk 3 brengt diverse problemen naar voor waardoor deze classificaties niet in staat zijn om de diversiteit in het internationalisatiegedrag te bestuderen. Dit leidde tot het formuleren van een eigen classificatie waarbij vertrokken wordt van Hill's (1999) definitie van diensten. In de nieuwe classificatie wordt een onderscheid gemaakt tussen vier diensten op basis van de kenniscontributie van de dienstverlener enerzijds en de klant anderzijds in het dienstverleningsproces. Op die manier wordt de cruciale interactie tussen de twee partijen benadrukt. Figuur 1 stelt de vier diensttypes in de nieuwe classificatie voor.

**Figuur 1: Vier diensttypes in een nieuwe classificatie**

	<i>Kenniscontributie van de klant</i>	
<i>Kenniscontributie van de dienstverlener</i>	Simpel (voornamelijk expliciete kennis)	Gecompliceerd (combinatie expliciete – impliciete kennis)
Gestandaardiseerd (expliciete kennis)	<p><u>Type A</u>  <u>Routine Diensten</u>  <i>(beperkt aantal gestandaardiseerde interacties gedurende een kort dienstverleningsproces)</i></p>	<p><u>Type B</u>  <u>Modulaire Diensten</u>  <i>(groot aantal gestandaardiseerde interacties gedurende een langer dienstverleningsproces)</i></p>
Maatwerk (voornamelijk impliciete kennis)	<p><u>Type C</u>  <u>Expert Diensten</u>  <i>(beperkt aantal op maat gemaakte interacties gedurende een langer dienstverleningsproces)</i></p>	<p><u>Type D</u>  <u>Co-Developed Diensten</u>  <i>(groot aantal op maat gemaakte interacties gedurende een lang dienstverleningsproces)</i></p>

De tweede uitdaging betreft de nood aan sterke conceptuele modellen om de internationalisatie van dienstverleners te bestuderen. In de literatuurstudie bleek dat voorgaand onderzoek onvoldoende steunt op sterke theoretische kaders waardoor de bevindingen elkaar tegenspreken en er geen eenduidig beeld bereikt wordt. Toekomstige studies rond diensten en internationalisatie kunnen verbeterd worden door het gebruik van een sterk conceptueel uitgangspunt dat de dataverzameling, analyse en interpretatie kan leiden. In dit doctoraat volgen we onderzoekers zoals Javalgi et al. (2003), O'Farrell et al. (1998) en Boddewyn et al. (1986) die stellen dat modellen ontwikkeld in een productcontext een interessante uitgangsbasis vormen voor onderzoek in een dienstencontext. We introduceren het Verrijkte Uppsala model in hoofdstuk 4 waarbij uitgegaan wordt van het wel aanvaarde Uppsala internationalisatieproces model van Johanson en Vahlne (1977; 1990). Vanuit de kernassumptie – internationaliseren is leren - versterken we dit model met drie andere onderzoeksdomeinen. Meer bepaald worden inzichten en concepten van de 'resource-based view', organisationeel leren, en de industriële netwerk theorie gebruikt om een antwoord te zoeken op de twee belangrijkste kritieken op het Uppsala model. Concreet zoemen we in op episodes van voortgang om de dynamiek in het internationalisatieproces beter te vatten en het gedetermineerd karakter van het proces tegen te spreken. In lijn met het Uppsala model gaan we ervan uit dat voortgang het resultaat is van een intense wisselwerking tussen marktkennis en marktengagement. Figuur 2 geeft een voorstelling van onze focus op episodes van voortgang in het internationalisatieproces die benaderd worden vanuit het verrijkte Uppsala model. We veronderstellen dat episodes van voortgang gevat kunnen worden in de sequentie 'stimulus-wisselwerking-manifestatie'. Met andere woorden, voortgang volgt uit een omgevingsstimulus die de wisselwerking tussen marktkennis en marktengagement in werking zet, en die uiteindelijk eindigt in een manifestatie die de verandering in het internationalisatieproces uitdrukt.

**Figuur 2: Focus op episodes van voortgang in het internationalisatieproces vertrekkend van het verrijkte Uppsala model**



De derde uitdaging betreft de praktische onderzoeksaanpak wat ons bij het tweede empirische deel van de studie brengt. De literatuurstudie geeft aan dat in voorgaande studies over internationalisatie van diensten het vaak aan methodologische rigiditeit ontbreekt. Toekomstig onderzoek is gebaat met een sterk conceptueel uitgangspunt dat vergezeld wordt van een transparante opzet van het onderzoeksproces. In hoofdstuk 5 wordt er uitgebreid ingegaan op de ontologische, methodologische en methodologische pijlers van deze doctoraatsstudie. Het gebruik van de meervoudige gevalstudie in negen logistieke bedrijven wordt uitgebreid toegelicht.

In hoofdstuk 6 worden de eerste resultaten besproken. Concreet worden de negen onderzochte logistieke bedrijven voorgesteld via de reconstructie van hun internationalisatieproces. Met behulp van een tijdslijn wordt aangegeven in welke landen de organisatie actief is, welke diensten er aangeboden worden, de operationele structuur die de internationale aanwezigheid mogelijk maakt, en de



interne en externe context waarin de uitbreidingen gebeurden. Bovendien wordt de internationalisatie van de negen case bedrijven besproken in termen van de kernconcepten die in de literatuurstudie naar voren kwamen. Er wordt ingegaan op motieven om te internationaliseren, land/markt keuze en de selectie van entreestrategieën. Het hoofdstuk sluit af met een bespreking van de impact van de dienstentypes op het internationalisatieproces. Hoewel de dienstenpakketten van de negen case bedrijven één, meerdere of al de vier dienstentypes bevatten die gedefinieerd werden in hoofdstuk 3, bleek er een sterke dominantie van Type A – Routine diensten (cf. van Hoek, 2000). Tegen onze verwachtingen in stelden we bovendien een geringe impact vast van de dienstentypes op de internationalisatie. Een sterke industrielogica zorgt er blijkbaar voor dat de logistieke dienstverleners de impact van de dienstentypes schijnen te onderschatten en aldus onvoldoende in rekening brengen.

In hoofdstuk 7 worden de periodes van voortgang in detail bestudeerd wat leidt tot de introductie van de 'mid-range' theorie die bestaat uit drie lagen zoals voorgesteld in Figuur 3 hieronder. Op basis van 14 onderzochte episodes worden vier stappen onderscheiden in een episode van voortgang waarin een omgevingsstimulus leidt tot een wisselwerking tussen marktkennis en marktengagement die uiteindelijk uitmondt in een bepaalde manifestatie. Een intense studie van 14 gevallen toonde dat de case bedrijven voortgang realiseren volgens één van zes ideaal-typische scenario's (S1 tot S6 in Figuur 3) die van elkaar verschillen met betrekking tot het onderliggende leerproces. De dominantie van het Type A – Routine diensten in de onderzochte bedrijven zorgde ervoor dat we onvoldoende variatie hebben waardoor de dienstenheterogeniteit niet is meegenomen in de constructie van de 'mid-range' theorie.

**Figuur 3: Mid-range theorie over voortgang in een internationalisatieproces**

Empirische laag	Beschrijvende laag	Verklarende laag
<b>Step 1: Perceptie en validatie stimulus</b>		
<b>Stap 1a:</b> Waarnemen van een stimulus in de interne of externe omgeving van de organisatie.	$\Delta MK IK$	Exploitatief $\longrightarrow$ $S_5$ <i>institutionalisatie</i>
<b>Stap 1b:</b> De waargenomen stimulus wordt uitdagend beschouwd en een nieuwe ronde van informatie zoeken vangt aan. De extra kennis leidt tot een verandering in het engagement van de organisatie met betrekking tot internationalisatie in de betreffende markt.	$\Delta C IK$	Exploitatief $\longrightarrow$ $S_6$ <i>institutionalisatie</i>
<b>Step 2: Naar het besef van stress</b>		
<b>Stap 2:</b> De organisatie ondervindt een storende discrepantie tussen de activiteiten die ze werkelijk onderneemt op de betreffende markt en die wat ze zou willen ondernemen.	$S= IC-TC $	Exploitatief
<b>Step 3: Zoektocht naar een reactie</b>		
<b>Stap 3a:</b> Een zoektocht naar een manier om de stress weg te werken start. De eerste reactie bestaat erin om na te gaan of de investeringen kunnen aangepast worden aan de veranderde attitudes.	$\Delta TC IK?$	Exploitatief
<b>Stap 3b:</b> De zoektocht naar een reactie wordt vervolgd. Het gebrek aan een duidelijke oplossing binnen de bestaande alternatieven vraagt om een aanpassing van de bestaande routines en normen. De vraag is echter of de stress groot genoeg is om de geïnstitutionaliseerde routines drastisch te veranderen.	$\Delta IK S?$	Exploitatief
<b>Stap 3c:</b> De bereidheid om de routines en normen te veranderen brengt een volgende vraag mee. Met name, moet er ook al een nieuwe oplossing gecreëerd worden.	$\Delta IK \ \& \ \Delta TC ?$	Exploratief
<b>Step 4: Implementatie reactie</b>		
<b>Stap 4:</b> Afhankelijk van de uitkomst in de vorige stappen, zijn er vier reacties die de waargenomen stress kunnen elimineren. In twee situaties wordt er actie ondernomen in de zin dat de investeringen worden veranderd (gedragmatige reacties) terwijl in twee andere situaties de veranderde attitudes opnieuw aangepast worden (attitudinele reacties).	Vier reacties: S1. $\Delta TC IK$ S2. $\Delta IC IK$ S3. $\Delta IK \ \& \ \Delta TC$ S4. $\Delta IK \ \& \ \Delta IC$	Exploitatief $S_1 \ S_2$ Exploratief $S_3 \ S_4$

Tot slot, in hoofdstuk 8 wordt de studie afgesloten. Kort samengevat leidt deze doctoraatstudie tot een vernieuwde conceptualisatie van voortgang in de

internationalisatie van logistieke dienstverleners. Steunend op een uitgebreid theoretisch kader wordt een beter inzicht gegeven in de internationalisatie van de logistieke sector die onmiskenbaar een dienstensector is die nog maar weinig academische aandacht genoot. Door middel van de zes ideaal-typische scenario's in de 'mid-range' theorie kan de dynamiek in het internationalisatieproces beter begrepen worden en kan er afstand genomen worden van het internationalisatieproces als een pre-gedetermineerd proces. De studie kent echter ook een aantal beperkingen die besproken worden en waaruit een aantal voorstellen gedaan worden naar verder onderzoek.

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