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# The experience of being a knowledge manager in a multinational: a practice perspective

Linh Chi Vo

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**ÉCOLE CENTRALE DES ARTS  
ET MANUFACTURES  
« ÉCOLE CENTRALE PARIS »**

## **THÈSE**

**Linh Chi VO**

**pour l'obtention du**

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**2009 - ECAP0038**

L'Ecole Centrale Paris n'entend donner ni approbation ni improbation aux opinions émises dans cette thèse: ces opinions doivent être considérées comme propres à leur auteur.

*I would like to dedicate this work in loving memory of my mother, Tran Kim Lan, an extraordinary human being, whose presence has constantly been with me, is with me now, and will always be.*

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## ABSTRACT

Inspired by the lack of research on the practices of knowledge managers in the literature and the existing dominance of the building mode in strategy-as-practice research, this thesis has two attempts. One is to examine how the knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, do their job via intentional doing and practical coping in their particular context. Another is to understand how knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, experience their position.

To develop an investigation framework, this thesis relies on the pragmatic theory of John Dewey, especially his perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment. The empirical investigation is carried out based on the six inter-related procedures put forward by van Manen (1990), which stem from the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology. Seven knowledge managers of two branches of Lafarge Group, who work in different countries, including France, Austria, China, and Canada, are interviewed during two sessions of two hours. The interviews are semi-structured with open-ended questions.

The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the knowledge managers, and studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality of each story. Exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases presented. Validity is enhanced by internal verification and testing of interpretive description, craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996), and a validation of findings by the participant. An "audit trail" (Koch, 1994) is kept to help the reader follow the rationale of the researcher's interpretations.

Dewey's pragmatism and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology help unveil a rich description of the totality of lived experiences of the knowledge managers, including anything that appears or presents itself such as actions, feelings, thoughts, and objects. It is revealed that the main particularity of knowledge management is that it is a new function. The knowledge managers have to build a place for the knowledge management function through a strategizing process. The knowledge managers can be compared with the rafters on an angry river, with the river indicating the organizational context, and the rafting representing the strategizing process. The knowledge managers, as the rafters, are carried on as well as endangered by the current. They fight to protect their inflatable boat from sinking by trying to avoid the obstacles and taking advantage of what is useful for them on the river. From the cross-case thematic analysis, the strategizing actions, undertaken by the knowledge managers, are grouped into three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labelled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively. Both building and dwelling modes are present in these categories of strategizing actions. From the paradigm-case analysis, the knowledge managers are divided into three groups based on their capability to survive the turbulent organizational context and build a territory for the knowledge management function. Among the seven knowledge manager, one has decided to give up the position, four are still struggling with the obstacles and the powerful current to obtain a place within the organizational, and two have achieved certain success. They are named the defeated, the struggling, and the contented, respectively. It is also revealed that the experience of being a knowledge manager, as strategizing practitioner, is unique to each individual, who undergoes a transactional relationship with the environment and learns over time how to cope with it in a more effective way.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the experience of being a knowledge manager in a multinational. It aims at understanding how the knowledge managers actually do their job and how they live their lives as knowledge managers.

This general introduction is organized as follows. It will begin by a discussion on the significance of this phenomenon of interest and how the research questions are formulated. A presentation of the conceptual framework, the methodology and the method mobilized in this study follows. Then the context of the research field, in which the investigation is conducted, will be introduced. Findings of the research will be briefly presented. Finally, a summary of the chapters in the thesis will be made.

### I. The significance of the phenomenon of interest and formulation of the research questions

#### 1. The significance of the phenomenon of interest

Interest in the topic of knowledge management has undoubtedly boomed (Johnson, 2000; Orlikowski, 2002; Swan *et al.*, 1999). In the academic world, the field of knowledge management has developed quickly over the last decade and the literature on the topic has demonstrated increasing diversity and specialization (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003). Knowledge management has also become a term commonly used in today's business environment and has been usually associated with large-budget projects pursued by firms, which are convinced that the competitive advantage of utmost importance is the ability to learn faster than competitors (DeGeus, 1988). Many firms have explicitly recognized the role of knowledge management by including "knowledge managers" in their organizational charts (Johnson, 2000). However, there is a lack of research on the knowledge managers, the *doers* of knowledge management. Existing research has not been able to demonstrate how they actually *do* their job and how they actually *experience* their position. The research tends to look only at the surface, i.e. the observed activities of the actual "doing" of the knowledge managers. A closer and deeper look at the knowledge managers' lives in their position is needed.

#### 2. Formulation of the research questions

The formulation of the research questions is based on the review of three areas of the literature.

First, a review of the knowledge management literature reveals that a practice school has recently emerged. It has generated the social-process view of knowledge and the second generation of knowledge management in the literature. The practice school offers to investigate the doing of the knowledge managers in their job as situated doing in their particular context.

Second, since the occupation of knowledge manager has only been recognized recently, a literature on new occupation is reviewed briefly. It leads to an observation that doing the job of a knowledge manager is not the same as doing the jobs that have been accepted such as those in marketing or human resources. Knowledge managers, as practitioners of new occupation, have to create effective strategies to do their job and secure professional legitimacy and status. Moreover, studies have

started to posit that securing professional legitimacy is a process embedded in a social, cultural, historical, and regulatory context, where the individual professionals play an important role.

Third, the strategy-as-practice literature is reviewed. It proposes an interesting perspective to take into consideration this specificity of the knowledge manager occupation and to examine the situated doing of knowledge managers. From this perspective, knowledge managers can be considered as strategizing practitioners, who undertake actions, interact, and draw on situated practice to create appropriate strategies to do their job and professionalize their status. Doing their job and professionalizing their status can be examined as a strategizing process.

In addition, it is found that the strategy-as-practice literature is dominated by the building mode, which is underlined by the primacy of intentional states and individual motivations. It has been argued that strategizing also takes place in a dwelling mode, in which strategic outcomes do not presuppose deliberate prior planning or intention, and strategy is something immanent - it unfolds through everyday practical coping actions (Chia and Holt, 2006).

Based on these reviews, the research questions are formulated as follows:

*How do the knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, do their job via intentional doing and practical coping in their particular context?*

*What is the life of a knowledge manager as a strategizing practitioner?*

## **II. Conceptual framework, methodology and method**

In order to address these research questions, a conceptual framework based on John Dewey's pragmatism, especially his perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment, is adopted. Relying on Dewey's viewpoint, the dynamics of individual's practices can be characterized as a process, in which man's actions, in his interactive response to the environment, reproduces as well as transforms that environment, which in turn will have impact on his future actions. Both building and dwelling dimensions are taken into account in Dewey's concepts of habits and inquiry. The framework helps expand the practice turn in social theory. It goes beyond the notion of practice focused on human disposition, habits, and the iterative procedural routines, to a notion of practice that pays attention to actors' orientation toward the past, the present, as well as the future. It enables us to investigate fully the practices of the knowledge managers rather than just the "visible part of the iceberg" (de La Ville and Mounoud, forthcoming). It is argued in this thesis that Dewey's perspective is applicable not only for the practice approach in management literature at large but also for the strategy-as-practice perspective.

Dewey advocates an experimental methodology, but does not develop concrete experimental methods or specific program for the conduct of social research. Moreover, pragmatism is the philosophy of uncertainty and relative interpretive openness, coupled with a strong desire to succeed and make things work. It does not search for a priori principles of research and once-and-for-all fixed methods of science. Rather, researchers should look for method best suited for providing a compelling answer to a given question. Therefore, within the scope of this research, the employed methodology

and method are hermeneutic phenomenological oriented. Phenomenology is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness, as we experience them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld. In fact, Dewey's pragmatism and hermeneutic phenomenology share many commonalities. Both view the world as a perceived world, oppose the idea that meaning is a given, and reject against the dualism between body and mind, man and nature, subjectivity and objectivity, and the like. It is argued that phenomenology remains rooted in descriptive interpretations of the structures, while pragmatism puts forward experimental research. This research places phenomenological description within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification by a validation at the experiential level of the participants and an internal testing of the analysis process.

In line with the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, the empirical investigation is carried out by the six inter-related procedures put forward by van Manen (1990). They consist of turning to a phenomenon of interest, investigating the experience as it is lived, reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the question, and balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Seven knowledge managers of two branches of Lafarge are interviewed during two sessions of two hours. The interviews are semi-structured with open-ended questions, in which there is a sequence of themes to be covered, yet there is also openness to change of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the participants.

The analysis of the collected data aims at reaching an interpretive description of the experience of the seven knowledge managers. The interpretation tools used in this research include the concepts of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, prejudice, the fusion of horizons, and play developed by Gadamer (1975). The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the knowledge managers, and studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality and the contextual root of each story. The cross-case thematic analysis describes the knowledge managers' organizational context and identifies their common categories of strategizing actions. It unveils the "pervasive quality" (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager, which in turn helps further interpret the data as well as is confirmed by the data. The paradigm case analysis reveals how each individual knowledge manager undergoes his/her life as a strategizing practitioner, his/her chosen actions within the common categories of strategizing action, the degree to which the building and dwelling modes dominate one another in his/her actions, and the transactional process, in which he/she comes up with his/her chosen actions in relation to the environment. Seeking the themes is guided by van Manen (1990) in his suggested methods for isolating thematic statements, which are the detailed reading approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. The move from the grouped thoughts of the participants, to the concepts, sub-themes, and ultimately, themes is informed by the useful advice provided by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) on coding ideas. In the model proposed by Benner,

exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases. It should be noted that cross-case analysis and paradigm case analysis are not two sequential steps. They are rather intertwined in the move back and forth between parts and whole in the analysis.

### **III. Context of the research field**

The research is conducted with seven knowledge managers in the cement branch and the concrete and aggregate branch of Lafarge Group. Although being part of the same multinational, the context for knowledge management in each branch is very different.

In the cement branch, since twenty years, many different initiatives have been introduced in a spontaneous way without a formal knowledge-capitalizing process. This has made the sharing database of the branch become extremely ill-structured with a myriad of heterogeneous documents. Due to the language barrier, the IT problems, and the lack of an ordered structure, people have had strong hostility toward the sharing database.

In 2001, the branch made an important acquisition of a cement company in North America, which necessitated the formalization of the knowledge management function. Knowledge management was then assigned to CKHC (Cement Know-How Center), an entity belonging to the performance department of the branch. The CKHC was responsible for improving the sharing database by collaborating with a network of experts. In the cement branch, the experts work in four technical centers, which are located around the world to provide factories with technical assistance. The experts are culturally considered to be holders of knowledge, hence, indispensable actors in knowledge management.

In 2006, the CKHC ceased to exist and its personnel joined different entities in the performance department. The two people, who took care of the sharing database, were grouped under Industrial Knowledge that belongs to the performance department. Besides these two people, there still exists a network of correspondents in the four technical centers. They are called Information Officers and act as a relay between Industrial Knowledge and plant people, regarding all issues related to knowledge management. For this research, the two people in Industrial Knowledge and three information officers are invited to participate.

In the concrete and aggregate branch, knowledge management does not have such a long history. The function has been in place for only about eight years. One significant contextual difference for this branch is the absence of experts. There is no one with the status of holders of knowledge. There are only different communities with a head in each expertise. They are the actors, who are expected to help the knowledge managers in maintaining and nourishing the database, but they are not officially implicated like the experts in the cement branch. Thanks to the absence of official experts, for eight years, the branch has chosen to involve everybody in the sharing of knowledge. Anyone, regardless of hierarchical level and expertise domain, has something to share with others and can learn something from others. The validation process of the plant contribution is, thus, much simpler.

In terms of the knowledge management organization, there is a knowledge manager working at the headquarter in Paris, who is in charge of the entire knowledge management process. That person works in collaboration with a network of regional knowledge managers and sponsors. The knowledge managers play the role of a regional relay for the knowledge management activities. The sponsors, who normally are the directors of the Business units, provide support to the knowledge managers. The knowledge managers are often the performance managers, who contribute 20% of their time to knowledge management activities. There is also a steering committee, which is composed of representatives of each region and each function of the company. The role of the steering committee is to approve the important decisions related to knowledge management.

Like the cement branch, the sharing database was not positively accepted by people in this branch. People did not use it and it was not working at the time the knowledge manager in Paris took over the function. For this research, the knowledge manager in Paris and the regional knowledge manager in Canada are invited to participate.

#### **IV. Findings**

The findings confirm that the main specificity of knowledge management is that it is a new function. It does not have an accepted place within the organization, like marketing or human resources. The knowledge managers accept this lack of territory and create strategies to develop a place for the knowledge management function. This particularity is in line with the underlying argument permeating new occupation literature that practitioners of new occupation, whether individual or aggregate, have to make considerable efforts to secure professional legitimacy and status.

Based on the data analysis, it is seen that the doing the job of a knowledge manager is like being a rafter on an angry river, the knowledge management function is like the inflatable boat, the knowledge sharing database is like a library on that boat, and the knowledge manager's strategizing process is like the rafting endeavor. This metaphor represents the "pervasive quality" (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager. As the analysis is a constant move back and forth between checking and re-checking, between parts and whole in a hermeneutic circle and with a "playful attitude", this metaphor emerges from the data analysis, and in turn helps further interpret the data as well as is confirmed by the data. The image of an angry river, with its powerful current and hard-to-negotiate obstacles, represents the difficult, imposing, changing, and at the same time inert organizational context. The obstacles on the rivers, such as drops, rocks and hazards, represent the hard-to-negotiate barriers that hinder the knowledge managers from accomplishing their mission. They embody the inert characteristics of the context. The powerful and always-moving current represents its unstable nature. The current keeps running the way it does. It is impossible for the rafters to move against the current or to make it less furious. It refers to what the context strictly imposes. The image of the inflatable boat represents the specific nature of the knowledge management function: it does not have an accepted place in the organization, rather it "floats". The image of a library on the floating boat illustrates the knowledge sharing database, implying that it is unconventional compared to traditional libraries because it is accessible via cyber space and serves users worldwide. It also indicates the fact



that the sharing database has not been accepted in the organization. Just like the knowledge management function, it “floats”. The knowledge managers are like the rafters, who have to let the powerful current move them on but manage to deal intelligently with the obstacles and dangerous features coming up along their way. They strategize through different actions to protect their inflatable boat from sinking by avoiding the obstacles and taking advantage of what is useful for them on the river. The rafting indicates the strategizing process experienced by the knowledge managers.

The cross-case analysis reveals that the hard-to-negotiate obstacles include the language barrier, the organizational culture that is not so favorable for knowledge sharing, the incorrect perception about knowledge management, people’s mind-set, and the IT problems. The unstable characteristic of the context is seen in the strategic objectives that continue to change, which draw time and efforts of the employees away from participating in knowledge management. The instability is also perceptible in the evolution in human resources, and in the constant changes in IT infrastructure.

Seen from far, the knowledge managers seem to accept the existence of those obstacles and let themselves be moved by the powerful current, but they do manage to deal intelligently with those forces of nature. From the cross-case thematic analysis, the strategizing actions, undertaken by the knowledge managers, are grouped into three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labelled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively. The intentional category is made of the marketing actions. The knowledge managers intentionally carry out the marketing actions within the organization in order to broadcast the existence of their function and convince people of its benefits. The emergent category is composed of the island-finding actions, i.e. the search for some secure islands on the river, in which the knowledge management function can be protected from the troubled water. It means the knowledge managers try to build a place for their function by integrating knowledge management activities in the existing and accepted processes of the organization. The action has emergent nature because the knowledge managers cannot create the islands; they can just actively look for and take advantage of the islands that emerge during the organizational course of actions. The constraint-responding category consists of the force-building actions, which have the purpose of searching for support that helps facilitate the knowledge managers’ job. At Lafarge, the support may come from the top managers, the regional managers, the experts, or people having the legitimacy to influence others. Among these three categories of actions, the intentional one is most easily seen. All the knowledge managers talk about the marketing actions as an obvious part of their mission. The other two categories are uncovered thanks to the image of rafters on an angry river, which helps further decipher the data and in turn is confirmed by the data.

From the paradigm-case analysis, the knowledge managers are divided into three groups based on their capability to survive the turbulent organizational context and build a territory for the knowledge management function. Among the seven knowledge managers, one has decided to give up the position, four are still struggling with the obstacles and the powerful current to obtain a place within the organizational life, and two have achieved certain success. They are named the defeated, the struggling, and the contented, respectively. This analysis also reveals that the lived experience of being a knowledge manager, as strategizing practitioner, is unique to each individual. It may be

enjoyable for one, but challenging and tiring for another, depending on the individual knowledge manager's river zone and the effectiveness of his/her strategizing actions.

It is found that both building and dwelling modes are present in all three categories of strategizing actions of the knowledge managers. The building mode is dominant in the marketing category of all the knowledge managers. However, despite their plan to undertake marketing actions, they always have to cope with the unexpected as soon as those actions are implemented in reality. With regards to the island-finding and force-building categories, the dominance of each mode varies between the individual knowledge managers. One knowledge manager may plan the island-finding actions while another may unintentionally do them. But it is important to remember that the implementation of those actions always contains the coping with the unexpected. In addition, there is a transition from the dwelling mode to the building one, as the knowledge managers continue to do their job. The knowledge managers tend to recognize some of their unintentional actions as essential in accomplishing their mission. This observation implies the importance of the dwelling mode in the strategizing process. While the building mode sows the seeds, the dwelling mode makes the sprouts come out. Without the dwelling mode, the building mode would not bring harvest.

Moreover, the strategizing actions in the three common categories vary among the individual knowledge managers. In the marketing category, one knowledge manager may pay more attention to the aspect of promotion and communication, while another may work more on taking care of the product aspect. In the island-finding category, the islands found by the knowledge managers are not the same. In the force-building category, the external forces gathered by the knowledge managers differ from one another.

Thanks to the perspective of Dewey, it is revealed that the knowledge managers' strategizing is embedded in their transactional relationship with the organizational context. In this relationship, the knowledge managers act in accordance with their own context, and the changes produced by their actions, in turn, influence their future actions. What influence their practices are not only the social, material and embodied practices but also the organizational features. In addition, what leads to their intentional actions also includes the anticipated consequences of those actions. This focus on the past, the present, as well as the future in strategizing is the contribution of Dewey to practice research in contrast with the existing practice theories. Importantly, Dewey's framework also helps disclose that the knowledge managers' strategizing inherently contains a process of learning through overt actions. All knowledge managers become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. This learning process is both intentional and accidental, with the knowledge managers being unaware or conscious of it.

## **V. Summary of chapters**

This thesis is organized in eight chapters.

*Chapter 1* provides an overview of the literature to justify the pertinence of the research direction, identify its potential theoretical contribution and determine appropriate research questions to

investigate. Four areas in the literature, including knowledge manager, knowledge management, on new occupation, and strategy-as-practice, are reviewed. Based on the observations from these different literatures, a research path is defined, followed by a closer look at the strategy-as-practice literature in order to determine suitable research questions.

*Chapter 2* presents the conceptual framework employed in this thesis: John Dewey's pragmatism. In this chapter, the pragmatic perspective of John Dewey is discussed to demonstrate its integration of both intentional and practical-coping dimensions in human actions. How the theory is applied to develop an investigation framework for this research is detailed.

*Chapter 3* discusses the methodology adopted in this research, which is the interpretive phenomenological methodology. How it is in line with the spirit of Dewey's pragmatism and how it helps put into action the developed investigation framework are looked at.

*Chapter 4* develops the research design based on the set of six methodical guidelines put forward by van Manen (1990). The guidelines are broad but they provide us with a workable and useful methodical overview.

*Chapter 5* provides a step-by-step account of the analysis. The interpretation tools and the interpretation process are presented. Examples are provided in the discussion to illustrate the interpretation process. The way how trustworthiness is established in this research is also discussed.

*Chapter 6* presents the findings based on the cross-case thematic analysis. It points out the common threads between the stories of the seven knowledge managers, including their organizational context and their categories of strategizing actions. The discussion relies on a metaphorical analysis of the organizational context of the knowledge managers and their corresponding actions.

*Chapter 7* focuses on the results of the paradigm case analysis, which is based on the thematic analysis approach discussed in chapter 6. The sub-themes and themes are re-discussed to reveal how each individual knowledge manager undergoes his/her life as a strategizing practitioner, his/her chosen actions within the identified common categories of actions, the degree to which the building and dwelling modes dominate one another in his/her actions, and the transactional relationship with the environment, in which he/she experiences a learning process. The purpose is also to see what gets left out of the themes and taxonomy cages and what goes on between those themes in each individual story. As a result, seven different lives of being a knowledge manager in a multinational are identified.

*Chapter 8* aims at providing a general discussion of this research. The findings obtained are re-visited in light of the literature reviews detailed in chapter 1. The theoretical and managerial contributions of the research, its limitations and the future research directions are presented. The chapter ends the thesis with a general conclusion.

# CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research conducts an overview of the literature to justify the pertinence of its research direction and formulate appropriate research questions. In the first section, the literature on knowledge management will be reviewed, which shows the existing lack of research on knowledge managers. In the second section, a detailed review of the knowledge management literature will be presented, which reveals a practice school that has emerged recently. This perspective has generated the social-process view of knowledge and the second generation of knowledge management in the knowledge management literature. It sheds some light on how the study of the knowledge managers can be approached, i.e. how the research direction can be formulated. This section is followed by a discussion on the literature on new occupation, since the occupation of knowledge manager has only been recognized recently. Then a particular stream of research will be presented. It is the strategy-as-practice perspective, which offers a potential approach to take into consideration the particularity of the knowledge manager occupation revealed in the review on new occupation literature. At the same time it corresponds to the spirit of the practice perspective in the knowledge management literature. Based on the observations from these different reviews, a research path will be defined, which is followed by a closer look at the strategy-as-practice literature in order to determine appropriate research questions.

## I. Knowledge management literature

### 1. Existing lack of research on knowledge managers

Since the emergence of the “knowledge-based view of the firm” (Grant, 1996a; Grant, 1996b; Spender, 1996a; Libeskind, 1996) with the focus on knowledge as the most strategically important of the firm’s resources, interest in the topic of knowledge management has undoubtedly boomed (Johnson, 2000; Orlikowski, 2002; Swan *et. al.*, 1999). In the academic world, the field of knowledge management has developed quickly over the last decade and the literature on the topic has demonstrated increasing diversity and specialization (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003). Knowledge management has also become terms commonly used in today’s business environment and has been usually associated with large-budget projects pursued by firms convinced that the competitive advantage of utmost importance is the ability to learn faster than competitors (DeGeus, 1988). Many firms have explicitly recognized the role of knowledge management by including “knowledge managers” in their organizational charts (Johnson, 2000).

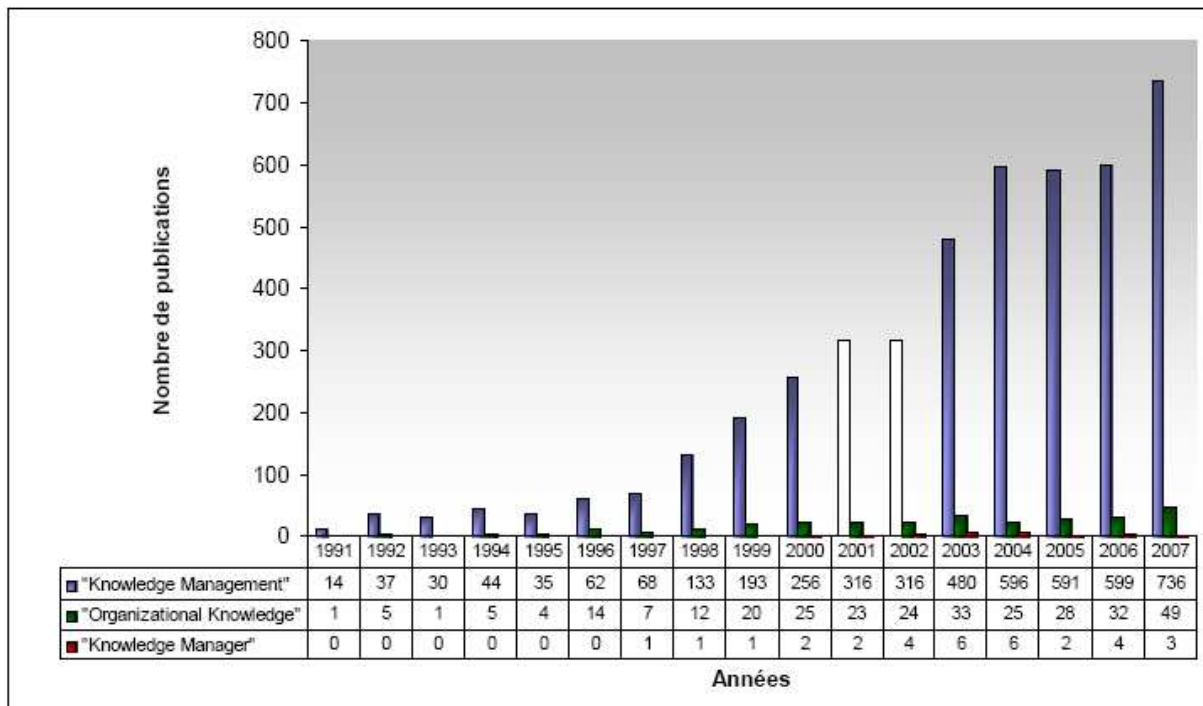
The literature on knowledge management is extremely huge, covering a wide range of topic. Some attempts have been made to develop a framework synthesizing this literature. For example, Argote *et. al.* (2003) propose a framework with two dimensions: knowledge management outcomes (including knowledge creation, retention, and transfer) and properties of the knowledge management context (including properties of units, properties of the relationships between units, and properties of knowledge). For Scarbrough and Swan (2003), three themes recurring in a large number of the knowledge management literature can be identified. The first and probably the most pervasive theme is the almost universal concern with the critical role of knowledge management in business performance. The second is to do with managing knowledge as a strategic resource. The third theme

highlights the processing and storage of knowledge. Many of the articles focus on means of codifying knowledge through IT tools including databases, decision support tools and intranet. Grover and Davenport (2001) point out the shift from social and psychological sciences pertaining to knowledge use and transfer to business emphasis. They identify two major streams of work. One involves theorization of why firms have performance differences. Another, being more empirically based, focuses on knowledge flows between organizational units and between organizations. In the literature, the most major attempt has been to develop an encyclopedia of knowledge management (Schwartz, 2006), in which hundreds of topics in knowledge management literature are gathered, synthesized and presented.

The field keeps growing with new themes continuing to emerge. For example, according to Argote *et al.* (2003), new research themes, such as the significance of social relations to knowledge management outcomes, the impact of environmental factors and nature of experience for the effectiveness of knowledge management, and the implication of organizational boundaries to knowledge management strategies, have come out. At the same time, there is no lack of efforts to propose agendas for future research in knowledge management. A paper often being considered as a landmark in the literature is that of Grover and Davenport (2001). The authors present two complementary frameworks highlighting potential research opportunities in the area: a process and a transactional perspective. The process framework focuses on the knowledge process (creation, codification, transfer, realization) and the context in which it is embedded. The framework can be studied for knowledge processes occurring between individuals, groups, and organizations. The transactional framework assumes knowledge exchanges occur in a market place. Organizations are considered to have buyers and sellers of knowledge. This framework raises questions that focus on pragmatic issues of “how” and “what” make knowledge markets work better. Lyles and Easterby-Smith (2003) do not propose but depict that the major future trends in organizational learning and knowledge management research seem to be an increasing emphasis on social capital, cognitive approaches, networks and communities, and an increased emphasis on measures and research design.

Despite diversity and richness of the knowledge management literature, the interest in researching the knowledge managers has been very insignificant. The encyclopedia of knowledge management (Schwartz, 2006), which is supposed to cover all topics in the domain, provides no formal definition of knowledge managers. The term is not mentioned a single time through out over 800 pages of the book. Perrin (2008) does a quick search in the EBSCO database and finds that the number of studies on the knowledge managers remains considerably smaller than that on knowledge management over time. This finding is represented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Volume of publications on knowledge management, organizational knowledge, and knowledge manager, between 1991 and 2007 (Source: EBSCO)



It can be seen that the number of publications on knowledge management has increased exponentially in the past few years. By contrast, research on the knowledge managers has been surprisingly insignificant. Between 2005 and 2007, the number of annual publications on the topic remained less than five. While that on knowledge management increased from 591 to 736.

Taking the knowledge managers as the research object is an interesting research direction. It does not focus on knowledge and how to manage knowledge as usually seen in the literature, but goes a step further to deal with the question of how people actually handle the tasks that are labeled knowledge management by the organization and various issues involved in that process. Knowledge managers are human beings and thus are not isolated entities within an organization. They do not simply implement knowledge management models put forward by the literature, adopt strategies to create, transfer and encourage the reuse of knowledge, or cultivate communities of practice within the organization. The knowledge managers *per se* and their environment should be also taken into consideration. It should be noted that knowledge managers, so defined in this research, are the people, who are officially responsible for the tasks that are labeled knowledge management by the organization. In the next section, a review on the existing research on knowledge managers will be presented.

## 2. Existing research on knowledge managers

As mentioned above, knowledge manager is a research phenomenon of minor interest in the literature. The review does not reveal many rich discussions or findings. One paper that explicitly investigates knowledge managers is that of Asllani and Luthans (2003). They identify day-to-day managerial activities of knowledge managers in comparison with traditional managers and examine what

successful knowledge managers do. They find that the knowledge managers spend about the same amount of time as managers in the 1980s in traditional and networking activities, but relatively more time in HR activities and less time in the communication activities of exchanging and processing routine information.

Except the empirical work of Asllani and Luthans (2003), other papers are much more theoretical, proposing different models that cover different activities/tasks of knowledge managers. The theoretical frameworks are highly different from each other. As described by Wong and Aspinwall (2004), some are system-oriented such as Holsapple and Joshi (2002), Jarrar (2002), and Gore and Gore (1999); some are sequential such as McCampbell *et al.* (1999), Wiig (1999), and Wiig *et al.* (1997); some combine both approaches such as Rubenstein-Montano *et al.* (2001). However, all of them share a common point. The activities of knowledge managers put forward in these frameworks can be divided in two major components: achieving an understanding of knowledge management landscape and performing knowledge management tasks. Achieving an understanding of knowledge management landscape means to obtain an appropriate perspective of the actual organizational situation in which knowledge managers perform their task of managing knowledge. As proposed by the frameworks, this covers a wide range of issues, ranging from analyzing the resources available for knowledge management to making a diagnosis of what have been done in the past. Performing knowledge management tasks means to translate knowledge managers' understanding of the current state of affairs to knowledge management projects and/or initiatives. This includes tasks such as capturing, storing, and transferring knowledge as presented in the frameworks. In the table below, this common point can be seen clearly. Under the title "others" are the activities other than these components.

Table 1: Theoretical frameworks on the activities of knowledge managers

Components of knowledge managers' activities	Wiig (1999)	Dataware Technologies, Inc. (1998)	McCampbell <i>et al.</i> (1999)	Rubenstein-Montano <i>et al.</i> (2001)
Achieving an understanding of knowledge management landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>survey and map the knowledge landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify the business problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyze the needs of knowledge management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategy – perform strategic planning and business needs analysis, conduct cultural assessment and establish a motivation and reward structure to encourage knowledge sharing</li> <li>model – develop performance conceptual modeling (conduct a knowledge audit)</li> </ul>
Performing knowledge management tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plan the knowledge strategy</li> <li>create and define knowledge-related alternatives and potential initiatives</li> <li>portray expectations for knowledge management initiatives</li> <li>set knowledge management priorities</li> <li>determine key knowledge requirements</li> <li>acquire key knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>prepare for change – obtain executive support and make the shift to a sharing culture</li> <li>create the team (of people responsible for leading knowledge management)</li> <li>perform a knowledge audit – identify what knowledge is missing and organize the knowledge</li> <li>define key features required for the technological infrastructure</li> <li>phase in knowledge management activities in seven steps:</li> <li>improve the return on investment on existing knowledge assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and collect knowledge</li> <li>design a technological structure to warehouse knowledge</li> <li>test the technology</li> <li>maintenance of the technology</li> <li>retest the technology</li> <li>training of knowledge workers</li> <li>roll out the use of knowledge management practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>model – develop performance conceptual modeling (do knowledge planning) and perform physical modeling (develop the physical architecture)</li> <li>act – capture and secure knowledge, represent knowledge, organize and store knowledge in the knowledge management system, combine knowledge, create knowledge, share knowledge, learn knowledge and loop back to capture and secure knowledge</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create knowledge programs</li> <li>• transform, distribute and apply knowledge assets</li> <li>• establish and update knowledge management infrastructure</li> <li>• manage knowledge assets</li> <li>• construct incentive programs</li> <li>• coordinate management and functions enterprise-wide</li> <li>• facilitate knowledge-focused management</li> <li>• monitor knowledge management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhance the process of locating applicable knowledge</li> <li>• increase the accuracy and speed of classifying knowledge</li> <li>• provide substantially enhanced functionality, security and performance for the growing knowledge management activity in the organization</li> <li>• start capturing valuable tacit knowledge that was previously lost to attrition</li> <li>• enable faster access to critical knowledge</li> <li>• quickly find people in the organization who have specific knowledge</li> <li>• link people to knowledge – knowledge directory and content management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• track usage</li> <li>• make systems go live</li> <li>• measure quality and productivity, measure the performance of knowledge management practices, conduct a need assessment review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• revise – pilot operational use of the knowledge system, conduct knowledge review, perform knowledge management system review</li> <li>• transfer – publish knowledge, coordinate management activities and functions, use knowledge to create value for the enterprise, monitor knowledge management activities, conduct post-audit, expand knowledge management initiatives, continue to learn and loop back through the phases</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obtain management buy-in</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• form powerful coalition</li> <li>• communication vision of knowledge management</li> <li>• establish teams for needs assessment</li> </ul>	

Table 1 (continued): Theoretical frameworks on the activities of knowledge managers

Components of knowledge managers' activities	Holsapple and Joshi (2002)	Jarar (2002)	Xerox Corporation (1999)	Gore and Gore (1999)	Wiig et al. (1997)
Achieving an understanding of knowledge management landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The knowledge resources block: participants' knowledge, infrastructure, artifact, purpose and strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>define and understand organizational knowledge –define what organizations consider as knowledge, identify their knowledge assets and understand how and where knowledge is developed in the organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discovery – identify business challenges and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the exploitation of existing explicit knowledge: reviewing the information flow and examining the utilization of current information bases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review: what have been achieved in the past, what the current state of affairs is</li> <li>Conceptualize: sitting back and trying to get a view on the state of the knowledge in the organization and analyzing the strong and weak points of the knowledge household</li> </ul>
Performing knowledge management tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The knowledge management activities block: acquiring, selecting, internalizing, and using knowledge.</li> <li>The knowledge influences management block: resource (financial, human, knowledge and material), managerial (leadership, coordination and measurement) and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manage knowledge – collecting, presenting, transferring, measuring knowledge, and focuses on building infrastructures and tools to support knowledge management</li> <li>knowledge environment – a conducive and suitable organizational culture for facilitating knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>definition – determine key requirements and scope of the project</li> <li>start-up – detailed project plan is developed</li> <li>delivery – implement the plan</li> <li>evaluation – ensure results meet expectations and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the capturing of new explicit knowledge that can be derived from the analysis of working practices, products and processes</li> <li>the creation of tacit knowledge and its conversion into organizational knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect: selecting the optimal plans for correcting bottlenecks and analyzing them for risks which accompany their implementation</li> <li>Act: effectuation of the plan chosen previously (develop, distribute, combine, and consolidate the</li> </ul>

	environmental (competitors, customers, markets, suppliers and other "climates").	sharing, creation and development in the organization	facilitate knowledge transfer		knowledge)
Others		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set a strategic priority for knowledge management: aligning knowledge management's goals and strategies with the organizational business strategies, linking knowledge management to value creation, and gaining senior management support and commitment</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of top management formulating a vision to support the whole knowledge management process.</li> </ul>	

As can be seen in the above table, research tends to consider doing the job of a knowledge manager as being constituted of some major activities or groups of activities that can be listed down. Some authors come up with long lists of what a knowledge manager should do, such as Wiig (1999), Dataware Technologies, Inc. (1998), in Rubenstein-Montano *et al.* (2001), and McCampbell *et al.* (1999). Some others propose lists of major categories of activities that a knowledge manager should undertake, such as Xerox Corporation (1999), in Rubenstein-Montano *et al.* (2001), Rubenstein-Montano *et al.* (2001), Holsapple and Joshi (2002), Jarrar (2002), Gore and Gore (1999), and Wiig *et al.* (1997).

The proposed models suggest the principal activities of the knowledge managers, but fail to demonstrate how they actually do their job. For example, as implicitly indicated in the frameworks, the two major components of achieving an understanding of knowledge management landscape and performing knowledge management tasks are closely connected, but how the two are assembled by knowledge managers in their activities is totally ignored. The actual “doing” of the knowledge managers in their job has not been considered. Whether such activities do enable the knowledge managers to “manage” knowledge still remains an unanswered question, not to mention the debatable point of view that knowledge can be managed. Similarly, other important factors, such as motivation and feeling, are not mentioned. These frameworks do not allow the readers to see how the knowledge managers actually *experience* their position. It can be argued that the existing research on knowledge managers tends to look only at the surface, i.e. the observed activities of the actual “doing” of the knowledge managers. We need to have a closer and deeper look at the knowledge managers’ lives in their position.

In order to identify an angle, from which how the knowledge managers do their job can be investigated in fullest details, a further review of the knowledge management literature is conducted, which reveals a practice school that has emerged recently, as presented in the following section.

## **II. The practice turn in knowledge management literature**

In contemporary social theory, there has seen the arrival of a practice turn since the 80s. Prominent theorists of this practice turn include Bourdieu, de Certeau, Foucault and Giddens (Whittington, 2006). They differ in details but share a common ambition to overcome the dualism between “individualism” and “societism” (Schatzki, 2005). Individualism pays special attention to individual human actors while ignores the macro context. Societism, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the social forces and neglects the individuals. Practice theorists aim at respecting both the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social. To the individualists, they insist that society is an important factor; to the societists, they affirm the significance of individual activity. These social scientists are occupied with the fact that knowledge coming from people must be connected to context or at least to indexical meanings in order to be understood. Practical activity cannot be detached from wider social, cultural and historical development (Giddens, 1984).

There is no unified practice approach, given the multiplicity of impulses, issues and oppositions put forward by practice theorists (Schatzki, 2001). However, three core themes for practice theory have

been identified. First, there is society. In their different ways, practice theorists are concerned with how social fields (Bourdieu, 1990) or systems (Giddens, 1984) define the practices – shared understandings, cultural rules, languages, and procedures – that guide and enable human activity. Second, practice theorists hold on to individuality by asserting another sense of practice: people's actual activity 'in practice'. In practice, social practices are followed in rough and ready way, according to the exigencies of the situation. The distinction between practices and what happen 'in practice' points to a third core theme in the practice turn: the actors on whose skills and activity depends. Indeed, actors may be creative agents: they are potentially reflexive enough, and their social systems open and plural enough, to free their activity from mindless reproduction of initial condition (Giddens, 1984). In their practice, actors may amend as well as reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw. For practice theory, people count (Whittington, 2006).

Management research is engaging increasingly with the practice turn (Whittington, 2006). This can be seen in the knowledge management literature as presented below.

### 1. Knowledge as practice

In the management literature, a passionate debate about what knowledge is and what forms or types of it are available can be identified. One can distinguish the positivist and constructivist standpoints in this debate (Vera and Crossan, 2003). Chiva and Alegre (2005) also identify a similar classification of approaches to knowledge: the perceptive or cognitive approach, and the constructionist or social approach. Another distinction made in the literature is between the perspective that emphasizes knowledge as something people have or possess and the one that regards knowledge as something socially constructed and thus particular emphasis is place on the process (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). In fact, the positivist, cognitive and knowledge as a possession approaches are related, and so do the constructionist, social and knowledge as a process approaches. For one school of thought, reality is objective and can be comprehended accurately, while for the other all meanings are context specific. In this section, we will do the same as Chiva and Alegre (2005) and use the "cognitive-possession" and "social-process" labels to discuss about these two major schools of thought in the organizational knowledge literature. However, it should be noted that it is not always clear whether a particular author is situated in the one or the other school, as can be seen below.

According to Spender (1996a) and Chiva and Alegre (2005), followers of pure cognitive-possession school believe that knowledge is justified true belief. They all share the idea of knowledge as perceptive and as a commodity. Thus, emphasis is placed on the possession of knowledge. Followers of this view regard the cognitive system as a machine to process information. Knowledge is defined as a collection of representations of the world that is made up of a number of objects and events. It is the result of a systematic analysis of our cognitive system of a knowable external reality. Also, it exists prior to and independently from the knowing subject, who creates no knowledge in the act of appropriation. It is possible to codify, store and transmit knowledge between people. This school posits that knowledge is universal and, hence, two cognitive systems should come up with the same representation of the same objects or situations. Learning, in this perspective, is the improvement of representations.

However, researchers in this school have moved beyond positivist notions of knowledge and adopt a more pluralist point of view. They have recognized that knowledge may be difficult to codify and communicate, that it may be deeply rooted in action and involvement in a specific context. Some have proposed that organizations have different types of knowledge, and that identifying and examining these will lead to more effective means for generating, sharing, and managing knowledge in organizations (Orlikowski, 1996). As a result, classifications of knowledge have been developed and then used to examine the various strategies and techniques, through which different types of knowledge are created, codified, converted, transferred, and exchanged. Such researches are grouped under an approach that is often referred to as “taxonomic” (Tsoukas, 1996). A well-known example in this case is the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge put forward by Nonaka (1994) based on the work of Polany. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language. Tacit knowledge has a personal quality, which makes it hard to formalize and communicate. Explicit knowledge can be converted to tacit knowledge and vice versa. Although Nonaka argues that tacit knowledge has a cognitive element centering on mental models, he does recognize its technical element, which is rooted in specific contexts. Grant (1996b) and Nelson and Winter (1982) can also be put in this group with their distinctions of knowing-how versus knowing-about and routines versus skills, respectively. Similarly, Alavi and Leider (2001) conclude from their review of the literature that knowledge can also be referred to as declarative (know-about or knowledge by acquaintance), procedure (know-how), causal (know-why), conditional (know-when), and relational (know-with). Additional knowledge taxonomies such as individual versus social (Alavi and Leider, 2001), local versus universal, codified versus uncoded, canonical versus non canonical, know-how versus know-what (Tsoukas, 1996), routines versus experiences (Orlikowski, 1996) have also been elaborated.

Chiva and Alegre (2005) find that there exists a related perspective to the cognitive-possession one: the connectionist. This perspective shares with the cognitive-possession one the view that knowledge, in other words the representations of the environment, arises as a result of information processing. However, the process of representing is different in that it believes knowledge to be generated through networks and relationships, and not by individuals. From this perspective, organizations are networks made up of relationships and managed by communication. Knowledge, thus, is found in the connections that exist between the organization and its people.

A concern of researchers in this school is the distinction between individual and organizational knowledge. Being connectionists, Kogut and Zander (1992) state that there exists individual knowledge, group knowledge, organizational knowledge, and network knowledge. Individual knowledge belongs only to the individuals. Group knowledge is created by the teaching of individual knowledge through frequent interaction within small groups. Cross-group interactions, in turn, help create organizational knowledge. Network knowledge is created when individuals of the organization establish interactions with external actors such as suppliers or buyers. In the cognitive-possession school, there have been several different views about the relationship between individual and organizational knowledge. The first approach defines organizational knowledge as individual knowledge shared by all members of an organization (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). This approach can be

seen in Grant's (1996b) view of knowledge (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). He argues that the creation of knowledge is individual and thus companies should aim at applying knowledge to the production of goods and services rather than creating and acquiring knowledge. The second approach, put forward by Nonaka (1994), examines the interaction between individual and organizational knowledge. His idea is that organizational knowledge is created through continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge.

In the study of knowledge, although the cognitive-possession school is the predominant one, it has been increasingly challenged and complemented by the social-process school (Vera and Crossan, 2003), shifting the notion of knowledge as a commodity that individuals or organizations may acquire, to the study of knowledge as socially constructed and held collectively in organizations. This school proposes the idea that reality is socially constructed or conceived and is based on social interactions and discursive behaviours (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). According to Heaton and Taylor (2002), it makes an assumption that, given the limitations of our physiological constitution as living beings, the only kind of reality we can consciously know is constituted by the kind of distinctions we make in language. When people live in different operational contexts, they perceive different realities. What we know as humans, therefore, is not a universe, but a "multiverse" of modes of knowledge creation. This approach understands knowledge as not as a representation, but a constructing or creating acts, in other words, as a process. It is something which we do, not something that we possess (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

The notions of practice and communities of practice are very important in this school of thought. The basic argument inherent in many views in this school of thought is that knowledge is embedded in practice and is readily generated when people work together in the communities of practice. A community of practice is "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time" (Lave and Wenger, 1991). A community of practice can also be viewed as an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities. The participants are united in both action and in the meaning that that action has, both for themselves and for the larger collective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The practice of a community of practice is the specific knowledge that the community members develop, share and maintain. It can contain ideas, information, documents, or styles that community members share (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). It is "the way in which work gets done and knowledge is created" (Brown and Duguid, 1998, 2001), or "the coordinated activities of individuals and groups in doing their "real work" as it is informed by a particular organizational or group context" (Cook and Brown, 1999). Practice is not behaviour or action. Doing of any sort is behaviour, while action is behaviour imbued with meaning. Practice is action informed by meaning drawn from a particular context (Cook and Brown, 1999).

Gherardi (2000) argues that knowledge is not in the head nor as a commodity, it is in practice and as practice. "Practice articulates knowledge in and about organizing as practical accomplishment, rather than as a transcendental account of decontextualized reality". Knowledge does not arise from

scientific discoveries. It is rather fabricated by situated practices of knowledge production and reproduction.

The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is the underlying tenet grounding of not only the cognitive-possession view but also the social-process one (Munkvold, 2006). However, researchers in the social-process school are critical of the cognitive-possession school for considering tacit and explicit knowledge as two separate types of knowledge. For them, tacit knowledge is the necessary nature of all knowledge, the tacit and explicit nature of knowledge is inseparably related. According to Tsoukas (1996), for taxonomic thinking to be possible, the conceptual categories along which the phenomena are classified must be assumed to be discrete, separate, and stable. The problem is that they hardly ever are. He observes that "tacit and explicit knowledge are mutually constituted and inseparable". He argues for an integrated approach that affords a view of knowledge as processual, dispersed and inherently indeterminate. Similarly, Brown and Duguid (1998) propose that knowledge should be seen through the prism of practice and elaborate the distinction between "know-how" and "know-what". Know-what is to a significant degree something people carry around in their head and pass between each other. Know-how embraces the ability to put knows-what into practice. Know-how is revealed in practice and created out of practice. It is, to a great extent, the product of experience and the tacit insights experience provides. They go further to posit that know-how is held by work group rather than individuals because most work is of collective nature. More precisely, it is produced and held in particular communities of practice.

Like Nonaka (1994), Cook and Brown (1999) adopt the distinction of tacit/explicit knowledge put forward by Michael Polany. Based on the notion of communities of practice, they argue that it is necessary to distinguish further between individual and group knowledge. These two dimensions make up four different forms of knowledge. Unlike Tsoukas or Brown and Duguid, Cook and Brown do not believe in the interrelationship between these knowledge forms. For them, these are distinct from each other. This is because in practice, each form of knowledge does work that the others cannot. All of them stand on equal footing; one form cannot be made out of or changed into any other. However, not all of what is known is capture by this understanding of knowledge. The authors criticize the cognitive-possession school for viewing knowledge as something to be used in action and not as part of action. They argue for a perspective that does not treat these as separate or separable, a perspective that focuses on the knowledgeability of action, that is on knowing (a verb connoting action, doing, practice) rather than knowledge (a noun connoting thing, elements, facts, processes). Knowledge, in this view, is a tool at the service of knowing (Cook and Brown, 1999).

With the argument that knowledge and practice are reciprocally constitutive, so it does not make sense to talk about either knowledge or practice without the other, Orlikowski (2002) develops the notion of organizational knowing as a substitution for the notion of organizational knowledge. It is stated that organizational knowing emerges from the ongoing and situated actions of organizational members as they engage the world. We can recognize the knowing how by observing the practice but the practice has no meaning apart from the knowing how that constitutes it. Orlikowski (2002) focuses on organizational knowing in complex organizations that are geographically distributed because the



examinations of knowing such as that of Lave and Wenger have focused on the work practices of individuals or that of focal groups proximate in time and space. Moreover, while Cook and Brown (1999) separate tacit knowledge from knowing, Orlikowski (2002) considers tacit knowledge as a form of knowing because it is constituted through action.

In this perspective, learning is, thus, no longer equated with the appropriation or acquisition of a piece of knowledge (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). It becomes the participation and interaction in communities of practice (Elkjaer, 2004). The content of learning in this perspective is the identity formation at work (Elkjaer, 2004), in other words, to become old-timer in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The distinction between learning and knowledge disappears (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

## 2. Knowledge management from a practice perspective

As presented above, knowledge can be seen from the cognitive-possession and the social-process views. As different views of knowledge lead to different perceptions of knowledge management (Alavi and Leider, 2001), two contrasting schools to knowledge management have developed accordingly. They are often considered as the first and the second generations of knowledge management (McElroy, 2000), reflecting the dominance of the cognitive-possession school in the past and the increasingly influence of the social-process school in the more recent years. The distinction has been named differently in the literature, such as “cognitive” and “community” models (Swan *et. al.*, 1999), personal knowledge and organizational knowledge orientations (Sanchez, 2005), information technology and human approaches (Gloet and Berrell, 2003), and content and relational perspectives (Tsouka, 1996). These authors use different terms but they essentially talk about a same thing. This research uses the terms cognitive and social to distinguish the two schools.

The cognitive school believes in the cognitive-possession view of knowledge, which argues that valuable knowledge is located inside people’s head and can be identified, captured, and processed via the use of information technology tools and then applied in new contexts (Bresnen *et. al.*, 2003). The definitions of knowledge management put forward by this perspective in the literature often have a strong prescriptive element. Knowledge management is understood as “managed learning” and is assumed to have a positive impact on performance (Vera and Crossan, 2003). For example, it is defined as “the explicit control and management of knowledge within an organization aimed at achieving the company’s objectives”, “the formal management of knowledge for facilitating creation, access, and reuse of knowledge, typically using advanced technology”, “the process of creating, capturing, and using knowledge to enhance organizational performance”, or “the ability of organizations to manage, store, value, and distribute knowledge” (Vera and Crossan, 2003). The goal of knowledge management is to capture, codify and distribute organizational knowledge via the application of information and communication technologies so that it can be shared by all employees. It focuses on knowledge use, not knowledge creation. The target of all investments in first generation of knowledge management is the individual workers and the extent to which he or she has access to, and can leverage information needed to get the job done (McElroy, 2000). Alavi and Leider (2001) find that three most common applications of IT to knowledge management consist of the coding and sharing of best practices, the creation of corporate knowledge directories, and the creation of

knowledge network that focuses on bringing individuals distributed across time and space together so that knowledge is shared. The most fundamental advantage claimed by this approach is that once an individual's knowledge is articulated in an explicit form, information system can be used to disseminate that knowledge, thereby freeing an organization from the limitations of time and space. Moreover, codified knowledge is easier to leverage. It is also visible and can be discussed, debated, tested further, and improved, thereby stimulating organizational learning processes. The codification of knowledge also minimizes the risk of losing expertise due to employee turnover (Sanchez, 2005).

With the idea of knowledge as perceptible and as a commodity, which can be codified, stored, and easily transmitted, learning is separated from knowledge and thus, can be dealt with separately (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). However, the knowledge management literature tends to see knowledge as a resource, a raw material to be leveraged, processed and utilized for the benefit of the organization. For the first time, it is claimed that knowledge has to be managed as a thing itself.

However, the cognitive school has been vastly criticized. Debates have questioned the emphasis on explicit knowledge and the codification of knowledge through technology (Bresnen *et. al.*, 2003). Critiques have been being mounted of the cognitive approach precisely on the grounds that it ignores the social architecture of knowledge exchange within organizations (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003) and completely side-steps the question of how knowledge is created, disseminated, renewed and applied (Cavaleri, 2004; McElroy, 2000). The critiques have led to the emergence of the social school, which believes in the social-process view of knowledge (Hayes and Walsham, 2003). Understanding how knowledge is created, how it is shared, and diffused throughout an organization – and not just how to codify and record it in artificial form, or map it into business process – lies at the very heart of the social school (McElroy, 2000). It is also recognized that the creation, diffusion and application of knowledge is situated and heavily influenced by the context of practice. In this context, developing communities of practice has been viewed as a popular approach for knowledge management because they favor situated and context-dependent learning and knowledge creation (Wenger, 2004). Knowledge management objectives in this school emphasize and promote social networks and the cultivation of trust, norms and shared values amongst employees that constitute “communities of practices” (Bresnen *et. al.*, 2003). A well-known article is that of Wenger and Snyder (2000), in which effective knowledge management is characterized as the “cultivation” of communities of practice within the organization. This idea has been frequently cited in the literature and widely adopted in the business world (Ardichvili *et. al.*, 2003). Moreover, in an era of globalization and worldwide communication networks, it is claimed that communities of practice with virtual interactions have emerged (Hildreth, 2003). Virtual communities of practice are described as containing any community of practice that cannot rely on face-to-face meetings and interactions as its primary means for connecting members. Typically, virtual communities of practice cross multiple types of boundaries, linking people across time zones, countries, and organizations (Wenger *et. al.*, 2002). It is stated that virtual communities of practice are becoming a knowledge management approach of choice for an increasing number of multinational corporations, including many well-known industry leaders such as Hewlett Packard, British Petroleum, IBM, and Shell (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003).

The practice perspective sheds more light on how to study the actual doing of the knowledge managers. First, for practice theory, people count and can be taken as a research phenomenon. Second, according to this perspective, one may take the knowledge managers as the creative agents being at the focal point to examine how they amend and reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw. This perspective enables the researcher to look closely at how the knowledge managers move back and forth between their understanding of knowledge management landscape and their performing of knowledge management tasks. The perspective offers to investigate the doing of the knowledge managers in their job as situated practices in a particular context. Moreover, studying the knowledge managers from a practice perspective is also in line with the current trend in the knowledge management literature. At this stage, the research direction can be reformulated as the situated practices of the knowledge managers in their specific organizational context.

### **III. New occupation literature**

Since knowledge management is a recent topic of interest in both academic and business worlds, the position of knowledge manager is an occupation that has been newly recognized and included in the organizational charts of corporations (Johnson, 2000). In order to have a deep insight of the doing of the knowledge managers in their job, it is necessary to have a good understanding of this particular characteristic of knowledge manager position. Thus, a brief review on the literature of new occupation is reviewed.

Hughes (1958) in Blum *et. al.* (1988) indicates that a new occupation emerges from work “formerly performed by amateurs, or for pay by people with little or no formal training”. “New occupation develops when employers need workers to do tasks that have never been done before” (Crosby, 2002).

According to Edman (2001), a prominent interest in studying the process of professionalization (Edman, 2001), i.e. how an occupation becomes a profession (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985) comes up in the literature on professions, which is followed a trait approach, attempting to identify a set of general traits of professions and then create a typology for occupational groups. Professional status is regarded as an end state that new occupations strive for in the process of professionalization.

Cooper and Robson (2006) notice that in this movement, the theoretical engagement of the studies has moved considerably beyond earlier trait approach that seemed to be characterized by an uncritical acceptance of professionals’ self accounts. No longer are the actions of professionals and regulators rationalized by reference to public interest explanations. More historical, critical and theoretically informed studies have brought to the fore the processes of closure through which occupational groupings attempt to secure professional legitimacy and status within particular markets. The sites of professionalization projects and regulatory processes also matter. The agencies where regulation takes place affect both the outcome of the regulatory process and the legitimacy of the rules and practices produced. Professionalization processes are also influenced by their institutional alignment. How practitioners come to see themselves, their identity as individual, public sector, or corporate entities, and what this means in terms of their allegiances and concerns, inter-relate with regulatory

processes and impacts how rules are operationalized. How professional organizations make claims to specific activities and expertise, and the nature of the claims they make, are also influenced by their histories, allegiances and struggles with other occupations and economic institutions. Scholars in this literature start to be interested in the interaction between individual professionals or aggregation of professionals and the wider societal, cultural and regulatory context.

For example, the switch in the conceptual lens employed in studying professionalization can be shown by the emergence of a new approach that focuses on the power dimension (Edmand, 2001). Professional power, so defined in this approach, is not necessarily the power of an occupation's formal structure. It can be the power held by practitioners in their social exchange with society and individual clients (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985). Being considered as the most theoretically promising (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985), the power approach has since been the major paradigm in theories of the professions (Edmand, 2001). Although some scholars concentrate on the power wielded by professional organizations, others are more interested in the power exercised by individual professionals. The latter analysis employs the concept of autonomy – power exercised by individual members of an occupation (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985).

In light of this new theoretical angle, many authors have attempted to examine and theorize the professionalization process. For example, Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) conceptualize the professionalization process as composed of three phases: addressing the potential a particular client-serving occupation has for establishing a claim for professional status, the public's evaluation of the occupation's claim for professional status and the possible formation of professional autonomy, and stabilization and maintenance. Abbott (1991) analyzes a variety of local, state, and national events to determine the order in which professionalization occurs. The events that play a professionalizing role are control of work, development of schools and other knowledge institutions, creation of professionally dominated work sites, association, licensing, and scientific transformation.

Many others take a closer look at the practitioners to understand in more details their role in professionalization. Scott (2008) argues that 'institutions are comprised of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life'. Although institutional elements - rules, norms, beliefs - are primarily symbolic in nature, to be of interest these symbols must impact social behavior: they must be reflected in activities, relations, and resources. He believes that more so than any other social category, the professions function as institutional agents - as definers, interpreters, and appliers of institutional elements. Professionals are not the only, but are the most influential, contemporary crafters of institutions. Blum *et. al.* (1988) describe a method for defining the emergence of a new occupation. Their approach is to assess commonality within an occupation through comparing the occupational performance and activities of occupational members, who have entered the work from distinctively different socialization backgrounds. If no major differences between the groups can be found, we can contend that an occupation has emerged.

It can be seen that there is an underlying argument permeating research in this literature. Practitioners of new occupation, whether individual or aggregate, have to create effective strategies to do their job

and secure professional legitimacy and status. And that process of making a name for their profession is embedded in a wider social and cultural context. This observation has led the researcher to turn to the strategy-as-practice literature, which offers a potential approach to take into consideration this particularity of the knowledge manager occupation.

#### **IV. Strategy-as-practice literature**

##### **1. Overview of strategy-as-practice literature**

Traditionally, the strategy discipline has treated strategy as a property of organizations: an organization has a strategy of some kind or another (Jarzabowski *et al.*, 2007; Whittington, 2006). Recently, the concern over the gap between the theory of what people do and what people actually do has given rise to the 'practice' approach in the management literature. For example, there is a literature on knowing in practice, formal analysis in practice, and technology in practice, each of which shares a common focus upon the way that actors interact with the social and physical features of context in the everyday activities that constitute practice (Jarzabowski *et al.*, 2007).

Most recently, the practice approach has entered the strategy literature, recommending that we focus upon strategists engaged in the real work of strategizing. That is, just as the literature on knowing in practice suggests that knowledge is not something that a firm has, but knowing in action, something that a firm and its actor do (Cook and Brown, 1999), so we should examine strategy not as something a firm has, but something a firm does (Jarzabkowski, 2004). The approach was originally termed 'activity-based view' in strategy (Johnson *et al.*, 2003). It then has been subsumed within the broader research agenda for 'strategy-as-practice', where practice refers both to the situated doings of the individual human beings (micro) and to the different socially defined practices (macro) that the individuals are drawing upon in these doings (Jarzabowski *et al.*, 2007).

The strategy-as-practice approach has two important aspects. One is the myriad micro-actions through which human actors shape activity in ways that are consequential for strategic outcomes. Another is the contextualization of these micro-actions. Micro-phenomena need to be understood in their wider social context: actors are not acting in isolation but are drawing upon the regular, socially defined modes of acting that arise from the plural social institutions to which they belong. The strategy-as-practice approach emphasizes explicit links between micro- and macro-perspectives on strategy as a social practice (Whittington, 2006).

From a strategy-as-practice perspective, strategy is conceptualized as a situated, socially accomplished activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Strategizing refers to the 'doing' of strategy, comprising those actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity (Jarzabowski *et al.*, 2007).

The key concepts of strategy-as-practice perspective include strategy praxis, practices and practitioners. Practices will refer to shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things', this last in the broadest sense. By contrast, the Greek word 'praxis' refer to actual activity, what people do in practice. Practitioners are strategy's actors, the strategists who both perform this activity and carry its practices (Whittington, 2006).

Strategy practitioners are those who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies. These are not just the senior executives for whom strategy is the core of their work. Many others perform strategy work, often as part of a wider role or a stage in their careers. Middle managers may engage in strategy work, not just through implementation, but through middle-top-down processes of agenda seeking, proposal selection, and information filtering. Lower-level employees are also important strategic actors. While their actions and influence on strategy may be unintended at the firm level, they are significant for firm survival and competitive advantage. Then there are the outside strategy advisers. Prominent here are the strategy consultants, but there are often other advisers too, for example investment bankers, corporate lawyers, non-executive directors, and business school gurus. All these can be seen as strategy's practitioners (Jarzabowski *et al.*, 2007; Whittington, 2006).

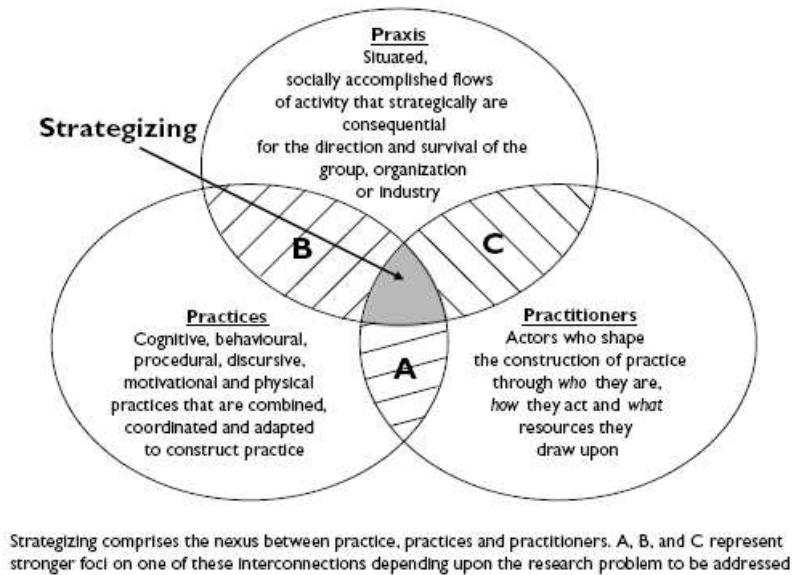
What these practitioners actually do is strategy praxis – all the various activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy. In this sense, strategy praxis is the intra-organizational work required for making strategy and getting it executed. Although this work is often diffused, a large part of it can be seen as taking place in more or less extended episodes or sequences of episodes. The domain of praxis is wide, embracing the routine and the non-routine, the formal and the informal, activities at the corporate center and activities at the organizational periphery. The practice perspective takes seriously all the effortful and consequential activities involved in the strategy work (Whittington, 2006).

There are strategy practices that practitioners typically draw on in their praxis. Practices refer to the routines and norms of strategy work. Strategy practices are multilevel. At one level, practices might be organization-specific, embodied in the routines, operating procedures and cultures that shape local modes of strategizing. But practice theory emphasizes the extra-organizational too – the practices deriving from the larger social fields or systems in which a particular organization is embedded. For example, there may be sectoral practices, such as the routines of environmental scanning defined by shared cognitive maps or norms of appropriate strategic behaviour set by industry recipes. At a still higher level, there are the strategy practices of whole societies (Whittington, 2006).

These three components are inter-related. Practitioners are seen as the critical connection between intra-organizational praxis and the organizational and extra-organizational practices that they rely on in this praxis. However, practitioners' reliance on these practices is not simply passive. Praxis is an artful and improvisatory performance. Practitioners also have the possibility of changing the ingredients of their praxis (Whittington, 2006).

The three concepts and their relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 2: Three main conceptual components of strategy-as-practice perspective



(Whittington, 2006)

## 2. Knowledge managers as strategizing practitioners

Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2007) define an activity to be strategic to the extent that it is consequential for the strategic outcomes, directions, survival and competitive advantages of the firm, even where these consequences are not part of an intended and formally articulated strategy. Strategic activities, thus, are not limited to a particular type of practices, such as strategic planning, annual reviews, strategy workshops and their associated discourses.

Besides, the authors also argue that a perspective on who strategists are goes beyond the truncated views of strategy as a deliberate, top-down process, identifying a much wider group of actors as potential strategists. Although strategy-as-practice studies do not abandon the top managers, they do consider that middle managers and lower-level employees are also important strategic actors. While the actions and influence on strategy of these actors may be unintended at the firm level, they are significant for firm survival and competitive advantage. It is important to identify these actors as strategists and go beyond top managers to study other level of employees as strategic actors. In their review of the strategy-as-practice literature, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) find that strategy's practitioners are defined widely, to include both those directly involved in making strategy – most prominently managers and consultants – and those with indirect influence – the policy-makers, the media, the gurus and the business schools who shape legitimate praxis and practices. Empirical studies also indicate that strategy practitioner might refer not only to individual practitioners but also to groups of practitioners. Individual actor acts as an individual in interaction with other actors, while aggregate actors are a class of actor, such as top management, middle management, and engineering. In fact, there exist studies that consider members of a British symphony orchestra (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003) and top team management in UK universities (Jarzabkowski, 2003;

Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002) as strategists that are worth-studying from a strategy-as-practice perspective.

This viewpoint shows that strategy-as-practice proposes an interesting perspective to examine the situated doing of knowledge managers and take into consideration the specificity of knowledge manager occupation. From this perspective, knowledge managers can be considered as strategizing practitioners, who undertake actions, involve in interactions, and draw on situated practice to create appropriate strategies to do their job and professionalize their status, to be investigated. Doing their job and professionalizing their status can be examined as a strategizing process

This observation sheds further light on the research phenomenon formulated in the previous section. Taking into consideration the particularity of the knowledge manager occupation, the research direction now can be focalized as the situated praxis of the knowledge managers, who are strategizing practitioners in their specific organizational context.

In order to determine appropriate research questions in this research direction, a review of the strategy-as-practice literature is conducted.

### 3. Existing gap of the strategy-as-practice literature

Chia and Holt (2006) claim that studies in the strategy-as-practice literature have the tendency to portray strategy in terms of intention, purposefulness, goal-orientation and causal actions, thereby overlooking and underplaying “the abiding influence of a culturally mediated *modus operandi* that can generate a patterned consistency of action that we are easily able to recognize as being immanently strategic”.

According to Chia and Holt (2006), most accounts of strategy formation assume “the primacy of intentional states and individual motivations, and presuppose a relationship of detachment in which an actor is generally viewed as distinct from and acting on a pre-existing external world”. They term this idea that language and representations bridge these two worlds of mental activity and practice the *building* mode. According to this view, in firms, strategists look to portray the organization as it is, as it might be and the possible means by which it might be guided from one to the other. The conceit is one of “efficient control over a predictable environment realized through managerial calculation”.

“Yet the picture is never whole, and the accompanying strategic narrative remains as much fairy story as it does gritty economic realism. No matter how standardized and simplified are the activities and procedures, no matter how well defined are the arenas of these activities, and no matter how rigorous is the logic of performance by which activities and outcomes are assessed, there are always exceptions, outliers and unpredictable forces that upset generalities” (Chia and Holt, 2008). Chia and Holt (2006) challenge the dominant building mode and argue that strategizing takes place in a more fundamental *dwelling* mode, in which “agent identities and their strategies are simultaneously co-constructed relationally through direct engagement with the world they inhabit; practical actions and relationships precede individual identity and strategic intent”. From this dwelling mode, they make two claims: firstly, strategic outcomes do not presuppose deliberate prior planning or intention; secondly,



strategy is not some transcendent property that a priori unifies independently conceived actions and decisions, but is something immanent — it unfolds through everyday practical coping actions.

Chia and Holt (2008) use an analogy to explain the rationale for a dwelling mode:

*“Building a house involves land sites that do not shift substantially, raw materials that are relatively unchanging in their shape, regularity and form and house structures that have not substantially changed over long periods of time. This is not the case with the world of strategy making, where the very ground premises upon which strategic assumptions are made are like shifting sand and where the every action taken elicits a reaction either from the environment or from the competition. In such circumstances the idea of detached surveying stance gives way to immersed making do. For the most part of their practical lives, the managers’ overall disposition is that of practical coping and problem-solving, not abstract representation or justification. The material and social world around them do not appear as free-standing objects to be scrutinised, mentally represented in the mind and only then purposefully utilised. Rather, these things are unconsciously interiorized so much so that practitioners dwell in them. They become so absorbed in their tasks that their actions and methods of resolution reflect unconsciously internalised tendencies and dispositions rather than deliberate conscious choice. The results that ensue, do not so much derive from some detached purposeful plan of action, but from concentrated, immersed practical coping activities; constantly find new ways to deal effectively with emerging situations and predicaments without necessarily having any overarching plan of action. Actions are thus motivated by internalized habits and predisposed tendencies more than by deliberate choice”.*

Chia and Holt (2006) put forward a central notion associated with the dwelling perspective: ‘practical coping’. Practical coping describes the relatively smooth and unobtrusive responsiveness to circumstances that enable human beings to get around and do what they do. Its scope extends from menial tasks, like using utensils, to the kind of practical mastery exhibited in competitive athletic performance or grandmaster chess. Here the ‘objects’ that strategists engage with are not ‘things’ but an interconnecting set of shifting relations in which action is undertaken not only from the identification and use of material assets, but from an awareness of divergent understandings (for example, different professional codes or local norms), the ‘noise’ of market turbulence, personal aspirations and so on. All these elements are real only in their complexly articulated interrelatedness. Competent practical coping is a kind of flexible responsiveness to a situation as it unfolds. It is a thoroughly material response to the world, guided by *habitus*; an immanent strategy that ensures a consistency of action even though the actor involved may be unaware of it.

Both the building and the dwelling modes co-exist in the practice of strategizing (Chia and Holt, 2008). Yet, to date, it has been the former that has preoccupied the attention of strategy academics mainly because it elevates the notion of mapping and cognitive representation as the founding basis of strategic decisions. The involved practitioner, on the other hand, is more like a blind person attempting to negotiate his/her way around an unfamiliar room. He/she does not, and indeed need not have a ‘bird’s eye’ view of the room space to successful with it. Instead, with the aid of a walking stick (a

prosthetic device which extends and reaches out to feel the world around him/her) he/she is able to find his/her way around. In the strategy-as-practice literature, Chia and Holt (2006) state that the building view still lingers, insofar as a practice is seen as something that firstly can be chosen and aligned through some form of deliberative weighting on the part of a strategist (albeit on a micro-social scale), and, secondly, can be observed and classified by a researcher in terms of its outputs, or effects. In order to have a fuller and more complete grasp of how business strategizing actually occur in the everyday lives of ordinary business practitioners as they go about effectively dealing with the issues that crop up and require attention, we need to substantially moderate the dominant view of strategy-making as a detached transcendent activity.

The argument of Chia and Holt has been supported by some authors. For example, de La Ville and Mounoud (forthcoming) point out that although social practice theory tends to emphasise the tacit and informal dimensions of practices and praxis, strategy-as-practice research has been focusing more primarily on explicit practices, such as operating procedures and standards (Jarzabkowski 2004, 2005), norms of appropriate strategic behaviour set by industry recipes (Spender, 1989), or legitimizing discourses (Barry and Elmes, 1997). Social practice theory talks about everyone in everyday life, strategy-as-practice research tends to focus on special events (Hendry and Seidl, 2003) and top management personnel (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Thus, research in this literature has been able to only change the method of observing process phenomenon, not the basic categories of thought. This represents a major gap in this stream of research that focuses only on the visible part of the iceberg: observable people, observable events and explicit tools. The actual practice in itself has not been fully investigated (de La Ville and Mounoud, forthcoming).

Furthermore, achieving a 'practice turn' in strategy research requires not only knitting together 'micro practices' and 'macro outcomes', but also avoiding being caught in the trap of considering practices as just something people do. Practices are construed as social skills that have been culturally acquired and, as such, unconsciously absorbed and embodied (de La Ville and Mounoud, forthcoming). Schatzki (2005) proposes that we should view practices as relational sites in which events, entities and meanings help compose one another. The challenge is now to overcome the prevalent individualistic focus on micro-level managerial activities and roles, which leaves a mass of larger social issues melting into the under-theorised, all-encompassing category of "context" (Tsoukas 1994; Willmott, 1997).

In the following section, the strategy-as-practice literature will be reviewed in details in order to verify the claim made by Chia and Holt (2006).

#### 4. Strategy-as-practice literature – a review based on building mode dimension

Chia and MacKay (2007) identify a number of implicit assumptions underlying the building mode that is dominant in the strategy-as-practice literature. These include the beliefs that strategy-making is the activity of self-contained, self-motivated individuals; strategy is something done deliberately and consciously and is goal-directed; strategy-making is a cognitive, representational activity that is directly observable through monitoring activities; the sense-making of strategic actors is sufficient for

explanatory coherence and adequacy and explanations of strategic actions can be best understood in the context of background values, beliefs and principles.

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) conduct an extensive review of the strategy-as-practice literature, identifying and categorizing the studies that explicitly identified themselves with the perspective. These studies are re-examined in this research, but from a different angle. The degree to which they have relied on the assumptions identified by Chia and Mackay (2007) is determined. A study may rely explicitly or implicitly on one or more than one of those assumptions. For illustrative purpose, only the most clearly seen one(s) in each study will be presented.

According to Chia and MacKay (2007), the first common building-mode assumption underlying strategy-as-practice research is that “processes and practices are generally construed as purposeful activities of individuals/organizations”. The forces of change are, therefore, not viewed as *immanent* in things and human situations but rather externally imposed by the will of conscious actors. The individual is assumed to be the *initiator* of activities, processes and practices. The strategy-as-practice perspective appears to subscribe to this ontological posture. The following table presents how this assumption permeates the reviewed articles.

Table 2: Studies in strategy-as-practice literature underlined by the assumption of strategists as initiators of activities, processes, and practices

Authors	Purpose of the articles	Evidence of the reliance on the assumption
Salvato (2003)	Proposing a model of strategic evolution as a sequence of intentional recombination of a company's Core micro-strategy with new resources and organizational routines	<p>The paper claims that one of its main contributions is to show the direct and salient role of managerial leadership within processes of strategic evolution, placing managerial agency centre stage in the guidance of strategic evolution processes. This role can be described as the result of top management's continuous involvement in tracking, honing and recombining Core Micro-strategies.</p> <p>It suggests that managers can understand organizational developmental processes well enough to <i>intentionally shape</i>, or 'engineer' them according to a repertoire of recombination patterns, hence improving the chances of organizational adaptation.</p>
Samra-Fredericks (2003)	Studying strategizing as lived experience, through a community of six core strategists, their talk, acts of persuasion and a number of specific decisions and outcomes	<p>The paper argues that it is through talking that strategists negotiate over and establish meanings, express cognition, articulate their perceptions of the environment (etc.) and from this basis, legitimate their individual and collective judgements.</p> <p>Physical entities such as written reports and flip-chart 'musings' are always talked about and in this way, strategists <i>breathe life into them</i> and <i>make them meaningful for their present purposes</i>.</p> <p>The paper focuses on the actions of individuals who are taken to be the <i>authors</i> of strategic change. The possibility that strategic change and the directions taken may be brought about by culturally and historically shaped tendencies and dispositions, which are internalized by the actors through social practices remains relatively unexamined.</p>
Maitlis and Lawrence (2003)	Developing a theoretical framework for understanding	<p>In the framework, the role of organizational actors as initiators of strategizing is emphasized:</p>

	failure in organizational strategizing based on the concept of an 'episode' of strategizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first stage of a strategizing episode, actors engage with an issue and take positions on it, which reflect their needs and interests, through <i>environmental scanning</i>.</li> <li>• The second element in a strategizing episode involves the organizational actors' attempt to <i>define</i> in abstract (conceptual) terms <i>what they understand to be the appropriate response to the issue to which they are reacting</i>.</li> <li>• In the third stage of a strategizing episode, responsibility and accountability are assigned to construct the strategic object, and action will proceed only if an individual or group of stakeholders accepts responsibility for moving that issue forward.</li> <li>• The final element in the framework involves the discursive construction of an object. This is the ultimate point of an episode of strategizing: <i>the construction of some sort of plan, strategy, campaign, proposal, budget, design, or any other concrete instance of the concept defined earlier in the episode</i>.</li> </ul>
Jarzabkowski (2004)	Proposing the concept of management practices-in-use	<p>The author argues that management practices were developed with a particular purpose or intent.</p> <p>Actors are <i>intentional</i> in their use of these practices and the intent of the actor may not comply with the objective purpose of a particular practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the intent implied in a practice complies largely with the intent of actors, habitual, routinized use may be expected, leading to recursiveness.</li> <li>• The appropriation of practices for particular, unanticipated outcomes may well involve their adaptation. This is referred to as bricolage: the making do and 'artisan-like inventiveness' by which actors produce their own <i>intentional</i> activities from the practices</li> </ul>

		that structure everyday activity.
Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007)	Drawing on sense-making theory to identify and understand individual interpretative responses to change level and show how interpretations and actions at the individual level shape the more aggregated response at the organizational level.	The authors believe that individuals, through the accounts they generate based on sense-making processes, affect change and responses to change. Their focus is on the accounts and interpretations individuals provide about the change initiative and the organizational context. They do not trace the sense-making processes per se, but attempt to capture individuals' accounts of change, how they have made sense of what to change, how to change, why change, and their subsequent actions. In other words, the individuals are considered as <i>conscious actors</i> in strategizing.
Melin and Nordqvist (2007)	Conceptualizing the institutionalization of the family business as a business organization, both through the activities of family businesses as aggregate actors and also through the activities of extra-organizational actors, such as researchers and government policies	The paper argues that specific categories of organizations become institutionalized through an interactive dynamics between researchers, educators, consultants, non-academic and academic journals, associations and lobbying groups devoted to this particular category of organizations. The assumption of self-motivated and conscious strategist is seen in their argument that family businesses are not constituted by completely passive agents giving in to this institutionalization with no degree of reflectivity. Generally, strategic responses to institutional processes can vary from passive conformity to <i>proactive manipulation</i> and are typically characterized by a process of translation and editing.
Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007)	Examining how central and peripheral teams of strategists in the multi-business firm, through their daily practice, adopt recursive and adaptive	The argument here is that strategists face a <i>choice</i> between recursive ways of acting that are based on routines while at the same time developing adaptive and creative approaches to strategy development and implementation. In total, seven categories about the practice of strategy teams were identified.

	behaviours during the strategy process	<p>The first three categories: executing, reflecting and initiating refer to activities conducted within the setting of a single strategy team.</p> <p>The next three: coordinating, supporting and collaborating refer to activities involving more than one strategy team. The settings of these types of practice are mainly meetings, teleconferences, virtual teams, and away days.</p> <p>The final practice, shaping context, refers to activities undertaken by strategy teams that eventually change the structural and organizational context within which strategy is conducted.</p>
Regner (2008)	Examining how the strategy-as-practice approach may complement the current dominating perspective on strategy dynamics, which emphasizes dynamic capabilities.	<p>The author suggests that activity configurations, which involve specific combinations of certain actors, socio-cultural contexts, cognitive frames, artefacts and structural properties, besides diverse practices, are a useful unit of analysis.</p> <p>He explicitly states that while prevailing organizational assets and initial conditions can be critical, actors do act <i>purposefully and proactively</i>. The strategy-as-practice approach has its foundation in structuration theory and variants thereof, and thus in an understanding of actors' structural restraints as well as <i>intentional abilities</i>.</p>
Whittington (2006)	Proposing a framework linking together different subsets of praxis, practices and practitioners, according to the particular task in hand, while acknowledging their membership of an integrated whole	<p>The framework highlights aspects of practitioners, practices and praxis that a psychodynamic account tends to pass over. Each element has significant repercussions in itself, but they are also intertwined.</p> <p>The assumption of conscious actors implicitly underlines this framework to the extent that it links the character of the practitioners to their <i>choice of practices</i> and their skill in carrying them out.</p>
Lounsbury and	Contributing to the development	This work has developed the notion of <i>performativity</i> , which assumes that individual

Crumley (2007)	of a more comprehensive institutionalist approach to the problem of practice creation. The research question guiding their efforts is: how may innovation in activities lead to the establishment of a new practice via institutionalization?	<p>performances of a practice play a key role in both reproducing and altering a given practice through variation in its enactment.</p> <p>The assumption of conscious strategic actors underlies the notion of performativity, as it emphasizes the fact that activity is often accomplished by skilled actors who rely on practical–evaluative agency to <i>understand and assess</i> how practices can be altered or tailored in order to accomplish specific tasks or to cater to different audiences.</p> <p>Their finding shows that the social recognition of an anomaly may require some sort of collective mobilization to make a particular innovation salient. Hence, a new practice field may emerge as a result of the division between actors wanting to develop novel activities into a practice via theorization, and those who reject those innovations, seeking to buffer their existing practice field.</p>
Beech and Johnson (2005)	Researching organizational change and adopting a detailed micro analysis of the lived experience of the strategists as they go through change	<p>The authors propose the concept of identity dynamics, arguing that identity dynamics are particularly relevant as they are processes through which strategists make sense of what is going on and what they are doing over time.</p> <p>Their approach is to use narrative analysis in an ongoing change situation. Strategists <i>make sense</i> of their actions, the context and interactions with others through a process of narrating everyday life. They are considered as being <i>self-motivated actors</i> imposing or perceiving patterns in their “lived experience” through their stories.</p>



Chia and MacKay (2007) point out that the second building-mode assumption prevailing in the strategy-as-practice literature is the particular attention paid to the explicit and articulated character of the social world, and to the manifest aspects of processes and practices. From this perspective, it makes every sense to study strategy process and strategy practice by longitudinally tracking the actual visible activities agents engage in organizational settings, as each study presented in the table below does.

Table 3: Studies in strategy-as-practice literature underlined by the assumption of explicit and articulated aspects of strategic practices

Authors	Purpose of the articles	Evidence of the reliance on the assumption
Hoon (2007)	Examining the interactions between senior and middle management levels	The paper examines formal events within strategic decision-making processes to understand the interactions between senior and middle management levels. The type of formal event studied: <i>strategic committee</i> , which is defined as a particular group of people put together to work on an issue.
Hendry and Seidl (2003)	Guiding research into strategic practice and its relationship to the operating routines of an organization	The paper puts forwards the concept of <i>strategic 'episode'</i> . It argues that while it is evidently important to understand the routines and micro-practice of strategic planners and consultants, the importance of that understanding lies largely in its contribution to our understanding of the communications that take place within strategic episodes.
Hodgkinson et al. (2006)	Exploring the role of workshops in strategy development through a large-scale UK survey of managerial experience of these events	<i>Strategy workshop</i> is defined by the authors as the practice of taking time out from day-to-day routines to deliberate on the longer-term direction of the organization. The authors conclude that strategy workshops play an important part in formal strategic planning processes; that they rely on discursive rather than analytical approaches to strategy formation; and that they typically do not include middle managers, rather reinforcing elitist approaches to strategy development.
Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008)	Addressing the question of how strategy meetings contribute to stabilizing or	<i>Strategy meeting</i> is defined as scheduled routinely, such as in the annual strategic planning cycle, and critical strategic incidents, such as

	destabilizing strategic orientations	calling a meeting whenever an important strategic issue arises.
Whittington <i>et. al.</i> (2006)	Examining three observable practices of strategising/organizing	First, <i>management workshops</i> or away-days, through which new strategies and organisations are typically both designed and communicated. Second, <i>strategic change projects</i> , a near universal practice through which strategic and organisational initiatives are implemented, coordinated and controlled. Third, a less widely diffused but none the less powerful practice, the <i>deliberate</i> use of symbolic artefacts for communicating new strategies and organisations.
Jarzabkowski (2003)	Proposing to use activity theory as an integrative framework for understanding the role of strategic practices in relation to continuity or change of activity	Activity theory provides a framework of four interactive components from which strategy emerges: the collective structures of the organization, the primary actors, the practical activities in which they interact and the strategic practices through which interaction is conducted. The primary actors in this study are conceptualized as the <i>observable top management team</i> members of three universities in the UK

Coupled with the emphasis on individualism and on the observable and manifest is an epistemological assumption regarding the essential purposefulness and intentionality of human action in the strategy-as-practice literature (Chia and MacKay, 2007).

This assumption can be seen in several articles presented previously. Salvato (2003) highlighted the intentional nature of the recombination of a company's Core Micro-strategy with new resources and organizational routines. Jarzabkowski (2004) explicitly supports the view that practitioners are intentional in their use of practices, which may lead to recursiveness or adaptation of the management practices-in-use. Regner (2008) explicitly states that while prevailing organizational assets and initial conditions can be critical, actors do act purposely and proactively. The strategy-as-practice approach has its foundation in structuration theory and variants thereof, and thus in an understanding of actors' structural restraints as well as intentional abilities. Whittington (2006) proposes a framework that link together different subsets of the three core elements of praxis, practices and practitioners, in which the practitioners are purposeful to the extent that they make choice in choosing practices and mobilize their skill in carrying them out. Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) attempt to capture individuals' accounts of change, how they have made sense of what to change, how to change, why change, and their subsequent actions and show how interpretations and actions at the individual level shape the

more aggregated response at the organizational level. Hendry and Seidl (2003) state: “we cannot escape the fact, however, that even in its routine aspects strategy is explicitly concerned with the creation of intentional, often radical change”.

The review of other articles also reveals the underlying of this assumption, as presented in the table below.

Table 4: Studies in strategy-as-practice perspective with the assumption of the intentionality of human actions

Authors	Purpose of the articles	Evidence of the reliance on the assumption
Sillince and Mueller (2007)	Providing an empirical study of the reframing of accounts of responsibility for the formulation and implementation of strategy	In the early stage, responsibility as well as expectations about the strategy’s successful outcome was <i>‘talked up’</i> .  In the later stage, when it was considered that the strategic initiative was failing, the middle management implementation team engaged in <i>‘talking down’</i> of expectations.  Reframing from initial duty to capability to later accountability actually <i>shaped and reflected actors’ changing goals</i> .
Mantere (2008)	Building an account of how the role expectations placed on middle managers impact on their agency.	The author refers to strategic agency as an individual’s capacity to have a perceived effect upon the individual’s own work on an issue that the individual regards as beneficial to the interests of his or her organization.  The author explicitly states that agency involves <i>purposive action</i> by subjects capable of reflecting on the conditions of their activities, and hence, also of transforming those conditions.
Balogun and Johnson (2005)	Examining how the implementation of an intended strategic change initiative progresses from the perspective of middle managers as change recipients.	The study relies on a sensemaking perspective.  The assumption of intentional nature of actions is seen in the statement that when individuals face change, they start to act in a more <i>conscious</i> sensemaking mode, as generic subjectivity breaks down to make sense of what is going on around them.
Campbell-Hunt	Considering social praxis as a	The ordered practices that sediment from praxis

(2007)	<p>complex adaptive system to illustrate how the complex processes of social praxis may autonomously organize into the relatively stable practices of replicating routine, and thence be aggregated into the larger assemblies known as strategy</p>	<p>may emerge in a number of different dynamic states.</p> <p>The individuals as agents these differing states is seen as <i>free</i> to change the micro-rules of their engagement with praxis, to explore and develop their own practices and so increase the dimensionality of activity in the organization.</p> <p>The author has unwittingly assumed that the individuals as agents may act intentionally the way they want when the control of structure on praxis is weaker.</p>
Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002)	<p>Examining how a top team in a UK university formulates and implements strategy</p>	<p>The authors propose a framework which may be used to investigate the components of strategy practice and process within a multitude of different contexts.</p> <p>In this framework, <i>strategic intent</i>, which is clearly articulated in the Strategic Plan of the university under investigation, is considered as an important component in the top management team's thinking and acting in the strategic processes embedded in an organizational context.</p>
Laine and Vaara (2007)	<p>Examining subjectivity in strategy discourse from a discursive struggle perspective</p> <p>Focusing on the question of what kinds of struggles over subjectivity characterize organizational strategizing.</p>	<p>Organizational discourse is considered as a dialectical battle between competing groups.</p> <p>Discourse and subjectivity are closely linked with an embedded assumption that actors are <i>intentional</i> in their actions. On the one hand, specific discourses produce subject positions for the actors involved. On the other, actors employ specific discourses and resist others precisely to protect or enhance their social agency or identity.</p>
Hendry (2000)	<p>Developing an integrating conceptualization of strategic decisions and a corresponding conceptualization of the strategy process</p>	<p>Based on Brunsson's empirical work, a re-conceptualization of strategic decisions as components of an organizational discourse is made.</p> <p>The author argues that specific contents of strategic decisions and their <i>associated intentions</i></p>

		feature explicitly in the analytical discourses of organizational life and may, indeed, be seen as the core of an organization's strategic discourse.
Jarzabkowski and Sillince (2007)	Proposing a rhetoric-in-context approach to illuminate some of the micro practices through which top managers influence employee commitment.	Rhetoric is defined as 'the <i>conscious, deliberate</i> and efficient use of persuasion to bring about attitudinal or behavioural change'.
Palmer and O'Kane (2007)	Arguing for a more active role for financial stakeholders and corporate governance systems, in particular securities analysts' arguments, within retail transnational corporate strategy-making.	The concept of argumentation is developed.  Argumentation occurs under a variety of conditions from one-to-one conversations, group-level face-to-face exchanges, and at the public-level.  Each of these opportunities for interaction provides a forum from which both management and/or the analyst can <i>intentionally</i> put forward their argument in order to influence the other to accept their viewpoint.
Seidl (2007)	Developing a systemic-discursive perspective on the field of strategy and the respective role of general strategy concepts.	What appears as the adoption of a general strategy concept would have to be treated as an illusion based on the fact that organizations use the same labels, or sets of labels, for their own constructs.  The paper implicitly assumes the intentional nature of practitioners to the extent that the organization, as an aggregate actor in this case (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), tries to make sense of the new labels on the basis of its existing discursive structures.
Balogun and Johnson (2004)	Examining the middle manager role in processes of change	The study relies on the argument that when individuals face change, they experience surprise, a "gap" in their expectations vis-à-vis their experience, they start to act in a more <i>conscious</i> and less automatic sensemaking mode and to interact with each other to make sense of what is

		<p>going on around them and to determine how they should respond.</p> <p>The authors use the notion of schemata, which constitutes the <i>cognitive</i> structures or frameworks by which generic concepts derived from past events and experiences are stored in memory.</p>
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Finally, Chia and MacKay (2007) point out an implicit or explicit subscription by both strategy process researchers and strategy-as-practice theorists to the presuppositions of ‘theoretical holism’ in terms of explanatory efficacy. This posits a holistic network of intentional states, tacit belief systems and values that provide explanatory adequacy for accounting for the meaning of action. But there is a more radical possibility associated with the practice turn in philosophy and social theory; that is an alternative ‘*practical holism*’ that eschews the primacy of mentalism, cognitivism or even intentionality in engaging with the day-to-day affairs of the world. According to this practice view, there is no need to have recourse to beliefs, values and abstract principles in order to explain social behaviour and practice. Researchers should go beyond the talk of strategists to show how the organizational history and situation, cultural mediation, individual socialization, internalized habits, mannerisms and tendencies shape predispositions and hence the character and direction of strategic outcomes. Strategy-as-practice research tends to subscribe to this assumption. For example, Mantere (2005) analyzes strategic practices as enablers and disablers of championing, with a champion being defined as an individual who reports taking action in trying to influence the organization to affect strategically important issues. By strategic practices, the author refers to first, concepts, tools and techniques involved in making strategies, and second, social routines which strategy workers regard as central to strategy formation and implementation.

#### 5. Strategy-as-practice research - a review based on dwelling mode dimension

There are very few studies in the strategy-as-practice literature being underlined by the practical coping assumption (Audebrand, 2007). Among the studies examined by Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), only a few acknowledge the coping dimension in the strategizing of the practitioner.

For example, Ambrosini *et. al.* (2007) report on a micro-level comparative study of the activities contributing to service delivery in two financial services organizations. They found that effective inter-team coordination was a critical factor in delivering increased customer satisfaction. The results show distinct differences in the *incidence* of inter-team coordination activities. In one organization, the issue for them is ‘how to make everyone talk to each other more’. In the other, the discussion of the findings prompted a realization with the Head of Servicing about what might be lacking in the division: she had been feeling increasingly frustrated that she had encouraged technical skills development, and greater ‘teambuilding’, but had still not seen the performance improvements she had anticipated.

Similarly, Rouleau (2005) looks at the workings of ongoing primary sensemaking and sensegiving micro-practices by which middle managers interpret and sell strategic change at the organizational interface. She adopts a point of view holding that success or failure in strategic change depends on

how managers interpret and enact the new orientation during their interactions and conversations. She examines how strategic sensemaking and sensegiving patterns are produced and reproduced daily and demonstrates how these processes are anchored in managers' tacit knowledge and how they are embedded in a broader social context. However, by directing attention to the workings of ongoing primary sensemaking and sensegiving micro-practices, the paper demonstrates that it is not only through consciously selecting and manipulating from a defined menu that these processes are produced. Sensemaking and sensegiving are more than just clear patterns constructed by top managers. They are in a *permanent flux and constantly being reconstituted* in daily experiences of agents.

Sminia (2005) elucidates the day-to-day activities comprising the strategy process at the senior management level as part of a layered discussion. For layered discussion to occur, two conditions need to be met. First, elements in the realm of strategy content need to be ambiguous enough to become disputed when a specific subject is being raised. Secondly, a conflict of interest should also be present. At the first glance, the occasions of layered discussion may be considered the times when the strategic plan itself was actually debated deliberately and openly at a senior management level in the studied company. However, a closer look at the course of events as regards a number of other subjects, which had been dealt with during the period of investigation, reveals that instances of layered discussion had been occurring regularly but *hidden* within discussion on other subjects.

Regnér (2003) examines how managers create and develop strategy in practice. The findings show a twofold character of strategy creation, including fundamental different strategy activities in the periphery and centre, reflecting their diverse location and social embeddedness. Strategy making in the periphery was inductive, including externally oriented and exploratory strategy activities like trial and error, informal noticing, experiments and the use of heuristics. In contrast, strategy making in the centre was more deductive involving an industry and exploitation focus, and activities like planning, analysis, formal intelligence and the use of standard routines. The author pointed out that strategy activities in the periphery developed and propelled the strategic issues forward and, in particular, some critical events turned out to be crucial for final macro strategic change. These were basically *everyday activities* at the time they happened, but they were later conceived as crucial events for the realized strategies. The dissimilar strategy and knowledge assimilation activities in the periphery and centre, rooted in disparate managerial contexts, resulted in considerable discrepancies in strategic reasoning and sensemaking and, in the end, knowledge. This resulted in continuous tension and conflicts over time. However, everyday activities that triggered most disagreement often later turned out to be critical for the development of the strategy.

Vaara *et. al.* (2004) focus in their paper on the discursive construction of strategies, believing that by examining the discursive elements involved in strategy talk, the understanding of the myriad of micro-processes and practices that make up strategies can be enriched further. The authors point out that there seems to be an in-built *lack of appreciation of the social aspects* in strategizing when viewing organizations or managers as rational decision-makers. They disagree with strategy work has traditionally been defined as teleological activity where intentions guide organizational action.

Ayache and Laroche (2007), in their framework for analyzing the dynamics of justification for accountability as a strategizing process of middle managers, point out that justifications may take place *during the course of action*, because the context and the mandates are ambiguous and are necessary to make sense on action. Accountability conceived by the authors as a chain of interactions along the line of responsibility, each interaction possibly having a resonance on the level above and on the level below. Justifications or accounts, therefore, can be seen as discursive micro-practices constructing “chunks” of meaning that are traded along the hierarchical line.

In the strategy-as-practice literature, some authors have emphasized and illustrated the importance of recognizing how much of strategy formation is rooted in the non-deliberate practical action of ‘coping’ that escapes the logic of planned, intentional action.

For example, de La Ville and Mounoud (2009, forthcoming) introduce a narrative approach to strategy-as-practice research based on the distinction between the ‘building’ and the ‘dwelling’ modes. They relates strategy-making to using texts and narratives, and also provides the conceptual and methodological means to achieve these challenges. The authors’ effort is an attempt to respond to the dominance of the building mode in strategy-as-practice research.

Similarly, Allard-Poésie (2006) distinguishes two approaches in defining strategic practice. One considers strategic practice as carried out by rational individual, who is able to manipulate resources, rules, and social practices for his/her own purposes. The other regards strategic practice as the accidental result of the continuous transformation of existing practices and discourse. Strategic intent is rather temporary and unstable, embedded in the ongoing course of managerial practices and their evolution.

Audebrand (2007) analyzes the dialectical tensions faced by practitioners in a Canadian Fair Trade organization in the process of developing a new strategic plan. Based on the findings, the author develops a grounded theoretical framework to understand the practical coping strategies that practitioners use to deal with these dialectical tensions.

## **V. Research questions**

In this chapter, the knowledge management literature was reviewed to show the lack of research on knowledge managers, the people in charge of doing the tasks that are labelled knowledge management by the organization. In the review on existing research on knowledge managers, it was pointed out that the question of their actual doing in their job had remained unexplored.

In order to identify an angle from which how the knowledge managers to their job can be investigated in fullest details, a further review of the knowledge management literature was conducted, which revealed a practice perspective. This perspective has generated the social-process view of knowledge and the second generation of knowledge management in the knowledge management literature. It offers to investigate the doing of the knowledge managers in their job as situated practices in a particular context.



On the other hand, since the occupation of knowledge manager has only been recognized recently, the literature on new occupation was briefly reviewed. The review led to an observation that knowledge managers, as practitioners of new occupation, have to create effective strategies to secure professional legitimacy and status within a wider social and cultural context.

This observation turned the researcher to the strategy-as-practice literature, which is a potential approach to take into consideration this particularity of the knowledge manager occupation. The strategy-as-practice perspective is interested in the myriad micro-actions, through which human actors shape activity in ways that are consequential for strategic outcomes, and the contextualization of these micro-actions. According to this perspective, practitioners are strategy's actors, the strategists who both perform this activity and carry its practices. They draw on practices, which refer to shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things', to perform 'praxis' - the actual activity, what people do in practice. The strategy-as-practice literature proposes an interesting perspective to take into consideration the particularity of the knowledge manager occupation and to examine the situated doing of knowledge managers. From this perspective, knowledge managers can be considered as strategizing practitioners, who undertake actions, involve in interactions, and draw on situated practice to create appropriate strategies to do their job and professionalize their status, to be investigated. Doing their job and professionalizing their status can be examined as a strategizing process

The research direction, then, was defined as the situated practices of the knowledge managers as strategizing practitioners. In an attempt to formulate the research questions in this research direction, a fuller review of the strategy-as-practice literature was conducted. It was found that the literature was dominated by the building mode. The building mode is underlined by the primacy of intentional states and individual motivations, and the assumption of a relationship of detachment in which an actor is generally viewed as distinct from and acting on a pre-existing external world. In fact, it has been argued that strategizing also takes place in a dwelling mode, in which agent identities and their strategies are simultaneously co-constructed relationally through direct engagement with the world they inhabit; practical actions and relationships precede individual identity and strategic intent. In this dwelling mode, strategic outcomes do not presuppose deliberate prior planning or intention, and strategy is not some transcendent property that a priori unifies independently conceived actions and decisions, but is something immanent — it unfolds through everyday practical coping actions.

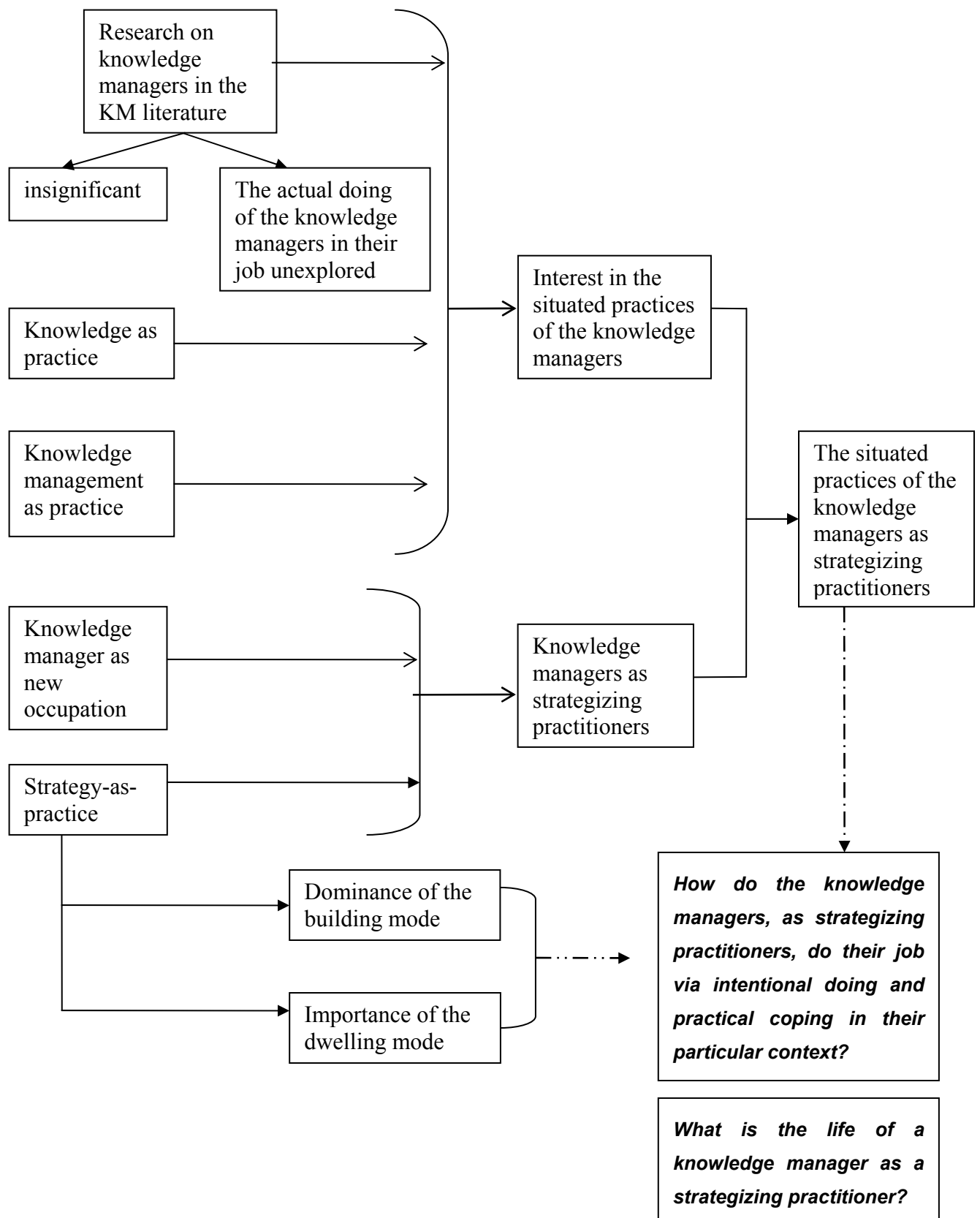
Based on this literature review, the research questions have been formulated as:

*How do the knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, do their job via intentional doing and practical coping in their particular context?*

*What is the life of a knowledge manager as a strategizing practitioner?*

The review process to come up with these research questions is summarized and visualized in the diagram below.

Figure 3: Literature review and formulation of research questions



In order to address these research questions, this research adopts a conceptual framework based on John Dewey's pragmatism, especially his perspective on the relationship between man and the

environment. For Dewey's pragmatism, the dynamics of individual's practice is characterized as a process, in which man's actions, in his interactive response to the environment, reproduces as well as transforms that environment that in turn will have impact on future actions of the man. This framework helps expand the practice turn in social theory as well as enables us to investigate fully the practice of the knowledge managers rather than just the "visible part of the iceberg" (de La Ville and Mounoud, forthcoming). Dewey's perspective is applicable not only for the practice approach in management literature at large but also for the strategy-as-practice perspective. In the next chapter, Dewey's pragmatism will be presented in fullest details.

## CHAPTER 2: PRAGMATIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter, the discussion of Chia and Holt (2006), which criticizes the dominance of building mode of strategizing in strategy-as-practice research, have been presented. Chia and Holt propose a conceptual framework that uses Heidegger's concepts of availability and occurrentness. This allows a distinction between "purposive" and "purposeful" activity, affording an understanding of how strategy might be seen as the constant negotiation between these modes of understanding within organizational settings. They argue that "typically, strategy research limits its concerns to 'occurrent' modes of strategizing, where consciousness, intention and purposefulness are presumed. Whereas the experience of actual strategizing suggests that it is by being sensate to an alternative, 'available' mode of practical coping that a more nuanced appreciation of strategy-making in practice may be achieved". If practical strategizing is to be understood from a dwelling perspective, issues and concerns, when they are defined as strategic, reflect an "availableness" rather than an "occurrentness".

Inspired by the discussion of Elkjaer (2004) on the application of John Dewey's pragmatism to study organizational learning, this research adopts Dewey's philosophy, especially his perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment, to develop the investigation framework.

Dewey believes that man, like any natural creature, is a being reacting and interacting with an environment. One of the key ideas of Dewey's pragmatism is that reality only reveals itself as a result of the activities – of the "doings" – of the organism. The transaction of man and his environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process, in which he seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with his ever-changing environment. Man learns through experience and his adjustments to regain equilibrium become more satisfactory. However, man can never recapture the original equilibrium.

Dewey's perspective on the relation between man and his environment is configured by his concept of experience. Experience is the way in which living organisms are connected with reality. The content of our experience includes something had, an undergoing of things which "happen to us". It also includes responsive "taking". Experiencing is primarily suffering and enjoyment, the feeling of need and the making of effort, while what is experienced is anything which can occur to anyone.

Situation is a chief principle for interpreting an experience. It denotes the entire, pervasive, unique character of all conditions, under which and within which an individual organism functions at a given time. Continuity is also another chief principle for understanding experience. Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity, something is carried over from the earlier to the later one. As an individual passes from one situation to another, he does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in terms of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument for understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue.

Experience covers the whole range of human possibilities. Dewey refers to these dimensions as modes of experience. Dewey discusses about a particular type of experiencing called inquiry: the cognitive mode of experience. The transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate one is the occasion for the process of inquiry and, therefore, for the transition of experience into the

cognitive mode. We interact continuously with the world through continuous process of inquiry, and this is the source of experiences that can be elaborated as knowledge. Dewey coins the concept of inquiry as the actual way in which one has experiences and becomes knowledgeable. Dewey's notion of inquiry is attached to the actual process of becoming knowledgeable – of having experiences. It is part of life to inquire the world, to mull things over, to make evaluations and draw conclusions.

This chapter will discuss in details Dewey's viewpoint on the relationship between man and his environment, which is configured by his concepts of experience, situation, continuity, inquiry and knowledge. How Dewey's pragmatic perspective takes into account both intentional and practical-coping dimensions in human actions will be detailed. How the theory is applied in this research and an investigation framework based on Dewey's pragmatism will also be presented.

### **I. Relationship between man and his environment**

Dewey (1934) denies that man is a unique being who is separated from nature. Man, like any natural creature, is a being reacting and interacting with an environment. We live and act in connection with the existing environment, not in connection with isolated objects (Dewey, 1938). Man's life and destiny are tied with the interchange he makes with his physical and social environments. He does not live *in* an environment; he lives by means of an environment.

Dewey advocates the transactional approach of the relation between the individual and his environment. He tries to account for the point of contact between the human organism and the world. For Dewey the human organism is always already in touch with reality. He denies the separation between the immaterial mind and the material world. But while Dewey's transactional approach implies that the human organism is always in touch with its environment, this does not mean that reality simply reveals itself to the organism. He took his point of departure in interactions taking place in nature, where nature is understood as "a moving whole of interacting parts" (Dewey, 2005). One of the key ideas of Dewey's pragmatism is that reality only reveals itself as a result of the activities – of the "doings" – of the individual (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Human action, Dewey argues, is always "the interaction between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social" (Dewey, 1922).

What is distinctive about the transactions between the living organism and its environment is that this is a double relationship:

*"The organism acts in accordance with its own structure, simple or complex, upon its surroundings. As a consequence the changes produced in the environment react upon the organism and its activities. The living creature undergoes, suffers, the consequences of its own behavior. This close connection between doing and suffering or undergoing forms what we call experience" (Dewey, 1948).*

The transaction of man and his environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the individual seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with his ever-changing environment (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). With his capacity of consciousness, man is able to examine the interchange between

himself and his environment and gradually learns how to have some control over nature. Each problem encountered leads to a re-examination of experience in order to include within it new material, more inclusive resolution, and new ways of coping with nature. Man learns through experience and his adjustments to regain equilibrium become more satisfactory. However, man can never recapture the original equilibrium. Living is composed of series of adjustments and learning through experience (Dewey, 1938).

The process of living is enacted by the environment and by the organism, because they are an integration (Dewey, 1938). The environment of an animal differs from that of a plant; that of a jelly fish differs from that of a trout, and the environment of any fish differs from that of a bird. The difference is not just that a fish lives in the water and a bird in the air, it also resides in the special way in which water and air enter into their respective activities (Dewey, 1938).

## II. Experience

Dewey's perspective on the relation between man and his environment is configured by his concept of experience.

The traditional conception of experience posits that "experience is primarily the passive affair of the mind receiving impression of external objects through the sense organs" (Talisso, 2002). Experience, from Dewey's view, is not merely the sense perceptions of passive spectators on the world. For Dewey, experience is not "a veil that shuts man off from nature" (Dewey, 1958), but rather "the dynamic participation, the continuing process of an organism's adjustment not simply to environing conditions but within a biological (physical) and cultural environment". In the process of experiencing, an organism actively encounters a world within which it must adjust. Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there and influence the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had. It is "the close connection between doing and suffering or undergoing" (Dewey, 1948).

The notion of experience has been formulated in different ways in many of Dewey's writings, but this conception is always inherent in those various definitions. For example, Dewey (1916) states that: "when we experience something, we act upon it, we do something with it; and then we suffer and undergo the consequences". A similar but articulated in more details expression about experience is found in his book *Experience and nature* (Dewey, 1925):

*"Like its congeners, life and history, it includes what men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe, and endure, and also how men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine - in short, processes of experiencing. "Experience" denote the planted field, the sowed seeds, the reaped harvests, the changes of night and day, spring and autumn, wet and dry, heat and cold, that are observed, feared, longed for; it also denotes the one who plans and reaps, who works and rejoices, hopes, fears, plans, invokes magic or chemistry to aid him, who is downcast or triumphant. It is double-*

*barrelled in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality”.*

What Dewey wants to stress with his transactional redefinition of experience is that this is the way in which living organisms are connected with reality (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Experience “is a means of penetrating continually further into the heart of nature” (Dewey, 1958). Dewey claims that “things – anything, everything, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term “thing” – are what they are experienced as”. This means that everyone’s experience is equally real. If their accounts turn out to be different, it does not mean that the content of only one of them can be real. It simply reflects the fact that they enter the transaction from different standpoints, from different backgrounds, from different histories, and with different purposes and intentions (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Experience is an undivided totality (Hocking, 1940). Many authors have tried to identify the components contained in that totality as implied by Dewey. Hocking (1940) distinguishes between a *stuff of experience* and a *way of dealing with it*. We never know what experience is by simply knowing the grist fed into the mill of perception. For example, somebody has gone through the experience of having smallpox. This is a habitual expression of experience, which denotes the stuff of experience. But the question of interest is: *how did he take it?* Is there a *story* in it? A given stuff may be taken in numerous ways. There are emotion, imagination, moral and esthetic meaning in the way this stuff is taken. And we need to include all of that because it is all *there*. Experience is a grist interfused with the way of taking it. Kennedy (1959) makes a similar distinction but uses slightly different terms. He states that the content of our experience includes something had, an undergoing of things which “happen to us”, e.g. we feel cold. It also includes responsive “taking”, i.e. we “take” account of what is happening to us by the closing of a window. Experiencing is primarily suffering and enjoyment, the feeling of need and the making of effort, while what is experienced is anything which can occur to anyone (Kennedy, 1959).

In Dewey’s concept of experience underlines both building and dwelling modes in the sense of Chia and Holt (2006). It has both “conscious” and “quiet” (Chia and Holt, 2006) dimensions. Dewey states that experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living (Dewey, 1934). Usually experience is confused because of our own distractions. In this kind of experiencing, “there are pauses and continuations without any rational aims or procedures” (Kaminsky, 1957). However, Dewey (1934) does discuss about a kind of unity experience may possess. “We have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment. Then and only then it is integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences”. “An experience is a whole and carries with it own individualizing quality of self sufficiency”. Examples of *an* experience abound: a piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory, a problem receives its solution, a game is played through... “It may have been something of tremendous importance – a quarrel with one who was once an intimate, a catastrophe finally averted by a hair’s breadth. Or it may have been something that in comparison was slight – and which perhaps because of its slightness illustrates all the better what it is to be an experience. There is that meal in a Paris restaurant of which one says ‘that was an experience’. It stands out as an

enduring memorial of what food may be". There is an order in an experience which differentiates it from all other aspects of experiencing. This kind of experiencing is vital and significant, and is what men refer to when they say "that was really an experience" or "that was some experience" (Kaminsky, 1957).

A question raised, then, is what transforms experience into an experience? It is argued that in an experience there is more emotion displayed than in the general stream of experience. The memories that are important to us are those that aroused and still arouse emotion. Important future events are those that involve emotions. Emotion, therefore, is an important characteristic of an experience (Kaminsky, 1957). The counter argument of this point is that emotion has been traditionally regarded as an incidental and purely subjective element of experience. Feelings have been relegated strictly to the personal. Dewey (1934), however, rejects this dichotomy between existence and emotion. "Emotions, like perceptions, belong to the self, but it belongs to the self that is concerned in the movement of events toward an issue that is desired or disliked". "Experience is not partly emotional and partly objective. Experience as a whole may be considered emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it". In essence Dewey regards emotion as the quality that permeates an experience. But the emotion must be expressed and not simply discharged (Kaminsky, 1957). A jump of fright may be no more than an automatic reflex to a situation. But a jump of fright becomes the emotional fear that can characterize an experience when there is found or thought to exist a threatening object that must be dealt with or escaped from (Dewey, 1934). In such an instance fear has been expressed rather than discharged. An action may be considered as either conscious or non-deliberate, depending on the particular circumstance and its corresponding emotion. Emotion, therefore, is the quality that unifies an experience.

### **III. Situation**

The term situation is often used in academic literature dealing with organizing and strategizing but the concept is still "neglected" by organization sciences. Journé and Raulet-Croset (2006) have been able to identify only a few management studies, in which the concept is used and discussed. They include Jacques Girin's work on "management situations" (Girin, 1990), Schon's idea of "discussion with the situation" (Schon, 1983), and Karl Weick's notion of "sensemaking" and "organizing" (Weick, 1979, 1995). It is argued that the situation should be considered as a concept in order to reinforce the theoretical framework of the study of strategizing and organizing and to analyze managerial activity. There cannot be any complete theory of organizing and strategizing without a deep reflection concerning the concept of situation (Journé and Raulet-Croset, 2006).

The concept of situation has been discussed in details by Quere (1998), who relies mainly on Dewey to argue for an emphasis on the role of situation without denying the actor control of the experience and activity, reestablishes the temporal structure of the situation, distinguishes between situation and environment, and points out the necessity of focusing on the things that are truly the situation's rather than those of a general environment. He argues that the discussion helps to clarify the confusion between situation and environment, hence the lack of an appropriate conception of how the situation



controls experience and action that is common in research on situated action. In this context, it is timely and appropriate to have a detailed discussion on the concept from Dewey's pragmatic perspective.

Interaction is a chief principle for interpreting an experience. Any normal experience is an interplay of two conditions: objective and internal conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a situation. According to Dewey (1938),

*What is designated by the word "situation" is not a single object or event or set of events. For we never experience nor form judgments about objects and events in isolation, but only in connection with a contextual whole. This latter is what is called a "situation".*

It denotes the entire, pervasive, unique character of all conditions under which and within which an individual organism functions at a given time. The phrase "objective conditions" covers a wide range. It includes what is done and the way in which it is done, e.g. not only words spoken but the tone of voice in which they are spoken. It includes equipment, books, apparatus, toys, games played. It includes the materials with which an individual interacts, and importantly, the total social set-up of the situations in which a person is engaged (Dewey, 1938b). "Every situation, when it is analyzed, is extensive containing within itself diverse distinctions and relations which, in spite of their diversity, form a unified qualitative whole" (Dewey, 1938).

Situations arise within experience, not experience within situations (Wright, 1922). One cannot decline to *have* a situation, because that means having no experience. One can only decline to have a *specific* situation (Dewey, 1938). The statement that individuals live in a world means they live in a sequence of situations. When it is said that they live in these situations, the meaning of the word "in" is different from its meaning when it is said that pennies are "in" a pocket or paint is "in" a can. It means, once more, that interaction is going on between an individual and objects and other persons. An experience is always what it is because of "a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or events, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation, or the toys with which he is playing, the book he is reading, or the materials of an experiment he is performing" (Dewey, 1938b).

From Dewey's point of view, situations are supplied with the consequences of past experience and loaded with new possibilities. They have distinctive unity and stand out against the rest of experience. Dewey argues that the unique pervasive quality of the situation gives it the unity and binds its constituents into a single whole (Berstein, 1961). The pervasively qualitative is also unique; it constitutes in each situation an individual situation, invisible and unduplicable. Distinctions and relations are instituted within a situation; they are recurrent and repeatable in different situations (Dewey, 1938):

*"A situation is a whole in virtue of its immediately pervasive quality. When we describe it from the psychological side, we have to say that the situation as a qualitative whole is sensed or felt. Such an expression is, however, valuable only as it is taken negatively to indicate that it is not,*

*as such, an object in discourse. Stating that it is felt is wholly misleading if it gives the impression that the situation is a feeling or an emotion or anything mentalistic. On the contrary, feeling, sensation and emotion have themselves to be identified and described in terms of the immediate of a total qualitative situation” (Dewey, 1938).*

The question, then, is what is quality in Dewey’s view? There are three basic aspects in which Dewey’s notion of quality differs from traditional discussions (Berstein, 1961). First, qualities have been understood as the basic cognitive elements that are known by direct awareness or acquaintance. Dewey denies this perception and argues that qualities *per se* are not directly known, they are just directly experienced, felt, or had. Second, Dewey (1938) considers qualities as experienced in a situation or context. A situation cuts across the dualism of subject and object, mental and physical. Subject and object, mental and physical are not independent; they are functional distinctions instituted within situations. Questions like “are qualities merely mental or physical?” are misleading. Any quality may be classified as either or both, depending on the specific situation.

Third, qualities are not limited to those which have been called sense qualities. There are tertiary or pervasive qualities which are directly felt. A situation may be cheerful, distressing, or indeterminate, etc. In each instance, there is a unique pervasive quality which conditions, and is conditioned by, all the constituents of the situation. Cheerfulness or fear, when used to name a type of quality, does not refer exclusively to subjective feelings of an individual. For Dewey (1938), we do not define or identify quality in terms of feeling, but the reverse is the case. Any feeling is of some immediate quality when that is present as experience. An example might be helpful (Kennedy, 1959): when someone says “What a *distressing* situation to be in!” the word “distressing” indicates a pervasive quality. This quality has a binding force holding together and giving unity to all elements, into which the whole situation might be decomposed, e.g. perceptions, thoughts, objective elements of the situation, and so forth. The immediate existence of quality, and of dominant and pervasive quality, is the background, the point of departure, and the regulative principle of all thinking (Berstein, 1961). Dewey sums up this point as follows:

*“The word “quality” is usually associated with something specific, like red, hard, sweet; that is, with distinction made within a total experience. The intended contrasting meaning may be suggested, although not adequately exemplified, by considering such qualities as are designated by the terms distressing, perplexing, cheerful, disconsolate. For these words do not designate specific qualities in the way in which hard, say, designates a particular quality of a rock. For such qualities permeate and color all the objects and events that are involved in an experience. The phrase “tertiary quality” qualifies all the constituents to which it applies in thoroughgoing fashion” (Dewey, 1938)*

There are, for Dewey, at least four types of situations (Kennedy, 1959). First, there is a type of situation, in which there is a smooth on-going routine of activity. The live creature is in tune with his environment. This type of situation can be called “determinate”. Second, when this harmony is disrupted, there is a type of situation that ensues. The live creature is disoriented and confused. Things are unsettled. The situation now is “indeterminate”. A situation is indeterminate with respect to

its issue. It may be *confused*, meaning that its outcome cannot be anticipated. It may be obscure, meaning that its course of movement to reach final consequences that cannot be clearly made out. It may be conflicting, meaning that it tends to evoke discordant responses (Dewey, 1938). Third, when and if the response to an indeterminate situation is not merely emotional and impulsive, if the feeling of confusion gives way to an attitude of doubt, the situation becomes “problematic”. As situations are constituted by both physical and cultural factors, a given situation can also be morally problematic. In a morally problematic situation, the social conditions are objectively disordered (Talisso, 2000). Fourth, if the confusion is dissipated and the doubt is resolved as the result of a problem-solving activity, the situation then becomes determinate. But this determinate situation is not the original one. The live creature is now a different being within an environment, which has also been changed to some extent. A new equilibrium has been achieved. The outcome of any problematic situation is retained in a person’s experience, and when another problematic situation arises, he can profit by what he has learned in the past, and utilizes it, so far as it is workable.

#### **IV. Continuity**

Besides interaction, continuity is also another chief principle for understanding experience. Experiences may be disconnected from one another. They are not linked cumulatively to one another. Each experience may be lively, vivid, and interesting, and yet their disconnectedness may artificially generate dispersive and disintegrated habits (Dewey, 1938b).

The principle of continuity of experience rests upon the fact of habit. The notion of habit put forward by Dewey illustrates the dwelling dimension inherent in Dewey’s perception of human actions. It is in line with the notion of *modus operandi* – an internalized disposition that is assumed to order the consistency of action – discussed by Chia and Holt (2006). The act of perception results, if successful, in coordinated action. We can say that an earlier “open” phase, in which there is a tension of various elements, resolves into a “closed” phase of integrated interaction of organism and environment. Dewey stresses that the outcome of this process on the side of the organism is not identical with the state out of which disequilibrium and tension emerged. There rather is “a change in the organic structures that conditions further behavior” (Dewey, 1938). The behavior of the organism becomes more specific or more focused. It can be said that through our constant transactions with our environment, through our continuous attempts to maintain a dynamic balance with our environment, we develop patterns of possible action, which Dewey calls habits.

The acquisition of habits, of possible ways to respond to and transact with our environment, is basically a process of trial and error. We do something (and Dewey emphasizes that we are always doing something, and cannot not do something) that affects our environment; we undergo the consequences of our doings, and try to adjust ourselves accordingly. This cycle repeats itself. In the act of knowing, both the knower and what is to be known are changed by the transaction between them (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). At the outset, the habit that operates in an inference is purely biological. It operates without our being aware of it. We are aware at most of particular acts and particular consequences. The craftsman, for example, learns that if he operates in a certain way the

result will take care of itself, certain materials being given. In like fashion, we discover that if we draw our inferences in a certain way, we shall, other things being equal, get dependable conclusions (Dewey, 1938).

Habits are not only patterns of action but should be understood as predispositions to act. "The essence of habits is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response, not particular acts...Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts" (Dewey, 1922). Any habit is a way or manner of action, not a particular act. When it is formulated, it becomes, as far as it is accepted, a rule, or more generally, a principle or law of action (Dewey, 1938).

Three things are important in Dewey's notion of habit (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The first is that habits are not formed by sheer repetition. The ability to repeat can only be the result of the formation of a habit. This is not to deny that repetition is possible. But since action always involves the organism-environment transaction, repetition is only likely to occur if the enviroing conditions remain the same. Dewey stresses that sheer repetition in the case of human organisms "is the product of conditions that are uniform because they have been made so mechanically" (Dewey, 1938). Second, since action is always transaction, the same environmental conditions will not necessarily evoke the same response in different organisms. All depends upon prior learning, which generates the unique set of habits acquired over time. Third, habits can be seen as the basis of meaning. To understand the link between habits and meaning, it is important to see that Dewey does not think of meaning as something mental. For Dewey (1958), meaning is primarily "a property of behavior". It is the way in which the organism responds to the environment. As long as the organism has not found a response that will result in coordination, we can say that the meaning of the situation is not clear. Finding a response that brings about coordination indicates that the meaning of the situation for this organism has become clear. Dewey posits that the experimental transaction of organism-environment not only leads to more specific habits, but also results in a more "differentiated" more meaningful world. Our responses become more specific, and as a result the world to which we respond becomes more differentiated (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

The principle of habit so understood obviously goes deeper than the ordinary conception of a habit as a more or less fixed way of doing things. It covers the formation of attitudes, which are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions which we meet in living (Dewey, 1938b). From this point of view, the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from previous experience and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after. This principle is of universal application. There is some kind of continuity in every case (Dewey, 1938b).

Two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite. They are the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience. Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later one. As an individual passes from one situation to another, he does not find himself living in another world, but in a different part or aspect of the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill

in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue (Dewey, 1938b).

## V. Inquiry

Experience covers the whole range of human possibilities. Dewey refers to these dimensions as modes of experience. Knowing is one mode of experience, but it is only one among others. Dewey assumes that different modes of experience do not occur simultaneously but alternate. This means that it is only at a certain moment and for specific purposes that experience turns into the cognitive mode. Then when the work is done, experience returns to another, non-cognitive mode (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Dewey discusses about a particular type of experiencing called *inquiry*: the cognitive mode of experience and the building mode of human actions. The transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate one is the occasion for the process of inquiry and, therefore, for the transition of experience into the cognitive mode.

One important question is whether what evokes inquiry should itself be seen as part of the process of inquiry. Does inquiry only start after the disruption of coordinated transaction? Or is the disruption the first steps of the process? (Biesta and Burbules, 2003) Dewey solves the problem by introducing a distinction between indeterminate and problematic situations. Conflicting habits constitute an indeterminate situation. Although this is a necessary condition for the transformation of experience into cognitive experience, the indeterminate situation is itself not cognitive. It is simply a natural event. The indeterminate situation becomes problematic in the very process of being subjected to inquiry. The indeterminate situation comes into existence from existential cause, just as does the organic imbalance of hunger. There is nothing intellectual or cognitive in the existence of such situations. It is only when such a situation is identified as a problematic situation that inquiry begins and experience turns into the cognitive mode. For example, a teacher may feel uneasy about what is happening in her classroom, and as a result may be distracted or find it difficult to focus. The normal flow of teaching is, in a sense, disrupted. For Dewey (1938), this counts as an indeterminate situation. As soon as the teacher acknowledges that something needs to be done, that the source of the uneasiness should be identified, the indeterminate situation turns into a problematic situation. It is here that inquiry begins, as Dewey puts it, "to see that a situation requires inquiry is the initial step in inquiry".

Qualification of a situation as problematic does not carry inquiry far. It is just an initial step in institution of a problem (Dewey, 1938). A problem is not a task to be performed. A problem represents the partial transformation by inquiry of a problematic situation into a determinate situation. It is a familiar saying that a problem well put is half-solved. To find out what the problems are, which a problematic situation presents to be inquired into, is to be well along in inquiry (Dewey, 1938). To mistake the problem involved is to cause subsequent inquiry to be irrelevant. The way in which the problem is conceived decides which specific suggestions are chosen and which are dismissed; which data are selected and which rejected; it is the criterion for relevancy and irrelevancy of hypotheses in the process of inquiry (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey's distinction between indeterminate and problematic situations reveals that his theory of inquiry does not rely on an "objectivistic" understanding of what problems are (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Problems are not simply there but emerge as a result of the identification of an indeterminate situation as being problematic. Similarly, what is indeterminate is not outside and independent of the human organism. The indeterminateness concerns the organism-environment transaction. This implies that similar external conditions do not necessarily lead to similar indeterminate situations. What is clear and confusing for one person is not necessarily also unclear and confusing for another person. All depends upon the relationship between environing conditions and available habits (Dewey, 1938).

The process of inquiry consists of the cooperation of two kinds of operations: existential (the actual transformation of the situation) and conceptual (reflection or thinking) (Dewey, 1938). In some phases of the process of inquiry, the emphasis will be on conceptual operations, while in other phases the existential operations will be more prominent. But it is always the cooperation of the two operations and never only one of them (Dewey, 1938). Put it more simply, inquiry is not a mental process, not something that happens in human mind, but that it is the actual transformation of a situation – where a situation always denotes the transaction of organism and environment.

Inquiry inherently relies on the *building mode* (Chia and Holt, 2006) to the extent that it involves thinking, choice of actions, and actions (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Finding out what actually is problematic about the indeterminate situation is a crucial moment in the process of inquiry (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The first step toward the identification of the problem lies in the collection of facts. We need to find the constituents of the indeterminate situation, which are called the facts of the case. The facts of the case "constitute the terms of the problem, because they are the conditions that must be reckoned with or taken account of in any relevant solution that is proposed" (Dewey, 1938). In order to find the facts of the case, we need observation. But not everything we observe will be a possible fact of the case. Everything depends on the ideas we have about the possible nature of the problem. Ideas give direction to our observations, just as they give meaning to what we observe. "A color seen at a particular locus in a spectral band is, for example, of immense intellectual importance in chemistry and in astro-physics" (Dewey, 1929). This means that facts and ideas do not develop independently but that there is a constant "check" between the two.

As long as the transformation of the indeterminate situation into a determinate one has not taken place, both facts and ideas only have a provisional status. The difference between them is also provisional (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The distinction between facts and ideas does not coincide with the distinction between conceptual and existential operations. That distinction lies wholly on the conceptual side of the process of inquiry. A possible solution is suggested by the determination of factual conditions, which are obtained through observation. The possible solution presents itself as an idea, which indicates anticipated consequences of what will happen when certain operations are executed under certain conditions. Observation of facts and suggested ideas arise and develop in correspondence with each other. The more the facts of the case come to light through observation, the clearer and more pertinent become the conceptions of the way the problem is to be dealt with. On the

other side, the clearer the idea, the more definite become the operations of observation and of execution that must be performed in order to resolve the situation (Dewey, 1938).

Because inquiry is a progressive determination of a problem and its possible solution, ideas differ in grade according to the stage of inquiry. At first, ideas are vague. "They occur at first simply as suggestions; suggestions just spring up, flash upon us, and occur to us. They may then become stimuli to direct an overt activity but they have as yet no logical status. Every idea originates as a suggestion, but not every suggestion is an idea. The suggestion becomes an idea when it is examined with reference to its functional fitness; its capacity as a means of resolving the given situation" (Dewey, 1938). This examination takes the form of reasoning, as a result of which we are able to evaluate better than we were at the outset. The pertinence and weight of the meaning is gradually tested with respect to its functional capacity. But the final test of its properties is determined when it actually functions (Dewey, 1938).

The cooperation of facts and ideas results in a proposal for action: the hypothesis (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The hypothesis articulates a relationship between actions and consequences on the basis of a hypothetical interpretation of what is problematic about the indeterminate situation. Whether the suggested relations (implications) correspond with the actual connections can only be found out by means of acting out with the suggested line of action. If the action indeed has the expected result, a unified situation has been created. The process of inquiry comes to an end when a unified situation is established (Dewey, 1938). In a sense we could say that the occurrence of a unified situation proves that the inference was correct or warranted. It becomes clear, in other words, that it was indeed possible to act on experience  $x$  as meaning  $y$  (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Inquiry yields judgment. Judgment may be identified as the settled outcome of inquiry. It is concerned with the concluding objects that emerge from inquiry. Every inquiry utilizes the conclusions or judgments of prior inquiries to arrive at a warranted conclusion. Propositional formulations are the means of establishing conclusions. They consist of symbols of the contents that are derived from those phases and aspects of former inquiries that are taken to be relevant to the resolution of the given problematic situation (Dewey, 1938).

The use of the outcome of previous processes of inquiry is not to be thought of as the application of existing knowledge. Application is part of the processes of continuous verification. When we apply existing knowledge in new situations, the question of success is not only one of the applicability of that knowledge in this situation; it is also a test of whether the knowledge holds under new circumstance (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Old objects may undergo modification through the tests in new problems (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

It should be noted that inquiry should not be understood as a serial or sequential process. There is not absolute end to inquiry. Inquiry, in settling the disturbed relation of organism-environment (which defines doubt), does not merely remove doubt by recurrence to a prior equilibrium. Inquiry does not solve problems by returning to a previous, stable situation, but by means of a transformation of the current situation into a new situation. It institutes new enviroing conditions that occasion new problems. There is no a final settlement, because every settlement introduces the conditions of some

degree of a new unsettling (Dewey, 1938). What the organism learns during this process produces new powers that make new demands upon the environment. As special problems are resolved, new ones tend to emerge. There will not be a point at which we can know everything that there is to know, because every settlement of a situation institutes new conditions, that, in turn, occasion new problems (Dewey, 1938), and the cycle repeats itself (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

To sum up, there are times when the ongoing dynamic organism-environment interaction breaks down. There is an interruption or disturbance of ongoing action. Dewey terms these instances of breakdown indeterminate situations. The problematic of an indeterminate situation initiates inquiry. Inquiry is reflective problem-solving which changes the indeterminate situation into a determinate one. Inquiry is the process by which problems are solved. In Dewey's sense, the building mode is inherent in inquiries, which enter into every area of life and into every aspect of every area in an intimate and decisive way (Dewey, 1938). In everyday living, men examine; they turn things over intellectually; they infer and judge as "naturally" as they reap and sow, produce and exchange commodities. Inquiries may guide actions towards overcoming immediate impediment or direct efforts towards desired outcomes.

## **VI. Inquiry and knowledge**

Dewey's account in the building and dwelling modes of human action can also be seen in his conception of knowledge. The philosopher believes that we perform most of life's tasks without reflecting on how to do them (i.e. we already understand how to do most things without having to figure them out). We know how and have the competence to cope in most situations without having to consciously think about what to do. We ordinarily act based on our practical or know-how knowledge, and this knowledge usually functions tacitly in the background and out of conscious awareness. It is this non-cognitive practical or background understanding that provides us with the sense we have of others, the world and ourselves. It provides our immediate understanding of what is to be done and how to do it. Dewey believes that background knowledge functions below the level of consciousness and language (Polkinghorne, 2000).

This non-deliberate knowledge needs to be differentiated from theoretical knowledge, e.g. the kind of knowledge that explains why turning a handle causes the door to open (Polkinghorne, 2000). Dewey's distinction between the everyday, practical knowing-how and theoretical knowing-that and knowing-why is illustrated in his statement that:

*We may... be said to know-how by means of our habits... We walk and read aloud, we get off and on streetcars, we dress and undress, and do a thousand useful acts without thinking of them. We know something, namely, how to do them... If we choose to call [this] knowledge... then other things also called knowledge, knowledge of and about things, knowledge that things are thus and so, knowledge that involves reflection and conscious depreciation, remains of the different sort (1922).*



Although the background knowledge usually functions smoothly and without deliberation to complete our daily tasks, there are times when it is unsuccessful. When a breakdown occurs in the functioning of the background, people move from their ordinary, practical mode of engagement with the world to a mode of deliberation or reflection. Dewey (1922) writes: “it is a commonplace that the more efficient a habit the more unconsciously it operates. Only a hitch in its workings occasions emotion and provokes thought”. These are the situations in which one could enlarge or deepen one’s practical know-how and background knowledge. They allow people to be more effective in achieving their desired purposes. Dewey holds that the situations that are most significant for producing background changes are when the background knowledge is ineffective for accomplishing a task, or when one is not able to clearly understand a text. They are indeterminate situations that have been discussed earlier.

We continuously interact with the world through continuous process of inquiry, and this is the source of experiences that can be elaborated as knowledge (Dewey, 1938). Dewey has coined the concept of inquiry as the actual way in which one has experiences and becomes knowledgeable. Dewey’s notion of inquiry is attached to the actual process of becoming knowledgeable. It is part of life to inquire the world, to mull things over, to make evaluations and draw conclusions. This is done all the time whether one is conscious of it or not. This is how human beings learn and become competent (Elkjaer, 2004). Dewey states:

*Knowledge arises “because of the appearance of incompatible factors within the empirical situation...Then opposed responses are provoked which cannot be dealt with, whether simultaneously or successively, only after they have been brought into a plan of organized action” (Dewey, 1916 in Biesta and Burbules, 2003).*

Dewey rejects the possibility that we can say anything general about what knowledge is apart from its being the outcome of inquiry. Knowledge, as an abstract term, is a name for the product of competent inquiries (Dewey, 1938). A problem with using the word knowledge to describe the outcome of inquiry is that it may seem as if the outcome of inquiry is definitive. The conceptual outcome of inquiry is, however, always related to the specific situation in which it was achieved. Knowledge in this account is always provisional. The settlement of a particular situation by a particular inquiry is no guarantee that that conclusion will always remain settled (Dewey, 1938). It is the convergent and cumulative effect of continued inquiry that defines knowledge in its general meaning. All special conclusions of special inquiries are parts of an enterprise that is continually renewed. For these reasons, Dewey prefers to use the expression *warranted assertion* to denote the conceptual outcome of inquiry, rather than knowledge (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

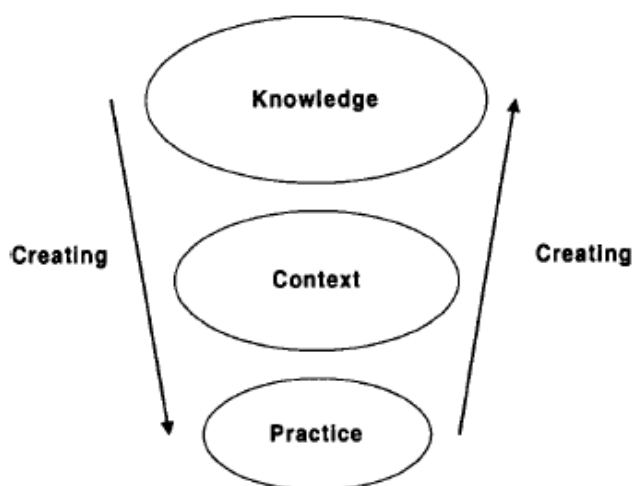
While thought or reflection must play an important part in inquiry, it will not result in knowledge. It is only when we put the suggested solution in action, that the value of the analysis of the problem and the suggested solution can be established. We need overt action to determine the worth and validity of our reflective considerations. Otherwise, we have, at most, a hypothesis about the problem and a hypothesis about its possible solution. This means that in order to get knowledge, we need action (Dewey, 2005). But although action is a necessary condition for knowledge, it is not a sufficient one.

We also need thinking or reflection. Dewey's claim is that it is the combination of reflection and action that leads to knowledge (Dewey, 1939).

From this it also follows that knowing – the acquisition of knowledge – is not something that takes place inside the human mind (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Knowing is itself an activity. "Knowing consists of operations that give experienced objects a form in which the relations, upon which the onward course of events depends, are securely experienced. While experience concerns transaction "as it is", knowledge has to do with the value or meaning of experience" (Dewey, 2005). The only way in which we can find out the meaning of immediate experience is by means of action. We can say that knowledge results from the cooperation of experience and action.

Dewey rejects the idea that knowledge is a mirror of reality and the role of science is to make knowledge as true as possible so it represents reality in an accurate way (Fenstermacher and Sanger, 1998). There is not, on the one hand, knowledge and, on the other, the real world. The real world is out there but it only made sensible through knowledge and vice-versa. A single thing is not unknowable, but it can be known in so many different ways. One thing can function as many different objects, and one object can be represented by many different things. For example, a piece of paper can be used to make a fire or to write a letter (Blosch, 2001). Knowledge is not some embodiment of truth. It is not permanent and immutable. It is not a description or photograph of an external reality, independent of *who* and *what* one is as a person (Fenstermacher and Sanger, 1998). Knowledge of objects is contingent upon their use. What an object is and what it may do is determined by the contexts of interaction within which it is used (Blosch, 2001). The pragmatic view that knowledge, context, and practice (i.e. action) are linked can be shown in the diagram below.

Figure 4: Knowledge and action in the sense of Dewey

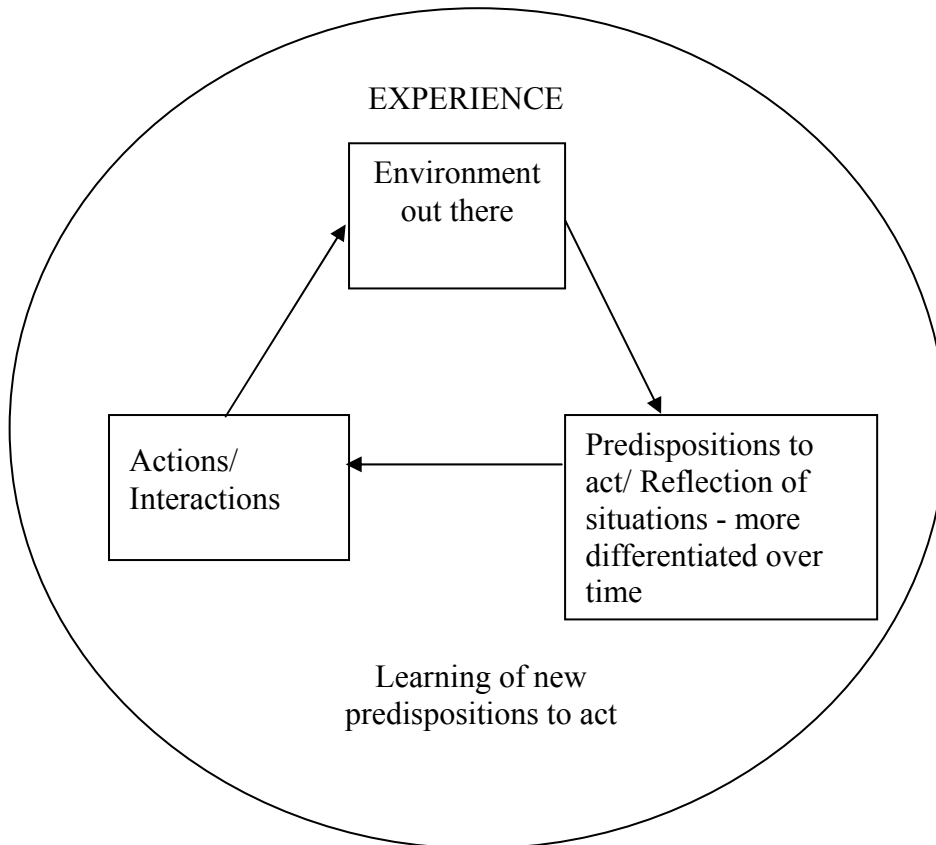


*Adapted from Blosch (2001)*

## VII. Investigation framework based on Dewey's theory

The perspective of John Dewey on the relation between man and his environment can be represented in the following diagram.

Figure 5: Relation between man and his environment in the sense of Dewey



This diagram sums up the principal viewpoints of Dewey. First, for Dewey, *experience* is the very way in which living organisms are connected with reality. It is “the dynamic participation, the continuing process of an organism’s adjustment not simply to enviroining conditions but within a biological (physical) and cultural environment” (Dewey, 1958). Dewey characterizes living organism – including the human organism – as capable of establishing and maintaining a dynamic, coordinated transaction with its environment. Moreover, the experiencing-experienced interaction or transaction was a *single structure*, not two separate structures which act upon one another (Kestenbaum, 1977).

Second, what is distinctive about the transactions between the living organism and it environment is that this is a *double relationship*. Man acts in accordance with his own structure and upon his surroundings. As a consequence, the changes produced in the environment react upon man and his activities. The individual undergoes and suffers the consequences of his own behaviour. This close connection between doing and suffering or undergoing forms experience. Experience goes on and influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had.

In these transactions, there is *the environment* “out there”, which conditions man’s surroundings and in which experience is had. The environment is the “natural medium” which poses threats and dangers to

the well-being of the live creature. It also provides the means whereby the needs of the live creature are satisfied. Need satisfaction in man is not “mere return to a prior state”. The outcome of this process is not identical with the state out of which tension emerged. There rather is a change in the environment that conditions further behavior (Dewey, 1938). It should be noted that since action is always transaction, the same environmental conditions will not necessarily evoke the same response and will not be seen as the same thing in individuals.

In the environment, man actively encounters a world within which he must adjust. Possible ways to respond to and transact with the environment reside in the habits, which are conceptualized by Dewey as the *predispositions to act or habits* possessed by the individual. Moreover, since *action* always involves the organism-environment transaction, repetition is only likely to occur as far as enviroing conditions remain the same. Thus, habits are not formed by sheer repetition, as the same environmental conditions will not necessarily evoke the same response in different organisms. All depends upon prior learning, that is, the unique set of habits that each individual organism acquires over time. The principle of habit so understood obviously goes deeper than the ordinary conception of a habit as a more or less fixed way of doing things. It covers the formation of attitudes, which are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions which we meet in living (Dewey, 1938b).

On the other hand, there are times when the ongoing dynamic organism-environment interaction breaks down. There is an interruption or disturbance of ongoing action. Dewey terms these instances of breakdown indeterminate situations. The problematic of an indeterminate situation initiates *inquiry*. Inquiry is the process by which problems are solved.

Inquiry is a progressive determination of a problem and its possible solution via *reflection and action*. It consists of the cooperation of two kinds of operations: existential (the actual transformation of the situation) and conceptual (reflection or thinking) (Dewey, 1938). In some phases of the process of inquiry, the emphasis will be on conceptual operations, while in other phases the existential operations will be more prominent. But it is always the cooperation of the two operations and never only one of them (Dewey, 1938). *Reflection* concerns the collection of facts and ideas, which results in a proposal for action: the hypothesis. The hypothesis articulates a relationship between actions and consequences on the basis of a hypothetical interpretation of what is problematic about the indeterminate situation. Whether the suggested relations (implications) correspond with the actual connections can only be found out by means of acting out with the suggested line of *action*. If the action indeed has the expected result, a unified situation has been created. The process of inquiry comes to an end when a unified situation is established (Dewey, 1938).

Inquiry does not solve problems by returning to a previous, stable situation, but by means of a transformation of the current situation into a new situation. It institutes new enviroing conditions that occasion new problems. There is no such thing as a final settlement, because every settlement introduces the conditions of a new unsettling (Dewey, 1938). What the organism learns during this process produces new powers that make new demands upon the environment. As special problems are resolved, new ones tend to emerge. There will not be a point at which we can know everything that

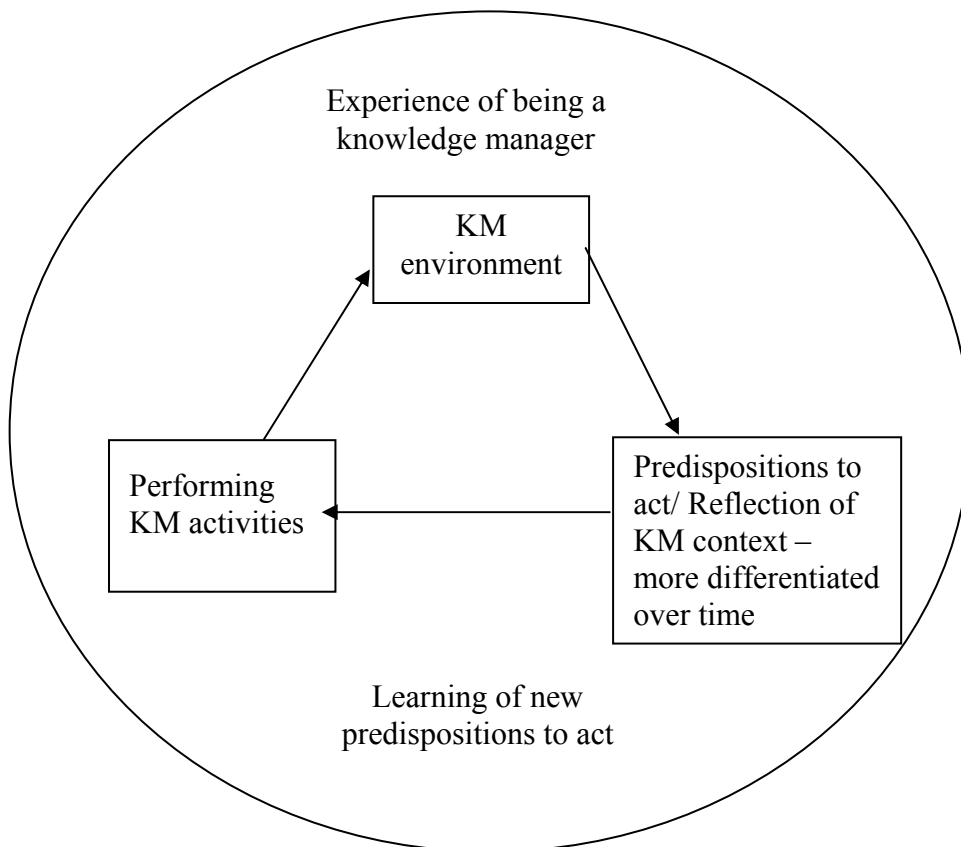
there is to know. Every settlement of a situation institutes new conditions, that, in turn, occasion new problems (Dewey, 1938), and the cycle repeats itself (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Third, for Dewey, man *learns* through experience and his adjustments to regain equilibrium become more satisfactory. The acquisition of habits is basically a process of trial and error. We do something that affects our environment, we undergo the consequences of our doings, and try to adjust ourselves accordingly – and this cycle repeats itself. In the act of knowing, both the knower and what is to be known are changed by the transaction between them (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). At the outset, the habit operates without our being aware of it. We are aware at most of particular acts and particular consequences. The craftsman, for example, learns that if he operates in a certain way the result will take care of itself, certain materials being given. In like fashion, we discover that if we draw our inferences in a certain way, we shall, other things being equal, get dependable conclusions (Dewey, 1938). Over time, *the behavior of the organism becomes mores specific or more focused*. It can be said that through our constant transactions with our environment, through our continuous attempts to maintain a dynamic balance with our environment, we develop *patterns of possible actions*, which Dewey calls habits.

Besides, with his capacity of consciousness, man is able to examine the interchange between himself and his environment and gradually learn how to have some control over nature. Each problem encountered leads to a re-examination of experience in order to include within it new material, more inclusive resolution, and new ways of coping with nature. Through this process *the predispositions of the individual become more focused and specific*. This is another way of saying that through the tentative, experimental way of establishing coordinated transaction, man has learned. This learning is, however, not the acquisition of information about how the world out there really is. It is learning in the sense of the acquisition of a complex set of predispositions to act. In this process the world becomes more differentiated. It becomes, in other words, infused with meaning (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The “circularity” of such a conception was not regretted by Dewey. He considers it to be a basic feature of all experience, which marks the life of live creature in interaction with its environment (Kestenbaum, 1977).

Through the lens of Dewey’s pragmatism, how a knowledge manager does his/her job and live in the position can be seen as inherent in the experience of being a knowledge manager. The experience of being a knowledge manager is an undivided totality. In the experience, his perception of the knowledge management context (his environment with different situations) leads to his way of performing of knowledge management activities, which in turn modifies that environment, and consequently his perception of that perceived world. The process continues until the person stops being a knowledge manager. The intentional doings and practical coping of the knowledge managers are embedded in this dynamics of this “circularity” and in the process of learning of new dispositions to act. The life of being a knowledge manager is seen through the emotion displayed in the experience. The phenomenon can fit into the above diagram as following.

Figure 6: The experience of being a knowledge manager based on Dewey's pragmatism



The pragmatic conception of the experience of being a knowledge manager can be exemplified by Dewey's discussion of the hunting life of the Australian aborigines. Dewey identifies occupations as the primary source of the structures of mind. "Occupations determine the fundamental modes of activity, and hence control the formation and use of habits" (Dewey, 1931). According to Dewey, "immediacy of interest, attention and deed" are the pervasive qualities of the entire world of the hunter, of which immediacy is the key word. Dewey first describes the temporal world of the farming life in order to emphasize the meaning of "immediacy" with respect to the hunter:

*The gathering and saving of seed, preparing the ground, sowing, tending, weeding, care of cattle, making of improvements, continued observation of times and seasons, engage thought and direct action. In a word, in all post-hunting situations the end is mentally apprehended and appreciated not as food satisfaction, but as a continuously ordered series of activities and of objective contents pertaining to them. And hence the direct and personal display of energy, personal putting forth of effort, personal acquisition and use of skills are not conceived or felt as immediate parts of the food process (Dewey, 1931).*

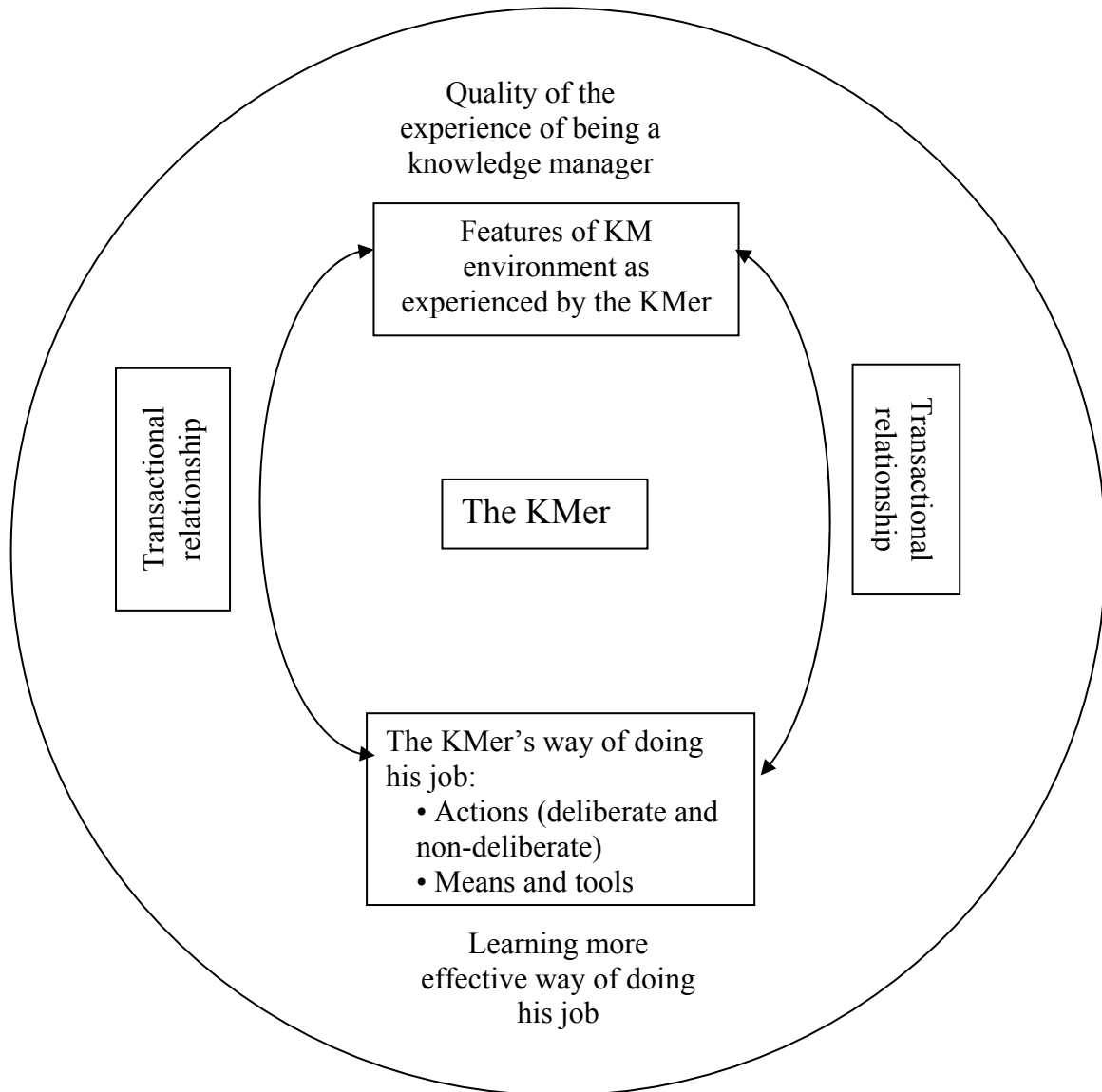
In striking contrast to this world of the farmer, the world of the hunter is characterized by a pervasive sense of immediacy: "there are no intermediate appliances, no adjustment of means to remote ends, no postponements of satisfaction, no transfer of interest and attention over to a complex system of acts and objects". Past and future are not sharply marked off from each other since they "meet and are lost in the stress of the present problem". Neither tools, weapons, or the land itself are experienced as "means" to some remote ends; hence, they are not matters of objective regard or analysis, but instead

are lived as “fused” portions of life (Dewey, 1931). Dewey says that the occupation of hunting develops or establishes a psychic pattern or structure which is embodied as a particular configuration of certain kinds of habits. These habits motivate behaviour and experience in such a manner that most interactions of the hunter come to be guided and influenced by a typical sense of immediacy of the occupation of hunting. The habits of the hunter require an environment, a world, where the drama of the hunt is enacted in all situations and interactions (Kestenbaum, 1977).

On the basis of this conceptual framework, this research’s investigation is carried out based on the following dimensions. First, in experience, there is never isolated singular object or event; an object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an enviroing experienced world. However, the singular object stands out because of its focal and crucial position at a given time, in determination of use or enjoyment which the total complex environment presents. There is always a field in which observation of this or that object or events occurs. Observation of the latter is made for the sake of finding out what the field is with reference to some active response and some course of behaviour (Dewey, 1938). Thus, in this research’s phenomenon of interest, the knowledge manager is the central point of our investigation, as he is the living organism undergoing the experience of being a knowledge manager in his environment. The *knowledge manager per se* needs to be studied in relation to his particular context. Second, it is possible to vary on observations that amass facts tirelessly and yet the observed “facts” lead nowhere. On the other hand, it is possible to have the work of observation controlled by a conceptual framework fixed in advance, which overlooks things that are decisive in the problem in hand and its solution. Everything is forced into the predetermined conceptual scheme. The only way to escape these two evils is sensitivity to the quality of a situation as a whole. If the unique quality of the situation is had immediately, then there is something that regulates the selection and the weighing of observed facts and their conceptual ordering (Dewey, 1938). Being a knowledge manager is necessarily *an* experience, because it is a whole and carries with it own individualizing quality of self sufficiency, like a piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory, a problem receives its solution, a game is played through. As it is the *quality* that unifies an experience, our investigation aims at determining the pervasive quality of the experience of being a knowledge manager. Third, as “experience denotes planted field, the sowed seeds, the reaped harvests, the changes of night and day, spring and autumn, wet and dry, heat and cold, that are observed, feared, longed for; it also denotes the one who plans and reaps, who works and rejoices, hopes, fears, plans, invokes magic or chemistry to aid him, who is downcast or triumphant” (Dewey, 1938), the investigation seeks to identify the *contextual environment as it is experienced by the knowledge manager*. Then the knowledge manager’s way of doing his/her job, including *the actions and the supporting means* he deliberately mobilizes or unintentionally creates, is examined. How those actions come up *in his transactional relationship with his experienced world* is also traced. Finally, man learns through experience and his adjustments to regain equilibrium become more satisfactory. Based on the principle of continuity, different situations succeed one another, but something is carried over from the earlier to the later one. As an individual passes from one situation to another, he does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively

with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. Thus, the *learning process* as the acquisition of a complex set of predispositions to act is included in the scope of our investigation. The investigation framework is illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 7: Investigation framework



The research questions, then, become:

- What is the organizational context of knowledge management, as experienced by the knowledge manager?
- How does the knowledge manager act in accordance with the organizational context?
  - o What actions (deliberate and non-deliberate) are adopted?
  - o What means and tools are created?
  - o How does the knowledge manager come up with such actions and tools?
- What is it like to be a knowledge manager?



## **VIII. Summary**

In this chapter, Dewey's perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment, which is configured by his notions of experience, situation, continuity, inquiry and knowledge, have been discussed. It has also been shown that this perspective can help study both building and dwelling modes inherent in a knowledge manager's experience.

Dewey's theory has been used to develop an investigation framework and formulate the research questions in order to study our phenomenon of interest put forward in chapter 1.

In the next chapter, the methodology adopted in this research, how it is in line with the spirit of Dewey's pragmatism and how it helps put into action the developed investigation framework will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology adopted in this research, how it is in line with the spirit of Dewey's pragmatism and how it helps put into action the developed investigation framework will be discussed.

The idea of experimental methodology is obvious in Dewey's philosophy. He is not interested in verifying the truth, but rather in verifying the way concepts and entire frameworks of thought affect ordinary lived experience. If ordinary experience can produce knowledge, it needs nonetheless to test that knowledge. Conclusions should be based on the testing of hypotheses. Insights into characteristics, causes and consequences should be connected to the context. However, Dewey claims that "until social inquiry succeeds in establishing methods of observing, discriminating and arranging data that evoke and test correlated ideas, and until, on the other side, ideas formed and used are employed as hypotheses, and are of a form to direct and prescribe operations of analytic-synthetic determination of facts, social inquiry has no chance of satisfying the logical conditions for attainment of scientific status" (Dewey, 1938). This point of view toward social inquiry explains why pragmatism proposes neither a specific "program" for the conduct of social research, nor any specific research methods (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

On the other hand, pragmatism is not searching for fixed principles of research and once-and-for-all fixed methods of science (Craig, 2001). Rather, such principles and methods are secondary to the tasks at hand. Pragmatism is the philosophy of uncertainty and relative interpretive openness, coupled with a strong desire to succeed and make things work (Fuchs, 1993). Therefore, within the scope of this research, the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, which offers a concrete research program, is adopted. The perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology shares many common points with Dewey's pragmatism. Both phenomenology and pragmatism attempt to interpret descriptively the concrete basis of everyday experience through their respective methods. Pragmatic methodology incorporates many central ideas of the phenomenological return to lived experience. There is an important place, within the method of pragmatism, for some aspects of phenomenological description.

In the following sections, pragmatic methodology, the hermeneutic phenomenology perspectives and its comparison with Dewey's pragmatism, hermeneutic phenomenology's methodology, and its application in this research will be discussed.

### I. Pragmatic methodology

#### 1. Common sense and scientific inquiries

Inquiry, in spite of the diverse subjects to which it applies, and the consequent diversity of its special techniques, has a common structure or pattern. This common structure is applied both in common sense and science, although due to the nature of the problems with which they are concerned, the emphasis upon the involved factors varies widely in the two modes (Dewey, 1938).

The existence of situations and of inquiries cannot be doubted. Inquiries continuously arise in the conduct of life and the course of everyday behaviour. They occur and recur in the life-activity of everyone, whether farmer, artisan, professional man, law-maker or administrator, citizen of a state,

husband, wife, or parent. They need to be designated by some distinctive word, and the term common sense inquiry is used for that purpose (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey (1938) claims that there is no need to wait for the occurrence of indeterminate situation in order to inquire into the relationships between our actions and their consequences. Systematic inquiry into actions and consequences can also be conducted deliberately and independent of problem-solving activities. He argues that there are even people who have made their profession out of this, namely, researchers or scientists. The process of research often involves creating an indeterminate situation, or seeking one out, for the sake of advancing knowledge (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Scientific inquiry follows the same pattern as common sense inquiry in terms of the utilization of facts and ideas (conceptual meanings) which are the products of earlier inquiries (Dewey, 1938). The difference between common sense and scientific inquiry resides in their subject-matter, not in their basic logical forms and relations. This difference in subject-matters is due to the difference in the problems respectively involved, which leads to a difference in the consequences they are concerned to achieve (Dewey, 1938). The problems that arise in situations of daily interaction may be reduced to problems of the use and enjoyment of the objects, activities, and products of the world in which individuals live. Such inquiries are different from those which have knowledge as their goal. The attainment of knowledge of some things is necessarily involved in common sense inquiries, but it occurs for the sake of settlement of some issue of use and enjoyment, and not, as in scientific inquiry, for its own sake.

Scientific inquiry always starts from things we see, handle, use, enjoy and suffer from in the environment experienced in our everyday life. But instead of accepting this world as providing the objects of knowledge, of which the being is given a certain logical arrangement, experimental inquiry treats it as offering a challenge to thought. The environment provides the materials of problems, not solutions. Scientific inquiry signifies a search for the relations upon which the occurrence of real qualities and values depends, by means of which we can regulate their occurrence. What science is concerned with is the happening of these experienced things. Its aim is to discover the conditions and consequences of their happening (Dewey, 1929).

Scientific subject-matter and procedures grow out of the direct problems of common sense, including practical use and enjoyments, and react into the latter in a way that enormously refines, expands and liberates its contents and agencies (Dewey, 1938). For example, upon the common sense level, light and colors are experienced, weighed and judged in reference to their place in the situations. The scientific theory of colors and light is extremely abstract and technical, but it is about the colors and light involved in everyday affairs. Through scientific inquiry, definite technical processes and instrumentalities are gradually formed and transmitted. Information about things, their properties and behaviours, is amassed, independently of any particular immediate application. It becomes increasingly remotes from the situation of use and enjoyment in which it originates (Dewey, 1938).

## 2. Experimental methodology

The idea of experimental methodology is obvious in Dewey's philosophy. He is not interested in verifying the truth, but rather in verifying the way concepts and entire frameworks of thought affect ordinary lived experience. If ordinary experience can produce knowledge, it needs nonetheless to test that knowledge. Conclusions should be based on the testing of hypotheses. And insights into characteristics, causes and consequences should be connected to the context (Rosiek, 2003).

For Dewey, the beginning phase of scientific methodology is not as a formalized deductive model, but as lived experimental activity of the scientist (Dewey, 1958). When pragmatism accepts the natural scientific methodology, it is accepting a methodology which arises from an examination of what the scientist does, not what he asserts as his findings. A researcher has to decide what to engage in and how to carry them on. This involves the issue of what observations to undertake, what experiments to carry on, and what lines of reasoning and mathematical calculations to pursue. Moreover, he cannot settle these questions once and for all. He continually has to judge what is best to do next in order to make his conclusion be grounded when it is arrived at. In other words, the conduct of scientific inquiry, whether physical or mathematical, is mode of practice. The working scientist is a practitioner. He is constantly engaged in making practical judgments: decision as to what to do and what means to employ in doing it (Dewey, 1938).

The scientist should conduct experimental research not as laboratory experiments but as reactions, influences, and changes. In other words, one should change the conditions, see what happens and reflect on the results, and retain an open attitude towards unforeseen ideas. Research, for Dewey, should be conducted in the actual context – in the actual “situation”. There is no point in reducing complex processes to individual, single processes. The individual parts of the process must be seen as constituents of entire situations. What scientific inquirers do is to execute certain operations of experimentation that modify antecedently given conditions, so that the results of the transformation becomes facts that are relevant and weighty in solution of a given problem (Dewey, 1938). Experimental inquiry has three outstanding characteristics. First, all experimentation involves overt doing, the making of definite changes in the environment or in our relation to it. Second, experiment is not a random active inquiry, but is directed by the need of the problem inducing the active inquiry. The third and concluding feature, in which the other two receive their full measure of meaning, is that the outcome of the directed activity is the construction of a new empirical situation in which objects are differently related to one another (Dewey, 1929).

Dewey's description of the process of inquiry comes very close to our everyday understanding of how we deal with problems. The experimental doing for the sake of knowing is found in ordinary procedure of inquiry (Dewey, 1929). When we are trying to make out the nature of a confused and unfamiliar object, our point of departure is a hypothesis about what might be the case. We develop an experimental strategy in order to investigate the situation. We perform experiment(s) and observe results. We perform various acts with a view to establishing a new relationship to it. We turn it over, bring it into a better light, rattle and shake it, thump, push and press it, and so on. On the basis of this we draw our conclusion (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

However, the set of assumptions that lies behind Dewey's description of the process of scientific inquiry is different. Particulars are *selectively* discriminated so as to determine a *problem* whose nature is to indicate possible modes of solution. This selective determination of perceived objects and their qualities necessarily involves experimental transformation of objects and qualities in their given "natural" state (Dewey, 1938). The particulars of observations, which are experimentally instituted, not only form the subject-matter of a *problem* to indicate an appropriate mode of solution, but also have *evidential and testing value* with respect to indicated modes of solution. Operations are deliberately performed to experimentally modify given antecedent objects of perception, so as to produce new data in a new ordered arrangement (Dewey, 1938). Knowledge is obtained exactly through deliberate institution of a definite and specified course of change (Dewey, 1929). The validity of a proposition cannot be determined without the consequences to which its functional use gives rise. The sufficient warrant of a judgment as a claimant to knowledge cannot be determined apart from connection with consequence (Dewey, 1938).

In current research, the methods by which generalizations are arrived at have received the name "induction"; the methods by which already existing generalizations are employed have received the name "deduction". For Dewey, these considerations at least delimit the field of discussion.

Generalizations are of two forms: there are those, which institute a relation of including and included kinds, and there are those, which institute universal *if-then* propositions as hypotheses and theories. Any adequate account of scientific methods, as the means by which warranted generalizations are achieved, must be applicable to both of these two forms. Induction and deduction must be seen to be cooperative phases of the same operations (Dewey, 1938). The inductive phase consists of the experimental operations by which antecedently existing conditions are modified, so that obtained data indicate and test proposed modes of solution. Any suggested or indicated modes of solution must be formulated as a possibility. Such formulation constitutes a hypothesis. The *if-then* proposition, which results, must be developed in ordered relation to other propositions until related contents are obtained. The criterion for the validity of such hypotheses is the capacity of the new data they produce to combine with earlier data (describing the problem) so that they institute a whole of unified significance. These two phases of inquiry are interrelated. The propositions which formulate data must, to satisfy the conditions of inquiry, determine a problem in the form that indicates a possible solution, while the hypothesis in which the latter is formulated must operationally provide the new data that fill out and order those previously obtained. There is a continued movement between the set of existential propositions about data and the non-existential propositions about related conceptions (Dewey, 1938).

This formulation agrees up to a certain point with current statements about scientific inquiry as hypothetical-deductive in nature. But it emphasizes two necessary conditions: first, the necessity of observational determinations in order to indicate a relevant hypothesis, and second, the necessity of existential operational application of the hypothesis in order to test the hypothesis. These conditions place the hypothetical-deductive stage of inquiry as intermediate. When this stage is taken in isolation from the initial and terminal stages of inquiry, it is disconnected from its occasion in problems, and from its application in their solution (Dewey, 1938).

### 3. Limitations of pragmatism's experimental methodology with regard to social inquiry

The difference between physical and social inquiry resides in their respective subject-matters (Dewey, 1938). This difference makes a great practical difference in the kind of operations to be performed in the conduct of inquiry. In the case of social inquiry, associated activities are directly involved in the operations to be performed; these associated activities enter into the idea of any proposed solution. Activity is socially conditioned in its beginning and close. In physical matters, the inquirer may reach the outcome in his laboratory. Utilization of the conclusions of others is indispensable, and others must be able to attain similar conclusions by use of materials and methods similar to those employed by the individual investigator. The conditioning social factors are relatively indirect, while in solution of social problems they are directly involved. Any hypothesis to a social end must take into consideration the actors who execute the operations it formulates and directs.

According to Dewey, social inquiry is relatively backward in comparison with physical and biological inquiry (Dewey, 1938). One obvious source of the difficulty lies in the fact that the subject-matter of the latter is so "complex" and so intricately interwoven that the difficulty of instituting a relatively closed system is intensified. The impact of cultural conditions upon social inquiry is obvious. Prejudices of race, nationality, class and sect play such an important role that their influence is seen by any observer of the field.

In social inquiry, genuine problems are set only by actual social situations, which are themselves conflicting and confused. Social conflicts and confusions exist in fact before problems for inquiry exist. The connection of social inquiry with practice is intrinsic, not external. Any problem of scientific inquiry that does not grow out of actual social conditions is factitious; it is arbitrarily set by the inquirer instead of being objectively produced and controlled (Dewey, 1938). Moreover, the validity of a proposition cannot be determined without the consequences to which its functional use gives rise. The ultimate end and test of all inquiry is the transformation of a problematic situation into a unified one. It is much more difficult to accomplish this end in social inquiry than in the restricted field of physical inquiry (Dewey, 1938).

The special lesson, which the logic of the methods of physical inquiry has to teach to social inquiry, is that the latter involves the necessity of operations, which existentially modify actual conditions that are the occasions of genuine inquiry and provide its subject-matter (Dewey, 1938). Physical inquiry have now reached the point where problems are mainly set by subject-matter already prepared by the results of prior inquiries, so that further inquiries have a store of scientific data, conceptions, and methods already at hand. This is not the case with the material of social inquiry (Dewey, 1938). This material exists chiefly in a crude qualitative state. The problem of institution of methods by which the material of existential situations may be converted into the prepared materials which facilitate and control inquiry is, therefore, the primary and urgent problem of social inquiry.

Dewey (1938) claims that "until social inquiry succeeds in establishing methods of observing, discriminating and arranging data that evoke and test correlated ideas, and until, on the other side, ideas formed and used are employed as hypotheses to direct and prescribe operations of analytic-synthetic determination of facts, social inquiry has no chance of satisfying the logical conditions for

attainment of scientific status". The lesson, as far as method of social inquiry is concerned, is the necessity for development of techniques of analytic observation and comparison, so that problematic situations may be resolved into definitely formulated problems. This point of view toward social inquiry explains why pragmatism proposes neither a specific "program" for the conduct of social research, nor any specific research methods (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

On the other hand, pragmatism shifts attention away from epistemological status and onto how scholar can best address useful research questions. That is, researchers should look for method best suited for providing a compelling answer to a given question (Wicks and Freeman, 1998). Pragmatism is not searching for fixed principles of research and once-and-for-all fixed methods of science (Craig, 2001). Rather, such principles and methods are secondary to the tasks at hand. Pragmatism is the philosophy of uncertainty and relative interpretive openness, coupled with a strong desire to succeed and make things work (Fuchs, 1993). Therefore, within the scope of this research, the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology is adopted. It is believed to be suitable methodology to investigate this research's questions

## **II. Hermeneutic phenomenology and Dewey's pragmatism**

### **1. Phenomenology: a brief history**

Sander (1982) argues that phenomenology is "a new star on the research horizon" for management studies. It has been applied as a research methodology by several authors (Gibson and Hanes, 2003) such as Gibson (2004). Elkjaer (2005) adopts phenomenology as the methodology for her Dewey-based conceptual framework, but never explicates the link between two perspectives. In many ways, phenomenology remains new and unknown not only in management studies but also in other discipline (Ehrich, 2005).

Phenomenology studies the totality of lived experiences that belong to a single person. It aims at producing accurate description of experience as it is lived, which includes anything that appears or presents itself such as feelings, thoughts and objects (Ehrich, 2005). It is an analysis of the way in which things or experiences show themselves, seeking to make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences. It is the search for "essences" that cannot be revealed by ordinary observation (Sander, 1982).

The term "phenomenon" for phenomenology means the presence of any given precisely as it is given or experienced. In other words, "phenomenology begins its analysis of intuitions or presences not in their objective sense, but precisely in terms of the full range of givenness that are present, and in terms of the meaning that the phenomena have for the experiencing subjects". The analysis often requires that the "phenomenal meaning" be related to the objective meaning in order to gain greater clarity, but it is always the meaning of the object as given that is the focus (Giorgi, 1997).

The founding father of the phenomenological movement is considered to be Husserl, a German philosopher. The movement has been promulgated and refined by different phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Gibson and Hanes, 2003; Hein and Austin, 2001), leading to a new stream of phenomenology called existential or hermeneutic phenomenology. While Husserl

focuses on studying the universal structuring processes of consciousness, Heidegger shifts the focus of inquiry to existence in general. In doing so, he interpretes existence as our experience of being the world, rather than simply our experience of being. The former term emphasizes that people do not exist in separation from, or independently of, the world but instead are involved and participate in the world in a dynamic and engaged way. Existential phenomenology therefore moves beyond the study of human consciousness and applies phenomenology to aspects of human existence, viewing existence as capable of being studied like other phenomena to reveal its essential structures (Hein and Austin, 2001). Among the known phenomenologists, it is Merleau-Monty, whose work is philosophically closest to American pragmatism in general (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980; Bourgeois and Rosenthal, 1983) and Dewey in particular (Kestenbaum, 1977).

## 2. Commonalities between hermeneutic phenomenology and Dewey's pragmatism

### a. The world as perceived world

Both Dewey's pragmatism and phenomenology view the world as "perceived world". The world for all phenomenologists is a *lifeworld*. The notion of lifeworld is first explicated by Husserl (1970), then built upon by the follower phenomenologists (Ehlrich, 2005). The lifeworld

*is continually "on hand" for me and I myself a member of it... This world is there for me not only as a world of mere things, but also with the same immediacy as a world of objects with values, a world of goods, a practical world (Husserl, 1970).*

The lifeworld is already there for us; it exists prior to science, prior to theory, prior to reflection, and prior to our attitude about it. The lifeworld exists prior to our conception of it and our ideas about it (Gibson and Hanes, 2003). But the lifeworld is the world as it is "lived by the person", not an entity separate and independent of the person (Valle, King, and Halling, 1989). Man emerges from nature as a unique part of nature, which has the ability to know and to relate in other unique ways. Nature, for man, is constituted by a system of meanings. Only through such meanings does nature, which is brutally there and from which man has arisen, reveal itself to man (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980). The world is therefore the basic context of all perception and of all sensation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Such a world is brought into explicit focus in Dewey's argument of "the world that is there" but it is "there" with such meaning only in its relation to an organism. His philosophy is not "idealistic" in that it does not deny or doubt the existence of a world "out there". Reality is, however, for Dewey, only "experienced" as a function of the organism-environment transaction (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). It would be wrong to suggest that reality or the world is simply an illusion in which people can do whatever they choose within it. The belief that science offers us a factual way of looking at the world is a wrong conclusion. He supports the view that there are multiple interpretations of events and different concepts and classificatory schemes which could be used to describe phenomena. Science is simply another narrative account of how things within the world relate to each other. Pragmatists in general argue that there is no one privileged description of events, each is narrative of how we make sense of the world, and thus, no way to find a truly objective account of a situation (Wicks and Freeman, 1998). Dewey (1938) stated:



*There is, of course, a natural world that exists independently of the organism, but this world is environment only as it enters directly and indirectly into life-functions. The organism is itself a part of a larger natural world and exists as organism only in active connections with its environment.*

b. Rejection against dualism

Both perspectives reject against the dualism. Dewey makes clear that the distinction between mind and matter, between the subjective and the objective, between facts and values, and the like is not the inevitable or necessary point of departure for all philosophy (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Dewey questions such taken-for-granted dualism (Rosiek, 2003). In his opinion, the world is characterized throughout by process and change, nothing is static and permanent, and everything is in flux and movement. Pragmatism emphasizes that change and process are evident in the world of experience. The world is incomplete and indeterminate, in which nothing can be anticipated and choice becomes meaningless. Thus a mixture of incomplete and indeterminate with the complete and determinate characterizes the world of existence. The world has ends within its own process. Objectives and values are not ultimate; they are terminals in experience, which are more or less transitory (Dopuch, 1962).

Such rejection against the taken-for-granted dualism is seen clearly in Merleau-Ponty's conception of body and the world (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980). He (2002) posits that our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: "it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive; it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system..." "Our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have. Analytical reflection puts forward the thought of an absolute object rather than the absolute existence of the object. If there is a cube with six equal sides, this is not because one constitutes it from inside; it is because one delves into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience. The cube is already there in front of the person and reveals itself through his perception". The thing and the world are given to the person along with the parts of his body, not by any natural geometry, but in a living connection comparable with that existing between the parts of his body itself.

c. Reciprocal relationship between man and the environment

As discussed earlier, Dewey sees that the transaction between man and the environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its ever-changing environment. This reciprocal relationship can be seen in different phenomenological discussions.

Husserl's most significant contribution is his development of the concept of intentionality (Hein and Austin, 2001). For him, intentionality refers to the fact that consciousness is always directed to an object that is not itself consciousness, although it could be, as in reflective acts. More precisely, consciousness always takes an object, and the object always transcends the act in which it appears. This idea implies that the very meaning of subject implies a relationship to an object, and to be an object intrinsically implies being related to subjectivity (Giorgi, 1997).

The classical way of stating the intentional relation is by noting that to be in a state of desire implies that something is desired, or that to know means one knows something, or that to be emotional signifies that one is emotional about some situation or person. The object of the intentional relationship can be specific (pencil) or general (justice), real (bread) or fictive (the Centaur), amorphous (the sky) or defined (triangle), and so on (Giorgi, 1997). Consciousness can also be directed toward itself in that we can be conscious of our own emotions, thoughts, desires and other forms of conscious experience. However, even when we believe that we are not conscious of anything in particular, we are still conscious of this absence of thought (Osborne, 1990).

Interrelated with the concepts of intentionality is the concept of inter-subjectivity established by Heidegger (1962) in order to describe how we are in the world. Like Husserl, he conceives of the world as already existing; the world has already been “presupposed” and in various ways. But he takes Husserl’s concept of consciousness one step further: he contends that human consciousness, or beingness, comes from our relationship with the world; therefore, consciousness is a situated consciousness. A “being world” is a “with-world”.

Merleau-Ponty (1983) advances the concept of consciousness, the lifeworld, and inter-subjectivity when he contends that they are experienced through the body. He defines this being-with in the lifeworld as intercorporality: “consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body”. We are in the lifeworld, or the lived world, as bodies, as we live the world through the body: “the body is our general medium for having a world. The body is not separated from the self, nor does it exist in space or in time; rather, it exists as part of the self, and it inhabits space and time. The body is our means for existing in the world; the body expresses existence at every moment”, and “existence realizes itself in the body”. Thus, “when two individuals come together in the world, they are embodied consciousness coming together; they bring their own spatiality and temporality, which can have an impact on both individuals’ bodies and consciousness” (Gibson and Hanes, 2003).

The relationship between perception, action, and the perceived world of an individual can be seen most clearly in Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of consciousness and structure of behaviour. Merleau-Ponty finds perception to be rooted in the world. The perception of the thing, as well as the perception of the cultural object and other people, takes place in the context of the field of perception, and more remotely, against the backdrop of the world (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980). As Merleau-Ponty (2002) puts it:

*Our perception in its entirety is animated by a logic which assigns to each object its determinate features in virtue of those of the rest, and which “cancel out” as unreal all stray data; it is entirely sustained by the certainty of the world. In this way we finally see the true significance of perceptual constancies. The constancy of colour is only an abstract component of the constancy of things, which in turn is grounded in the primordial constancy of the world as the horizon of all our experiences. It is not, then, because I perceive constant colours beneath the variety of lighting that I believe in the existence of things, nor is the thing a collection of constant characteristics. It is, on the contrary, in so far as my perception is in itself open upon a world and on things that I discover constant colors (p. 313).*

According to Merleau-Ponty (2002), perception grasps things in the world through sensibility as the point of contact. On the level of sensation, the thing itself, which is expressed in its color, in its hardness, in its various modes of manifestation, is grasped. "We now discover the core of reality: a thing is a thing because, whatever it imparts to us, is imparted through the very organization of its sensible aspects". Furthermore, the thing emerges through it profiles against a field, which makes its sense emerge in experience. The role of the body is paramount, since the body and its unity, instead of an intellectual synthesis, allow the thing to emerge as meaningful.

The body, as mediating the perceived world, is central to the role of sensation and perception. Through the body, sense perception mediates the world. "Sense experience ... invest the quality with vital value, grasping it first in its meaning for us, for that heavy mass which is our body, whence it comes about that it always involves a reference to the body" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The body has a central role on the fundamental level of unity or of meaning in man's basic rapport with the given. The body in this view emerges as an original intentionality: "our body is in the world as the heart is in the organism" (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980), or in other words:

*"bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness, a meaning which clings to certain contents. My body is that meaningful core which behaves like a general function, and which nevertheless exists, and is susceptible to disease" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).*

Merleau-Ponty (2002) tries to relate "the content of human perception to the structure of human action". In describing the emergence of human action and human perception, Merleau-Ponty establishes that these are irreducible "to the vital dialectic of the organism and its milieu". He discovers "that from the moment behaviour is considered in its unity and in its human meaning, one is no longer dealing with a material reality, nor, moreover, with a mental reality, but with a significant whole or a structure which properly belongs neither to the external world nor the internal life".

#### d. Meaning

Merleau-Ponty (2002) opposes the view that meaning is a given, and the view that it is constituted as cause to effect. He remains consistent in his opposition to these positions. For Merleau-Ponty, the individual lives in a world of things, of which he is not conscious, an experienced world in which non-cognitive, pre-reflective acts take place and within which reflection arises. Yet, such a world is the basic context of meaning for all perception, and therefore for all sensation. It is the level at which sense emerges in experience, and meaning begins to emerge at a level prior to that of conscious acts.

Similarly, Dewey also opposes the idea that meaning is a given, or is it constituted as cause to effect. Rather, meaning is already "there" for conscious acts, because conscious acts emerge within a meaningful world. This does not mean, however, that we discover meanings already in the world in the realist sense. The world is the world of perception, the perceived world, the field of perception in which things emerge as meaningful within our experience. The world is "there" as a context of meanings within which reflective acts take place, but it is "there" with such meanings only in its relation to an organism (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980).

Such an understanding of meaning will reveal three basic features of perceptual awareness which form common denominators of the phenomenological and pragmatic perspectives (Rosenthal, 1987). First, physical objects can be understood as constructed from appearances, as within the structure of meaning appearances emerge. Second, a physical object cannot be understood as just a collection of objective properties. The meaningfulness of physical object claims includes the meaningfulness of potentialities which transcends such a collection of objective properties. Third, the structure of meaning incorporates an interactional unity of knower and known. Its radically non-spectator character undercuts the subject-object split.

### **III. Hermeneutic phenomenology's methodology**

Phenomenology is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness. It differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meanings specific to a particular culture (ethnography), to a certain social groups (sociology), to historical periods (history), to mental types (psychology), or to an individual's personal life history (biography). Rather, phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld (van Manen, 1990). It is a philosophical method initiated by the technique of reduction and proceeding by way of phenomenological descriptive interpretation. Its initial focus is precisely the "thing itself" to be interpreted, beginning within its presuppositional situation.

For transcendental phenomenology, the basic elements are the reduction, imaginative variation or free fancy, and description. To understand a particular phenomenon, the phenomenological researcher makes every effort to suspend or set aside his or her presuppositions, biases, and other knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from personal and scholarly sources. This process is referred to as the phenomenological reduction or bracketing and involves a process of rigorous reflection.

The natural attitude refers to our unquestioned assumptions about the world; it is the "taken-for-grantedness" or acceptance of day-to-day events and the assumption that the world around us is "real" and provides us with the same reality (Hein and Austin, 2001). The natural attitude is the habits of mind which are characteristic of everyday understanding, but which are also the basis of scientific activity, including common sense beliefs about the nature and existence of things in the "outer world" (Paley, 1997). Phenomenological reduction, as explicated by Giorgi (1997), has the researcher move out the natural attitude and "directs one to step back and describe and examine them [things and events]". Giorgi describes the process of phenomenological reduction as follows:

*a. bracketing past knowledge about a phenomenon in order to encounter it freshly and describe it precisely it is intuited (or experienced) and b. to withhold the existential index, which means to consider what is given precisely as it is given, a presence, or phenomenon. No work can be considered to be phenomenological if some sense of the reduction is not articulated and utilized.*

In fact, bracketing bars a researcher from using his personal judgements. It is a philosophical device which is simple *cancel*s the natural attitude, as a preliminary to phenomenological inquiry (Paley, 1997). Through bracketing, the researcher strives to move from the natural attitude to what is referred to as the transcendental attitude (Husserl). In other words, through the reduction, the researcher suspends his or her belief in the objective reality of the phenomenon to attend to it as it is experienced by the participant. The researcher attends to the phenomenon as it presents itself in awareness (Hein and Austin, 2001). Husserl's main aim was the achievement of transcendental subjectivity (Elrich, 2005).

After the phenomenological reduction, further analysis of the pure phenomenon yields what is contained within the pure phenomenon. This is referred to as eidetic reduction, which reduces the objects or givens to their essences (Giorgi, 1997). Through imaginative variation, the pure phenomenon is dealt with in such a way as to manifest "that within it without which it would not be what it is". The researcher chooses an instance of the concept concerned and, in his imagination, examines the range of possible forms it can take. By adding or subtracting certain features, and noting the points at which the object in question ceases to exemplify that concept, the researcher can identify what is, and what is not, essential to the concept (Paley, 1997). By such imaginative variation the invariable element of the phenomenon is reached, and a rich description of the phenomenon's essence can be made (Bourgeois and Rosenthal, 1983).

The bracketing and eidetic reductions take on a completely new twist for Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and for interpretive phenomenology in general. Although Husserl believed in the possibility of a presuppositionless perspective (Kockelmans, 1987 in Hein and Austin, 2001), many phenomenological researchers and philosophers maintain that such a stance is unattainable. Bracketing is viewed as necessarily incomplete because as we uncover and bracket presuppositions, other hidden ones are discovered beneath them. We are always in the world, so we can never truly break with our way of seeing it. This may be the most important lesson we gain from bracketing: its final impossibility (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty reject Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, maintaining that self and consciousness are not separated (Barritt *et al.*, 1985 in Elrich, 2005). Merleau-Ponty (2002) for example, believes that "consciousness is in dialogue with the world" or human beings are situated in the world. Heidegger claims too the importance of being since being in the world is more important than consciousness (McCall, 1983 in Elrich, 2005). In other words, people are not separate from the world but are experienced as "being-in-the-world". A presuppositionless perspective from which to analyze descriptions may therefore be unattainable, but the phenomenological reduction is nevertheless important in increasing our awareness of such influences and their role in the research process (Hein and Austin, 2001).

Since the phenomenological reduction does not, in this understanding, overcome the link with the world prior to consciousness as acts, the eidetic reduction attempts to arrive at the structures of the perceived world, but not in any way separated from existence. Merleau-Ponty (2002) says: "the eidetic reduction is, on the other hand, the determination to bring the world to light as it is before any falling back on ourselves has occurred; it is the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of

consciousness". Thus, Merleau-Ponty is constant in affirming that he is not seeking transcendental conditions but rather actual structures. The eidetic reduction is the phase of his application of phenomenological method which allows him to arrive at the structures of the perceived world. But he considers the structure of the human organism and his world, or the phenomenology of the body, to be already a phenomenology of perception, since the body is the mediation of the world through sensation and perception (Bourgeois and Rosenthal, 1983).

Existential phenomenology is explicitly hermeneutical. For existential phenomenology, interpretation is inherent in all inquiry and, more generally, in all understanding. Heidegger (1962) conceives of his approach to phenomenology as an interpretive understanding of existence in the world. He realizes that the investigation of existence involves some a priori understanding of that subject. For Heidegger, history and language are fundamental aspects of existence and understanding and play an instrumental role in shaping our understanding of psychological phenomena (Hein and Austin, 2001). For Heidegger and other existential phenomenologists, phenomena are necessarily "interpreted" and treated as textual in nature. In contrast, Husserlian forms of inquiry lack this explicitly hermeneutic emphasis: insight into the essence of an experience is a matter of "eidetic seeing" or "direct grasp", and the structures of phenomena are universal rather than contingent. In the Husserlian view, any given data can give rise to only one interpretation, whereas existential phenomenology suggests that data can lead to multiple interpretations (Hein and Austin, 2001).

It is hermeneutic phenomenology's methodology that is more compatible with that of Dewey's pragmatic perspective as seen in the next discussion.

#### **IV. Comparing the methodologies of pragmatism and hermeneutic phenomenology**

##### **1. Comparing the two methodologies**

It is stated by Bourgeois and Rosenthal (1983) that each movement, through its respective methodology, is led to similar understandings of experience and of the relationship among various experiential levels. Both turn to lived experience and the way in which man deals with it, rather than substitute for lived experience the abstractions of the findings of science. Pragmatic methodology incorporates many central ideas of the phenomenological return to lived experience (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1977).

##### **a. Turning to lived experience**

Dewey is critical of the tradition, which considers human experience as primarily knowledge affair (Polkinghorne, 2000). Traditional philosophy approaches the person as a spectator rather than an interacting worldly creature. Dewey feels an "inward laceration" and "unnatural wound" when he first recognizes that traditional empirical philosophy has no place for the human spirit. He wants to reconstruct traditional philosophy by changing its question from how to gain true knowledge to what is nature of experience. He wants to move "forward the emancipation of philosophy from too intimate and exclusive attachment to traditional problems (Dewey, 1960).

Similarly, Heidegger (1982) calls for a similar deconstruction of traditional foundationalist philosophy:

*we understand this basic task [deconstruction] as one in which by taking the question of being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of being – the ways in which have guided us ever since.*

Both authors propose that philosophy takes up a different task: describing everyday experience (Polkinghorne, 2000). One cannot create a point outside the background from which it can be viewed and investigated. Inquiry into its characteristics has to be an immanent inquiry. Heidegger identifies this kind of inquiry as a phenomenological-hermeneutic inquiry. Although Dewey does not name his method of inquiry into the background, Parodi (1989) identifies it as a type of phenomenological exploration.

b. Essential features of scientific methodology

Several key features are revealed by an examination of scientific methodology put forward by Dewey (Bourgeois and Rosenthal, 1983). It shows that man actively determines the world in which he lives, as man, through his meanings, structures that world. Thus, the most crucial aspect of the scientific methodology is human creativity. The creation of scientific meanings requires a free creative play that goes beyond what is directly observed. Without such creativity there is no scientific world and there are no scientific objects. Additionally, there is directed activity, which is guided by the possibilities of experience contained within the meaning structures that have been created. The system of meanings both sets the context for the activity and limits the directions which such activity takes. Further, the adequacy of such meaning structures in grasping what is there, or in allowing what is there to reveal itself in a significant way, must be tested by consequences in experience. Only if the experiences anticipated by the possibilities of experience contained within the meaning structures are progressively fulfilled – though of course never completely and finally fulfilled – can truth be claimed for the assertions made. Finally, though the contents of an abstract scientific theory may be far removed from the qualitative aspects of lived experience, such contents are not the found structures of “ultimate reality” but rather abstractions, the very possibility of which require and are founded upon lived qualitative experience of the scientist. These are the general features the pragmatist finds when examining the scientific method as the model by which to understand the way man structures his world.

It is argued that the elements of creativity, anticipation in terms of possibilities of experience, fulfillment of anticipation and verification within the activity of the scientist correlate well with the essential features of hermeneutic phenomenology (Bourgeois, 1996).

First, creativity, intrinsic to lived experience, is shown from the beginning of phenomenology with Husserl’s view of intentionality. Then Merleau-Ponty focuses on the organism’s creative role in allowing something to be a stimulus, and shifts the focus from the stimulus-response correlation as depicted by hypothesis to the structure of total context (Merleau-Ponty, 1983). For Merleau-Ponty, this notion of structure, embodying creativity, is a means of understanding meaning in lived experience (Bourgeois, 1996). The world which is scientifically determined, whether by physical sciences, life sciences, or the human sciences, is a known world, a world unthinkable apart from the scientist who studies it. “Matter, life and spirit are not three orders of reality, but three orders of signification

embedded in the perceived world from which scientific significations emerge through the creative activity of the scientist” (Merleau-Ponty, 1983).

Heidegger (1962) also discusses about the role of creativity in scientific method. He states that the emergence of the scientific object requires a “working over” of the things in everyday experience, and changing them to objects, which are decontextualized from the everyday world. The abstract objects of science are not ontologically independent beings, but are dependent upon the everyday world, from which they emerge through the creative activity of the scientist (Rosenthal, 1988).

Second, Merleau-Ponty can be seen to interpret the anticipatory aspects of the structure of meaning. For Merleau-Ponty, the general and anticipatory aspects of something emerge in terms of the experience of a bodily presence, and are not founded on the recognition of some law (Bourgeois, 1996). This can be seen in his account of habit. For Merleau-Ponty (1983), the acquisition of habit is a “bodily grasping of a meaning entailing the motor grasp of a motor significance”. Every habit, however, is both motor and perceptual. Habit has its abode “in the body as mediator or a world”. The bodily understanding which goes on in habit means that to understand is “to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance – and the body is our anchorage in the world”. It is the body which ...”gives to our life the form of generality, and develops our personal acts into stable dispositional tendencies”. It is precisely the “form of generality” and “stable dispositional tendencies”, which constitute the anticipatory structures of meaning on this corporeal level. Both of them seeks and obtains fulfilment:

*Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood, that is, when it has incorporated it into the ‘world’, and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002)*

Third, within this anticipatory character are included possibilities of expected fulfilment (Bourgeois, 1996). According to Merleau-Ponty (2002), the content of human perception is connected to the structure of human action, which is anticipatory in its receptivity of things perceived in the world, and which has the capacity “of orienting oneself in relation to the possible, to the mediate...” (Merleau-Ponty, 1983) The thing is taken up in experience in so far as it is “bound up with a world, the basic structure of which we carry with us, and of which it is merely one of many possible concrete forms”. Although a part of our living experience, it is nevertheless not reducible to the here and now of our life

*because the human body, with its habits which weave around it a human environment, has running through it a movement towards the world itself...Human life “understands” not only a certain definite environment, but an infinite number of possible environments, and it understands itself because it is thrown into a natural world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002)*

Finally, for Heidegger (1982b), the characteristic of science involves rule, law, explanation, and experiment, the various aspects of methodology. “Only within the horizon of the incessant-otherness of change does the plenitude of particularity – of facts – show itself. But the fact must become objective. Hence procedure must represent the changeable in its changing, must bring it to a stand and let the



motion be a motion nevertheless". This is accomplished through rule and law. Rule allows for the "fixedness of facts and the constantness of their change," while law provides "the constancy of change in the necessity of its course". A sphere of objects comes into representation through the establishing and verifying of rule and law. Experiment becomes possible with the laying down of rule and law as a basis, and explanation develops through experimentation. Explanation has a twofold function. "It accounts for an unknown by means of a known, and at the same time it verifies that known by means of that unknown". The latter aspect of explanation's function leads directly to the general characteristic of scientific method for pragmatism (Rosenthal, 1988).

Gadamer also agrees with Dewey the need to verification. Dewey seeks to achieve this purpose through a hypothesis-testing logic, and Gadamer through a dialogic logic (Polkinghorne, 2000). Gadamer (1975) holds that background knowledge does not consist of general knowledge about universals, but a repertoire of responses to particular situations. Backgrounds vary historically. In different historical periods, the world shows up differently. He believes that background knowledge of these past periods contains understandings and wisdom that could be recovered in the present, thereby serving in overcoming the limits of one's present understandings of the world. One's background is dynamic and changing. It changes and develops over time because of its successful and unsuccessful experiences with the world.

Gadamer's position on how one's background is enlarged is similar in structure to Dewey's four-step logic of inquiry: experience of lack of knowledge in a situation, openness to alternate background understandings, dialogical engagement with the world or other traditions to produce a fuller understanding of the situations, and acting from out of the broadened understanding.

Once people experience the inadequacy or intrinsic limitations of their pre-reflective background understanding of a situation, improvement in understanding depends on the readiness to question their background's ways of engaging the world. They need to take a radically open stance in which questions can be raised about any part of the background. By asking for answers, knowledge of effective operations in the world is incorporated into the background. Gadamer's emphasis on the need to pose the right questions is similar to Dewey's emphasis on posing the right hypotheses (Polkinghorne, 2000). Both authors propose that individuals experienced with the subject of the inquiry are more likely, because of their experientially enlarged understanding, to formulate questions that are attuned to the phenomena. Questions lead to answers when they are submitted to the test of experience. If the shift in the texture's interpretation does not produce a more adequate appreciation of the object of topic of concern, it is revised and submitted to further tests. The process of questioning-testing-questioning again is an inherent tool embedded in the texture of backgrounds. A background includes processes of self-correction. Experience becomes the arbiter between competing understandings. Gadamer's dialogic process of questioning and testing resembles Dewey's process of the hypothesis-testing model of scientific inquiry (Polkinghorne, 2000).

In short, phenomenology's attempt to maintain scientific rigor contains the essential ingredients which pragmatism, with its implicit phenomenology of scientific method, derives from the activity of the scientist. The pragmatic account of science can be considered to engender a quasi phenomenology of

scientific method since it attempts to derive the essential and pervasive characteristics of what the scientist actually does in practicing science or, in other words, of the lived experimental activity of the scientist (Bourgeois, 1996b).

c. The continuity between the lived level and the scientific level of experience

It can be seen that for both phenomenology and pragmatism, there is a continuity between the lived level and the scientific level (Bourgeois, 1996). Precisely what an examination of scientific methodology indicates for the pragmatist is the need to return to the fullness of lived experience as the grounding level of scientific meanings and abstractions (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1977) in three ways (Rosenthal, 1978). First, there is, on both levels, an intentional unity between knower and known. The creation of scientific meaning requires a creativity that goes beyond what is directly observed. Scientific methodology, as the lived experimental activity of the scientist, reveals an intentional unity between man, the knower, and the world which he grasps. For the object of primary experience, as for the objects of science, the role of the knower enters into the object known. The second characteristic of the model of scientific method is that the structure of experience is intended to provide the solution within a problematic situation, not only at the scientific level but also at the level of lived experience. The objects of both levels are the results of meaning used to turn a problematic situation into a resolved one. Third, within scientific methodology, there is directed or goal oriented activity which is guided by the possibilities of experience contained within the created meaning structures. The system of meanings both sets the context for the activity and limits the directions which such activity takes. The adequacy of such meaning structures in grasping what is there, or in allowing what is there to reveal itself in a significant way, must be tested by consequences in experience. Such experimentalism is again reflected in pre-reflective mode of experience, because “such pre-reflective experience, as far as it has meaning, is neither mere doing nor mere undergoing, but is an acknowledgement of the connection between something done and something undergone in consequence of the doing” (Dewey, 2005).

It can be argued that primary experience grounds Dewey’s understanding of the model of scientific methodology, and in turn, the model of scientific methodology enriches his examination of lived experience by providing a directing fullness of meaning. Lived experience reflects the dynamics of scientific methodology, or, in other terms, lived experience reflects the dynamics of experimentalism (Rosenthal, 1978). And Merleau-Ponty does not deny reciprocity of interchange between these two levels (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980), as seen in the quotation below:

*The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science has not and never will have, by its nature, the same significance qua form of being as the world which we perceive, for the simple reason that it is a rationale or explanation of that world. I am, not a “living creature” nor even a “man”, nor again even “a consciousness” endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or*

*historical process ... Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world's, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learned beforehand what a forest, a prairie, or a river is" (2002).*

## 2. Applying phenomenological methodology

Both phenomenology and pragmatism attempt to interpret descriptively the concrete basis of everyday experience through their respective methods. Pragmatism is, through its own methodology, attempting to return to lived experience in a way which has much in common with the phenomenological return to lived experience (Bourgeois and Rosenthal, 1983). There is an important place, within the method of pragmatism, for some aspects of phenomenological description. Yet, the method of pragmatic philosophy is the method of experimentalism, and the method of phenomenological description must fit into the dynamics of experimentalism. Dewey, as a pragmatist, is not attempting a purely descriptive endeavour. Rather, he uses the model of scientific methodology in order to return to lived experience with an enrichment of meaning of precisely what is operative within the level of lived experience (Rosenthal, 1978). Phenomenological description does not stand alone within pragmatism but must be placed within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification (Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1980).

In order to place phenomenology's interpretive description within the context of pragmatic experimentalism, there is one possible way. In addition to whatever criteria for quality a research study currently needs to meet, a study also would need to provide an analysis of the likely effects of the research conclusions on the meaning of ordinary experience and practical activity. This might take the form of an ethnographic analysis of experience in a community with whom the research results have been shared. Lacking that opportunity, it might involve a more speculative cultural studies analysis of the potential reception of the research in specific communities (Rosiek, 2003). In this research, the findings are discussed with the participants. They are able, at an experiential level, to validate the findings of the research, that is, whether the findings are valid for them. Disagreements in interpretation send the researcher back to the field text for clarification, and they are discussed in the writing process (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). The findings are also checked against the current literature and see to what degree do the findings fit in or not fit in with the tradition of literature in the area (Hycner, 1999). On the other hand, internal testing of the analysis process is ensured. This will be discussed in details in the chapter on data analysis.

## V. Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological stance of Dewey's pragmatism and its limits. Dewey advocates an experimental methodology, but does not develop concrete experimental methods or

specific program for the conduct of social research. Besides, as pragmatism focuses on how scholar can best address useful research questions rather than epistemological status, researchers should look for method best suited for providing a compelling answer to a given question. Pragmatism is not searching for a fixed principle of research and once-and-for-all fixed methods of science. Rather, such principles and methods are secondary to the tasks at hand. Pragmatism is the philosophy of uncertainty and relative interpretive openness, coupled with a strong desire to succeed and make things work.

Therefore, within the scope of this research, the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology is adopted. It is believed to be suitable to investigate this research's questions. Phenomenology is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness. It differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meanings specific to a particular culture (ethnography), to a certain social groups (sociology), to historical periods (history), to mental types (psychology), or to an individual's personal life history (biography). Rather, phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld.

In fact, Dewey's pragmatism and hermeneutic phenomenology share many commonalities. They share a similar argument on the relationship between man and the environment. Both view the world as a perceived world, oppose the idea that meaning is a given, and reject against the dualism between mind and matter, between the subjective and the objective, between facts and values, and the like. In terms of methodological stance, both phenomenology and pragmatism attempt to interpret descriptively the concrete basis of everyday experience through their respective methods. However, phenomenology remains rooted in descriptive interpretations, while pragmatism puts forward experimental research. In order to place phenomenological description within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification, the findings are discussed with the participants. They are able, at an experiential level to validate the findings of the research, that is, whether the findings are valid for them. On the other hand, internal testing of the analysis process is also ensured in accordance with the spirit of Dewey's experimentalism. This will be discussed in greater details in the chapter on data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

As mentioned, this study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to examine the research questions. It has been stated that phenomenological methods are adapted to the characteristics of the particular phenomenon being investigated (Hein and Austin, 2001). The method ultimately varies according to the particular phenomena being research and the thematic attention given to them (Sanders, 1982), the purposes of the researchers, his or her specific skills and talents, and the nature of the research question and data collect (Hein and Austin, 2001). A precise method does not exist for phenomenological researchers as van Manen states:

*Perhaps the best answer to the question of what is involved in a hermeneutic phenomenological human science research method is “scholarship!” A human science researcher is a scholar: a sensitive observer of the subtleties of everyday life, and an avid reader of relevant texts in the human science tradition of the humanities, history, philosophy, anthropology, and the social sciences as they pertain to his or her domain of interest... So in a serious sense there is not really a “method” understood as a set of investigative procedures that one can master relatively quickly. Indeed it has been said that the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics is that there is no method! (van Manen, 1990)*

This point of view is not criticized by Dewey, as can be seen in his statement that pragmatism is not searching for a priori principles of research and once-and-for-all fixed methods of science (Craig, 2001). Rather, such principles and methods are secondary to the tasks at hand. Pragmatism is the philosophy of uncertainty and relative interpretive openness, coupled with a strong desire to succeed and make things work (Fuchs, 1993).

However, van Manen (1990) does propose a set of six guidelines for phenomenologists to follow. The guidelines are broad but they provide us with a workable and useful methodical overview. The six procedures are:

- turning to a phenomenon of interest
- investigating the experience as it is lived
- reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon
- describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting
- maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the question
- balancing the research context by considering parts and whole

These steps are, to some extent, sequential components of a chronological process, yet there is a backwards and forwards motion that occur when we comport ourselves to the data. We might write about the phenomenon, consider our position in relation to it, write some more, consider the parts and the whole, write some more, reconsider our position, and then come back to our writing, and so on. Van Manen underlines this circular nature of the six research activities when he recognizes that the

separation into six elements is somewhat artificial, hermeneutic phenomenological research is rather a dynamic interplay among the elements.

Although there could be some backwards and forwards movement in these early phases as one has to constantly remember the research questions and check that the methods of trying to answer the questions are appropriate, the first two procedures could be considered as linear. This is because one turns to the phenomenon of interest, asks research question, and then starts the investigation.

In the following sections, each of these steps and their application in this research will be discussed in details.

## **I. Turning to the phenomenon of interest**

Van Manen (1990) believes phenomenological research is a “being-given-over” to some quest, a true task, and a deep questioning of something. Phenomenological research does not exist in a disembodied fashion. It is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence. Van Manen describes the starting point for phenomenological research as “*largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interest you or me and of identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e. some experience that human beings live through*”.

In fact, the phenomenon of interest of this research comes up in a very much phenomenological way. The starting point is when the researcher started to work on a knowledge management project for Lafarge Group. As she became more involved in the organization and met with different knowledge managers, she realized that they differ significantly in a wide range of facets, from easy-to-see aspects, such as responsibilities and missions, to less noticeable ones, such as motivation and the degree of recognition of their efforts granted by the organization. She started to have a curiosity in knowing more about how they live through the experience of being a knowledge manager. The question prompted by that phenomenon of interest was: what is it like to be a knowledge manager in a multinational like Lafarge? Then she obtained an internship from the enterprise and stayed in much more frequent contact with the knowledge managers. She began to see even more closely how they live the question and became the question. The turning to this phenomenon is not a one-time occurrence. It is rather a process, a continuous evolving that results from the researcher’s deeper encounter with the phenomenon over time.

According to van Manen, once an interest in the nature of a selected human experience is identified, it is possible to formulate the phenomenological question. It should be noted that the methodical procedure of van Manen (1990) is for researching lived experience. For him, to do phenomenological research is to question something phenomenologically and, also, to be addressed by the question of what something is “really” like: What is the nature of this lived experience? The research questions, then, become:

- What is it like to be a knowledge manager?

- What is the organizational context of knowledge management, as experienced by the knowledge manager?
- What is it like to do the job of a knowledge manager in accordance with the organizational context, in terms of
  - o adopted actions?
  - o created means and tools?
- How do the knowledge managers come up with his/her actions and tools in accordance with the organizational context?

One must remember that a phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description (van Manen, 1990).

One fundamental problem of phenomenological inquiry is that we know too much about the phenomenon to be investigated (van Manen, 1990). In other words, our common-sense pre-understandings, our assumptions, our existing experiences and knowledge prompt us to interpret the essence of the phenomenon before we have even come to grasp the significance of the phenomenological question. One way to avoid this problem is to use bracketing, as discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, the research process is started by writing down everything the researcher knows about the phenomenon and the participants (see Appendix 1). This activity continues during the research process in order to maintain a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon being investigated (this point will be discussed further in section 5). By making explicit all understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, and presuppositions, the researcher tries to hold them deliberately at bay and even turns to this knowledge against itself as the research progresses.

## **II. Investigating the phenomenon as we live it**

Investigating the phenomenon as we live it means “re-learning to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). It means the same as the famous phrase “turn to the things themselves” made by Husserl (1980). In essence, the phenomenological researcher is required to “stand in the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations” and “actively explore the category of lived experience in all its modalities and aspects” (van Manen, 1990). In order to understand the phenomenon, it is necessary to enter the lives of the individuals who have lived the experience. To do this task, van Manen (1990) suggests several alternatives such as observation, interview, protocol writing, personal diaries or logs, etc. Although there are other methods for conducting phenomenological research, such as the analysis of written statements, the interview is perhaps the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person’s experiences (Kvale, 1983). In this research, unstructured in-depth interview is chosen.

In the following sections, the interview participants and the interview process will be discussed.

## 1. Participants

According to Seidman (2006), a fixed number of participants that all phenomenological studies should adopt do not exist. The two main criteria for an appropriate number are sufficiency and saturation of information. Sufficiency means the sample reflects the range of participants and sites that make up the population, so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it. Saturation of information means the sample enables the researcher to reach a point at which he/she begins to hear the same information reported. In general, thanks to the method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing, stories from a sample of relatively few participants can have enormous power (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). Sander (1982) also states that the first critical rule for the phenomenological researcher is: more subjects do not yield more information. The validity, meaningfulness, and insight generated from qualitative studies have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size (Patton, 2002). The phenomenologist must learn how to engage in in-depth probing of a limited number of individuals because the phenomenological method is a method of depth rather than breadth (Giorgi, 1985). Although the ideal number will vary according to the topic under investigation, too many subjects can become overwhelming. It is realistic to believe that sufficient information may be collected from approximately three to six individuals (Parse *et al.*, 1985; Sander, 1982). Other authors support this point of view, although they do not argue for the exact same number of sufficient sample size. Boyd (2001) regards two to ten participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation. Creswell (1998) recommends "long interviews with up to ten people" for a phenomenological study.

Random sampling is not in keeping with the hermeneutic phenomenological method (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) because the persons to be investigated must be those who possess the characteristics under observation or those who can give reliable information on the phenomena being researched (Sander, 1982). The researcher may in fact seek a particular type of person for this study. Very often it is necessary for a phenomenological researcher utilizing the interview method to seek out participants, who not only have had the particular experience being investigated but also are able to articulate their experience. It should be remembered that the phenomenological researcher is seeking to illuminate human phenomena and not, in the strictest sense, to generalize the findings. Therefore, randomness, or participants unable to articulate their experience, might, in fact, keep the researcher from fully investigating the phenomenon in the necessary depthful manner. The critical issue here is that the phenomenon dictates the method including even the selection and type of participants. In fact, part of the control and rigor emerges from the type of participants chosen and their ability to fully describe the experience being researched (Hycner, 1999).

In order to establish access to, make contact with and select participants, Seidman (2006) provides a number of recommendations. First, one should avoid the perils of easy access by not selecting people with whom they already have a relationship. In general the easier the access, the more complicated the interview. Interviewing people whom one supervises, interviewing one's students, acquaintances, and friends may be problematic. The interview may be affected by the existing relationship due to



reasons such as conflicts of interest between supervisors and subordinates, the shyness of a student toward a teacher, the assumption that friends understand each other, and so forth. Second, whenever possible, it is important to establish access to participants through their peers rather than through people “above” or “below” them in their hierarchy. The demand of equity in the interviewing relationship (see section “Interviewing as a relationship”) requires for peer access when possible. Third, it is not advised to rely on third parties to make contact with the potential participants. This is because the interviewing relationship begins the moment the potential participants hears of the study. Third parties may not be able to introduce the subject and respond to questions that naturally might arise.

Given the generally accepted sample size and non-random sampling in phenomenological research, the participants of this research are selected as follows.

One participant is Isabelle Corbett, who has been in a CIFRE contract with the cement branch of Lafarge on the subject of knowledge management for three years. She can be considered as a part-time knowledge manager, thus, is an appropriate participant for the study. However, as Isabelle is the researcher’s doctoral peer, she is not included in the sample to avoid the perils of easy access (Seidman, 2006). An interview with her was conducted for the purpose of practising interview skills (see the section “Interview technique” for further details).

The other participants are presented in the table below in order to show the variation in line with maximum sampling put forward by Seidman (2006). It should be noted that the chosen participants are the ones who are in charge of doing the tasks that are labeled knowledge management by the organization.

Table 5: Research participants

Participants	Company/branch	Title	Responsibility	Data collection
Alex	Lafarge/ cement branch <i>France</i>	Industrial knowledge manager <i>(full-time)</i>	Overall management	interview
Christina	Lafarge/ cement branch <i>France</i>	Database officer <i>(full-time)</i>	Taking care of the sharing database	interview
Mary	Lafarge/ cement branch <i>France</i>	Information Officer <i>(part-time)</i>	Promoting the sharing database Collecting new documents for the sharing database	interview
Kathy	Lafarge/ cement branch <i>Austria</i>	Information Officer <i>(part-time)</i>	Promoting the sharing database Collecting new documents for the sharing database	interview

Yvon	Lafarge/ cement branch <i>China</i>	Information Officer <i>(part-time)</i>	Promoting the sharing database Collecting new documents for the sharing database	interview
Carol	Lafarge/ A&C branch <i>France</i>	Knowledge manager <i>(full-time)</i>	Overall management	interview
Helen	Lafarge/ A&C branch <i>Canada</i>	Knowledge manager <i>(full-time)</i>	Promoting the sharing database Collecting new documents for the sharing database	interview

## 2. Interview technique

### a. Interview structure

For a hermeneutic phenomenological interview, semi-structured interview (Kvale, 1996) with open-ended questions (Seidman, 2006) should be used. In a semi-structured interview, there is a sequence of themes to be covered. Yet there is also openness to change of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the participant (Kvale, 1996).

Repeated interviews over time in a study are an essential feature of the hermeneutic phenomenological method (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). For phenomenological interviewing, Seidman (2006) proposed a model of three series put forward by Dolbeare and Schuman in Schuman (1982). The first interview establishes the context for the participants' experience: the researcher asks the participant about him or herself in light of the research topic up to the present time. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs: the researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of their lived experience. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them: The researcher asks the participant to reflect on the meaning of their experience. This approach allows the researcher to plumb the experience and to place it in context. To accomplish the purpose of each of the three interviews, Seidman (2006) suggests the length of 90 minutes for each interview.

This interview structure covers perfectly this research's questions. The first interview corresponds to the question on the organizational context, the second to the question on the doing of a knowledge manager's job, the third to the question on the experience of being a knowledge manager. The question on the circular transaction between the organizational context and the knowledge manager's activities is addressed implicitly in the second interview, as it comes up naturally when the knowledge managers talk about how they do their job, as long as the interviewer makes sure to cover the longitudinal dimension of the knowledge manager's doing of his/her job.

As there is no absolute in the world of interviewing, the three-interview series can be adapted as long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience

within the context of their lives (Seidman, 2006). Due to the availability of the participants, two interviews of two hours are conducted with each of them. The topics covered in each interview then become:

- First interview: part 1
  - o The researcher asks the participant how he/she came to involve in the KM project.
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of that process. We do not ask for opinions but rather the details upon which their opinions may be built.
  - o The researcher asks the participant to tell us what he/she thinks about the organizational condition in which he/she works.
- First interview: part 2
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of his/her job as a knowledge manager.
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of the influence of his/her organizational condition on the doing of his/her job.
- Second interview: part 1
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of how he/she work in the existing organizational condition.
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct the concrete details of how the doing of his/her job has evolved over time.
- Second interview: part 2
  - o Given what the participant has reconstructed since the first interview, the researcher asks the participant to reflect on the meaning of their experience.
  - o The researcher asks the participant to reconstruct his/her experience of being a knowledge manager as a story with different chapters.

The three-interview structure works best when the researcher can space each interview from three days to a week apart. This allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two. However, this spacing is not absolute because it depends on the availability of the participants. Making effort to respect the schedule of the participants is important in establishing a substantial relationship with them over time. In this research, the first and second interviews with each participant were one week apart from each other.

#### b. Interviewing technique

Before moving on to the interviewing process, the researcher practices interviewing skills with a peer (Seidman, 2006; Cohen *et al.*, 2000). It is to help the researcher to experience different aspects of a

phenomenological interview, such as control and focus, listening and asking question, the impact of the researcher as a person on his/her interviewing.

During the interviews, the following techniques as put forward by Seidman (2006) are used:

- *Listen more, talk less*: listening is the most important skill in interviewing. Interviewers must listen on at least three levels. First, they must listen to what the participant is saying, concentrate on the substance to make sure that they understand it and to assess whether what they are hearing is as detailed and complete as they would like it to be. Second, interviewers must listen to “inner voice” as opposed to an outer, public voice. Outer voice is what participants would use to communicate to the larger public. Whenever interviewers hear a public voice, it is necessary to get to the inner voice. If the participant uses the word fascinate, which is commonly heard, interviewers should ask for elucidation. For example, when Carol said that the context of her branch is simpler than that of its cement counterpart, she was immediately asked for further explanation. Similarly, all the participants were requested to describe their experience of being a knowledge manager by an image, and then asked for reason behind the usage of that image. Third, interviewers must listen while being conscious of the process as well as the substance. They must be aware of time during the interview, of how much has been covered and how much there is yet to go. They must be sensitive of the participant’s energy level and nonverbal cues in order to move the interview forward as necessary. For example, in the second interview, Yvon was being sick and he was not well enough to do two hours of interview. So the interview moved forward faster than planned and finished half an hour earlier. In order to facilitate active listening, notes were taken during the interview, so that the researcher can concentrate on what the participant is saying and can come back to the subjects mentioned by the participant when the timing is right. A good way to check the listening skills is to compare the relative length of the participant’s paragraphs with the interviewer’s. If the interviewer is listening well, his/her paragraphs will be short and relatively infrequently mixed along the longer paragraphs of the participant’s responses. As can be seen from the transcripts of the interviews, the interviewer’s paragraphs are much shorter than those of the interviewees.
- *Follow up what the participant says*: when interviewers do talk in an interview, it is to ask questions, which should follow, as much as possible, from what the participant is saying. It is in response to what the participant says that the interviewer follows up, asks for clarification, seeks concrete details, and requests stories. There are several following-up techniques that are used in this research: asking questions when the interviewer does not understand, asking to hear more about a subject, exploring meanings of what the participant says if necessary
- *Listen more, talk less, and ask real questions*: listen more, talk less is the first principle of interviewing. Asking real questions means asking the questions to which the interviewer does not already know or anticipate the response. It is avoided to ask leading questions, which might influence the direction the response will take. The lead may be in the intonation of the questions, in the wording, and so forth. Rather open-ended questions, which do not presume

an answer and allow the participant to take any direction he/she may want, are used (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

- *Follow up but not interrupt*: the interviewer should avoid interrupting participants when they are talking. Although it is tempting to interrupt to pursue the interesting point while the participant continues talking, the researcher just jots down the point in order to come back to discuss it later. The respondent's own words and phrases are used when asking follow-up questions. Using respondent terms is an important means for remaining unencumbered by conceptual predilections (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).
- *Two approaches to ask questions*: there are two approaches in asking questions: participants to talk to the interviewer as if he/she were someone else, ask participants to tell a story. In this research, the participants are asked to talk about their lives as knowledge manager as a story with different chapters. They are also asked to imagine how to coach their successors, if one day they leave the knowledge manager position.
- *Ask participants to reconstruct, not to remember*: ask participants not to remember their experience but rather to reconstruct it. The researcher asks the participants questions like "what happened?" or "what was your experience like?" rather than "do you remember your experience?"
- *Keep participants focused and ask for concrete details*: the interviewer should keep participant focused on the subject of the interview. The researcher provides sufficient guidance without ruining the interviewing relationship (see section "Interviewing relationship"). She tries to keep the participants talking about their experience rather than irrelevant subjects by asking questions like: may we come back to this/that point(s)? As it is also important to ask for concrete examples and stories related to the participant's experience, the participant are always requested to provide examples to illustrate their points. Focusing on specific events enables the respondent to provide a fuller, more detailed description of an experience as it is lived (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).
- *Do not take the ebbs and flows of interviewing personally*: the participant may change his/her behaviour through out the interview process. The interviewer should not take such change personally and focus on the interview. This happened in the second interview with Yvon because he was sick and he was not very motivated. But the researcher managed to keep the conversation move on without him feeling annoyed. In the end, Yvon did acknowledge that he was tired but the interview actually "woke him up".
- *Limit the interviewer's own interaction*: the interviewer can limit his/her own interaction by avoiding sharing his/her own experience, avoiding reinforcing the participant's response by such habit as saying "uh... uh" or "OK" or "yes" or some other short affirmative response to the statements from the participant. As the researcher has been in collaboration with Lafarge for some time, she has certain knowledge about knowledge management in the company and

the participants are aware of that. So affirmative responses, which may cause misunderstanding by the participants, are avoided.

- *Explore laughter:* often a participant says something and then laugh, sometimes what he or she just said is funny, sometimes the laughter may be nervous or ironic. If the origins of the laughter are unclear, it is worth exploring by asking questions for details. The interview with Christina can be used as an example in which her laughter revealed a deeper level of her experience. Christina laughed while saying that she is a database officer and the title is “barbaric”. The researcher asked for further details and found that she is very motivated in doing her job, despite the fact that it has a back-office nature, the title is just a formality for her.
- *Use an interview guide cautiously:* if the interviewer uses an interview guide, it is important to avoid manipulating the participant to respond to it. The questions used in the interviews follow from what the participant say. This point will be discussed further in the section on the interview guide.
- *Tolerate silence:* it is crucial to give the participant time to think, reflect and add to what he or she has said. Interviewers should not see pauses as voids and jump into the interview with a quick question to fill the silence. This technique is used most frequently in the interviews with Kathy. Among the participants, Kathy is least fluent in English; she takes time to find appropriate words to make an answer.

In addition, soliciting narratives from participants is an important element in phenomenological interview. As Seidman (2006) just mentions briefly this technique in his interviewing guideline, this research relies on Cohen *et al.* (2000) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995) for more detailed guidance. According to Cohen *et al.* (2000), the way to solicit narratives in the context of a conversation depends on whether the participant is undergoing the experience or the experience is primarily in the past. As the participants are currently being knowledge managers, the longitudinal and prospective approach is adopted. The prospective approach elicits as much as possible about the participant’s daily life. The technique recommended by Cohen *et al.* (2000) takes the form of three questions. The first statement is “tell me the most important thing that has happened to you recently”, i.e. since the phenomenon of interest (since you started your job as a knowledge manager in the case of our study). The second statement aims at broadening the scope of the interview by asking the participant to tell of an important event that has the opposite emotional valance of the first narrative. The third statement aims at filling in as much detail about daily life as possible. These three types of questions are all used during the course of the interviews.

During the course of the interviews, “why” questions are avoided. Such questions shift the focus of the dialogue away from describing the experience as it was lived to a more distant and abstract discussion (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). The emphasis on avoiding “why” questions is an area, in which phenomenological interviews differ from traditional methods. “Why” questions can be perceived as requests for rationalizations and can engender feelings of prejudgment and defensive responses. Such questions may also put the respondent in the position of a “naïve scientist” seeking to find a plausible explanation for his or her actions (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

Finally, the role of the interviewer is to provide a context in which respondents freely describe their experiences in detail. The researcher does not begin an interview feeling that he or she knows more about the topic than the respondent. Since the topic is the respondent's experience, an opposite assumption is probably more useful (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

#### c. The interview guide

The goal of a phenomenological interview is to attain a first person description of some specified domain of experience. The course of dialogue is largely set by the respondent. With the exception of an opening question, the interviewer has no a priori questions concerning the topic. The dialogue tends to be circular rather than linear; the descriptive questions employed by the interviewer flow from the course of the dialogue and not from a predetermined path. The interview is intended to yield a conversation, not a question and answer session (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

Kvale (1996) states that there is a sequence of themes to be covered, yet there is also openness to change of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the participant. This research's interview guide contains just some rough topics to be covered, with suggested questions. In the previous section, the main topics to be discussed in the interviews have been highlighted. The types of questions asked on each topic are the ones presented in the discussion on the interviewing technique section.

#### d. Recording the interviews

According to Seidman (2006), it is important that the interviews are recorded. The participants' thoughts are embodied in their words. Researchers need to transform those spoken words into a written text to study. Paraphrasing and summarizing the actual words spoken by the participants is to substitute the researcher's consciousness for that of the participants. Recording is very beneficial in preserving the words of the participants for analysis as well as future verification for accuracy. With a record of original data, the participants will also have confidence that their words will be treated responsibly. Some may argue that the recorder could inhibit participants. But Seidman (2008) and Cohen *et al.* (2000) believe that they soon forget the device as the interview moves on.

Based on the advise of Cohen *et al.* (2000), equipment taken to the field consisted of a digital recorder, microphone to improve the quality of the sound, spare batteries in case I was out of battery, and a towel to put under the microphone to avoid all the noises generated from the floor up to the table top where the microphone is placed.

In addition, notes are taken during the interviews as well as non-verbal gestures of the participants, which may be useful in interpreting verbal data.

#### e. Transcribing the interviews

Transcribing interview tapes is time-consuming but it is important to do this task. A transcript needs to reflect the interview as fully as possible by being verbatim. In addition, nonverbal signals such as coughs, laughs, sighs, outside noise, telephone rings, and interruptions that are recorded on the tape also need to be transcribed. Decisions about where to punctuate the transcripts are significant.

Participants do not speak in paragraphs or clearly indicate the end of a sentence by voice inflection. Punctuating of one of the beginning points of the analysis and interpretation of the material and is done thoughtfully (Poland, 1995).

It is unlikely that all errors and discrepancies can be prevented. Poland (1995) suggests that one way to maximize the transcription quality is to listen to the recorded conversation and review the transcripts several times to check for all possible errors. As the number of participants in this research is not significant, all the transcripts are reviewed to ensure the transcription quality.

f. Between the interviews

Some researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for the integration of the two stages so that each informs the other. However, in hermeneutic phenomenological research, it is advised to keep interviewing and analysis separate (Seidman, 2006). As pure separation of generating from analyzing data is impossible, Seidman (2006) suggests that the researcher can constantly run over the past interviews in his/her mind and think about the upcoming ones, but avoid any in-depth analysis of the interview data until all interviews have been completed. This is to prevent imposing one participant's interviews on the next. So between the interviews, no analysis or transcription is made.

3. Interviewing as a relationship

Seidman (2006) borrows the concept of "I-thou" relationship explained by Schuts (1967) to make his recommendation on hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing. "Thou" is someone close to the interviewer, still separate, but a fellow person. "Thou" is recognized as another "alive and conscious human being". A relationship in which each person is "thou" oriented, meaning the sense of "thou-ness" is mutual, become a "We" relationship. Seidman (2006) recommends that hermeneutic phenomenological interviewers should not strive for a full "We" relationship because they would then become an equal participant and the resulting discourse would be a conversation, not an interview. In an "I-Thou" relationship, the interviewer keeps enough distance to allow the participant to fashion his or her responses as independently as possible.

Among the participants, Alex, Christina, Mary, Kathy, and Yvon are approached directly by the researcher because access to them is not controlled by a formal or informal "gatekeeper" (Seidman, 2006). The contact with Carol is made via Alex and the contact with Helen through Carol. The perils of easy access are avoided. With regards to the participants, the researcher does not know them well enough to have a full "We" relationship.

Besides, in order to achieve this "I-Thou" relationship, the rapport an interviewer builds in an interviewing relationship needs to be controlled (Seidman, 2006). Too much or too little rapport can lead to distortion of what the participant reconstructs in the interview. The concrete actions put forward by Seidman (2006) are adopted in order to maintain a balancing rapport with the participants:

- avoiding sharing one's own experience with the participants
- maintaining an interviewing relationship that is marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on my part



- trying to make the interviewing relationship friendly but not a friendship
- respecting the formality rather than familiarity, e.g. paying attention to common courtesies such as holding a door, not sitting until the person is seated, and introducing myself again.

These are small steps but they all add up to expressing respect to the participant, which is central to the interview process.

Another issue is ownership of the material. Seidman (2006) believes it is important to share with the participants any material that concerns them. The principle is: not saying anything in print that the interviewer would not say directly to the participants. Thus, the materials are shared with the participants.

Another important aspect of the interview is that the interviewer and respondent are in position of equality (Kvale, 1983). The interviewer does not want to be seen as more powerful or knowledgeable because the respondent must be the expert on his or her own experiences (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). Seidman (2006) also talks about the importance of striving for equity in the interview process. By equity, he means a balance between means and ends, between what is sought and what is given, between process and product, and a sense of fairness and justice that pervades the relationship between participants and interviewers. The quality of an interview may be seriously affected by inequity because an equitable process is the foundation for the trust necessary for participants to be willing to share their experience with an interviewer.

Individuals are never equal, neither are interviewers and participants. Seidman (2006) also recognizes that it is difficult to do equitable research in an inequitable society. But equity must be the goal of every in-depth interviewing researcher. Equity could be achieved when the interviewer is explicit about the purposes and processes of the research, when he/she does not promise what cannot be delivered but make sure to deliver what is promised, when the dignity of those interviewed is respected. A number of concrete actions that support equity are recommended by Seidman (2006) and adopted in this research:

- before beginning an interview, respondents are told of the study's purposes and that the interview will be recorded, and are assured of anonymity. During all stages of the study, a concerted effort is made to protect respondent confidentiality (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989, p. 138).
- scheduling time and place of interviews that are convenient to the participant and reasonable for the interviewer
- valuing the words of the participant during the interview (see section Interview technique) because those words are deeply connected to that participant's sense of worth – not looking for corroboration of personal views rather than the story of the participant's experience

The issues of equity in an interviewing relationship are affected by the social identities that participants and interviewers bring to the interview. Race and ethnicity, gender, class, hierarchy, and status, linguistic differences, age, and power position are factors that should be taken into consideration

(Seidman, 2006). The difficulties due to these factors and my actions to overcome them, as suggested by Seidman (2006), are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Factors affecting equity in an interviewing relationship

Factor	Difficulties	Actions
Race and ethnicity	<p>Researchers and participants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds face difficulties in establishing an effective interviewing relationship.</p> <p>It is especially complex for Whites and African Americans to interview each other, but other interracial or cross-ethnic pairings can also be problematic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining sensitivity to issues that trigger distrust as well as exhibiting good manners, respect and a genuine interest in the stories of others.</li> <li>- Using three-interview structure to overcome the initial distrust that can be present in an interviewing relationship. Actually the distrust problem was not present in my interviews</li> </ul>
Gender	<p>The interviewing relationship that develops when participants and interviewers are different genders can be deeply affected by sexist attitude and behaviours. Males interviewing female participants can be overbearing. Women interviewing men can be reluctant to control the focus of the interview. Interviews among two parties of the same gender can be imbued by the false assumption of shared perspectives or a sense of competition never stated.</p> <p>There is also the possibility of sexual exploitation in in-depth interviewing because of the sense of intimacy that can develop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staying focused on the purpose of the interviews and being conscious of gender equity and of the intimacy that can develop. In fact, gender issue did not come up during my interviews.</li> </ul>
Class, hierarchy, and status	<p>When the interviewer and participant eye each other through</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using open-ended questions: participants, whatever their</li> </ul>

	<p>the lens of class consciousness, the stories told and the experiences shared can be distorted.</p> <p>If one understands class as a function of status, education, and wealth, interviewers are often middle class and university based. Interviewees may have lower or higher status.</p>	<p>class background, place their work in the context of their life stories and are given the space to tell their stories, they can respond to open-ended questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being conscious to avoid making class, gender, or racial tensions pervade the interviewing relationship</li> </ul>
Linguistic difference	<p>The language used by both the participant and the interviewer affects the progress of the interview.</p> <p>The issue of understanding the full sense of the words the participants speak is demanding and requires a great deal of care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is not one right way to deal with this issue</li> <li>- Among the participants, English was not the native language of Yvon, Kathy, and Helen. All of them did not have any difficulty in expressing themselves. The interviews with Alex, Carol, Mary, and Christina were in French, their native language, so the linguistic difference was not an issue for them. From my side, I was very conscious of getting to understand the fullest sense of their words by asking for detailed explanation.</li> </ul>
Age	<p>The relative ages of the participant and the interviewer may affect the type of relationship that develops between them.</p> <p>Some older participants may feel uncomfortable being interviewed by a young interviewer. Interviewing younger participants take a special type of sensitivity on the part of the interviewer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interviewing skilfully and with consciousness of class, race, and age</li> <li>- The participants and I did not have significant distance of age. The interviews were not uncomfortable due to the age differences.</li> </ul>
Power position of the	Of the imbalances that can occur in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All the participants are not in</li> </ul>

participant	the relationship between interviewer and participant, one of the most difficult to negotiate occurs when researchers try to use an in-depth interviewing approach with people in positions of power.	positions of power. The imbalance did not occur in the relationship between us.
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The researcher tries to avoid these factors by reflecting interview experience in a journal in order to ensure the rigor of the interview quality (see Appendix 2)

One final issue that is relevant to this study is that of reciprocity. In Seidman's opinion (2006), this is the most problematic aspect of interviewing because researchers often get more out of the interview than the participant. The lack of reciprocity in the interviewing relationship can influence the quality of the interview. The type of listening suggested by Seidman (2006) is adopted to manage this issue. Appropriate listening takes the participant seriously, values what they says, and honors the details of their lives. The reciprocity one can offer to his/her participants is that which flows from his/her interest in their experience, his/her attending to what they say, and his/her honouring their words when their experiences are presented to a larger public.

### III. Reflecting on essential themes that characterize the phenomenon

Van Manen (1990) says that "a true reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful, reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance". Thus, phenomenological research makes a distinction between appearance and essence, between the things of our experience and that which grounds the things of our experience. This involves a bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life. Consequently, it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. Reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience.

For interpretive phenomenological analysis, van Manen defines phenomenological themes as the *structures of experience*. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience. Phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes we can navigate and explore such universes. Themes have phenomenological power when they allow us to proceed with phenomenological descriptions. But they are only fasteners, foci or threads around which the phenomenological description is facilitated.

As a consequence of the absence of randomness and the limited number of participants, the results of this research cannot be generalized (Hycner, 1999). In the strictest empirical sense, the first part of the criticism is accurate in that the results only apply strictly to the participants interviewed. However, it is

argued that if they illuminate to some significant degree, the “worlds” of the participants, then they are valuable. In the process of even investigating the experience of one unique individual, we can learn much about the phenomenology of human being in general. Therefore, even with a limited number of participants, though the results in a strict sense may not be generalizable, they can be phenomenologically informative about human being in general (Hycner, 1999).

Once the transcript themes have been identified by the researcher, they become objects of reflection in follow-up hermeneutic conversations in which both the researcher and the interviewee collaborate. In other words, both the interviewers and the interviewee attempt to interpret the significance of the preliminary themes in the light of the original phenomenological question (van Manen, 1990).

#### **IV. Describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting**

Language is an external accompaniment of thought (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Every language has certain meanings presenting a specific message to the listener’s mind. The phenomenological method consists of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. Van Manen describes the importance of tones in language as follows:

*If the description is phenomenologically powerful, then it acquires a certain transparency, so to speak, it permits us to see the deeper significance, or meaning structures of the lived experience it describes. How is such transparency achieved? It is a function of the appropriate thoughtfulness that we have managed to muster in creating exemplary description by, for example, being sensitive to the evocative tone of language in which description are captured.*

Thus, a phenomenological researcher must be a true listener, being able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, being able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us. As presented in the “Investigating the lived experience part”, the researcher follows the tactics of listening put forward by Seidman (2006).

If language is the external accompaniment of thought, then writing is the permanent maintaining of those thoughts. Writing forces what is hidden to be exposed, what is internal to be external, what is invisible to be visible. In phenomenological research, writing does not merely enter the research process as a final step or stage. Phenomenological research *is* a form of writing. Creating a phenomenological text is the object of the research process (van Manen, 1990). The importance of writing is highlighted by van Manen:

*Yet for the human sciences, and specifically for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself. We might even argue that even for traditional social science research the cognitive stance required to do research is closely related to the cognitive style of writing.*

*Writing fixes through on paper. It externalizes what in some sense is internal; it distances us from our immediate lived involvements with the things of our world. As we stare at the paper, and stare at what we have written, our objectified thinking now stares back at us. Thus, writing*

*creates the reflective cognitive stance that generally characterizes the theoretic attitude in the social sciences. The object of human science research is essentially a linguistic project: to make some aspect of our lived world, of our lived experience, reflectively understandable and intelligible.*

Therefore, a phenomenological researcher has to write and rewrite and rewrite what he is trying to say. Only by rewriting that the true description of a phenomenon begins to show the essence and meanings. The analysis of the data is written and re-written several times. It is not a linear process, as writing on one participant may help the researcher's reflection on another participant become clearer. The writing and re-writing process is rather circular with a constant moving back and forth between the analyses of each individual participant.

In addition, van Manen (1990) shares that:

*Researcher too, have found that keeping a journal, diary, or log can be very helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of the work in progress, for reflecting on previous reflections, for making the activities of research themselves topics for study and so forth.*

Thus, a journal on the researcher's reflections, insights, thoughts about the experience of the participants is kept (see Appendix 3 for further details).

## **V. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon**

Phenomenological human science is a form of qualitative research that is highly demanding of its researchers. One must remain devoted to the fundamental question or notion; otherwise there will be many temptations to get side-tracked or to wander aimlessly and indulge in weak speculations, or to settle for preconceived opinions and conceptions. Van Manen (1990) informs researchers that we should retain a strong and oriented relationship to the phenomenon under investigation through out the research process. To be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense. To be strong in our orientation means that we will not settle for superficialities and falsities.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2000), a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon may be maintained by the process of bracketing (see section Turning to the phenomenon of interest). The researcher records her own preconceived opinions and conceptions, memories and experiences in a journal during the research process. It helps the researcher be aware and differentiate between his/her own thoughts and those of the participants (see Appendix 3 for further details). Moreover, once written, the journal entries are read and reread in multiple ways as part of the analytic process. An important element recorded in journal entries is the reciprocal influence of the researcher and what is searched. Changes in the researcher's perspective that occur over the study through the dialogue with participants are also noted.

The issues of validity and reliability are fundamentally related to maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon. For a descriptive methodology, where no conceptual distinction is made

between discovery and justification, the method of interpretation affords its own justification (Giorgi, 1986). In this research, verification procedures are internal to the interpretive process (Hoon, 2009), which is in line with pragmatic experimentalism. These procedures will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5.

The most common criticism is that the subjective influence of the researcher, in both the interviewing and analysis phases, hinders the researcher from coming up with objective and therefore usable data (Hycner, 1999). The first argument against this criticism is that for interpretive phenomenological philosophy, experience is not divided into the categories of objective and subjective (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). However, the whole meaning of being objective is quite different in phenomenological research. Objectivity in this approach means: trying to be as comprehensive as possible in investigating the whole phenomenon, and utilizing a method or methods which will be as faithful to the phenomenon as possible. Given the approach of phenomenological research, there is no way to eliminate the “subjectivity” of research. In fact, the phenomenologists believe that it is the very nature of such subjectivity which allows for greater objectivity (Hycner, 1999). Second, in this study, validity is attained through craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), the craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher are essential for validity of the research. Validity is not only a matter of method used; the person of the researcher, including his/her moral integrity, is critical for evaluation of the quality of the scientific knowledge produced. This point will be discussed in greater details in chapter 5.

A criticism that is often raised is that interviewing a participant about a phenomenon elicits a retrospective viewpoint. The criticism is that a retrospective viewpoint is not the same as getting a description from someone while an experience is actually occurring. It is argued that a retrospective viewpoint is altered by time and therefore different from the experience itself. However, it is argued that any description of an experience is already different from the experience itself. Language, by its nature can distill or enhance an experience. In any case, a description is not the experience itself. Consequently a retrospective viewpoint has some of the same shortcoming as even a concurrent description, given the nature of language. On top of that, as the participant describes an experience after some time has elapsed, the verbal description is not “accurate” because of distortions arising from the passage of time. The advantage is that a retrospective viewpoint may actually allow a much fuller verbal description because the participant has had an opportunity to reflect back on the experience and to integrate it consciously and verbally (Hycner, 1999). Moreover, the three-interview structure adopted in this study incorporates features that increase the accuracy of the experience described by the participants (Seidman, 2006), thereby enhancing the validity. It places participants’ comments in context. It enables us to check for the internal consistency of what they say. The process helps understand how the participants understand and make meaning of their experience. It is argued that if the interview structure allows them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity (Seidman, 2006).

Replicability is that a study can be replicated by other researchers and get essentially the same results. Given the nature of phenomenological research, which is open to multiple interpretations (van Manen,

1990), there are bound to be some finding differences among researchers. Consequently, the control comes from the researcher's context or perspective of data. Once the context and intention become known, the divergence is usually intelligible to all even if not universally agreeable. Thus, the chief point to be remembered with this research is not so much whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted, but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it (Hycner, 1999). A major requirement of an interpretation is that it can be seen by others (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). In order to help readers to follow the rationale of the researcher's interpretations, examples of the material used for the interpretations are presented and the different steps of the analysis process are explicitly outlined. This is done by using the "audit trail" developed by Koch (1994), which will be presented in chapter 5.

Finally, research credibility is established by determining whether the participants recognize the findings as true to their experience. The participants are able, at an experiential level to see whether the findings are valid for them. If they experience a spark of recognition, termed the "phenomenological nod" (van Manen 1990), it is a powerful indication that the results of the project are credible.

## **VI. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole**

There is a danger that researchers can get so involved in their work that they fail to realize what their work has revealed. To help keep in view the research questions, the following questions, recommended by van Manen (1990), are constantly asked

- What is the object of human experience to be studied?
- What is the intelligibility of the experience to be studied? Commonly shared experiences such as "reading a novel," "being evaluated," may be more easily approached and understood than less common experiences such as "birthing pain," "old age forgetfulness," and so forth.
- What is the experiential situation which the researcher enters?

In addition, van Manen (1990) stresses that the researcher needs to constantly measure the overall design of the study/text against the significance that the parts must play in the total textual structure. At several point the researcher steps back and looks at the total, at the contextual givens and how each of the parts contribute toward the total. This involved continual dialogue between seemingly meaningful words, phrases, and concepts, and questioning these sections of the text to ask "what is really being said here?" during the analysis process. From each individual text (individual participant's stories), words and concepts emerge. They then are reviewed and questioned in light of the whole perspective. Questions such as "Is this concept shared or different from other perspectives?", "What does this mean in relation to the phenomena?" are asked (van Manen, 1990).

In addition, van Manen (1990) considers it helpful to organize one's writing in a manner related to the fundamental structure of the phenomenon itself. He suggests alternative ways of organizing the



description of the phenomenon of interest, so that the balance between parts and whole may be achieved:

- Thematically: one may use the emerging themes as generative guides for writing the research study.
- Analytically: if the research involves in-depth interviews with certain persons, then these interviews may be reworked into reconstructed life stories, or conversations may be analyzed for relevant anecdotes. Another approach is to start with a singular description of some particular life situation, thus showing the puzzling and depthful nature of a determinate research question. The task is then to follow through with the several investigative queries which the concrete life situation makes problematic. A third approach is to begin by describing how ordinary social science at present makes sense of a certain phenomenon. The object is to show how the experience as presented by traditional social science is ill-understood, and how the taken-for-granted or generally accepted conceptualizations gloss over rather than reveal a more thoughtful understanding of the nature of a certain topic. Next, one may reflectively show how certain themes emerge from considering etymological and idiomatic sources, from examining experiential descriptions, literary and phenomenological material, and so forth.
- Exemplificatively: we begin the description by rendering visible the essential nature of the phenomenon and then filling out the initial description by systematically varying the examples. For example, after explicating the essentials structure of the phenomenon of parenting, one may proceed by showing how this description is illuminated by considering various modalities of parenting such as being an adoptive parent, being a stepmother or stepfather, etc.
- Exegetically: a phenomenological description may be organized by engaging one's writing in a dialogical or exegetical fashion with the thinking of some other phenomenological authors – in other words, with the tradition of the field. The exegetical approach orients itself first or primarily to the available phenomenological human science literature and organize itself in terms of a discussion of those texts and the structural themes that their authors have already identified and discussed.
- Existentially: one may weave one's phenomenological description against the existentials of temporality, spatiality, corporeality, and sociality.
- Inventing an approach: the above approaches are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. A combination of the above approaches may be used. Or a different organization may be invented.

In this research, the phenomenon of interest is described in two different ways: thematically and analytically. These two dimensions will be discussed in greater details in the next chapter.

## **VII. Summary**

In this chapter, a research design based on the six guidelines developed by van Manen (1990) has been presented. The guidelines are broad but they provide us with a workable and useful methodical overview. The first element is turning to a phenomenon of interest. It means identifying what deeply interests me and identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e. some experience that human beings live through. Once the phenomenon of interest has been identified, the research questions are re-formulated in a phenomenological sense. The second element is investigating the experience as it is lived. Van Manen suggests several alternatives such as observation, interview, protocol writing, personal diaries or logs, etc. In this research, unstructured in-depth interview is chosen to obtain information because the interview is considered the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences. Different issues related to collecting data via in-depth interview, such as sampling, interview technique, interviewing relationship, data management, are taken into consideration. The third element is reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon. Phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes. Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these themes we can navigate and explore such universes. The fourth element is describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting. Phenomenological research is a form of writing. Therefore, a phenomenological researcher has to write and rewrite and rewrite what he is trying to say. Only by rewriting that the true description of a phenomenon begins to show the essence and meanings. The fifth element is maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the question. One must remain devoted to the fundamental question or notion; otherwise there will be many temptations to get side-tracked or to wander aimlessly and indulge in weak speculations, or to settle for preconceived opinions and conceptions. To be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense. To be strong in our orientation means that we will not settle for superficialities and falsities. The sixth element is balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. The researcher needs to constantly measure the overall design of the study/text against the significance that the parts must play in the total textual structure. At several point it is necessary to step back and look at the total, at the contextual givens and how each of the parts needs to contribute toward the total. In this research, the phenomenon of interest is described both thematically and analytically.

## CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

This chapter will provide a step-by-step account of the analysis, which is based on the method of the hermeneutic phenomenology perspective and Dewey's pragmatic experimentalism. The analysis attempts to reach an interpretive description of the experience of the seven knowledge managers. Interpretation means dealing with the meaning the researcher has made of the data and how it has been translated through this process into findings. The foreground of this process is what Patton (2000) has described as: "going beyond the descriptive data, interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world". The interpretation is placed within the context of pragmatic experimentalism by an internal verification and testing procedure proposed by Hoon (2009).

It should be noted that as a consequence of the absence of randomness and of the limited number of participants, the results of the research cannot be generalized. In the strictest empirical sense, the first part of the criticism is accurate in that the results only apply strictly to the participants interviewed. However, for Dewey, we have no access to ourselves and the world except through a background. The world is not known directly, but only as it appears through the background's interpretations (Polkinghorne, 2000). Because the background in which we live is implicit and partially hidden, it is not open to complete description; it is, however, available to an increased, though not complete, understanding of how it functions in our lives. Hence, it is suggested that if the results illuminate to some significant degree, the "worlds" of the participants, then they are valuable.

Moreover, even in the process of investigating the experience of one unique individual, we can learn much about the phenomenology of human being in general. Therefore, with a limited number of participants, though the results in a strict sense may not be generalizable, they can be phenomenologically informative about human being in general (Hycner, 1999). Besides, Seidman (2006) suggests that the goal of phenomenological analysis is to give a thematic description of experience. Identifying global themes across interviews is a means for improving interpretive vision and capturing figural aspects emerging from a given set of experiences, not a means for attaining some type of convergent validation and offering exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon. The common patterns in experiences may serve as an alternative to generalizability.

In this chapter, the interpretation tools and the interpretation process will be discussed. The interpretation tools used in this research include the concepts of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, prejudice, the fusion of horizons, and play developed by Gadamer (1975). The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the knowledge managers, and studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality and the contextual root of each story. The cross-case analysis unveils the "pervasive quality" (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager, which in turn helps further interpret the data and is confirmed by the data. In this model, exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes

and paradigm cases presented. The analysis is also informed by the work of van Manen (1990). Examples are provided in the discussion to illustrate my interpretation process. Finally, how trustworthiness is established in this research will be presented.

## **I. Interpretation tools**

A number of concepts put forward by Gadamer, a hermeneutic phenomenologist, are employed in the analysis. They include the hermeneutic circle of understanding, prejudice, the fusion of horizons, and play.

For Gadamer (1975), prejudice means a judgement that is formed before all the facts and elements, which create and determine a situation. Prejudice is a form of pre-understanding or pre-judgement, fore-meanings, knowledge and awareness of, in this case, what it is to be a knowledge manager. It is well worth being aware of one's prejudice when conducting a phenomenological study, as the researcher is an instrument of the research and his/her prejudice informs the language he/she uses.

Gadamer's concept of play has a range of forms. In the form adopted for the analysis in this thesis, Gadamer does not orient himself towards interpretation from an objectivist or subjectivist position; rather, he participates as a "player". This uses the analogy of a game, when the player has his/her perspective and experience, yet they are absorbed into the whole game. This neatly avoids overt subject and object distinctions and this is a natural and helpful approach.

In fact, play, in Gadamer's sense, serves to develop an interpretation tool of essentially the same conception as Dewey's methodology which arises from an examination of the experience of the scientist (Jeannot, 2001). For Dewey, experience occurs in the field of transaction between man and environing conditions. It encompasses both the subject, who experiences, and the subject matter of experience. Both the "how" and the "what" of experience are taken together in the mutual connection. For Gadamer (1975), play is the starting point of the investigation of the experience of art: "it is not aesthetic consciousness but the experience of art... that must be the object of our examination... The work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it. The "subject" of the experience of art ... is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it but the work itself". Gadamer confirms the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player by stating that: "the real subject of the game... is not the player but instead the game itself. What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself". The researcher, as a player, experiences the interpretation process, which is itself the subject of the researcher's experience.

Gadamer speaks of the "horizons". The prejudice of fore-knowledge, which one has about one phenomenon, is considered as the first "horizon of understanding". Then this horizon expands as one chooses to examine the initial interpretation, and re-examines it in the light of what is revealed in the text. This is connected with Heidegger's idea of (let's return) "to the fact themselves" (Heidegger, 1962). One can use one's own interpretation, based on prejudices, but anchored in the "facts" (the experiences) of the research subject. From this marriage of horizons, a new, richer, and more

developed understanding can grow, which is greater than the original understanding. This fusion of horizons” is continually in flux and flow because constantly we need to test, expand and may even leave behind our prejudices. Our own history also influences our horizons. Horizon, then, is a clear and poetic metaphor, which, according to Gadamer, represents a range of vision that includes everything which can be seen from a particular vantage point.

It is not difficult to hear echoes of Gadamer’s fusion of horizons in Dewey’s work (Jeannot, 2001). For example, in *Art as experience*, he criticizes the aesthetic theories of Roger Fry and Vernon Lee, the former focusing one-sidedly on the act of aesthetic expression, the latter on the object. Dewey believes that the two theories complement each other, but “the truth of esthetic theory cannot be arrived at by a mechanical addition of one theory to another”... “Both theories separate the live creature from the world in which it lives”. Later, he writes that: “the professional thinker is the one who is most perpetually haunted by the difference between self and the world. He approaches discussion of art with a reinforced bias, and one, which, most unfortunately, is just the one most fatal to esthetic understanding. For the unique distinguishing feature of esthetic experience is exactly the fact that no such distinction of self and object exists in it, since it is esthetic in the degree in which organism and the environment cooperate to institute an experience in which the two are so fully integrated that each disappears”.

For Gadamer, the process of interpretation is circular rather than linear. The interpretation, which occurs in a circle, is dynamic in nature. It has no bottom, top, beginning or end, no subject-object distinctions. It is called the “hermeneutic circle” (Gadamer, 1975). It is proposed that interpretation in human sciences, takes place within the hermeneutic circle in order to avoid a possible loss of meaning. Within the hermeneutic circle, the whole can be understood by study of the particular, and the particular, with reference to the whole. During the process, each interpretation of part or whole is a provisional interpretation that guides future interpretations and is only retained to the extent it is confirmed in future interpretations. In this research, the hermeneutic circle applies to all the participants. Both the back and forth movement and the way the interpretations guide future interpretations while remaining provisional have clear parallels in Dewey’s account of the relation between means and ends in inquiry (Vessey, 2009). In *Experience and nature* (1958), Dewey writes:

*When appetite is perceived in its meaning [as opposed to in brute interaction], in the consequences it induces, and these consequences are experimented with in reflective imagination, some being seen as consistent with one another, and hence capable of coexistence and of serially order achievement, others being incompatible, forbidding conjunction at one time, and getting in one another’s way serially – when this estate is attained, we live on human plane, responding to things in their meanings. A relationship of cause-effect has been transformed into one of means-consequence. Then consequences belong integrally to the conditions that may produce them, and the latter possess character and distinction. The meaning of causal conditions is carried over also into the consequence, so that the latter is no longer a mere end, a last and closing term of arrest. It is marked out in perception, distinguished by the efficacy of the conditions which have entered into it. Its value as fulfilling and consummatory is measurable by subsequent fulfilments and*

*frustrations to which it is contributory in virtual of the causal means which compose it. Thus to be conscious of meaning or to have an idea marks a fruition, an enjoyed or suffered arrest of the flux of events.*

## **II. Interpretation process**

This research relies on the interpretation process proposed by Benner (1994) to “make conspicuous the socially embedded knowledge trapped in the familiarity of peoples’ mundane everyday lives”. They are paradigm cases, thematic analysis and exemplars. All three are interpretive, inter-related strategies and serve to present the highly contextualized meanings that emerge from the text.

Benner’s (1994) suggests that identifying paradigm cases “is the most usual way of entering the dialogue with the text” (1994). Paradigm cases are strong instances of concerns or ways of being in the world, doing a practice, or taking up a project. The next step is thematic analysis. The text is read to identify meaningful patterns or concerns, which involves the researcher moving back and forth between the whole text and parts of the text in an attempt to clarify differences and similarities. The identification of exemplars, which are smaller than paradigm cases, is the final strategy used to interpret the text. Benner (1994) explains: “exemplars convey aspects of a paradigm case or a thematic analysis”. Exemplars are specific episodes or incidents which present aspects of a particular situation and the participants’ responses to them. A range of exemplars allows the researcher to establish a cultural field of relationships and distinctions.

This research starts by performing cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the seven knowledge managers and unveil the “pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938) of their experience. Paradigm cases are then studied using within-case analysis to understand the individuality and the contextual root of each story. Exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases presented.

### **1. Data handling**

In order to proceed with the data analysis, it is obvious but important to have the interviews transcribed. This includes the literal statements and as much as possible the significant non-verbal and paralinguistic communications (Hycner, 1999). While the conversations are transcribed verbatim, a large margin is left at the right of the transcription, where paralanguage of the respondents are noted.

After interviews have been transcribed from the audio files, the interpretation phase begins. The transcribed interviews become the text from which interpretation ensues (Kvale, 1983). The exclusive reliance on verbatim interview transcripts reflects three methodological criteria of phenomenological interpretation: the emic approach, autonomy of the text, and bracketing (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

In an emic approach, the interpretation relies on the respondent’s own terms and category systems rather than the researcher’s (Kvale, 1983). The goal of phenomenological investigation is to describe experience in lived rather than conceptually abstract terms. Using respondent’s terms is one methodological procedure for staying at the level of lived experience (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

The text of the interview is treated as an autonomous body of data comprised of respondent reflections on lived experience. Autonomous has two methodological aspects. First, there is no attempt to corroborate a respondent's description with external verification. Respondent descriptions are not construed as recalled "copies" of past events, but as reconstructions emerging in the interviews. A second methodological aspect of the autonomy criterion is that the interpretation does incorporate hypotheses, inferences, and conjectures that exceed the evidence provided by the transcripts (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

To treat the transcripts as an autonomous body of data, preconceived theoretical notions about the phenomena are bracketed. Bracketing does not imply a neutral view, as researchers must always see and describe the world from some perspective (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The interpretation has as its ground the meta-assumptions of existential phenomenology. Holding to these meta-assumptions does not preclude bracketing specific preconceptions, such as a theoretical model or hypothesis, about the phenomenon (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

## 2. Bracketing

The first step in the interpretative process is bracketing, which is "the act of suspending one's various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world" (van Manen, 1990). In other words, through bracketing, the researcher suspends his or her belief in the objective reality of the phenomenon to attend to it as it is experienced by the participant. The researcher attends to the phenomenon as it presents itself in awareness (Hein and Austin, 2001). It means the research data, that is, the recordings and the transcriptions, are approached with openness to whatever meanings emerged. It also means using the matrices of that person's world-view in order to understand the meaning of what that person is saying rather than what the researcher expects that person to say (Hycner, 1999). However, bracketing is viewed as necessarily incomplete because we are always in the world, so we can never truly break with our way of seeing it. This may be the most important lesson we gain from bracketing: its final impossibility (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). A presuppositionless perspective from which to analyze descriptions may therefore be unattainable, but the phenomenological reduction is nevertheless important in increasing our awareness of such influences and their role in the research process (Hein and Austin, 2001).

Two specific procedures are used for facilitating bracketing in this research: themes are rendered in "emic terms" (i.e., those of participants) (Thompson *et. al.*, 1990), and recording the researcher's own preconceived opinions and conceptions, memories and experiences in a journal during the research process. In this study, the discussion employs as much as possible the language used by the participants while presenting their experience. A journal is also kept to record the researcher's initial understanding and assumption about their lives as knowledge managers (see Appendix 3). It helps the researcher be aware and differentiate between her own thoughts and those of the participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Once written, the journal entries are read and reread in multiple ways as part of the analytic process. An important element recorded in journal entries is the reciprocal influence of the researcher and what is searched. Changes in the researcher's perspective that occur over the study through the dialogue with participants are also noted (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

### 3. Interpretation informed by Gadamer

The goal of hermeneutic interpretation is to engender a wholistic understanding of the participants' stories. That is to articulate the meanings that specific stories have in relationship to a broader narrative of personal history (Thompson, 1997). Using the hermeneutic circle as a means of interpreting data means that the smallest statements must be understood in terms of the largest cultural contexts. It refers to a part-to-whole mode of interpretation, which occurs through a series of part-to-whole iterations. First, an individual understanding of each interview is sought, which involves viewing each transcript as a whole and relating separate passages of the transcript to its overall content. After each transcript has been interpreted at the individual level, a new part-to-whole phase begins in which separate interviews are related to each other and common pattern identified. There are also interactive movements between these two phases of interpretive cycles. It happens that the researcher may gain an important insight from an interview text interpreted later in the process and then reconsider previously interpreted texts in light of this newly developed understanding (Thompson, 1997). This is back-and-forth movement continues throughout analysis and interpretations are continuously revised as more of the text is grasped (Thompson *et. al.*, 1990). In the analysis, the researcher moves from the parts of each interview, to the whole of that interview, and then gathers all seven analyzed interviews together and brings together the sub-themes and themes. This is not a linear process but indeed circular and looped. When the analysis is completed, the researcher reflects on the research questions, checking that they have been answered. So from the beginning to the end of this process, there is a move backwards and forwards through the data as the researcher reflects on the material, the questions, and the answers, another deeper level of the hermeneutic circle of understanding begins to form. This became my interpretation of the data, described in the next chapter.

The fusion of horizons is important especially in the process of analysis. The implication is that the researcher's interpretive orientation (i.e. background knowledge, underlying assumption, and questions of interest) enables her to become attuned to specific characteristics and patterns afforded by the textual data. Conversely, the engagement with the textual data can sensitize the researcher to new questions and precipitate revisions in his or her initial interpretive standpoint (Thompson, 1997). The researcher's prejudice is the first horizon of understanding. When the early analysis starts, her horizon of understanding expands to fit the experience of the knowledge managers, and then her prejudice is re-examined in the light of what has been found. The later analysis, from pure description to being analytical, involves that whole process at a deeper level.

As far as Gadamer's concept of play is concerned, the researcher's perspective in the analysis process is included as she dialogues with the text in the context of the hermeneutic circle. Play is done in a playful spirit, like a person playing with a bat and ball. It occurs through dialoguing with the text and this brings about understanding of a subject under inquiry. The ideas are approached in a playful way, quotes being cut and pasted from different interviews and put together under different themes, to see where they best belong.



#### 4. Cross-case thematic analysis

##### a. Cross-case thematic analysis: an overview

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenological research strategy is holistic and seeks to related descriptions of specific experiences to each other and to the overall context of the lifeworld. The research goal is to give a thematic description of experience. Identifying global themes across interviews is a means for improving interpretive vision and capturing figural aspects emerging from a given set of experiences, not a means for attaining some type of convergent validation and offering exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon. The interpretation seeks to describe common patterns in experiences as an alternative to generalizability (Seidman, 2006). Although global themes are identified across interviews, support for each theme is always available in individual transcripts. It is continuously referred back to individual transcripts to ensure that global themes are not rendered in abstract terms removed from respondent experience (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

In the thematic analysis, both explicit and implicit themes are revealed. Explicit themes are those themes that are easily identified or the issues that stand out more readily as meaningful or important. They are revealed early in the analysis process. Implicit themes are the meaning behind the words. There is often a “hidden meaning” behind a large volume of text, which emerges when the researcher dialogues with the text and dwells with the data (van Manen, 1990). They are often not obvious on a first reading of the text. This process is part of the “fusion of horizons” discussed by Gadamer (1975).

Reading and re-reading the transcripts of the seven participants, and also re-listening to the recorded conversation allow their thoughts, feelings, and stories to filter through the researcher’s mind. The analysis begins by writing and analyzing all seven individual cases, considering the “parts”, and then gathers together the seven stories to consider the “whole”, and moves backwards and forwards in the analysis to attempt to make sense of the phenomena.

##### b. Cross-case thematic analysis: step-by-step account

In seeking the themes, this research is guided by van Manen (1990) in his suggested process for isolating thematic statements. Van Manen (1990) has advised three methods for isolating thematic statements in analysis. All of them are used in the search for meaning in the data and the development of sub-themes and themes in light of the constructed investigation framework. These methods are the detailed reading approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. Each approach is applicable in different ways and can be used to solicit different information. Although the analysis starts with the wholistic reading approach, continues with the selective/highlighting one, and finishes with the detailed reading one, the approaches are used in an iterative rather than linear manner, which means there is a back-and-forth movement between them as the analysis proceeds.

##### Wholistic reading approach

The wholistic reading approach refers to looking at the text as a whole and asking oneself which memorable phrase captures the fundamental meaning or the main significance of the text? (van Manen, 1990) In this approach, the entire recorded conversation is listened several times and the

transcription is read a number of times (Hycner, 1999). This is sometimes called “immersing oneself in the data”. The aim of this immersion is the establishment of some initial interpretation of the data that will drive later coding of the data in subsequent phases of analysis. In this first phase, the essential characteristics in the data from each interview are identified (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Attention is paid to the non-verbal and paralinguistic levels of communication, that is, the intonations, the emphases, the pauses, etc. There is also a journal to note specific issues that might arise or to record general impression of the researcher (see Appendix 3). In this manner, these perceptions do not interfere with the attempt to bracket interpretations and biases while trying to stay as true to the interviewee’s meaning as much as possible (Hycner, 1999).

For example, while conducting this analysis approach to search for implicit themes in the data, it is quickly found that knowledge management function has not obtained an accepted place within the organization. All the participants mention about the non-strategic position of the function and the lack of interest in sharing knowledge with each other among the line employees and managers. An example of this is:

les Business Units qui ne voient pas le Knowledge management comme une priorité (Carol)

Alex has this to say:

on est à la fin du cycle, on a perdu le champ...

He is joined by Mary, who expresses similar sentiment:

Mais là à l'heure actuelle, ce n'est pas la priorité quoi. La priorité, c'est la réduction des coûts et court terme. Le Knowledge management, c'est un peu plus long terme

With regards to the lack of interest in sharing knowledge among organizational members, the participants appeared to share the same opinion. Mary says:

Je pense qu'il faut travailler avec certains pays matures là-dessus, il faudrait qu'ils aient, qu'ils comprennent bien que il ne faut pas réinventer la poudre. Moi, ce que j'explique, c'est OK, tu vas donner, tu vas recevoir, donc chaque un va monter en fait. Et ça, ce n'est pas inné, à l'école française, tu es : je mets mon coude, je suis sûr que c'est encore comme ça, et les autres, il ne faut pas qu'ils les copient sur ce que je fais. Donc il n'y a pas cette culture de travailler ensemble pour monter ensemble. C'est chaque un pour soi. Alors si je peux être le meilleur, c'est de l'élitisme et je travaille pour moi-même, je travail pas ensemble...

Christina shares the same point of view:

Je pense quand même qu'il y a une culture peut être de partage qui n'est pas si évidente

From these memorable phrases, it is seen that this should be an important point that will help explain in a rich manner the experience of being a knowledge manager in such multinational as Lafarge.

### Selective reading approach

The selective or highlighting approach involves reading the text and asking which statements appeared to be especially revealing about the overall phenomenon and its dimensions, as represented in the investigation framework.

First, this phase consisted of a clarification of the material, making it amenable to analysis by eliminating superfluous material such as repetition and simplify the spoken language of the informants without changing the unique character of it (eliminate “you know” for instance) (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Kvale, 1996).

Second, as in-depth interviewing generates an enormous amount of text, the vast array of words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages is reduced to what is of most significance and interest. The transcripts are read and and marked with brackets the passages that are interesting (Seidman, 2006). In this stage of the process, the researcher is exercising judgement about what is significant in the transcript, analyzing, interpreting and making sense of it. Reducing the data is done inductively rather than deductively. The transcripts are let to breathe and speak for themselves (Seidman, 2006).

Third, the statements identified in this approach are highlighted, copied from the transcript, and tabulated. Examples of such statements follow:

We cannot keep silent in terms of knowledge management. We have to speak out, make some noise to remind people we are still working on that... It is not a waste of time to do it, even though it is a bit too much in advance. But still, in terms of generating awareness, generating some integration, I think it still helps... People need to open their mind. People who need to know what happened in different parts of Lafarge and in different companies. Lafarge database is the real attractive point for people. People know that Lafarge has something new, something with so many knowledge and documents, something interesting for people from outside just coming to Lafarge. Even though they cannot use it right away but for the mindset, for their integration, it still helps... Practically people need to know, so I will deliver it, even though it is not feasible for them to use it right now but there is some meaning to run it, with the current situations, there are so many difficulties, it still has some meaning. (Yvon)

In the preliminary analysis, this quote is highlighted, cut and pasted, and becomes linked to the key word, **Communicating with end-users about the sharing database**, which leads to the concept, **Communication**. In the final analysis, it becomes part of the sub-them, **Promotion: communicating and convincing**, and the theme, **Marketing action**.

The following quote, from Mary, is highlighted, cute and pasted, and linked to the key words, **Making KM become part of organizational members' activities**, and then to the concept, **Integrating KM to the organizational life**. It later becomes part of the sub-them, **Existing organizational process**, and the theme, **Island finding**.

Ce que je fais, moi, depuis que je suis TCEA, ce que j'ai réussi aussi à faire c'est d'intégrer dans chaque formation technique qui se passe ici, que ce soit sur le broyage, que ce soit sur

la qualité, c'est de forcer...fin, forcer, j'ai réussi à intégrer 2 heures ou 3 heures dédiées à l'utilisation des outils de Knowledge management.

Other quotations are extracted from the text, grouped together based on similarity of ideas, and analyzed together in the same way.

#### Detailed reading approach

In the detailed reading approach, the researcher is required to look at every transcribed sentence or cluster of sentences and ask, "What does this sentences, or sentence cluster, reveal about the dimensions of the experience denoted in the investigation framework and the overall phenomenon?" This is a process of getting at the essence of the meaning expressed in word, phrase, sentence, paragraph or significant non-verbal communication. It is a crystallization and condensation of what the participant has said, by using as much as possible the literal words of the participant. This is a step whereby the researcher tries to stay very close to the literal data (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

At this stage, the researcher goes over every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and noted significant nonverbal communication in the transcript in order to elicit the participant's meanings and develop early key words and concepts. This is done with as much openness as possible. Going from the parts (aspects of each interview) to the whole picture of the data snapshot (the interview as a whole), the researcher groups together words used by the participants, which contain similar ideas, and analyzed them as a whole, looking once more for the implicit and explicit themes. She then goes back to the data to identify key words and concepts that represents these similar ideas. In order to locate the sub-themes and themes, ideas, words and phrases that seem to repeat in the data are removed and segmented. The analysis strives to establish the linkages of the key words, concepts, sub-themes and themes. Once all data collected have been processed in this way, these words and phrases are re-read to check for similarities or differences and to check that no concepts or ideas that stand out as being significant or meaningful to the participant are missed. When looking at the entire text, these words and phrases link together under broad concepts, sub-themes and themes

In this process, the words or phrases considered to be meaningful and relevant when crossing and re-crossing from the parts to the wholes are highlighted and cut and pasted in to a Word document. These are then read and re-read, and groups of ideas are classified in columns of a table as "Words of participants" then "Key words" and "Concepts". The concepts from preliminary analysis are pooled with similar concepts to form the sub-themes. Finally the themes are gathered together similarly to inform the development of the major themes. This search for sub-themes and themes involves a coding process as the researcher is reading and asking continuously the questions of "who, what, when, where, and why" (Dey, 1983). This process is carried out based on the useful advice provided by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) provided on coding ideas by grouping or aggregating them in similar categories with key words and links, which help move from the grouped thoughts of the participants, to the concepts, sub-themes, and finally, themes. It is also constantly informed by Gadamer's ideas of the hermeneutic circle and fusion of horizons.

In the following table, an example of the analysis will be given. It is represented in a decision trail in order to help readers follow the rationale behind the researcher's decisions regarding the formulation of concepts, sub-themes, and themes.

Table 7: Linking key ideas, concepts, sub-themes, and themes

Significant statements (extract from the interviews with Helen)	Key words	Concepts	Sub-themes	Themes
<p><b>It's not on any agenda, you know, you look at any of the management meetings, you will never see KS on any of the agendas.</b> If in every KM meeting, there was one topic to be shared, because those are really key people who can identify this knowledge, if they had that idea on their agenda and to finish their meeting with at least one perspective to be shared, or to be published, or to be followed up, like here is an opportunity for KS, just do follow it up, we could make a lot of progress</p>	<p>KM: not a priority</p>	<p>Position of KM in the organization</p>	<p>Non-strategic position of KM</p>	<p>Organizational barriers</p>
<p>I also <b>travel to the head of community</b>. Usually the heads of community are based in the regions' head offices. Most of the heads of community are located there. Each of the regions has its own <b>regional meeting on a monthly basis</b>. So I <b>try to be present at as many of those meetings as possible, so that I could speak about knowledge sharing, the benefits</b></p>	<p>Communicate with end-users about the sharing database</p>	<p>Communication</p>	<p>Communicating and convincing</p>	<p>Marketing action</p>
	<p>Taking advantage of the organizational events for communication purpose</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the organizational life</p>	<p>Existing organizational processes</p>	<p>Island finding action</p>
<p>When I go to a business process meeting, where they were doing some training for example on a new process. I speak to people who are holding the meeting, who are chairing the meeting, and ask them what the meeting is about, then I find some of the documents which may help them to understand why that process</p>	<p>Make the sharing database useful for end-users</p>	<p>Customer oriented</p>	<p>Product</p>	<p>Marketing action</p>

<p>has been changed. <b>If it's a sale and marketing meeting, there has been some new development in Lafarge value added product, I will make sure I make a presentation to that particular product.</b></p>				
<p>You know <b>the only way to do that I think is to include something in their personal goal and objectives.</b> Everyone is obliged to contribute, you know, at least one best practice, or one modification to a best practice, one improvement to a best practice, or one popular standard, or one success story or tool, something to be shared with may be another community or another country or another region. Only then people will think about coming on board. Or also if you prove that you have taken something from another community or another country or region, and implemented it in our own community successfully. <b>That should be part of everybody's goal and objective. Then I think this knowledge sharing culture will be more alive</b></p>	<p>People participate in KM when they are evaluated on that participation.</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the organizational life</p>	<p>Existing organizational processes</p>	<p>Island action finding</p>
<p><b>I communicate with all the heads of community at least on a monthly basis.</b> I have a list of the heads of community in our product lines and all our departments so to speak. So I communicate with them. <b>I have a schedule which I try to keep to, to contact them at least once a month,</b> to see if they can provide me with something that I could share with another community or with another region, or another country</p>	<p>The KMer relies on a network of helpers to do her job</p>	<p>Continuous process of getting help from the strategic helpers</p>	<p>Strategic helpers</p>	<p>Force building</p>

Appendix 4 will give the example of how the island-finding theme and its sub-themes are formulated.

#### 5. Paradigm case analysis

In paradigm case analysis, the sub-themes and themes are reviewed to present the particularity of each individual knowledge manager with regard to each of those themes and sub-themes. The method of Boje (2001) is also employed. It is an antenarrative approach to thematic analysis, aiming at defining moves in-between and outside the themes. Given the themes having been identified in the cross-case thematic analysis, one can see what gets left out of the themes and taxonomy cages and what goes on between those themes in each individual story. The paradigm case analysis reveals the uniqueness of each individual knowledge manager, including the experienced transactional relationship with the environment, the dominance of the building and dwelling modes in his/her experience, and the pervasive quality of his/her experience.

In fact, cross-case thematic analysis and paradigm case analysis are not in sequential order. They are rather embedded in each other in the process of moving between parts and whole and in the detailed reading, the selective or highlighting reading, and the wholistic reading. In order to come up with the sub-themes and themes, each individual story has already been analyzed. The relationship between each tentative sub-theme and theme (Hoon, 2009) had been provisionally made. The analysis process ends with the paradigm case analysis, as a coming back to review the finalized sub-themes and themes in the experience of each individual KMer is needed. The provisional relationship between the tentative sub-themes and themes in the experience of each KMer is reviewed to confirm and modify in light of the finalized sub-themes and themes.

#### 6. Internal verification

As mentioned previously, internal testing and verification is conducted in accordance with the spirit of pragmatic experimentalism during the interpretation process. This is achieved by the formulation of concepts, sub-themes, and themes as tentative propositions open for testing (Hoon, 2009). Tentative propositions can be understood in a sense as statements that carefully formalize and systematize the researcher's thinking. They are tentative in character as these propositions refer to the subtleties of meaning found in the data, but still allows for the free flowing interplay of observation and multi-relational reflection (Hoon, 2009). These tentative propositions are tested in terms of adding evidence of the same pattern but also remain open to disconfirming evidence. Concepts, sub-themes, themes, and the connections between them are not static findings but fluid results that are changed and refined within the ongoing analysis and the moving back and forth between parts and whole (Hoon, 2009).

For example, all the participants mentioned the importance of communicating and convincing dimension of the marketing action. However, each of them talked about it in a different way. Only by articulating concepts, sub-themes, and themes as tentative propositions open for testing that this dimension was finally formulated. Carol discussed explicitly about her communication campaign, which had the purpose of promoting the knowledge sharing culture. Helen also considered the communication actions as part of her principal concern. By contrast, while Kathy and Yvon acknowledged that they found it important to keep people informed of changes and updates in the

sharing database, they used the word inform rather than communication in their conversation. Mary termed this dimension as “bringing knowledge to end-user”. For Christina, she put herself in the end-users’ shoes and realized that there should be some kind of communication action that notices them of evolution in the sharing database.

### **III. Establishing trustworthiness**

Validity of this research is ensured by craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), the craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher are essential for validity of the research. Validity is not only a matter of method used, the person of the researcher, including his/her moral integrity, is critical for evaluation of the quality of the scientific knowledge produced. Interviewing is a craft. It does not follow content- and context- free rules of method, but rests on the judgement of a qualified researcher. The interviewer is the instrument. The outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer.

Craftsmanship validity is enhanced if the interviewer is well trained with necessary skills (Kvale, 1996). The researcher’s interview with a doctoral peer is very helpful in this aspect (see section Interview structure for further details). In addition, in order to ensure the credibility of the researcher, checking and rechecking the written memos are done after each interview, which records such things as the researcher’s own beliefs, the response and emotional state of the respondents, and her thoughts and ideas as a result of the interview. The conclusions are then measured against this and the participants’ stories at every phase of analysis. Each theme is reviewed thoroughly and worked through by dialoguing with the text (van Manen, 1990). Each theme is not finalised until the researcher is convinced by re-reading, checking and discussion, that it is a faithful representation of the text.

Moreover, the three-interview structure incorporates features that enhance the accomplishment of validity. It places participants’ comments in context. It enables us to check for the internal consistency of what they say. The goal of the process is to understand how the participants understand and make meaning of their experience. If the interview structure allows them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity. The procedure of internal verification (Hoon, 2009) employed in this research also helps enhance the validity of its findings.

Another tactic adopted to improve validity of the research is to control the analysis process. Kvale (1996) provided two approaches: the use of multiple interpreters and the explication of procedures. As presented, the second approach is adopted in this research. Examples of the material used for the interpretations are presented and the different steps of the analysis process are explicitly outlined. This is done by using the “audit trail” developed by Koch (1994). Besides, as phenomenological description is open to multiple interpretations (van Manen, 1990), the audit trail, which evolves from the description of the analysis process, may be able to help the reader follow the rationale of the researcher’s interpretations.

Finally, research credibility is established by determining whether the participants recognize the findings as true to their experience. Van Manen (1990) says that a good phenomenological description



is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience, and he called this the “validating circle of inquiry”. The participants are able, at an experiential level to validate the findings of the research, that is, whether the findings are valid for them. In this study, descriptions of themes are given to participants for their responses. As they do experience “a spark of recognition”, termed the “phenomenological nod” (van Manen, 1990), it is a powerful indication that the results of the research are credible.

#### **IV. Summary**

This chapter has discussed about the interpretation tools and the interpretation process. The interpretation tools used in this research include the concepts of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, prejudice, the fusion of horizons, and play developed by Gadamer (1975). The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the knowledge managers, then studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality and the contextual root of each story. The cross-case analysis unveils the “pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager, which in turn helps further interpret the data and is confirmed by the data. In this model, exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases.

The analysis is also informed by the work of van Manen (1990). The author has advised three methods for isolating thematic statements in analysis, and all of them are used in the search for meaning in the data and in the development of sub-themes and themes in light of the constructed investigation framework. These methods include the detailed reading approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. Although the analysis starts with the wholistic reading approach, continues with the selective/highlighting one, and finishes with the detailed reading one, the approaches are used in an iterative rather than linear manner, which means there is a back-and-forth movement between them as the analysis proceeds. The move from the grouped thoughts of the participants, to the concepts, sub-themes, and finally, themes is informed by the useful advice provided by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) on coding ideas

During the analysis process, internal verification (Hoon, 2009) is constantly kept at bay in order to place phenomenological description in the context of pragmatism’s experimental research. This is achieved by the formulation of concepts, sub-themes, and themes as tentative propositions open for testing. They are tentative in character as these propositions refer to the subtleties of meaning found in the data, but still allow for the free flowing interplay of observation and multi-relational reflection. These tentative propositions are tested in terms of adding evidence of the same pattern but also remain open to disconfirming evidence.

In the paradigm case analysis, the sub-themes and themes are re-discussed to present the particularity of each individual knowledge manager with regard to each of those themes and sub-themes. Moreover, an antenarrative approach to theme analysis is employed, aiming at defining

moves in-between and outside the themes. This approach enables us to see the uniqueness of each case and identify the experience of being a knowledge manager of each particular individual.

Trustworthiness is established in this research in a number of ways. First, craftsmanship validity is obtained, as the researcher tries to practice her interviewing skills and ensures a faithful description of the experiences by keeping a written memo during the analysis process. Second, the analysis process is controlled by a decision trail, which allows the readers to follow the researcher's decisions in making interpretation of the data. Finally, descriptions of themes are given to participants for their responses to determine whether the participants recognize the findings as true to their experience.

## CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In this chapter, cross-case thematic analysis will be presented to show the common threads between the stories of the seven knowledge managers (henceforth KMers). The cross-case thematic analysis helps picture the commonalities in the organizational context of the knowledge managers and identify the common categories of actions in the strategizing process of the knowledge managers. It unveils the “pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager, which in turn helps further interpret the data and is confirmed by the data. It should be noted that the interpretation relies on the respondent’s own terms and category systems rather than the researcher’s. The goal of phenomenological investigation is to describe experience in lived rather than conceptually abstract terms. Using respondent terms is one methodological procedure for staying at the level of lived experience (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989).

In the following sections, an overview of the experience of doing the job of a knowledge manager will be given. A metaphor and its analogical power will then be presented before a general description of that experience based on that metaphor is provided. The discussion will be followed by a metaphorical analysis of the organizational context of the knowledge managers and their strategizing process within that context.

### I. Thematic analysis

#### 1. The experience of doing a KMer’s job: an overview

The particularity of knowledge management, as seen in the experience of the knowledge managers in this study, is the fact that knowledge management function is not automatically accepted by all people in the organization. As knowledge management is a new function, people do not understand what it is. They do not necessarily understand what the activities and mission of the KMers are. Unlike the traditional functions, such as marketing, finance or human resources, of which the existence is not questioned, knowledge management has to strive for acceptance of employees and build for itself a solid place in the organization.

The KMers’ common objective consists of two inter-related aspects: ensuring the availability, adequacy and usability of the company’s knowledge sharing database and making the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people’s daily work.

Ensuring the availability, adequacy and usability of the knowledge sharing database requires several actions. First, the database has to be constantly nourished with new knowledge document, which may be a good practice, a lesson learned, a new standard and so forth. This requires the KMers to constantly identify the knowledge pieces that are truly valuable and useful for other people. Second, the database has to be maintained, updated, and if necessary improved to make it more user-friendly. They have to do regular cleaning to remove outdated knowledge pieces and extend the validity of documents that are still usable. They also make improvement in the archive of knowledge pieces when needed, so that people can more easily find the documents.

Making people accept knowledge sharing as part of their working life means different things to different KMers in this research. Some KMers motivate people to consult the posted knowledge pieces and to make their valuable experience available for others in the database. They make sure people are able to use the database and be aware of its development. They also explain to people how to use the knowledge sharing database, as well as make them understand why they need it. Some other KMers explain to people that sharing knowledge is a way of working, which goes further than just using the sharing database. In an ideal perspective, sharing knowledge involves all employees at all levels of the hierarchy.

Depending on the individual KMers, the actual tasks may be different. One may be responsible for maintaining and nourishing the database. One may take care of providing training sessions. One may carry out different activities to promote the knowledge sharing culture. One may do some of each of those activities. It should be noted that not all the KMers in this study devote 100% of their time to the knowledge management mission. They have other duties and can be considered as part-time KMers.

In order to understand thoroughly the mission of the KMers, it is useful to clarify what they are not responsible for. The KMers are not holders of knowledge. They are not in charge of producing knowledge for everyone to share. The role of the KMers is not to evaluate the correctness of the knowledge documents' content. They work on knowledge sharing tools and processes rather than the content of knowledge documents. It is not primordial to be experts or specialists in a particular domain to be a KMer. It happens that a KMer, without technical background, is responsible for collecting technical documents for the knowledge sharing database. Finally, at least for the KMers in this study, they are not responsible for cultivating and developing the communities of practice within the organization, although their task of promoting the sharing culture may lead to the formation of such communities of practice.

As the database needs to be continuously fed with new knowledge pieces as well as consulted by visitors, it is like a library, which exists to serve readers and at the same time needs new books coming in. However, the database is not like a conventional library because of two reasons. First, it is supposed to serve visitors from all over the world, while traditional library can just reach a geographically limited group of users. Second, the way people access the database is through the company's intranet, unlike a traditional library, where people need to physically travel to the library if they need books. The KMers are like a group of managers of that library. They are responsible for maintaining and nourishing the library, attracting book users and book contributors, and making the library become part of the reading culture of users.

As knowledge sharing involves all employees at all levels of the hierarchy, they are all the target users and contributors of the sharing database. They use the knowledge pieces in the database to solve their problems encountered at work, and also make their own lessons learned available for others via the database. Due to the international presence of the company, the target users are numerous and scattered all over the world. They are diverse and have different characteristics. For example, they speak different languages and do not necessarily have good knowledge of English. Their facilities, such as computer, intranet account, and network speed, may not have the same level of adequacy to

access to the knowledge sharing database. In some countries, people may have greater need for learning from others, while in other countries, they have more knowledge to share with the rest of the organization. In terms of culture, some countries are very open to sharing and learning, but it is not the case in many others. Moreover, due to the geographical spread of the target users, not all KMers have direct contact with them. They tend to rely on a network of collaborators who act as links between them and the target users. In some way, they are disconnected from the users.

In the next section, an image will be used to describe in greater depth the experience of doing a KMer's job.

## 2. The experience of doing a Kmer's job: an analogical metaphor

Pesqueux (1999) argues that discussion about a social object, such as a company, should be based on model, image and metaphor rather than reality. The rationale is that reality may exist without us being aware of it, and that we construct and refute theories according to our perception of this reality. A model offers an elementary level of meaning elucidated by an image. This mediating image may itself be of the simplest kind and fulfil the basic function of a metaphor by using an element to refer to another. The use of metaphor within organizational research is not uncommon. There has been a continuous and growing interest in this approach in multiple disciplines and literatures, ranging from organizational behavior, organizational development, to organizational theory and organizational communication (Cornelisse *et. al.*, 2008). In line with this spirit, a metaphoric description is used to illustrate the experience of the knowledge managers in this study. This metaphor emerges from the analysis, and in turn informs the analysis to interpret deeper the experience of the participants as well as is confirmed by the analysis.

Doing the job of a KMer is like being a rafter on an angry river, the knowledge management function is like the rafter's inflatable boat, the sharing database is like a floating library on that boat, and the KMer's strategizing process is like the rafting endeavor. The analogical power of this metaphor is presented below.

The knowledge management function is not an isolated entity. It is necessarily embedded in an organizational context. The KMers' process of carrying out their activities is strongly linked to different actors, the organization, the management, the culture, and so forth. For the KMers in this research, it is very challenging to attain KM objectives in their organizational context. There are many organizational and individual barriers that they have to overcome while carrying out their tasks. The difficulty is magnified further due to the inert, but unstable, and imposing nature of the organizational conditions. The organization is always on movement and the changes may not always be favorable for the job of the KMers. It also has an inert nature. Things are slow or even impossible to change, which make the barriers difficult to eliminate. Such instability and inertia are beyond the power of the KMers to influence, they rather have to accept their existence and arrival.

The organizational context can be pictured as an angry river, on which there is a raging current and many obstacles such as white waves, drops, rocks, and hazards. The image of an angry river implies the difficult situation in which the KMers carry out his tasks. The obstacles indicate the significant and

arduous barriers in the organization that the KMers have to overcome if they want to accomplish their mission. The running current illustrates the evolving and imposing nature of the organizational context, of which the KMers are an inherent part. As the organization is not only changing but also slow to change, the features on the river, which are difficult to change or eliminate, represent this inert nature.

This image of an inflatable boat implies the particularity of knowledge management mentioned above. The knowledge management function has yet gained an accepted place within the organization, it “floats”. A floating library is a new idea that is not automatically accepted by people, especially the ones who have been using traditional library for most of their lives. Its functions and benefits are not necessarily known by its potential users and contributors. It is the goal of the KMers to make the floating library be known, accepted and then become an intrinsic part of the organization.

The image of a library on a floating boat is used to illustrate the knowledge sharing database. The image of a library indicates the knowledge sharing database. It is a floating library rather than a normal one because it is important to emphasize the fact that access to the database is unconventional compared to the traditional library. As the river covers a wide geographical area, the floating library’s book users and contributors may not necessarily speak the same language, share the same culture, or have the same living conditions. The body of water also indicates the geographical distance that the KMers may have with the book users and contributors.

The KMers are part of a bigger context and their lives move on in accordance with that context and its barriers to knowledge management. They do not have the power to stop the organization from changing or going forward, to make it change as quickly as they want, and to remove effortlessly the barriers. The KMers are like the rafters on an angry river. They are carried away by the powerful flow of the river, without being able to stop that movement or move against the current. They cannot prevent the floating library from being shifted away by the running current or make the river less ferocious. They are also endangered by the dangerous obstacles on the river that cannot be eliminated. On the other hand, the KMers try to deal intelligently with the organizational context so that their goal can be achieved successfully. They strategize through different ways of overcoming the organizational barriers, fine-tuning with the organizational changes, and adapting to the organizational inertia. They are like the rafters on an angry river, who are carried away by the running current, but maneuver the inflatable boat and paddles to avoid drops, rocks and hazards, to protect their floating boat from being damaged or sinking in the water. And their strategizing is like the rafting endeavor.

The image below helps visualize the experience of doing a KMer’s job as a rafter on an angry river.

Image 1: The knowledge managers as rafters on an angry river



In the next section, this image will be used to present in details how the KMers manage to do their job and experience their lives as knowledge managers.

### 3. The experience of doing a KMers' job: a rafter on an angry river

The KMers are like the rafters on an angry river. The image of such raging river, on which there are numerous barriers, a powerful and running current, and hard-to-negotiate obstacles, represents their organizational context. The KMers are like the rafters, who let the powerful current move them on but manage to deal intelligently with the obstacles and dangerous features coming up along their way. Their role is protecting their library on their floating boat, attracting users and contributors, and making the library become an inherent part of the reading culture of all people living along the river.

On that river, language is an important barrier. As the company is internationally present, its employees speak different languages and many of them do not master English or French, the official languages of the sharing database. This makes them linguistically unable to use or contribute to the sharing database. This barrier has a considerable inert nature. People are not eager to learn English due to the amount of time and effort required to learn a foreign language. They do not see an urgent need or a priority in having knowledge of another language. The issue is not simple to solve because it is beyond the KMers' authority to require people to engage in improving their foreign language skills.

The KMers have to cope with the organizational culture that is not so favorable for knowledge sharing. People do not share knowledge instinctively. Even if it does happen, it is often between small group of

people knowing each others, via the telephone or email. People are used to using the traditional library being close to their working place rather than going to a “floating library”. Part of the organizational culture is the management style that is not convenient. The KMers have to either manage by themselves without clear direction from the top management or follow certain lines of actions imposed by their hierarchical superiors. Just like the language issue, this obstacle is difficult to eliminate because people’s mind-set is extremely slow to change.

Part of the movement of the running current is the changing nature of the organization’s strategic objectives. For each period of time, the organization has a different strategic priority. Knowledge management used to be considered as a highly important topic. However, new strategic objectives continue to be put in place, like a cycle rolling on and moving knowledge management out of the center of attention. This creates significant difficulty. The employees are always taken by the strategic objectives actually in place. The resulting lack of time for knowledge sharing activities makes users and contributors of the sharing database less available. Obtaining help from different entities involved in the process of knowledge management becomes a challenging task. The resources available for the KMers’ activities are also constrained.

IT issues represent another obstacle. As the sharing database is on the intranet, it depends on an IT infrastructure, which is managed by the IT function independent of the KMers. The IT infrastructure is like the path that enables people to cross the river and reach the floating library. One issue of the IT infrastructure is the problem with password. People are required to have many different passwords, which expire periodically, to access to the sharing database. Confusion of passwords deters them from going across that path. Another problem is the inflexibility of the IT infrastructure. The KMers have no authority to make that infrastructure more user-friendly for the users and contributors; they have to rely on the IT function. Besides, the IT infrastructure undergoes frequent changes, such as server modification or database substitution, which are decided by the IT function. Such changes make it difficult for the KMers to manage the sharing database and for users and contributors to familiarize themselves with it. It can be said that this obstacle has both inert and unstable nature.

The lack of correct understanding about knowledge management also constrains the KMers from carrying out the knowledge management activities. People tend not to understand what knowledge management is and what the KMers do, and consequently do not see instantly the need in using and contributing to the knowledge sharing database. This is understandable since people cannot have interest in doing something that they do not understand.

On the running current, there is also the issue of human resources evolution. Human resources turnover is highly frequent in the organization. This means the KMers have to constantly rebuild their network, in which there are helpers and sponsors of their activities. The arrival of new generation and the departure of old generation require adaptation. This change is favorable to the extent that new generation is more familiar with the practice of searching for information online. The idea of using a floating library has already been in their life since early age. The old generation has always been using traditional library. It is much more difficult for them to accept a “floating library”. This change is



favorable to the job of the KMers but it also means they have to adapt to the reading culture of the new generation.

Seen from far, the KMers seem to accept the existence of those obstacles and let themselves moved on by the powerful current. However, they do manage to deal intelligently with those forces of nature. Their strategizing actions consist of three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labeled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively.

The marketing category has two interrelated aspects. The first is to promote the knowledge sharing culture. It involves communicating through out the organization about knowledge sharing and convincing people of its benefits. It. The second is promoting the knowledge sharing database, educating employees of its operation, and convincing them to become its users and contributors. The ultimate goal is to make the database become an accepted and used knowledge sharing tool.

Being a new idea for the organization's employees, the floating library's difficulty to find a place in their working life is intensified by the organizational obstacles and ongoing movement. It is like a new product struggling to build a position in a highly competitive market. Just like a marketing professional, who tries to introduce a new product, the KMers purposefully work on the fundamental elements of marketing. Marketing is intentional to the extent that the KMers consider it as an deliberate action to overcome the organizational barriers and accomplish their mission.

In terms of promotion, the KMers inform people that the sharing database exists and is beneficial, train them to use and contribute to the database, and keep them updated of any changes in the database. Promotion activities take into account the barriers such as language and IT issues. They are conducted on a regular basis to constantly remind people, whose mind-set is slow to change, of the benefits of sharing knowledge. In terms of distribution, the KMers facilitate as much as they can the access to the floating library. The stockage of knowledge documents is made user-friendly and instruction on finding a document is provided. They also find ways to actively bring the library to its target users rather than wait for them to come. In terms of product, which is the sharing database with its knowledge documents in this case, the KMers tries to give it a user-friendly and useful image, and not a deserted library. Finally, they segment the target visitors of the floating library and conduct the four P's accordingly.

While rafting on the river, the KMers may happen to find some small islands, on which the floating library may be protected from white water and dangerous features for some time. Such islands are already part of the river; they are accepted by people living along the river and less endangered by the hazardous features of the river. Such islands are also easier and more enjoyable than a continuously moving library for users and contributors to come. The KMers tries to identify such islands and take advantage of their existence and emergence in order to simplify their lives as KMers. Although the KMers may or may not plan in advance the island-finding action, it is emergent to the extent that the KMers cannot deliberately create the islands. They can just deliberately or non-deliberately find the islands that have already existed or are about to emerge for their purpose.

One possible island is the organizational changes that may be favorable for knowledge management, such as the arrival of new top managers, who are more open to knowledge sharing. The organizational events, where the KMers can take advantage to promote the knowledge sharing culture and the knowledge sharing database, represent another island.

One important island is the existing organizational processes to which knowledge sharing can be integrated. As an inherent part of the organizational processes, knowledge sharing can serve the overall objectives of the organization and somehow becomes official and compulsory. Contributing to the attainment of the organizational objectives shows the benefits of knowledge sharing; being an obligation motivates people to use and contribute to the sharing database. That is the basic rationale for the island-finding action.

As rafters on a raging river, the KMers just have the floating boat and paddles as the fighting instruments. In order to realize the marketing activities more effectively and find out the islands more easily, they need to make them stronger by gathering external force. The force-building action is constraint-responding to the extent that it is the way the KMers counter the constraints of their limited strength in order to deal with the angry river more easily. This action may or may not be planned in advance, depending on the individual KMers.

One source of external force is the personal network of the KMers, from which they can obtain assistance in carrying out their tasks. Another source is a network of strategic helpers, which can be divided into two groups. One group is to help them in maintaining and nourishing the knowledge sharing database. Another group plays the role of intermediary between the KMers and the end-users and contributors. As mentioned, the users and contributors are spread all over the world. This group of strategic helpers enable the KMers' marketing efforts to reach them. The network of strategic helpers is different from the personal network to the extent that the former is known actors in the knowledge sharing process. Their status and position make them be the supposedly appropriate helpers of the KMers. Between the KMers and the strategic helpers may develop a close relationship that they form a personal network, although it may not be always the case.

It is a continuous process to obtain support from the strategic helpers. Following up, staying in touch, developing concrete action plan and objectives but insignificant extra workload, and providing assistance so that the strategic helpers know what they are expected to do are the adopted tactics of the KMers. Communicating and educating potential users and contributors is an important task of the KMers, but it is also essential with regards to the strategic helpers. The strategic helpers need to understand correctly about the value of sharing knowledge and the activities of the KMers so as to be willing to provide help.

An important group of strategic helpers is the top level managers and managers of strategic functions, such as performance managers. The role of the sponsors is critical because they are able to make employees believe in the importance of sharing knowledge. More importantly, having the support from the sponsors, the KMers' process of carrying out their activity is facilitated. They can find out more easily the floating islands and conduct marketing activities more successfully. As the sponsors have a myriad of preoccupations, the KMers are obliged to make their responsibility for knowledge sharing

simple, with concrete actions and objectives to undertake. They have to continuously seek for their sponsorship. Importantly, actual beneficial results of sharing knowledge must be visible so as to preserve the sponsors' interest in the issue.

Among the three categories of strategizing actions undertaken by the KMers, only the marketing one is intentional. The other two categories may or may not be intentional, depending on the individual KMers. It should be noted that although the actions may or may not be planned deliberately, the actual course of actions always has a practical coping nature. For example, a KMer may deliberately look for sponsorship from the top management, but he/she cannot plan in advance how the sponsorship is to be obtained.

For each individual KMer, the river zone is unique, with its own types of obstacles and hazards and its own degree of ferocity. Each KMer has his/her own difficulties. Moreover, since the knowledge management tasks of the KMers are not the same, each focuses on different categories of actions. For example, one may focus more on the marketing dimension, while another may pay more attention to the island-finding and force-building ones. Needless to say that the way these actions are carried out is distinctive to each individual KMer.

In the next section, each aspect of the KMers' experience as rafters on an angry river is presented.

## **II. The organizational context as an angry river**

This section will discuss the organizational condition, in which the KMers have to accomplish their tasks. The obstacles that the KMers have to overcome, the corresponding changing or inert characteristics of those obstacles and of the organizational context, and the to-be-built position of knowledge management in the organization are presented.

It will also show how the KMers have to let themselves be gone with the powerful flow of the river and accept the existence of the obstacles on that river. On that river, they "fell small" (Yvon). Attempting to prevent the floating library from being shifted away by the running current or make the river less ferocious is like "running against the wall" (Mary). The imposing nature of the river is compared with that of a tax declaration form (Christina), which forces people to follow a standard format, rather than create their own form, add more questions, or change the font size (Christina). It is something that the KMers "cannot control", "something out of control" (Yvon). It is not for them to change, they "have to accept" (Yvon). Alex resumes this situation as "bon, je me laisse porter".

### **1. Language barrier**

Language is a "big problem" (Kathy). Due to the international presence of Lafarge, employees speak many different languages and they do not necessarily master English or French, the common languages of the company. For example, in Carol's branch, in Brazil, there are only 7% of employees being able to speak English; in Greek, the corresponding number is 10%. In Yvon's branch, there exist factories in which there is only one person being able to speak English.

From the KMers' side, it is difficult for them when communicating with people, who do not speak English very well. It "becomes a barrier immediately" because they "hesitate to communicate in English" (Helen). From the employees' side, as the languages of the knowledge sharing database are English and French, they may not be linguistically able to use or make contribution to the database. Some even feel "upset and discouraged" (Yvon).

Unfortunately, this obstacle cannot be eliminated rapidly, as Yvon says: "we cannot change it totally and shortly, in the coming months or coming years". It is commonly heard that there is English training every year in the company' plants, but there are not so many successful stories about learning English (Yvon). The inert nature of this obstacle can be explained by the fact that people are not motivated to learn English; they do not see it as a need or a priority (Yvon). This is especially true for senior people (Yvon). In addition, the amount of time and efforts needed to learn foreign language is considerable. Yvon states: "learning language is nothing but having interest and spending some time on it. There is no talent...Then you have to practice, you have to use it". People are deterred from taking the endeavor; they "want to stay in their comfort" and use local language (Yvon). This inertia can also be explained by the lack of "pushing power" from the management to make people learn English (Yvon).

This inertia makes the knowledge sharing database "go away" from non-English speaking employees (Yvon), just like an obstacle on the river that drive people away from coming to the floating library.

Facing this inert obstacle, the KMers have no choice but to acknowledge its existence and take it into account while doing their job (Carol). Yvon is even more pessimistic, saying that for the time being, "the knowledge sharing database is meaningless" for the employees. It is like "giving them a gift that they cannot open". But at the same time, he has to move on together with the running current. This means he has to continue to do his job, as required by the organization, but "it is a doubt that people can really use and start looking for information" in the database.

## 2. Strategic objectives of the organization

Another significant obstacle is the changing nature of the strategic objectives of the organization. For each period of time, the organization has a different strategic priority. The organization "is always changing". "Not only the structure, but also the focus and the objectives of each of the regions, they keep shifting" (Helen). In the past, during a given period, knowledge management used to be considered as a highly important concern for the top management. It was an important element for the organization's strategic plan (Alex). It was relatively easy for the KMers to introduce new initiatives and achieve their mission because a top organizational priority is always on the top of people's mind (Helen).

However, the organization now focuses on issues such as cost reduction or security improvement rather than knowledge management. The strategic objectives tend to transform "from long-term to short-term oriented" (Mary). As knowledge management is a long-term endeavor (Carol), of which the seeds take time to bear fruits (Alex), it is understandable that the new strategic objectives no longer include knowledge management. The organization considers that sufficient resources have been invested in knowledge management; it is now time to move to other things (Alex). It is "some kind of

rolling cycle that throws knowledge management out of the center of attention” (Alex). Knowledge management is “au creux de la vague” (Alex).

The diminished importance of knowledge management can be seen clearly by the fact that knowledge sharing is now not on any agenda of the management meetings. In the past, the top managers were willing to express openly their appreciation of the subject on the internal media. For the time being, the situation is: “if the managers had that idea on their agenda and to finish their meeting with at least one perspective to be shared, or to be published, or to be followed up, that is an opportunity for us and we could make a lot of progress” (Helen).

With the “golden age of knowledge management” (Alex) being over, the KMers find it much more difficult to carry out knowledge management activities. When knowledge management is a priority, “it is easier to do their job”, because “everyone knows it is a priority and we should do something” (Kathy). In the words of Alex:

Quand tu avais il y a quatre ou cinq ans un grand patron qui disait : le Knowledge management est important et on va se donner les moyens pour le faire, t’as tout le monde qui suivait et du coup tu étais la plus pour graisser les boulons pour que les choses se mettent en place.

When the actual situation is “tu n’as pas ce message” and “on n’est pas dans une phase de développement”, “les choses sont plus complexes” (Alex). “C’est beaucoup plus difficile de développer chez les gens, de leur faire activer l’énergie nécessaire, de leur faire dépenser l’énergie nécessaire pour activer un peu les choses, puisqu’ils sont sollicités par plein d’autres programmes, ou ceux qui sont supportés par le management, qui sont supportés par les messages corporate et compagnie” (Alex).

Facing this situation, the KMers accept the changing nature of the organization’s strategic objectives because it is beyond their power to do that. They are unable to “influence the strategic governance of the organization” (Helen). Even when the objectives no longer include knowledge management, it is impossible for them to re-launch knowledge management as a strategic objective (Alex). The organization and its employees are “not ready” for that (Alex). For them, it is inevitable due to the “changing environment and the changing economic focus and so on” (Helen).

Besides the changing nature, the strategic objectives and the objectives for knowledge management may not be clearly defined, which hinder the KMers from defining their activities. They do not know if their activities contribute to the attainment of the organization’s overall objectives or in which direction knowledge management should follow (Alex). They have difficulties in prioritizing their tasks. Alex describes this situation the following way:

Le fait de manquer de direction fait que tu as du mal à savoir sur quoi on va mettre la priorité, voilà tout simple mais c’est ça quoi. Les quatre grands piliers : animation, développement, promotion. Oui, mais quoi promouvoir en premier, quoi animer en premier, quoi développer en premier, bah personne n’est la pour me dire « attendez les gars cette année c’est là-dessus qu’on met l’effort ».

Unfortunately the KMers have no choice but to accept that lack of clarity. It is beyond their power to “put a knife under its manager’s throat” and “force him to define an objective”. “Il y a des choses sur lesquelles c’est toujours pas claire” (Alex). The KMers can just “déplorer” (Alex) or like Alex says “bon je suis avec”. Mary confirms this point:

Si tes missions ne sont pas, ne s'inscrivent pas dans les priorités ou dans la stratégie, comme je t'ai expliqué au début, c'est là qu'il faut avoir la foi, c'est là que tu es ton propre acteur, c'est toi qui mets en place tes outils, c'est toi qui mets en place des choses qui te bougent quoi.

The KMers can just work in a somewhat intuitive way. They work based on their “feeling of what the best is” (Alex). Kathy resumes this as “so you do the job, you do what you think is best and that's it”.

### 3. Consequences of the non-strategic position of knowledge management in the organization

The previous section has presented the non-strategic position of knowledge management. This section will explain how this has a negative impact on the job of the KMers.

The top managers do not pay considerable attention to knowledge management. It is “a struggle” for the KMers to make them spend sometime for knowledge management (Helen). Alex visualizes this situation this way:

L'espace dans sa mémoire, dans son cerveau qui pouvait être consacré à mes activités, était déjà trop plein, ça veut dire qu'il n'y a que ça, on ne peut pas y ajouter une case de plus. Et comme ça que je vois et comme ça que j'explique parce que derrière ça, il y a des investissements, des performances industrielles, des milliers de choses qui passent avant ce qu'on fait.

The top managers do not publicly express their commitment to knowledge management. They often do not mention knowledge management in the company’s meetings or internal communication, because there are so many other things that seem much more important for them to discuss with people (Carol). Their lack of concern about the subject can be seen daily at work, as Alex notes:

Il est encore en retard, ça veut dire que il ne prête pas considération à ce que je fais, ça veut dire que ça va être encore annulé, ça va être encore reporté. Tu vois, tu mets dans un aspect un peu négatif. Il faut savoir que... et il faut aussi faire prendre conscience que, comment dire, pourquoi il se permet d'avoir un quart d'heure de retard ou pourquoi il se permet de reporter à 4 reprises. On peut trouver la réponse, c'est quelles risquent il prend à me faire reporter trois jours de plus et à me faire croire à un manque de respect. C'est un problème de notre manager. Je ne suis pas en train de dire que c'est un mauvais manager, mais il ne prend pas de risque en nous montrant qu'il accorde une grande importance à ce que je fais.

All employees, including the line managers, following the direction put forward by the top managers, devote time and efforts to the existing strategic objectives. Knowledge management, being not an obligation, attracts much less attention from them. Alex experienced visibly the ignorance of employees towards knowledge management the days he participated in the regional reunion, where

the knowledge management stand did not attract a significant numbers of passers-by compared to other stands.

Helen notes that when she started the job “the motivation of people was lacking, and also the awareness of the tool that captured the information, and how to get to it, how to use it, all that was lacking”. Using and contributing to the knowledge sharing database move down in employees’ to-do list. Although everybody knows that knowledge management is important, it is never a priority (Yvon). “People always have emergency or priorities” and sharing knowledge is the last thing to do (Yvon).

They use the lack of time as an excuse for not sharing knowledge (Carol, Yvon). This is what Mary has always heard when she gives training on the sharing database. But the root cause is that they find no “extraordinary interest” (Mary) in using or contributing to the knowledge database. They do not see in that activity an obligation (Mary) or a mission (Alex).

Besides users and contributors, another kind of actors that play an important role in the KMers’ life is the strategic helpers. As discussed, the KMers and the potential users and contributors of the knowledge sharing database are geographically disconnected from each other. Therefore, the KMers have to rely on intermediary actors to reach those users and contributors in order to receive their contribution, make them use the database, get contact with them, understand their interest, and so forth. The KMers are not holders of knowledge. They have to rely on other people to maintain and nourish the knowledge sharing database. All those people, who provide them with assistance in maintaining and nourishing the database, and in reaching the users and contributors, are called strategic helpers in this research. Their role will be discussed later in greater depth.

Due to the non-strategic status of knowledge sharing, the strategic helpers have to devote their time and efforts to other more strategic priorities. “C’est une activité qui est un peu annexe” for the strategic helpers to assist the KMers (Christina). They consider the assistance provided to the KMers as extra workload (Yvon). So it should not be a “surprise” when things do not progress rapidly. “Parce que les gens donnent forcément la priorité à ce qui fait parti de leurs objectifs et à ce qui sur lesquels ils seront récompensés financièrement” and helping the KMers “passe en peu après tout le reste” (Christina). Alex pictures this situation as:

on touche à des choses et on fait appel à des gens qui ne sont pas forcément disponibles et il n’y a pas qu’une question de disponibilité physique, mais aussi une question de disponibilité à vouloir se plonger dans ce projet

What makes the job of the KMers even more difficult is the fact that making the strategic helpers committed to knowledge management is beyond the KMers’ authority. They do not have the hierarchical authority to make the participation in knowledge management an objective of the strategic helpers. Like Christina says: “On n’est pas leurs supérieurs hiérarchiques donc on peut pas exiger d’eux les choses si leur patron ne l’a pas intégré l’a pris en compte et les fait travailler sur autres choses”.

The KMers do not have the power to make the strategic helpers more dedicated. As Carol says, this makes her job “difficult” because it is “out of her control”. They accept to work with what the strategic

helpers are willing to devote to knowledge sharing. In the words of Christina: “on fait avec ce que nous ce que veulent bien nous accorder les experts, le temps qu’ils veulent nous accorder”. It happens that some strategic helpers are active while others are not committed (Carol). It really depends on the person. “It depends on what the person thinks about the system” (Kathy). Christina states that:

C'est beaucoup une question de personne. Si tu tombes sur quelqu'un qui est très ouvert à ce sujet là, il va t'aider il va dire c'est bien. Si tu tombes sur quelqu'un qui s'en fiche et qui en plus a un poste où les décisions peuvent être prises et les décisions ne sont pas prises et tu n'avance pas.

In this context, it is understandable that the KMers has difficulty in getting collaboration from the other departments involved in the process of carrying out knowledge management activities, such as IT or communication department (Yvon, Carol). Again, they do not have the authority to make knowledge management be one of their objectives. “The only people who can give them objectives are human resource people or their line managers” (Yvon).

As a result, there is no synchronization between the KMers and the human resources department. People without knowledge of English are still hired (Yvon), no hand-over plan has been developed for people getting retired to transfer their knowledge to the colleagues staying back (Mary, Christina and Carol). The KMers have to deal with the design standards imposed by the communication department on the knowledge sharing database (Mary and Christina), which are not necessarily pertinent (Carol). It is a lot of negative energy and efforts spent in explaining and convincing the communication department, as in Carol’s experience.

Another consequence of the non-strategic position of knowledge management is that the strategic objectives actually in place are more privileged in receiving resources than knowledge management. Carol explains this situation very clearly:

La restriction budgétaire à court terme peut repousser les investissements dans le partage des connaissances, puisque les bénéfices de partage de connaissances se font à long terme. Quand on a des choix de faire à court terme, on peut bien évidemment supprimer celui-ci

A necessary condition for the using and contributing to the knowledge sharing database is the availability of computer and the internet. However, there is not really an engagement from the top managers to make sure that those facilities are in place for all employees (Christina). In China or Africa, computers and user accounts are just available for a certain number of employees (Yvon and Mary). Purchasing such facilities costs money and “it is always a problem when it is linked to money” (Yvon).

The way the KMers achieve their mission is impacted accordingly. Yvon cannot go “freely everywhere” he wants to promote the knowledge sharing database. Helen has to make in house instead of purchasing a software to capture all knowledge documents because “it is far too expensive and the annual cost is phenomenal”. Carol’s spending on the communication campaign has to be approved by the branch director. Somehow they are constrained from making too many new initiatives and have to rely on what has already been existed, as Carol notes:



On n'a pas beaucoup de budget, on utilise les supports qui existent déjà, on crée pas énormément de nouvelles choses, bien sûr, vous allez voir

In terms of human resources, the KMers have to face with the lack of people to build their network of strategic helpers. The situation is not simple because the organization's entities may simply not have people (Carol) or their people do not have time for that task due to their commitment to the strategic objectives. It is not for the KMers to decide who will join that helping network. It depends on the managers and the availability of personnel. In some cases, such human resource is not "sufficient" (Christina) and not the "meilleur cheval de bataille" (Alex) for knowledge management to thrive. But they are unable to improve that situation.

#### 4. Organizational culture

Another obstacle on the angry river is the existing organizational culture, which is not knowledge sharing oriented. At Lafarge, communication between employees throughout the organization is not a common practice. Christina states that "it is nice to be in such a big company", but "it is very often that people do not know what their colleagues are doing, unless they are in the same team". People tend not to share knowledge instinctively. The culture of working together to developing together does not exist, as Mary says: "partager, ce n'est pas forcément naturel chez l'homme. Ça c'est pas inné". There is "a lack of sharing mind-set" (Mary).

There is certainly some sharing. But due to the language barrier and the geographical spread caused by the international presence of the organization, sharing tends to happen within small groups of people speaking the same languages, staying in close or the same locations, or knowing each other. They learn from each other by discussing via email, telephone, or face-to-face meetings. It is not natural for them to go to the knowledge sharing database to look for a solution when they have a problem at work. It is explained by Yvon that people tend to be "lazy", they do not "bother to go to the intranet" and look for knowledge that is in another language because "they can solve their problem using mainly local resources". It is also not natural for them to make their lessons learned available for others by putting them in the knowledge sharing database. They do not have the "awareness to share it in certain platform" (Yvon).

In this culture, the KMers cannot force the employees to use and contribute to the knowledge sharing database. Whether people come to visit and make contribution to the floating library is "out of the control" (Yvon). Yvon points out that:

I could do nothing more to ask people, I cannot kick their ass and say: hey, you have to contribute and submit some plant experiences, otherwise, bla bla bla. You know I cannot do that.

The KMers cannot insist them to learn about the sharing database. They can just propose the training sessions. "Insisting" (Kathy) and 'being pushy" (Mary) are not an option.

Another factor of the organizational culture, which represents a challenge for the KMers to overcome, is the management style of the multinational. For some KMers in this study, they have to work with a

management style that never gives a precise direction or communicate a clear instruction on the subject of knowledge management. Like Alex says,

On est pas dans un style de management très direct ou très directif. Donc tu peux pas demander à ton patron de prendre des décisions, tu peux pas demander à ton patron de dire est-ce que c'est bien, est-ce que c'est pas bien ce que je fais. Ça tu peux, mais tu peux pas mettre la réponse...

Making important decision for them is like making a bet. The top managers do not express clearly whether they are for or against when they are presented with a major decision in knowledge management. It is up to the KMers to decide and they seem not to care. There is no “governance” (Alex), which is sometime “difficult” and “dégoutant” (Christina). This is the situation of Carol when she launched her communication campaign, which had never been done before in her branch:

C'était la première fois que une branche lance une campagne de communication de cette ampleur. On a pris le pari d'y aller. La direction générale n'avait rien contre mais, si vous voulez, montrait pas ni oui, ni non. C'était à nous de nous débrouiller. On était dans une période de restriction budgétaire. Bruno Lafont venait d'arriver avec l'Excellence 2008. Donc on devait couper tous les budgets. Donc nous, même le budget de communication devait être revalidé par le patron de la branche, qui était a un moment donné ni oui ni non, on la fait, on la fait pas. Donc c'était mon patron, le patron a lui, moi n plus deux qui ont décidé : on y va, on veut prendre une position, un peu comme si les gens ici à ce niveau, si vous voulez, sont pour, mais on s'enfiche un peu quoi. Mais si on fait, c'est bien, si on ne fait pas, ca ne va pas changer leur vie.

By contrast, for some other KMers, they are required to follow certain lines of actions and principles without being granted necessary resources or authority by the management. They often have to struggle in circumstances that are “unstable”, as Alex states. For example, they are not supposed to abandon ineffective knowledge sharing tool, but they are not provided with resources to make improvement. Alex describes poignantly this situation as following:

C'est que tu as un remède qui n'existe plus, tu veux quand même soigner la maladie, mais quand même tu constate que le remède ne marche plus et que la maladie continue à s'aggraver, c'est pas pour autant qu'on donne des moyens pour changer de médicament et qu'on s'autorise à changer de médicament. Alors ça, c'est quand même déstabilisant.

Similarly, the management may not see knowledge management in its totality, some KMers are required to be in charge of only certain aspects, while other crucial ones are not included in the scope of their responsibility. They do not necessarily have sufficient and necessary authority to manage knowledge in the correct sense of the term. But the situation is imposed on them that way. Alex sees this situation as “bizarre and uncomfortable” as follows:

Pour reprendre notre fameuse métaphore, attention la vieille dame te demande que de la faire danser. T'en est pas le mari. Tu va pas décider de changer de partenaire avec qui danser, tu

vas pas choisir la musique sur laquelle tu vas danser, par contre c'est à toi de la faire danser.  
Bon voilà il faut s'y faire.

#### 5. People's mind-set

A significant obstacle is the fact that people tend to be slow to accept changes and new things. People's mind-set has a considerable inertia because it never changes over a single night. Given the fact that knowledge management is a new function, it is a challenge for the KMers to make people accept and participate in that process. "Il y a quand même une culture, des ancrages qui font que tu ne peux pas tous changer" (Alex). Alex explains this situation in a metaphorical way as follows:

au début je me suis pété la gueule... quand tu es arrivé, la vieille dame est toute tremblante, et tu dis bah attendre, on va changer, on va prendre une jeune danseuse... on m'a fait comprendre que les choses ne bougent pas comme ça, on m'a fait comprendre que je n'ai pas forcément le droit de les faire bouger. L'organisation n'est pas prête à ça.

One aspect of this inertia can be seen in the knowledge sharing culture of the company. As mentioned previously, the organizational culture is not knowledge sharing oriented. Mary characterizes the cultural transformation as "long to come" :

Donc il n'y a pas cette culture de travailler ensemble pour monter ensemble. C'est chaque un pour soi. Alors si je peux être le meilleur, c'est de l'élitisme et je travaille pour moi-même, je travail pas ensemble. Donc comment vois-tu que dans une entreprise, on te, tout d'un coup, il faut tout partager, ah pardon, c'est long à venir ça.

People tend to stick to their own established way of using knowledge, which for them is always the best and the most comfortable (Helen). They are not open to others' knowledge because it may not be what they have always believed in (Helen). It is really a "challenge" (Helen) for the KMers to accelerate that transformation in sharing culture.

Moreover, despite the ineffectiveness of some sharing tools in the knowledge database, the KMers are obliged to keep working with the knowledge sharing tools that are so-called historic, even if they are no longer effective. If culturally knowledge management means those tools (Alex) for people, they have to be kept (Mary). This aspect of the inertia makes Alex admit that it would be easier to develop the knowledge sharing database from scratch than build it based on previous tools and databases. "En tout cas les gens ont beaucoup plus de facilité à le saisir " (Alex).

#### 6. IT issues

As the knowledge sharing database is on the intranet of the organization, a "huge barrier" (Helen) in the organizational context that is worth mentioned is the IT issues, which make the life of the KMers "really hard" (Kathy) and undermine the utilization and contribution to the database (Helen). Christina summarizes very concisely this problem as following:

Il y a eu beaucoup de plaintes au moment à propos du portail que c'était pas à jour, c'était trop lente, certains pays dans lesquels l'accès est quasiment impossibles parce que les connexions Internet sont pas bonnes etc. Il y avait des problèmes aussi beaucoup avec les

mots de passe. Il y a plusieurs mots de passe différent, un mot de passe pour Window, un mot de passe pour LO. Les gens oublient leur mot de passe, ils ne savent plus comment connecter, bref...

First, password is a “big problem” (Helen). In the past, the system was so complicated that each time the user navigates to a new page, a different password was required. A user had many different passwords, which changed every three months. The system has been improved with the single sign-in, but the password does not always work properly. This problem deters employees from using and contributing to the knowledge sharing database. People do tell the KMers that they cannot access to the database because “I have problem with my password” (Carol). So unless something is done to improve further the situation, the KMers will not be able to attract employees to the database (Helen). Kathy describes the password problem as “a complete mess”, and for Mary, it is “catastrophic”.

Second, speed of the network causes problem for both the KMers and the users. As the company has an international presence, not all locations have adequate connection speed to access to the sharing database. For example, in Africa, Mary describes the network speed as “c'est pas la peine d'imaginer d'utiliser”. To get to a page, people “click on the link, go get a coffee, come back” and then the page comes out (Mary). If there are any problems with the utilization, it's partly because of the performance of the tool (Helen). Unless something is done to “make it easily accessible to users” (Helen), users and contributors will not be attracted to the database.

For the KMers, they also have to suffer from the slow speed of the network. The process of updating and nourishing the database takes very long. “This is certainly not exciting and it can be very frustrating sometimes” (Helen).

Third, the KMers have to work with the existing structure without being able to make any modification for better management of the database. For some KMers, it constrains them from managing the archive of knowledge pieces in an effective way. Christina explains this constraint as below:

Du coup aujourd'hui nous on se dit : bah on veut pas les documents à deux endroits, on les veut à un seul endroit, parce que si non ca devient complique pour la gestion, si tu met à jour un document, il faut penser le mettre à jour des deux côtés, ou tu ne sait plus ou sont les documents, si ils sont plutôt du côté gestion documentaire ou autre. Donc nous on essaie de notre logique, c'est de stocker les documents sur le base de gestion documentaire et depuis le portail de faire des liens et ca, c'est quelque chose qui ne qui n'est pas forcément si évident à faire euh... avec beaucoup de souplesses aujourd'hui avec le système qu'on a.

The situation is aggravated because the IT structure of the knowledge sharing database has a changing nature. As mentioned, the IT structure of the database depends on the IT function of the organization. The changes made by the IT function with regard to the database may be decided by the top managers and the KMers have no choice but to adapt their actions accordingly. For example, the IT function once decided to transfer the database from Lotus Notes to the Web. So the navigation and interface became completely different. People got lost with the new system and stopped using it

(Christina). And the KMers have to “start from scratch” their efforts to train them how to use and contribute to the database. In the words of Mary:

J'allais en usine, j'allais pas mal en usine, et des fois tu revenais trois semaines un mois après, tous les systèmes après a été changé, que du bonheur.

Changes may put the KMers into a tough situation, like the case of Helen:

I just realized last week and I haven't spoken to Carol about this. We are having some server issue. Few of our servers are down in North America. And what happened is they migrated the users to other servers, but a lot of the other databases are not accessible by the users because of the server problem. And the awareness in North America about the KTP is very very important, but that not yet exists. So for me to ask the IT department to migrate the KTP also for those users is an immense task

On the other hand, changes in the IT structure do not always have a negative impact. The KMers acknowledges that the system does have positive improvement over time. For example, “people are no longer asked two or three times for different password when they access to the knowledge sharing database” (Yvon). With the single log-in, things are much easier. And that is the main reasons for which there are more and more people coming to the database (Yvon).

Facing the IT issues, the KMers have to accept the fact that they cannot overcome all of those problems due to their lack of authority (Yvon). With the IT structure of the knowledge sharing database depending on the IT function, the KMers do not really have choice with regards to many IT aspects. They rather have to accept the inflexibility and the lack of user-friendliness of the system. In the words of Christina:

Je ne peux rien faire parce que bah parce que c'est un système qui a été voilà il a élaboré décidé on a pas trop de souplesse pour le changer quoi... Bon on fait avec on a pas le choix.

They have to accept the inability to solve the password problem encountered by the organization's employees. All they can do is to live with the situation (Kathy) and wait for the IT function to make improvements, as Carol says:

On a beaucoup de mal, parce que euh on fait remonter un message à tous les niveaux auprès des IT, mais ça bouge pas beaucoup... C'est une vraie barrière, on a un problème qu'on arrive pas à résoudre. On sait que on va résoudre cette barrière, mais on sait pas quand, dans un an ou deux ans. On n'a pas de garantie de l'informatique.

The IT issues cannot be solved by the KMers not only because of their lack of authority over the IT function, but also because the time-consuming nature of the IT issues that makes it lengthy to solve. Carol states that they face with “des démarche énorme, qui se mettent pas en place un jour au lendemain, qu'il demande un peu de temps”.

The KMers accepting to be handicapped by the IT problems can be compared to the victims accepting their misfortune, as Carol notes:

on est dans l'espace intranet de Lafarge, et il y a beaucoup de problèmes de mot de passe en fait pour accéder, il ne dépend pas de nous, qui dépendent de la stratégie mis en place pour l'intranet, qui dépend de l'informatique, qui dépend de plusieurs facteurs, donc on est finalement, parfois les victimes.

#### 7. Perception of employees about knowledge management

Two people-related obstacles have been discussed: the organizational culture is not knowledge sharing oriented, and people are taken by the existing strategic objectives and priorities of the organization. Another people-related obstacle is the perception of employees about knowledge management. People tend not to understand what knowledge management is and what the KMers do, and consequently do not see instantly the need in using and contributing to the knowledge sharing database.

For many people within the company, they think that sharing knowledge means surfing on the Internet (Carol). Some people cannot differentiate between news and knowledge. It happened to Helen that someone asked her why they could not have the telephone list in the sharing database.

With regards to the responsibility of the KMers, many just have a vague understanding of what they do. This can be seen clearly in the anecdote of Christina:

Je pense que notre rôle même de notre rôle à nous, Industrial Knowledge, ce n'est pas clair, ce n'est pas clair forcément pour tout le monde à la DPC. La semaine dernière on a eu la visite de training manager de l'Égypte qui a passé la semaine en France notamment avec les gens du training, et puis Norbert Livert a fait un tour du couloir et puis en passant devant nos bureaux, j'entends qu'il dit à ce monsieur : voilà ici c'est le CKHC, ils s'occupent du portail ciment voilà. Alors CKHC ça n'existe plus et on s'occupe pas, si on a le travail avec le portail mais on ne fait pas que ça. Knowledge management ce n'est pas que le portail ciment. Donc j'ai dit à Alex il y a vraiment un problème sur la perception des gens sur ce qu'on fait quoi.

Many others think that the KMers are supposed to do only stocking and arranging the knowledge pieces in a given place, which is the database. They are there to "mettre en boîte le contenu" (Alex). That perception is particularly present among the experts, who are recognized holders of knowledge in the cement branch. An example is given by Alex:

Une anecdote, au début de l'année, les comites de DPC ont établi les grands objectifs pour l'année 2008 et dans les grandes missions, il y a l'expertise, des animations des réseaux d'experts, et tous ça, Knowledge Management, capitalisation du savoir industriel de la division, et CKHC. Donc ils font une distinction nette entre le KM et nos activités. Pour eux, la gestion des connaissances dans le sens noble du terme, c'est eux qui la font, c'est eux qui ont la connaissance, donc c'est eux qui la gèrent

The lack of correct understanding about knowledge management and the KMers results in the lack of interest in using and contributing to the sharing database. People cannot have interest in doing something that they do not understand what it is; they cannot see the need; they cannot understand

why it is important to develop a common knowledge source (Christina). "It is difficult to progress rapidly" (Christina).

That lack of correct understanding also constrains the KMers from carrying out the KM activities. Alex describes precisely this situation in the long but worth-citing quotation below.

Ca me bride. J'ai l'impression que ça ne permet pas d'exprimer tout le potentiel et toute la valeur ajoutée qui pourra apporter de la vraie dimension KM à la DPC. Voilà, nous limiter nos actions ou percevoir nos actions comme le gars qui est là pour mettre en boîte l'information, d'une part fait qu'on a du mal à faire notre travail, on nous envoie des messages de manière interrogée, on reçoit des messages interrogés, on n'est pas toujours prévenu au bon moment, donc pas de synchronisation et on n'est pas toujours prévenu, donc il y a des problèmes pris en compte, ça fait que du coup, les boîtes qu'on ne peut pas toujours avoir la chance de bien remplir et remplir au bon moment et de bien remplir tout court. Donc oui ça a un impact ou ça bride dans le sens que si on se limite à l'action du metteur en boîte, le fait qu'ils ne sont pas conscients que la mise en boîte ça nécessite une certaine préparation et ça fait que même la gestion des boîtes n'est pas évidente. Et ça bride dans la mesure où le KM ce n'est pas que la boîte mais de faire vivre ce qui est dans la boîte. Et je pense qu'on pourrait leur apporter des choses, ils ont comme missions les experts DPC de faire vivre les réseaux, des réseaux qui sont dispatchés dans tout le planète, des réseaux qui ne sont pas toujours synchronisés, des réseaux qui ... fin bref on peut leur apporter des outils, j'estime qu'on peut leur apporter des choses dans l'animation des réseaux, dans la capitalisation des savoirs qu'ils ont fait, dans la mise en avant des savoirs des expertises, pas mal de choses, quoi. Voilà, voilà pourquoi ça bride. C'est autant d'opportunités ratées pour qu'on apporte la valeur ajoutée au process à travers le principe KM, voilà.

People's perception about the KMers and the knowledge sharing database has an inert nature. If the former knowledge sharing tools and initiatives were not user-friendly, with such problems as password and slow network speed, people tend to put the new tools "in the same basket" (Alex) and assume that the entire sharing database is not user-friendly (Christina). People are "empeignés des démarches qu'ils avaient eu avant, dont ils retiennent plus facilement les échecs que les succès" (Alex). In fact, people's mind-set changes much more slowly than the organization (Alex). The KMers have to accept that people's mind-set is slow to change. They can keep promoting the sharing database and "pray and pray", but people may still not use it (Kathy). "They are difficult" because the KMers "cannot change their mind"; "it is impossible" (Kathy). This is especially true to senior people, who are like "for the last 20 years I did not use it, so I will not use it now" (Kathy). They have to be prepared to the fact that they need to continue their efforts over a long period of time. Things do not change overnight. "It takes dozens and dozens years for people to change their way of working" (Carol).

## 8. Human resources

Another organizational feature with a changing nature is related to human resources. In the multinational in this research, there is a high rate of turnover. People are frequently rotated between units and regions. This impacts the KMers in several ways.

As discussed, the KMers work in collaboration with a network of strategic helpers through out the organization in order to obtain new knowledge pieces and carry out their promotion of knowledge sharing culture. Frequent job rotation leads to constant change in the members of that network. Thus, Mary describes the network building as “difficult” and “horrible”. Updating the information on the network must be done every six months because people keep moving (Mary).

Frequent job rotation also makes regular arrival of new top managers. This sometimes has positive impact because it may give the KMers opportunity to obtain stronger sponsorship for knowledge management (Christina). Carol was able to take advantage of the arrival of two new top managers in her branch, asking them to mention knowledge management as a priority in their letter to all employees of the branch. With a stronger sponsorship, the KMers will be able to progress faster because employees follow the direction put forward by the top managers, as we have discussed in the previous section. This impact of job rotation is recapitulated concisely by Christina as “c'est plutôt le changement de personne qui fait changer les choses”.

One important change in human resources that cannot be neglected is the coming of the young generation to the organization, which makes the characteristics of users and contributors of the knowledge sharing database change gradually. For the older génération, “l'informatique est venue au cours de leur vie” (Christina). It is “not natural and too complicated for them” to go and look for book in a floating library. Mary describes their attitude toward the knowledge sharing database and knowledge management as “on s'en fout”. However, for the young generation, “ils sont nés ou ils ont baigné dans l'informatique et le web” (Christina). The culture of using a floating library is much more present. Mary starts to see that at work, the young generation uses the sharing database “de manière innée et naturelle”. Young people also learn how to use and contribute to the knowledge sharing database much more quickly. It is much easier for the KMers because it is not necessary “to show them 50 times” (Mary). They have better knowledge of English, which is essential in using and contributing to the database, while introducing the sharing database to the older generation has always been “le grand moment” (Mary).

It can be said that this evolution is somehow favorable for the KMers' life. At the same time, the arrival of the new generation is unstoppable and it means that they have to adapt the knowledge sharing database in a way that corresponds to their habitual fashion of using the Internet. For example, Carol anticipates that new sharing tools, which are similar to the social networking tools the young generation commonly uses like Facebook, should be introduced in the sharing database. Christina envisions this future adjustment as following:

Ça c'est super intéressant parce que il faut à la fois dans une société comme Lafarge, il faut à la fois se préparer être quand même suivre ces évolutions, et puis préparer l'avenir, préparer utiliser les nouvelles technologies.



### III. The knowledge managers as the rafters dealing with the river and its obstacles

Although the rafters are carried away by the running current, they do manage to deal with the white wave and dangerous features in order to protect their inflatable boat from sinking in the water. Using their paddles, they steer the floating boat from hard rocks and hazards, surf the boat on top of the white wave, and keep the boat from being crashed by water damn.

Like the rafters, KMers also have their own strategy to deal intelligently with the organizational context to attain their objectives. Their response to the movement, the dangers and the constraints of the rivers can be described as “acting in accordance” (Alex) and “orchestrer” (Mary) with their working environment.

The strategizing actions that the KMers takes to deal with the organizational context are composed of three categories: intentional, emerging, and constraint-responding. They are labeled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively.

As mentioned previously, each individual KMer faces with a unique river zone, with its own types of obstacles and hazards and its own degree of ferocity. Moreover, since the knowledge management tasks of the KMers are not the same, the three categories of strategizing actions differ between them. For example, one may focus more on the marketing dimension, while another may pay more attention to the island-finding and force-building ones. In terms of the marketing action, one may does more promotion activities, while another may works mainly on the product element. Needless to say that the way these actions are carried out is distinctive to each individual KMer.

In this section, we these three categories of strategizing actions will be discussed in details.

#### 1. Marketing actions: intentional

This action is intentional. The KMers consider that all employees are the customers of the knowledge management function (Helen). They intentionally do all necessary marketing activities to build a good customer base for their product, which is the sharing database. The activities that they carry out with a marketing orientation are discussed below.

##### a. Promotion: communicating and convincing

The first action in this category is communicating and convincing. This action is crucial because “plus la société est grande il faut plus expliquer les choses” (Christina). It is a way to overcome part of the organizational obstacles mentioned previously. Only by communicating and convincing the employees that they gradually recognize the benefit in sharing knowledge and accept it as part of their working culture. Only by communicating and convincing that people see the need to go beyond the obstacles such as IT issues to share knowledge. “En tout cas un moyen efficace de relancer la machine” (Alex). So this action represents “les efforts les plus importants à réaliser” (Carol).

This action has two interrelated aspects. The first serves the purpose of promoting the knowledge sharing culture. It involves communicating through out the organization about knowledge sharing and convincing people of its benefits. The second focuses on promoting the knowledge sharing database,

educating employees of its operation, and convincing them to become its users and contributors. The ultimate goal is to make the database become an accepted and used knowledge sharing tool.

The first aspect has a key role because it is important that people know about knowledge sharing. Like Yvon states, the KMers have to “speak out, make some noise to remind people” rather than “keeping silent”. The essential message that they have to communicate to employees of the company is that sharing knowledge is a way of working rather than just using the Internet (Carol).

With regards to this aspect, the KMers have different initiatives in communicating about knowledge sharing and convincing people of its benefits. Carol initiates a communication campaign in which true success stories of sharing knowledge and their benefits are presented. It is a campaign on the benefits people have when sharing knowledge, not a campaign on the sharing database. Adopting the same tactics, Alex is about to prepare the posters on knowledge sharing and its benefits to distribute to the company’s factories. Such initiatives help make knowledge sharing and the sharing tools “visible through out all hierarchical levels of the organization” (Carol). People have to be aware of knowledge sharing benefits and knowledge sharing tool before starting to make any acceptance (Carol and Alex).

The training sessions are another occasion to communicate with people about the principles and benefits of sharing knowledge. Mary has always been trying to tell the engineers participating in her training that: “vous êtes aussi des acteurs, et si vous venez de recevoir, vous devez le partager avec vos collègues”. It is important to “open their eyes” that “si tu acquies les connaissances par les autres, logiquement tu devrais la transmettre toi aussi” (Mary).

Such communication actions are also carried out on an occasion basis. Alex holds a stand, where the knowledge sharing principles and the sharing database are presented, during the performance days that gather all managers of the branch. Or more frequently, the KMers realize this aspect of communication action on a daily basis at work and normal interaction with people around them. Carol explains this tactics as “jouer sur la proximité”. In the experience of Helen, that daily communication with people around takes place all the time. In her own words:

Sometimes they don’t recognize that they have that knowledge and I have to explain to them, do you just realized that what you just developed is a good practice and if you share it then somebody else is going to benefit from it, because that idea has not occurred to them. Then they say, ah are you sure? Give me that document or that process that you just implemented and then they see the value in it. One example like that and latter on they are willing to share something similar to that, you know.

It should be noted that while realizing this aspect of communication action, the KMers must find a way to show the implication of the top management in the subject (Carol). For example, it could be “des éditos signé par les BU managers, ce qui permet en fait de donner la parole au BU manager sur le sujet, donner de la visibilité “ (Carol).

With regard to the second aspect of communicating and convincing, there are different activities that the KMers carry out. First, they communicate with people about the existence of the sharing database. People must know that there is such database before they are interested in it and become its users

and contributors of the sharing database (Yvon). They have to “broadcast” (Yvon) and “demystify” (Mary) the existence of the sharing database. In the past, people did not even know that the sharing database existed (Mary). For them it was like “ah oui ça existe, mais c'est super!” (Mary). So this is a necessary and arduous phase in communicating and convincing people. Second, the KMers not only communicate with people about the existence of the sharing database, but also convince them of its benefits (Carol). Alex states that : “il faut communiquer ces règles et ces outils, il faut montrer qu'est-ce qu'ils apportent, il faut montrer que euh les efforts qu'ils demandent de fournir pour les utiliser sont à peine”. They use true success stories of using the knowledge sharing database to convince people (Kathy, Yvon, Helen). Another way is to show them the actual usage of the database as an evidence of its attractiveness. Helen's recent idea is to start informing people on the intranet “on how the utilization was going, not only in North America, but worldwide, just to encourage them to see that it's not difficult and it's useful and so on”.

Convincing people of the benefit of the sharing database cannot be neglected. “If people do realize the value of this tool that they have and of the knowledge sharing initiative, then they would participate freely and become part of this movement” (Helen). In Alex's words :

C'est quelque chose qui m'a paru très rapidement comme évidence, c'est d'arrêter d'appliquer l'outil, comment il est fait et tout ça, et comment il marche, mais expliquer pourquoi l'outil. Si l'ils comprennent pourquoi l'outil, peut être ils auront peut être plus de chance de l'utiliser.

Third, the KMers provide training to the employees, so that they know how to use and contribute to the sharing database rather just aware of its existence and benefit (Kathy, Yvon). They are very active in providing training to the employees rather than wait for them to come for the training. For example, training session is proposed to factories and the KMers comes to do the training in person (Yvon, Kathy, and Mary). Like Kathy says, “it is necessary to go there”. New employees are always given a session of some hours on knowledge sharing and the sharing database.

Fourth, they regularly keep the employees informed of new arrivals and all changes in the sharing database. It means each time a new document is posted or there is a modification in the database, the KMers find a way to notify the employees (Carol), either by e-mail (Christina), newsletter (Kathy), teaser on the branch's intranet (Alex) or group's intranet (Helen), or presentation at employees' meeting (Yvon). When the sharing database is modified, in terms of interface or structure for example, they inform the employees of such changes (Yvon, Mary, Helen).

Keeping the employees informed is very important (Christina) because they “never know if there is anything new in the database” (Christina). The sharing database is huge with a myriad of knowledge documents. Users are not able to identify easily the new documents or new structure (Christina). They do not actively go and look for information when needed, especially when they do not have much time to devote to sharing knowledge activity (Mary).”They do not sit in front of the computer for eight hours per day just to look for what they want or what's new in the database” (Christina).

Keeping the employees informed is in line with the approach of making knowledge sharing as visible as possible in the organization. People have to have something that continuously reminds them of the

sharing database (Kathy). It is an effective way to attract them to use the sharing database (Helen), Christina envisions this process as follows:

Les utilisateurs ils vont commencer à recevoir régulièrement ou avoir régulièrement euh... les teasers sur LO ou ils vont recevoir dans leur boîte mail ah bah il y a tel ou tel euh... expérience nouvelle experience qui est sur tel sujet qui vient d'être publié ils vont intégrer que il y a pas que le téléphone et le collègue à l'usine à côté ça c'est un changement je pense que c'est aussi un changement de mentalité.

In fact, "every time we promote a document, the utilization numbers are good, and then they are off, and you hardly find the people who are looking for some documents until the next document, the next promotion, then there is a surge again" (Helen). Christina also has the same good experience when she informs people of the publication of a new document.

Helen concludes that keeping the employees informed "is a very big reason for the increase in the number of visitors" to the sharing database. But "in order to sustain it at that effective level, the constant communication and news articles are absolutely vital" (Helen).

The second aspect of communication action also involves motivating employees to contribute to the sharing database (Carol). "Il faut beaucoup jouer aussi sur la reconnaissance la dessus" (Mary). People are more willing to share their knowledge with others when their contribution is acknowledged and appreciated (Carol, Christina). What the KMers do is to make public acknowledgement of all individual contributions to the database, either by a special section called thank you on the intranet, via the organization's newsletter, by awarding the best contribution, or by thank you notes from the top managers to the contributors.

It should be noted that all of these communication activities have to take into account the obstacles of the organizational context discussed in the previous section.

First, communication has to be a continuous process because people's mind-set is slow to change. The activities are all carried out on a regular basis. Only by regular communication that people are constantly reminded of sharing knowledge (Yvon) and they gradually accept the database as a useful sharing tool (Christina). Even when people have yet had the necessary facilities, such as computer or intranet account, and language skill to participate in sharing knowledge, it is "not a waste of time" to take communication actions (Yvon). In such case, at least people know that the company has something useful. Although they cannot use the sharing database immediately, communication still helps in generating awareness and changing people's mind-set; "it still has some meaning" (Yvon). Carol sums up this approach as following:

on est dans les efforts à long terme, on fait des campagnes tous les ans, parce que ce sont les longs termes qui peuvent porter leurs fruits à long terme. Ce n'est pas par one-shot communication que on va obtenir évidemment des résultats.

Second, the communication has to be in different languages to address the diversity of the company's employees. The communication campaign of Carol was available in seven languages in the first year. It is in twelve languages in the following year.

Third, the communicating message itself has to be easily accessible for its target audience. The KMers try to “give them something very simple and get it to them to see, because they are the objectives of that whole campaign exercise” (Helen). They initiate different communication tools in order to reach as large audience as possible. For example, Carol prepares her communication campaign in the form of a short video and posters to reach people having and not having a computer, respectively.

Finally, the KMers rely on an important communication channel, which is the strategic helpers, through whom the message about knowledge sharing and the database can be transferred to the worldwide-based employees. It is more effective to approach and convince the “acteurs qui sont en contact avec les clients finaux” (Alex).

#### b. Distributing

Like any product, the knowledge sharing database has to be as accessible as possible to users. Thus, an important task is to facilitate as much as possible the access to books in the floating library.

First, the sharing database itself has to be user-friendly. It is obvious that the better the database is structured, the more easily people are able to find the knowledge they need, and the more frequently they come back to use the sharing database (Christina). Christina notes that besides the communicating and convincing actions, the KMers need to make sure that users “do not have to spend half an hour without being able to find what they are looking for”.

Second, they provide users with simple path to the knowledge documents they are interested in. For example, direct links to the newly posted knowledge documents are provided in the online advertisement about their arrival (Helen). People can have “free access” and the problems of multiple passwords or searching difficulty are thereby avoided. Similarly, instruction on how to access a particular document is given, so that people do not have to waste time in looking for that document in the database. This is what Helen has been doing over the past two and a half year.

Third, rather than wait for the users to come and look for books on their own, the KMers have to actively bring books to them. In Mary’s words:

Quand ils vont avoir besoin de quelque chose pour un problème d'usine, ils vont aller chercher de l'information. Mais non, non, ils ne vont pas chercher, il faut leur ramener l'information.

However, the KMers do not bring the entire database to everybody. For users of a given domain of expertise, they only bring knowledge in that specific domain. For example, resource recovery users receive only knowledge in resource recovery domain, maintenance users receive only maintenance knowledge, and so forth (Mary, Kathy). The distribution must be based on the specific needs of target users. The KMers just bring what is of interest for a given type of users. This approach is pictured nicely by Mary:

C'est vraiment cibler et puis ne pas tout donner comme ça, tous les magasins sont disponible, non, tu as besoin que du cèpe, il y a un rayon où il y a du cèpe, on va te dire, aller faire le tour. Ça je trouve que c'est important d'être plus orienté, travailler là dessus.

Helen sees this strategy of active and interest-based distribution as a useful approach to attract users to the database.

So if I find that there is a small team that doesn't go to the portal, I ask the manager what do you think would be relevant to them, and then I list some of the pieces that are on KTP and I email to them and I say, you know when you have a minute, go and check this out, it may be useful to your job, it may be useful to you, especially for new employees, when they come, I make sure that, you know, I direct them to at least this particular document, go and have a look, you can do this on your own time, go and read about the page about performance program and you'll know what our business is about. So stuff like that. I try to make them understand that it's useful for you, there is something in it for you, go check out.

This explains why Alex states that actively bringing information to end-users is indispensable if they want "un peu de pérennité à nos actions".

### c. Product

One important element in the marketing action is building a good image of the product, which is the knowledge sharing database.

First, the sharing database must have a user-friendly image. That's why Carol designs each knowledge document with two parts. One is the abstract in English and in the language of the original country. Another is the full document. The idea behind this design is that "les gens avec le résumé doivent savoir c'est ce qu'ils cherchent ou pas, pour leur éviter de ouvrir les pièces attachées, parce que ça prend beaucoup de temps, dans des sites où les connexions sont mauvaises, ou très lentement" (Carol). The knowledge pieces in the sharing database are made available in different languages to help users avoid the problem of language. It is important to "privilege local language" (Carol). At the same time, the KMers take charge of translating the key documents from English into local language and vice-versa. It is "helping people to translate their sharing" (Yvon).

In addition, a contributor-friendly image is extremely crucial, as pointed out by Carol. If there are too many steps of validation, it takes "months and months" (Carol) for a knowledge piece to be available in the database. The contributor will not be responsible for the document's content because at each stage of validation, it is modified by the evaluator. At the end, the contribution no longer belongs to a specific person (Carol).

Second, the sharing database must have a useful image. This means people need to see in the database some usefulness for their job. The knowledge documents posted in the database have to meet their needs and correspond to their priorities (Mary). What the KMers do is trying to identify the "challenges faced by the Business units each year" (Carol), and then provide them with the "key documents" corresponding to those challenges in local languages (Carol). In that way, the sharing database can bring more "value added" (Carol). Helen points out that as long as they are able to find out the "hot topic of the day in order to promote the use of the tool and knowledge sharing, the utilization of the tool is good". Thus, an important task of the KMers is to "keep in touch" with the regional managers to "follow with them what their priorities are and what they want their employees to

follow very closely” (Helen). “Researching what are the users are looking for, researching what the users have to share and researching what is the best for our organization” is a crucial and ongoing activity (Helen). The KMers also try to look for knowledge documents that the employees “need to know about external standards or external policy” (Helen), so that people are kept updated of the technological evolution outside the organization.

Finally, the database must have an active image. People must see that the knowledge sharing database has a life. It needs to be continuously nourished with new knowledge pieces, which may be a good practice, a lesson learned, a new standard and so forth. Doing the task of nourishing the knowledge sharing database is like “searching for truffle” (Carol). The image of searching for truffle indicates that good knowledge pieces are scattered through out the organization; the KMers have to identify the pieces that are truly valuable and useful. They have to make sure that the collected knowledge pieces are worth sharing, that they are rare and precious truffle, not ordinary mushrooms that can be found everywhere. However, unlike truffle harvesters, who work on a seasonal basis, KMers’ searching for truffle is an ongoing task. Carol notes that:

Ça c'est une chose quotidienne, un réflexe quotidien à avoir une curiosité. Il faut avoir une curiosité pour sans arrêt aller chercher les choses un peu précieuses, qui vont être très intéressant pour d'autres équipes.

By nourishing the knowledge sharing database, the KMers have unwittingly become “knowledge brokers” (Helen), because they bring knowledge pieces from one place to many others, where the pieces are needed and appreciated. They connect brains, which are spread through out the organization, together.

Besides the task of nourishing, maintaining is also primordial. Mary states that “il faudra que l'information soit a minimum mis à jour si on veut être crédible”. The KMers have to do the “regular cleaning” (Carol) to remove outdated knowledge pieces and extent the validity of documents that are still usable. They also make improvement in the stock of knowledge pieces, so that people can find the documents more easily. It is important that “the users feel that some actions have been taken on their feedback” (Helen). Again, just like the task of search for truffle, the maintenance and update continue all around the year (Helen).

#### d. Segmenting the customers

In order to carry out the marketing activities in an effective way, the target users of the database are divided into different segments. For each segment, the KMers adopt a different way of communicating and brings a different knowledge content that corresponds to its specific needs.

In terms of promoting knowledge sharing culture communication, the KMers attempt to “segmenter un peu. C'est-à-dire rendre visible de façon spécifique, c'est-à-dire rendre visible certains aspects de la démarche KM, qui semblent être les plus impactant pour la population cible” (Alex). Alex gives an example to explain this approach below :

T'explique comment marche le téléphone, tu auras une explication qui rentre un peu dans les détails si tu es scientifique ou si tu as des techniciens en face de toi. Grosso modo,

t'expliqueras qu'est-ce qu'il y a dedans. Par contre si t'explique à quoi sert ce téléphone, t'essaieras de comprendre quels sont peut être les besoins des personnes qui sont en face de toi. Et là il y a des réponses qui ont beaucoup plus de différences que le discours qui explique qu'est-ce qu'il est, ce téléphone.

As a result, they need to have “more than one speech” (Alex) to promote the sharing culture and the sharing database. The content of the communication activities is adapted based on the target segment of users (Helen). For example, the success stories in the communication campaign of Carol vary based on its target audience. For each group, she identifies the key topics and adapts the success stories accordingly, so that “la campagne colle” (Carol).

In terms of distribution, each knowledge document is distributed to only the interested users. The distribution of knowledge must always “link to the expertise domain” (Mary) of each segment. With a given knowledge document, Helen finds out “whether it will be of interest to either a large group of people or specific group of people” and she “deals with that piece of knowledge accordingly”. Sometimes a document “is not of interest to the entire population”. The KMers “provide it only to the specific audience”. For example it could be the product specialist or the resource people within the aggregate department or something like that, and it just needs to be posted”. The KMers “can just e-mail it to them, or make it available on their shared network” (Helen).

The notification of new arrival of knowledge document is sent to only the concerned segment of users. The KMers notify the different segments by using « les listes des e-mail par domaine, c'est-à-dire la liste des personnes de maintenance de toutes les usines ciment, la liste de toutes les personnes qui sont dans le broyage ainsi de suite » (Christina).

In terms of communication, the training content is adjusted based on the participating audience. It is impossible that a person knows everything in the sharing database. “Il a d'autre chose à faire, on lui donne bien d'autre chose à faire que de parler de Knowledge management, des outils et tout ça” (Mary). It is “vachement important” that the exercises and examples in the training are linked to the expertise domain of the participants (Mary). The KMers have to “customize” as much as they can the training content (Yvon). In the words of Mary:

Moi aussi j'ai fait évoluer les outils pour former vers les exercices dédiés à leur domaine d'activité. Le gars qui travaille sur la maintenance. OK il peut savoir que effectivement il a un domaine de la qualité, mais lui ce qui l'intéresse c'est pas de savoir tout sur tout, ça marche pas non plus. C'est ciblé. Dans les outils. Dans les modes de transfert de nous, en tant qu'information officer, pour moi c'est très important de cibler par domaine d'activité pour les personnes.

## 2. Island-finding actions: emergent

While rafting on the river, the KMers may find some small islands, on which the floating library may be protected from white water and dangerous features for some time. Such islands are already part of the river; they are accepted by people living along the river and less endangered by the hazardous



features of the river. Such islands are also easier and more enjoyable than a continuously moving library for users and contributors to come. The KMers try to identify such islands and take advantage of their existence and emergence in order to simplify their lives. This action is emergent to the extent that the KMers cannot deliberately create the islands. They can just take advantage of the islands that have already existed or are about to emerge for their purpose. This action may or may not be planned in advance depending on the individual KMers.

One island is the organizational changes that may be favorable for knowledge management. As discussed previously, the arrival of new top managers represents “good opportunity” (Christina) for the KMers to obtain stronger sponsorship and implication of the top management. Other examples are the change in organizational structure (Kathy) and human resources turnover (Alex), which create an occasion to redefine the role of the KMers, so that they have more power and authority to carry out more easily their mission.

Another island is the organizational events in which the KMers can communicate and promote the knowledge sharing culture as well as the knowledge sharing database. The KMers “take every chance” (Yvon) to deliver training or the message about knowledge sharing to other people in the organization.

One kind of possible event is the regional or international meetings of important managers of the company such as performance day, reunion of “comité de direction” (Alex and Christina), or senior management meeting (Helen). Helen describes how she takes advantage of this emerging island below:

I also travel to the head of community. Usually the heads of community are based in the regions' head offices. So we have Denver, Calgary, Toronto and Maryland. There regional head offices, most of the heads of community are located there. Each of the regions has its own regional meeting on a monthly basis. So I try to be present at as many of those meetings as possible, so that I could speak about knowledge sharing, the benefits.

Network meetings, where people of the same expertise gather together, are also a great opportunity for the KMers to come and present about knowledge sharing and the sharing database. “For example, the process engineers, they have their network meeting in China level, with ATC process engineers and all process engineers of every plant. They get together once a year I think for the network meeting. The same network meeting so exists for quality, for maintenance. They have their network meeting” (Yvon). Yvon “has been preparing a very short, like a two-hour workshop” (Yvon) or “just a presentation of 30 minutes or one hour” (Kathy), for this kind of network meeting. “It is another chance” to promote the database (Yvon).

Training sessions for the employees in general is an excellent event to “advertise” (Helen) about knowledge management and the sharing database (Helen). The KMers try to “be present there to talk for few minutes about knowledge sharing and just to show them how to access the tool and to encourage them to go there if they need any information about their line of work” (Helen). They have to

“catch chances” (Yvon) to “take the part in all technical training” and “have a part on knowledge sharing tool in all trainings” (Kathy).

Organizational events are good opportunity for the KMers to obtain help from the strategic helpers. For example, Kathy “takes every opportunity to meet people from plants and business unit, it could be from the network meeting, it could be during a training, and really try to have connections in the plants”, to have someone “who knows you and whom you can contact in case there is something”. Yvon tries “every year” to “take the chance to talk to the HR people” and “take part in the next HR network meeting” to remind them that they need to make people more involved in knowledge sharing by setting up specific knowledge sharing objectives for employees.

The third important island is the existing organizational processes to which knowledge sharing can become an inherent part. The KMers make sure that knowledge management serves the overall objectives of the organization, because “there is no point in seeing KM functioning on its own, promoting KS and so on. It has to be related to strategic imperative” (Helen). It is necessary that “notre discours soit cohérent avec la stratégie de la société” (Mary). What the KMers do is to get familiar with the organizational priority and objectives of the entire organization as well as the individual business units (Helen). Then they can prioritize their mission based on the strategic objectives of the organization (Alex) and position knowledge sharing as an important factor contributing to the achievement of organizational objectives. In the words of Carol:

évidemment nous dans la branche, on pourra considérer le partage de connaissances comme un facteur pour améliorer la performance individuelle et collective des collaborateurs. Ça, ça fait pas de doute. Personne ne remet en cause ce posture là. Ça c'est clair. Ça nous permet aussi d'accélérer, parce que c'est l'objectif de Lafarge d'accélérer les résultats. Et le partage d'expérience est bien sûr un facteur d'accélération.

Moreover, the KMers try to make knowledge sharing integrate within the existing organizational course of actions. “Ce n'est plus une boîte un peu a part de la chaîne, mais c'est vraiment être des maillons de la chaîne ou intervenir les maillons de la chaîne” (Alex). This is the only way to cultivate the knowledge sharing culture and to make knowledge sharing bring “value added” to the organization (Alex), when it is not part of the organizational strategic objectives and the top managers are not implicated (Mary). The rationale for this action can be best seen the metaphorical explanation of Alex below:

Quand tu es le seul point qui parle de quelque chose dans une organisation bien particulière, les gens te voient pas. Soit les gens ne voient que toi, soit ils te voient pas. C'est-à-dire que quand les gens savent que le lundi matin sur la réunion de 8 a 12, ils ont des workshops l'après-midi, que le mardi c'est pareil et tout ça. Et puis quand on leur dit, en plus, pendant la pause, vous pouvez aller voir le stand où on parle du portail ciment. Les gens écoutent leurs messages et ils vont boire un café. Alors que à la TC on a tout développé un stand, il y avait un stand qui représente tous les départements, tous les grandes fonctions du CT. Donc les gens sont plus inclinés d'aller voir chacun de ces stands quand ils y vont dans une fois. Donc forcément ça draine plus de monde. Quand les gens vont voir les stands à côté de toi, ils

passent 5 minutes à ton stand. Quand les gens savent que il y a des stands à aller voir et pas quand, ils se disent ah bah oui, quand il y a un machine à café qui est entouré de plein de stand, forcément ça incite à aller voir les stands que quand t'as un stand à côté de trois machines à café. Grosso modo, c'est ce qui s'est passé quoi.

Integrating knowledge sharing in the existing organizational processes also helps develop knowledge sharing culture because it somehow makes knowledge sharing compulsory and official. People tend to follow what is obligatory. As Mary points out, "même si c'est pas comportement inné, ça fonctionne parce que c'est intégré dans le processus de travail".

Knowledge sharing can be integrated within the organizational courses of actions to the extent that participating in the training session on the knowledge sharing database is an inherent part of what employees are supposed to do. For example, Kathy and Mary have "succeeded" in incorporating in each technical training program two hours of training about the knowledge sharing database. By "insisting" and "relying on the support of the training managers", they have been able to make do what "had never been done before" (Mary). Similarly, making contribution to the sharing database is made a part of the training requirement for new employees (Alex). Another way is to make people be "officially assigned objectives in participating in knowledge sharing process and they are evaluated on the achievement of those objectives" (Mary). It is "difficult" to implement this approach but it is "the only useful one to ask people to involve", "to push people", "to generate pressure" (Yvon). If knowledge sharing is not part of people's assigned objectives, nothing happens at the end (Yvon). Carol notes that "if people receive an objective to post a given number of knowledge document, to do certain things, it is clear that they will do. It is very basic". It seems « stupid » (Mary) because people do without critical thinking on what they are evaluated on. But "things always happen that way in an enterprise" (Mary). Christina explains this argument as follows:

Parce que les gens donnent forcément la priorité à ce qui fait parti de leurs objectifs et à ce qui sur lesquels ils seront récompensés financièrement. Parce que l'atteinte de l'objectif ça donne le droit à l'attribution d'une prime. Donc que c'est une bonne carotte pour faire avancer les choses.

### 3. Force-building actions: constraint-responding

As rafters on a raging river, the KMers just have the floating boat and paddles as the fighting instruments. In order to realize the marketing activities more effectively and find out the islands more easily, they need to make them stronger by gathering external force. This action is constraint-responding to the extent that it is the way the KMers counter the constraints of its limited strength in order to deal with the angry river more easily. Yvon confirms this point by saying that "for knowledge management, you have to involve different kind of forces to help you". This action may or may not be planned in advance depending on the individual KMers.

#### a. Personal network/networking

The KMers build for themselves a personal network of helpers, from whom they can obtain assistance in carrying out their tasks. This is important because they "need more hand" (Yvon) in doing

knowledge management. Mary points out that "il faut avoir le bon, le bon réseau, le bon, comment dire, oui les bonnes personnes, il faut être en lien avec les bonnes personnes".

The personal network may be useful in keeping the KMers informed of what is happening among the holders of knowledge (Mary) and the evolution of the organizational context. For example, just by informal conversations during coffee breaks, one knows what the others are doing; and sometimes, "ça peut te donner des idées ou des opportunités de lancer quelque chose" (Christina). Christina explains how such incident happens as following:

C'est aussi un moyen de s'informer sur ce qui se passe... Et même si tu discutes pas spécifiquement d'un problème, tu entends des choses, tu apprends des choses, tu peux dire : tien en fait j'ai entendu dire que, est-ce que ça serait pas bien, tu vois, tu peux t'insérer dans le circuit.

The personal network can help the KMers to get direct contact with end-users in factories. Kathy has "a collection of contact persons in plants" and Mary plans to have as list of "plant champions", to whom they ask to transfer information to other people. Kathy says that such contact persons are very useful because they help her inform their colleagues of new arrivals or updates in the sharing database. Such network can help the KMers integrate their activities within the existing organizational courses of actions. Kathy relies on her network with the technical training department to "have a module or at least a presentation about KM tools" in the training sessions.

Another value of the personal network is related to the knowledge content. It enables the KMers to understand what knowledge a particular segment of users will be interested in. For example, "just by networking with all these people" (Helen), they can find out whether a given piece of knowledge "will be of interest to either a large group of people or specific group of people" (Helen).

The personal network with the organizational functions that are related to knowledge management facilitates considerably the KMer's job. Helen says that her greatest initiative was to establish the relationship with the communication and IT departments. She meets with the communication department every fortnight to see whether they can provide her with any new knowledge pieces. She now has been considered as a "cousin" of the communication department. Her relationship with the IT department makes her task of communicating and informing end-users much easier. An example is when the communication campaign was conducted. Thanks to the help from the IT department, Helen was able to put the communication video on a website, to which people can access freely without any password difficulty. For Yvon, the relationship with the HR department plays an important role. He keeps coming to the department's network meeting every year in order to convince them of the need to evaluate employees' performance on their participation in knowledge management.

#### b. Strategic helpers

The KMers rely on a network of strategic helpers to carry out their mission. The strategic helpers of each KMer differ, depending on his/her working position. There are two types of strategic helpers that the KMers rely on. One group is to help them maintain and nourish the knowledge sharing database. Another group plays the role of intermediary between the KMers and end-users and contributors. As

mentioned, there are many users and contributors spread all over the world and the KMers are geographically disconnected from them. This group of strategic helpers enable the KMers to reach the end-users and contributors working in factories. The network of strategic helpers is different from the personal network to the extent that the former is known actors in the knowledge sharing process. Their status and position make them be the supposedly appropriate helpers. The “products and programs” that the KMers work on “do not allow them to pass over those actors” (Alex). Between the KMers and the strategic helpers may develop a close relationship that they form a personal network, although it may not be always the case.

First, the KMers are not holders of knowledge. They cannot provide the knowledge pieces that are “credible and useful” (Alex). They have to rely on the strategic helpers, who can “supply knowledge to the sharing database” (Alex, Helen) and “evaluate the pertinence” of each knowledge piece (Yvon, Christina). They have to rely on the strategic helpers, who collects knowledge pieces from local contributors and post them in the database (Carol). Mary makes an analogy to describe this dependence:

Il fallait absolument qu'on soit impliqué dans ce réseau, je n'appelle pas ça un réseau, mais que les animateurs de chaque domaine, qui sont des experts, informent les commerciaux qui nous sommes.

Second, the strategic helpers can play an intermediary role in promoting the knowledge sharing culture and the sharing database to the potential users and contributors. As the numbers of users is considerable, it is impossible for the KMers to “be interested in all users” (Helen) and get “direct contact with them” (Christina), they “reach the end-users” through the strategic helpers (Helen, Christina). The strategic helpers have direct contact with a large number of end-users at work and are “much closer” (Yvon) to them in comparison with the KMers. They can “cascade down to the BU level or plant level” (Yvon), to “local level” (Carol) the sharing culture and the utility of the sharing database. They can “open the eyes and open the mind of end-users and contributors” (Yvon). They are “very good relays and resources to promote knowledge management, to promote Lafarge database” (Yvon). Their importance is explicated evidently in Christina’s statement below:

Nous tout seul ici on on peut pas faire grande chose... mais je me rends compte en me disant que... au plus on on sera capable nous équipe industrial knowledge de promouvoir auprès de nos nos experts, qui sont les détenteurs de une partie des detenteurs de le savoir au plus on on saura promouvoir les différents outils euh... qu'on peut leur proposer pour transmettre leur savoir au plus... bah au plus on les rendra conscient de ça, au plus on pourra distribuer ce savoir et atteindre les utilisateurs euh... finaux qui euh... qui aujourd'hui ne font sans nous.

The strategic helpers can help rising both “the taking” and “the giving” related to the sharing database (Helen). Christina gives an excellent example to illustrate the role of the strategic helpers in inspiring people to use the sharing database.

Il faut que quand un expert de centre technique, il va à l'usine et que le gars lui dit ah j'ai un problème j'ai un problème avec ça et ça, comment je peux faire il faut que le gars de centre

technique lui dise bah écoute vas voir sur le portail dans le domaine euh... bio processing, il y a des procédures intéressants tu vas tu vas trouver ce qui te faut.

Their role in encouraging contribution to the sharing database is seen evidently in Yvon's example:

There is one plant experience submitted by a plant, because ATC engineers, when they have mission in plants, and they found some good experiences in those plants, and they tell the guys in the plants: do you know that there is a process for plant experience tool, where you can submit your contribution, and then the guy did it.

The strategic helpers also play an important role in keeping users informed of new arrivals in the sharing database. Kathy always relies on her strategic helpers to let people know that a new document of a given domain has been posted.

In terms of promoting the knowledge sharing culture, the strategic helpers are the indispensable actors. They are "des leviers ou des relais inévitables" (Alex) and the "plaque tournante" (Mary). They are the "strategic points for the success" (Helen) because they have the authority and power to push people to share knowledge. Helen argues that:

The most effective group of customers, the customers that I need to target are really the senior managers, because like I said, if I can influence them to give and take, they can then influence their direct reports, because they can make it imperative for their direct report to use this portal or not.

As the role of the strategic helpers is primordial, the KMers have to find an effective way to obtain their help. It is a continuous process to obtain support from the strategic points of success (Carol). Following up, staying in touch, and having concrete action plan are the adopted tactics because "frequent interaction" (Alex) is an effective way to keep people involved.

Following up is indispensable. Christina observes that if she does not actively follow up with the strategic helpers, they will never come and remind her that something has to be done. She details further this point as follows.

Ça veut dire que c'est plutôt moi qui doit les... les solliciter si je les sollicite pas il se passe rien en deux mots c'est ça c'est un peu près ça (laugh) donc il faut en permanence se activer réactiver euh... fixer une réunion faire le point euh... leur rappeler que euh...il faut qu'on avance sur tel ou tel point.

The KMers have to keep "reminding them all the time" (Helen) by "being in their face", by "emailing them all the time", by conference call on a regular basis (Helen, Carol), by "regular meetings" to review the progress (Christina), so that things will not be forgotten (Alex). In Carol's words, it is necessary to "harceler" them frequently. For example, Helen has a schedule which she tries to keep to and contact the strategic helpers "at least once a month" to see if they can provide her with something that "can be posted on the sharing database" or "shared with another community, another region, or another country". Metaphorically, she uses the color green to highlight her connection with the strategic helpers. Green is the "go signal of traffic light", it indicates the ongoing nature of the interaction between them.

Yvon tries to “attend every year in the HR network meeting”, so that he can “remind” and convince them of the need to evaluate people on their participation in the knowledge sharing process.

Defining concrete actions and objectives for the strategic helper and then following up their achievement is another way to keep the them involved. Carol defines and follows closely the objectives of her strategic helpers. Christina explains how this strategy helps her in obtaining helps from her strategic helpers below.

En fait ce qu'il fait avancer les choses c'est de faire en plan d'action et de mettre les dates, de faire un compte rendu à chaque fois, disons voilà on a décidé de faire ça, il le fait, et à quelle date ça doit être fait. Et c'est à moi de prévoir quelque temps avant, de dire salut on a prévu de se revoir à telle date, on a prévu que tel travail serait fait, ou est-ce que vous en êtes.

Another way to get help from the strategic helpers is to provide them with assistance so that they know what they are expected to do. The KMers “try the best” (Yvon) to make sure that the strategic helpers themselves “have good knowledge of the database” (Yvon) and understand correctly “knowledge sharing and its benefits” (Carol). So in their turn, they can “communicate and educate the end-users and contributors” (Yvon). This can be done by a short training session conducted regularly during their periodical meetings, by discussion when the KMers have chance to meet them in person (Yvon), or by training sessions organized specifically for them (Mary). The KMers also equip the strategic helpers with necessary communication materials so that they can communicate with end-users. This is what Yvon, as well as Kathy, has been doing. They prepare two or three slides that the strategic helpers can integrate within their own communication or training materials used in their mission.

They assist the strategic helpers in the process of maintaining and nourishing the sharing database. This means ensuring the conformity of the strategic helpers to the contribution standards (Alex). This also means guiding them on the process of making their knowledge available to others. Christina plans to prepare a small booklet, “qui leur dira bah voilà moi si je veux faire la publicité sur mon document X ou Y, je sais que a ma disposition j'ai ça ça et ça pour le faire connaître et comment je dois m'y prendre”. Christina describes concisely the accompanying role of the KM team as following.

Finalement on a un rôle d'accompagnement quoi. C'est ça, l'accompagnant, accompagner les experts. Oui c'est bien de cette idée. On accompagne c'est-à-dire qu'on est là pour, c'est comme l'aveugle que tu veux faire passer la route, tu prends la main et tu fais traverser la route on est là pour les aider, on est là pour le support. On n'est pas des experts techniques. Et ils ne sont pas là j'estime pour passer du temps à mettre en forme leurs documents et à se demander comment ils vont faire pour distribuer. Donc voilà, on est là pour les accompagner dans cette démarche la, faire capitaliser leur savoir, gérer leur savoir puis le transmettre. On n'est pas une cellule indépendante.

### c. Communication

As mentioned above, communication is an important activity in order to promote the knowledge sharing culture and the sharing database. It is also a crucial element in building stronger force. The strategic helpers need to understand correctly about the value of sharing knowledge and the activities

of the KMers so as to be ready to provide help. Like Alex says, it is important to change the mind-set of those "inevitables relais". In fact, in the experience of Alex, it has been his mistake to "avoir voulu passer en force ou avoir voulu faire des choses sans prévenir les gens, c'est ne pas assez communiquer sur des principes ou des règles qu'on voulait mettre en place". Communicating and education this population can be done by written documents, which explain knowledge sharing and its benefits (Carol), by doing presentation at their organizational events (Yvon, Helen, Alex), or by convincing them with concrete success stories (Helen).

The KMers also communicate with different organizational entities involved in the process of carrying out its activities, so as to facilitate that process. Carol explicates this multiple-role of communication as following:

Il faut être capable d'expliquer à des gens au terrain, pourquoi c'est important pour eux d'échanger avec leurs collègues et leurs réseaux, et de faire avec les populations DG. Comme on a, la population est très large. Il faut sentir un peu près à l'aise dans tous les types de contexte, et adapter les bons arguments en fonction de cette audience en fait.

Communication is extremely important when knowledge management is not one of the strategic objectives of the organization. It helps the KMers keep knowledge management remain in the organization, show that the function is beneficial (Alex), and carry out their activities in the most effective way.

To one extent, communication means explaining. An example is when Carol deals with the communication department to avoid being imposed with the "règles graphiques" that will "rendre inefficace" the sharing database. She has to spend a lot of time and effort to explain to the communication department that the sharing database is like a library, where knowledge documents are stocked; it is not a communication website, of which the design principles are not the same and hence not suitable for the sharing database. Similarly, Alex makes significant efforts in explaining to his hierarchical superior about the need of distributing knowledge to users and managing the documents' life cycle rather than just simply producing documents. He talks about this "battle" as follows:

Eux ils voulaient m'entendre parler des types de documents, moi je voulais leur parler de cycle de vie. Donc il a fallu que je trouve la bonne façon de présenter les choses et leur dire, OK vous voulez les types, voilà des types, mais moi je ne veux pas vous parler des types sans parler des cycles de vie, et entre autre, insister sur le fait que on n'est pas là que pour produire les documents, on est là aussi pour faire en sorte que le document produit soit utilisé dans les usines, d'où cette envie et cette nécessité de développer des moyens de transfert.

To another extent, communication means convincing. In the experience of Carol, it is not an easy task to convince the Business units to assign someone to play the strategic helper role. They do not sufficient human resources. But it is vital that the KMers succeed in that convincing action. Yvon keeps working closely with unit management to persuade them to purchase computers, to purchase Lotus Notes account for their personnel, so that they can have access to the sharing database.



#### d. Sponsor

An important group of strategic helpers is the top level managers (branch level, group level) and managers of strategic functions, which have hierarchical authority on the strategic helpers and KM, such as performance managers. Carol describes this type of strategic helpers as sponsors. The sponsors can be the Business unit directors, or members of the Business unit's executive committee, or top managers of the branch. It is indispensable that the sponsors have "strategic roles" in the organization (Carol).

The role of the sponsors is critical because they are able to make employees believe in the importance of sharing knowledge. Carol states that

Leur rôle est capital. C'est eux, qui vont montrer aux équipes que c'est un sujet important. Si ils font pas, personne va considérer que le sujet est important)

In fact, Christina has observed that in a technical center in her branch, where the director explicitly tells his subordinates that: "ne réinventons pas nouvelles choses, utilisons ce qui existe déjà", sharing knowledge between the employees is much more frequent. It is a mind-set that develops thanks to the engagement of the sponsor (Christina).

The sponsors are able to make the other strategic helpers more committed in helping the KMers. Christina notes that if the sponsors say that "knowledge management is important, put in place what is necessary for the function", the job of the KMers will be much more facilitated thanks for greater commitment of the strategic helpers. The influencing power of the sponsors can be seen clearly in Carol's example. When she looks for regional sponsors, she proposes a list of persons, makes it be approved by the branch director, then approaches the people in the list for their accord. In fact, she notes that: "quand on leur dit que c'est le patron de la branche qui a proposé, qui fait parti du comité de direction, personne ne vous dit non".

More importantly, having the support from the sponsors, the KMers can carry out their activity more effectively. They can find out more easily the floating islands and conduct marketing activities more successfully. Alex sums up succinctly this role of the sponsors:

L'idée d'aller chercher les sponsors est de s'assurer que nos actions s'intègre dans, ils vont apporter les valeurs ajoutées quelque part. C'est ça en faite, l'idée du sponsor c'est d'avoir le support qui va faire que les choses soient mises en place plus facilement, conduite du changement pour que nos principes KM soient plus intégrées dans le processus organisationnels donc apportent plus de valeur.

The sponsors have a myriad of preoccupations. The KMers are obliged to make their responsibility for knowledge sharing simple. They define concrete actions and objectives for the sponsors to undertake (Carol). What they expect from the sponsors is "prendre la parole sur le sujet, donner de la visibilité au sujet, faire comprendre à ses équipes que si ils incitent les gens à partager, ils en vraiment tireront le bénéfice" (Carol). They also expect the sponsors to support the activities of the KMers. For example, the sponsors can invite the KMers to present about knowledge management and their objectives at the executive committee's meeting. They can define objectives in terms of sharing knowledge, such as the

number of knowledge documents to be contributed, to their subordinates. They can acknowledge on the Intranet or during their meetings people's contributions to give them motivation.

The KMers have to convince the sponsors by aligning the benefits of sharing knowledge with the organization's goals. Christina says that they convince the sponsors by reminding that "le partage des connaissances ça fait partie en principe d'action de lafarge", so they can "give knowledge management an important role".

Carol notes that the KMers can convince the sponsors only when they can get something beneficial in return. She states that:

Donc je pense que dans la tête du sponsor, il s'est dit que il devrait sponsoriser un projet qui marche, un sujet qui va me valoriser. C'est vrai que ce n'est pas facile d'avoir un sponsor quand on est dans un contexte où l'on a beaucoup de problèmes, où on a une démarche pas très visible, pas très successful, c'est un peu difficile d'avoir le soutien d'un sponsor en ce moment là.

That means the KMers has to be able to show real beneficial results of sharing knowledge. It has to equip itself with a "shining example", "un truc un peu quick win" (Alex). It has to make knowledge management become "un sujet qui est en progression, qui a une visibilité, qui pouvait aussi valoriser le sponsor d'être identifié à ce sujet la " (Carol).

Among the KMers, only Yvon does not have to make significant effort in obtaining sponsorship from the top management. He sponsor is fully supportive of knowledge management. In his own words:

The ATC director mentions explicitly that he fully supports knowledge management in China. He always invites me to the organizational events of the strategic helpers Several times I joined the ATC BO days. All the experts gather together in this room. He always invites me to give a short speech about the current situation of KM, so I have chance to talk to all the experts and after, so people know what I'm doing. This helps my job very much. And also my boss, he's not doing technical training at the moment, but he asks me to spend his money in my job.

#### **IV. Summary**

This chapter has discussed the experience of being a knowledge manager in a multinational based on a cross-case thematic analysis. The particularity of knowledge management is the fact that knowledge management function is not automatically accepted by all people in the organization. Thus, the KMers' common ultimate goal is essentially building for knowledge management function a place accepted by the organization. Their mission consists of two inter-related aspects: ensuring the availability, adequacy and usability of the knowledge sharing database and making the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's daily work.

Based on the data analysis, it is seen that doing the job of a KMer is like being a rafter on an angry river, the knowledge management function is like the rafter's inflatable boat, the sharing database is like a library on that boat, and the KMer's strategizing is like the rafting endeavor. The image of such raging river, which has a powerful current and hard-to-negotiate obstacles, represents the difficult,

imposing, changing, and at the same time inert organizational context. The obstacles on the rivers, such as drops, rocks and hazards, represent the hard-to-negotiate barriers that hinder them from accomplishing their mission. They imply the inert characteristics of the context. The powerful and always-moving current represents the unstable nature of the context. The current keeps running the way it does. It is impossible for the rafters to raft against the current or to make it less furious. It implies the imposing characteristics of the context. The image of the inflatable boat represents the particularity of knowledge management function: it does not have an accepted place in the organization, but rather “floats”. The image of a library on the floating boat illustrates the knowledge sharing database, implying that it is unconventional compared to traditional libraries because it is accessible via cyber space and serves users worldwide. It also implies the fact that the sharing database has not been accepted in the organization. Just like the knowledge management function, it “floats”. The KMers are like the rafters, who have to let the powerful current move them on but manage to deal intelligently with the obstacles and dangerous features coming up along their way. Their role is protecting their library on their floating boat, attracting users and contributors, and making the library become an inherent part of the reading culture of all people living along the river. They strategize through different actions to protect their inflatable boat from sinking by trying to avoid the obstacles and taking advantage of what is useful for them on the river. The rafting indicates the strategizing process experienced by the knowledge manager.

The cross-case analysis reveals that the hard-to-negotiate obstacles include the language barrier, the organizational culture that is not so favorable for knowledge sharing, incorrect perception about knowledge management, people’s mind-set, and IT problems. Besides, the unstable characteristic of the context is seen in the new strategic objectives that continue to be put in place, which draw time and efforts of the employees away from participating in knowledge management, in the evolution in human resources, and in the continuous changes in IT infrastructure.

Seen from far, the KMers seem to accept the existence of those obstacles and let themselves moved on by the powerful current, but they do manage to deal intelligently with those forces of nature. Their strategizing actions consist of three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labeled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively.

Being a new idea for the organization’s employees, the floating library’s difficulty to find a place in the organization is intensified by the organizational obstacles and ongoing movement. It is like a new product struggling to build a position in a highly competitive market. Just like a marketing professional, who tries to introduce a new product, the group of KMers purposefully work on the fundamental elements of marketing, including promotion, distribution, product, and customer segmentation. Marketing is intentional to the extent that the KMers consider it as an deliberate action to overcome the organizational barriers and accomplish their mission.

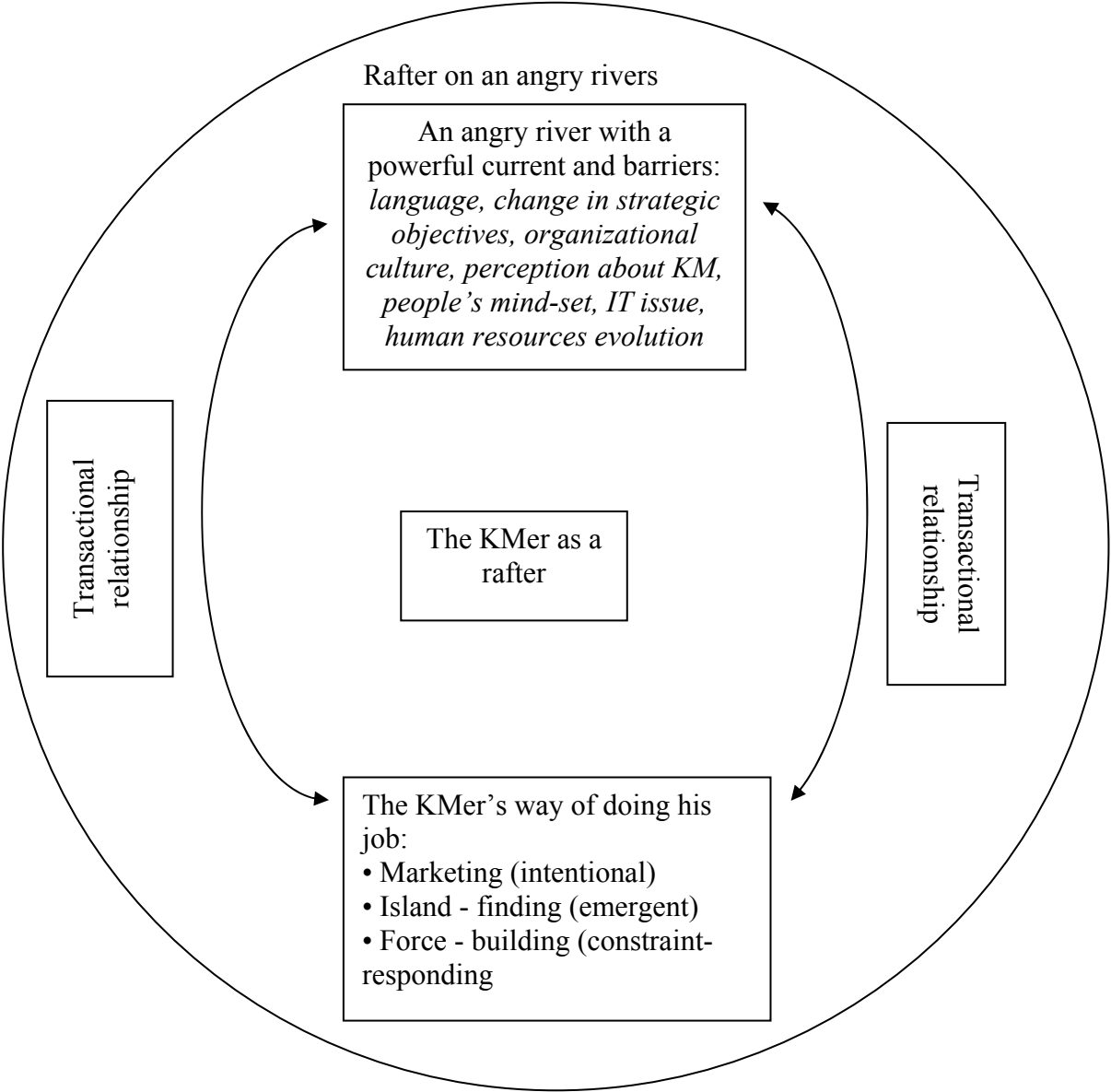
While rafting on the river, the KMers may find some small islands, on which the floating library may be protected from white water and dangerous features for some time. They try to identify such islands and take advantage of their existence and emergence in order to simplify their life as KMers. Although the KMers may or may not plan in advance the island-finding action, it is emergent to the extent that the

KMers cannot deliberately create the islands. They can just deliberately or non-deliberately find the islands that have already existed or are about to emerge for their purpose. The possible islands may include favorable organizational changes, organizational events, and existing organizational processes.

As rafters on a raging river, the KMers just have the floating boat and paddles as the fighting instrument. In order to realize the marketing activities more effectively and find out the islands more easily, the KMers need to make them stronger by gathering external force. The force-building action is constraint-responding to the extent that it is the way they counter the constraints of its limited strength and tools in order to deal with the angry river more easily. Depending on the individual KMer, this action may be planned or unplanned. The sources of external force consist of the personal network of the KMers and their network of strategic helpers, who help them maintain, nourish the knowledge sharing database, and reach the end-users. An important group of strategic helpers is the top level managers and managers of strategic functions, such as performance managers. The role of the sponsors is critical because they are able to convince the employees of the importance of sharing knowledge. More importantly, having the support from the sponsors, the KMers' process of carrying out their activity is facilitated. They can more easily find out the floating islands and conduct more successfully the marketing activities.

Among the three categories of actions undertaken by the KMers, only the marketing one is intentional. The other two categories may or may not be intentional, depending on the individual KMers. To sum up, the experience of being a knowledge manager as a rafter on an angry river with a powerful current and many obstacles can be represented in the following diagram.

Figure 8: Summary of themes and sub-themes



## CHAPTER 7: THE SEVEN KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS SPEAK

This chapter will present the paradigm case analysis, which is based on the results of the thematic analysis approach discussed in the previous section. The sub-themes and themes will be re-discussed to present the particularity of each individual knowledge manager with regard to each of those themes and sub-themes. Based on the antenarrative approach to theme analysis proposed by Boje (2001), what gets left out of the themes and taxonomy cages and what goes on between those themes in each individual story will be identified. In this way, seven different lives of being a knowledge manager in a multinational will be presented.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the intrinsic goal of the KMers is to build a position and make a name for knowledge management in the organization. Based on this dimension, the KMers participating in this study can be divided into three groups. Carol and Helen are the KMers, who have been able to contribute to build a relatively solid position for knowledge management. Alex, Christina, Mary, and Kathy are the ones, who are still struggling with their contribution in order to make people accept the knowledge sharing culture and the knowledge sharing database. Yvon is the KMer, who has decided to give up. These three categories of KMers can be described as *the contented*, *the struggling*, and *the defeated*, respectively.

Based on the themes and sub-themes discussed in the previous chapter, the following elements in their stories are examined:

- The mission of the KMer
- The zone of the river and its corresponding obstacles on which the individual KMer does his rafting
- The concrete strategizing actions in three categories that each KMer undertakes to deal with his corresponding zone of river: marketing, island-finding, and force-building

Besides, four other elements, which are unique to each individual story, are discussed. They include:

- The means and tools besides the supporting forces that each individual KMer creates to facilitate his own concrete actions
- The transactional relationship with the environment, as experienced by each individual KMer, in which he/she comes up with the three categories of strategizing action
- The dominance of the building and dwelling modes in each of the categories of action
- The overall rafting experience as perceived by each individual KMer

The following sections will present the stories of the seven knowledge managers participating in this study.

### I. The defeated: Yvon's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Yvon in his experience can be summarized in the following table.

Table 8: Yvon's story

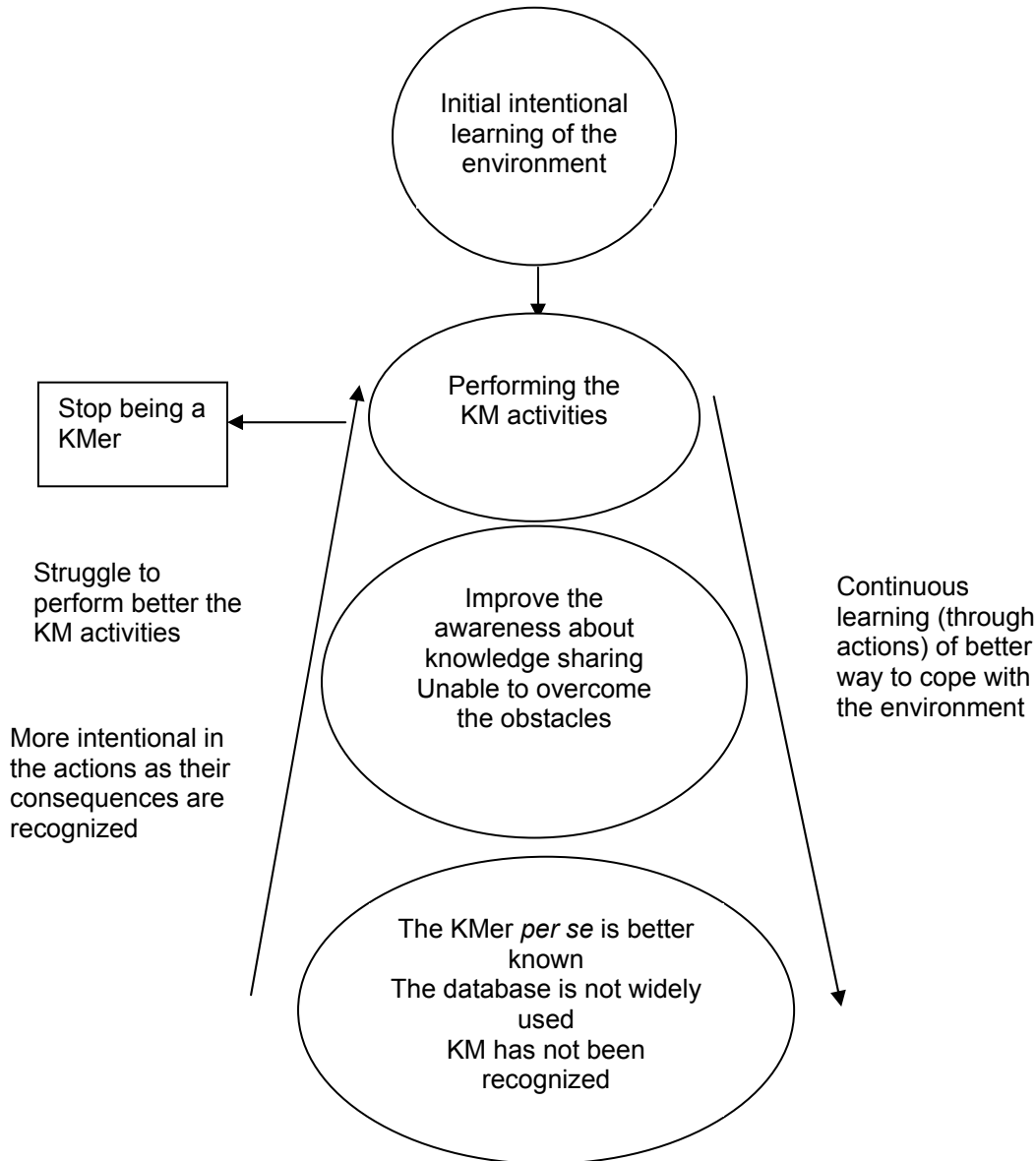
<b>Missions</b>	Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life: sharing database oriented Play a small role in taking care of the sharing database
<b>River zone</b>	Newly integrated river zone Organizational culture is different The long knowledge management history of the organization is unknown to people in this area.
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	Language barrier IT issues Non-strategic position of knowledge management and its consequences
<b>Marketing actions</b>	Promotion aspect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people to use the database</li> <li>• Convince people to use and contribute to the sharing database during the training sessions</li> <li>• Keep people informed of the evolution in the sharing database</li> </ul> Product aspect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make a user-friendly image of the sharing database by translating knowledge documents</li> <li>• Contribute to make an active image of the sharing database by collecting knowledge documents from contributors</li> </ul> Segmenting the customers to carry out marketing actions
<b>Found islands</b>	Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	Rely on the strategic helpers to facilitate the KMer's job <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR function</li> </ul> Rely on the strategic helpers for communicating and educating purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training function</li> <li>• Technical experts and their superiors</li> </ul>
<b>Means and tools</b>	Technical knowledge, training materials, ready-made training materials for the strategic helpers, e-newsletter, mailing list of end-users, survey of database usage, positioning language training and IT conditions as the prerequisites for doing knowledge management

Yvon is the KMer in China. He is a part-time KMer since he also has a training mission. He has been doing the job in the cement branch for about three years. Yvon's job location is in the technical center in Asia. The mission of Yvon is related to the aspect of making people accept the sharing database as part of their working life. He also plays a small part in taking care of the sharing database. Yvon has decided to quit the KMer position. He makes up *the defeated* category of the KMers.

Overall, rafting for Yvon is "an interesting experience without a satisfying achievement". It is interesting because he has the opportunity to learn many new things, such as cement technical knowledge that is needed in delivering training sessions to people. He also likes the fact that he has chance to get direct contact with plant people, know their feeling and understanding, to see the reality. This is something that "one cannot have working in an office".

It can be seen that embedded in Yvon's experience of being a KMer is a transactional relationship in the sense of Dewey between him and the organizational context. This relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 9: The transactional relationship between Yvon and the organizational context



At the beginning, when he first started the job, he was excited and ambitious, “like a young graduate”. He did not know what was going to happen. Then he realized that there were many new things to learn in order to do this job. Getting to know the sharing database and technical knowledge in cement production is the very first thing he had to do. After this initial phase, Yvon put his “feet down on the ground” and faces with the reality. That was when he got to understand gradually the organizational context for his job as a knowledge manager.

Yvon plans to do marketing action because he is explicitly assigned with that task. Gradually he realizes that the action helps increase the awareness about knowledge management and the sharing database. Realizing this important consequence of the marketing action makes Yvon keep up with his job. He believes that “in terms of generating awareness... it still helps”. In his own words: “practically



people need to know, so I will deliver it, even though it is not feasible for them to use it right now but there is some meaning to run it, with the current situations, there are so many difficulties, it still has some meaning”.

The way Yvon carries out the marketing action can be seen as very purposive and responsive to each particular situation. First, he segments his customers and “customizes the training content and the e-newsletter content whenever needed”. Second, as plants in China are scattered through out the country and Yvon cannot go freely everywhere he wants to deliver training due to restricted budget. Consequently, whenever he goes to a given plant for a training mission, he takes the opportunity to give a knowledge management training session in that plant or in the near-by plants. He describes this way of providing training as “catching chances”, because all depends on how his training mission goes.

It is by delivering training that Yvon starts to recognize that the most prominent obstacles for him are the language barrier and IT issues. And it is through trying to overcome the language and IT obstacles that Yvon experiences the non-strategic position of knowledge management. He states that people are “kind of lazy”, because they see no need in learning English for an activity that is “important but not urgent”. While he approaches plant management to persuade them to equip people with adequate IT facilities, he often feels that the local management is not willing to spend on something that is not a priority for them.

In order to carry out effectively his marketing actions, Yvon unwittingly becomes an island-finder and a force-builder. It is not planned at the beginning for him to get help from the strategic helpers and locate the existing islands on the river.

The main islands that Yvon has been able to find out are the regular organizational events in which he can communicate about the sharing database and convince the strategic helpers to provide help. For example, he always tries to “take advantage” of the network meetings of the technical experts, in which he “integrates a short presentation on the subject of knowledge management”.

Yvon simply wants to gather “more people and more hands” to do his job, thereby becoming a force builder. The strategic helpers that Yvon mobilizes daily at work include the technical experts, their superiors in the technical center in China, BU training managers, and plant training officers. These people are supposed to provide technical assistance and training to plants. They can help convince the end-users and contributors that there exists a sharing database that is useful for them. He acknowledges: “without them I would not be able to do the job”. Yvon’s direct superior and the technical center’s director are very supportive. Yvon states that: “this helps my job very much”. The HR function is also a group of strategic helpers in Yvon’s experience. He attempts to convince the HR function to put in the objectives of the training and IT personnel the missions related to knowledge management. The difficulty with this is the fact that knowledge management is important but not a strategic priority of the organization. This group of strategic helpers is not very much ready to take into consideration his proposal.

It is interesting to note that as Yvon continues in his job, he realizes that island-finding and force-building actions are very helpful for his job. He becomes more intentional in taking advantage of the organizational events and seeking for help from the strategic helpers.

Gradually in his life as a knowledge manager, Yvon sees that his efforts have made certain impact. From time to time, he receives e-mails that people ask for help with regard to the sharing database. "The implication is that people are trying to visit this library". With regard to the level of contribution to the sharing database, there is certainly some visible improvement thanks to the help of his strategic helpers. The number of knowledge documents he has been able to get increases.

However, the language and IT obstacles are so significant for Yvon that he does not see how to overcome them. He feels "small" on the river. For him, they are something, which he cannot control; they are not for him to change and he has to accept. He is not satisfied with his achievement and at the same time feels like being "in the middle of the forest without being able to find out a way out".

One change as part of the running current came up and evokes Yvon the possibility of quitting his rafting. That is the departures of some people in his training function, which gives him extra workload in non-KM mission and compels him the need to distribute his energy more reasonably to achieve some good results. Yvon decides to give up the KMer position because he "does not have the courage to continue another year or two". Overcoming the two obstacles mentioned above is "difficult, too challenging, and very difficult to see the future". Moreover, the non-KM missions are more meaningful to him, for which he can bring faster results, and in which he has a "greater degree of control".

## **II. The struggling**

The particularity of the context of the struggling group is that there is a long history of knowledge management development. For twenty years, there have been many different initiatives to codify and stock knowledge in one common sharing database, which is dedicated to only the technical population of the company. Due to some recent significant organizational changes, the term knowledge management has been adopted for those initiatives. There are some special contextual features, which are unique to this group of KMers and make their river zone much more troubled than that of their homologues.

First, the previous initiatives have made people relatively hostile toward the sharing database. This negative image stems from the obstacles mentioned previously, especially the language and IT issues. Language of the database is English and French, which is not understandable for many users. The transfer of the sharing database from Lotus Notes to the Web has made people get lost because the interface was completely changed. Moreover, the previous KMers were not able to build a user-friendly image for the sharing database. The complex structure of the database, together with the password problem, makes it time-consuming and frustrating to find a document. In fact, "il y a une perte de confiance" and people "boycott" the sharing database (Christina). As "la démarche précédente nous a fait amène un peu dans un sac" (Alex) because "les gens sont empeignés des démarches qu'ils

avaient eu avant, dont ils retiennent plus facilement les échecs que les succès", a major challenge of this group of KMers is to "récupérer la confiance des gens et des utilisateurs" (Christina).

Second, the KMers have to work in line with the existing norms of knowledge management. In the words of Alex, "tu n'arrives pas pour tout remettre a zéro et créer quelque chose. Tu arrives avant tout pour maintenir la dynamique et rajouter ta couche" on what have been developed for twenty years. The previous efforts in knowledge management have identified the experts in the technical centers as holders of knowledge, who feed the sharing database. Plant contributions to the sharing database have to go through a long validation process with the experts, the spirit of "giving and receiving knowledge by everybody" is thereby lacking. The experts are supposed to be the main people having knowledge to share. This limits the sources of valuable knowledge and hinders the KMers from creating an effective sharing of knowledge.

Third, given the long history of knowledge management in the organization, the demand of the organization for new initiatives has saturated. The KMers have to continue the previous efforts, keep running the system, improve the ineffective initiatives and make the good ones work better. The effort to further develop knowledge management is not requested by the organization. Alex states that

On arrive à la fois un niveau de saturation, c'est-à-dire que on en fait plus que l'organisation est capable de assimiler en terme de démarche KM, on arrive à la saturation en terme de qu'est-ce que l'organisation est capable de promouvoir, ca y est, on promeut assez, on peut pas encore faire la pub en plus, on a déjà dépensé l'argent là-dessus ou du temps.

This group has not been able to build place for the knowledge management function in the organization. The culture of sharing knowledge via the sharing database is still lacking. The usage and contribution to the database are insignificant. This is shown by the fact that the number of visitors to the sharing database is trivial (Alex). In the words of Mary, it is "peau de chagrin".

### 1. Christina's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Christina in her experience can be summarized in the following table.

Table 9: Christina's story

<b>Missions</b>	Take care of the sharing database Play a small role in making the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life: sharing database oriented
<b>River zone</b>	Long-time integrated river zone Long history of knowledge management
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	Non-strategic position of knowledge management and its consequences Perception of people about knowledge management IT issues Human resources changes <i>Indirect obstacles:</i> Organizational culture:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of direction for knowledge management</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing culture</li> </ul> <p><i>Indirect obstacles unique to this group:</i> Hostility towards the sharing database</p>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	<p>Communication aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the other KMers and the strategic helpers informed of the evolution in the sharing database</li> </ul> <p>Product aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make a user-friendly and active image of the sharing database by making updates, maintenance, improvements, and nourishing actions</li> </ul>
<b>Found islands</b>	N/A
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	<p>Rely on the strategic helpers to take care of the sharing database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical experts</li> </ul>
<b>Means and tools</b>	<p>Mail de push, model of knowledge distribution process, teamwork space for the KM team, recapitulating table of archive of documents and their characteristics, Industrial knowledge newsletter, online broadcasting tools</p>

Christina is a full-time KMer in France. She has been in the position for about one year. In the past, she worked as an administrative assistant for an expert in the performance department. Her mission focuses mainly on taking care of the sharing database. She is responsible for nourishing, maintaining and updating the database. Due to the unique contextual characteristics of her group, she also does auditing of the content that has already existed in order to make all possible improvements. Christina is not in direct contact with end-users and contributors. Although her responsibility has a back-office nature, it is very important to the extent that "ça permet de maintenir quand même un minimum de vie à nos outils, qui contiennent le savoir".

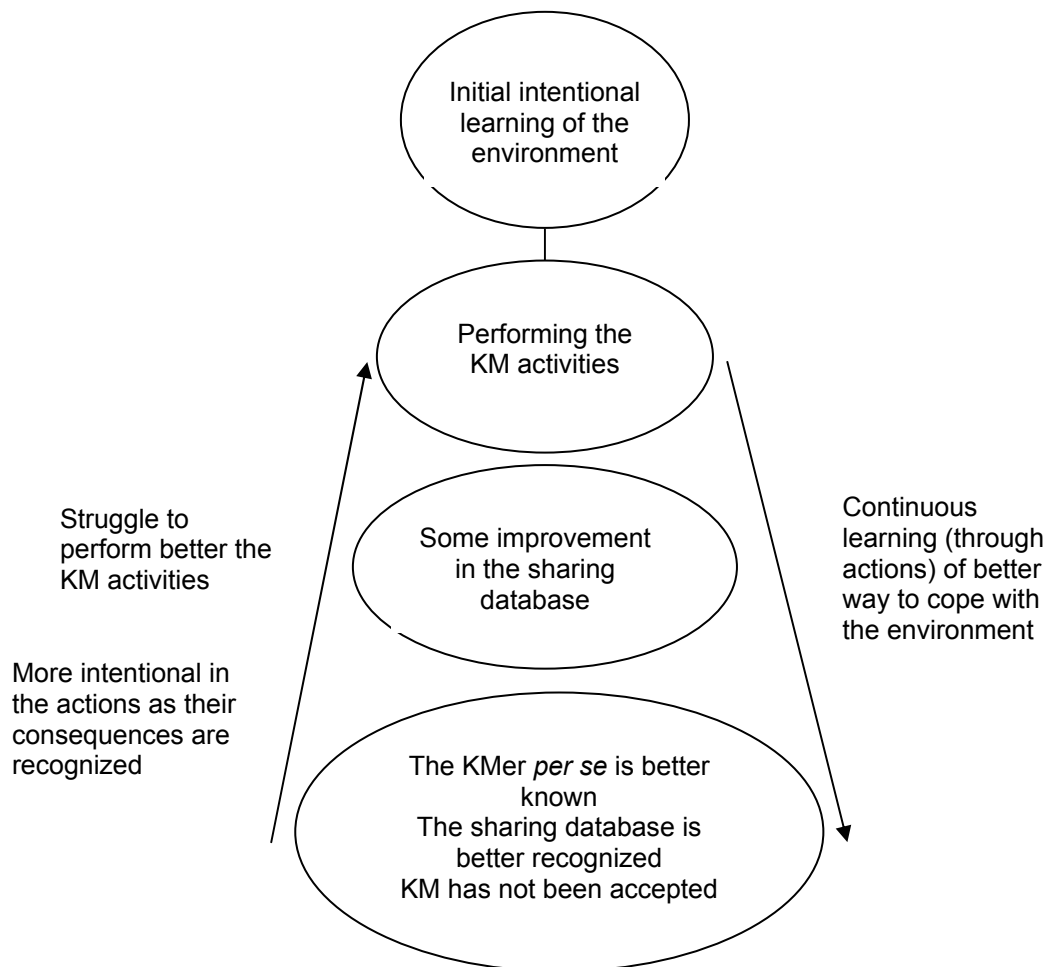
Rafting is a very meaningful experience for Christina. She had been working as a secretary for about twenty years before joining the knowledge management function. Moving to this position is a great opportunity for her to turn to a new page in her career. She really enjoys her job. For her, it is a multi-faceted position, which is related to communication, document management, knowledge management, as well as IT issues. She learns many new things while doing this job. In her own words: "J'apprends plein de choses auxquelles j'avais jamais été confronté avant, sur des sujet que je connaissais pas. Donc pour moi c'est intéressant d'un point de vue personnelle".

Christina has always been motivated. She explains: "je ne connais pas l'historique de KM chez Lafarge, ca fait juste un an que je suis dans ce poste... si j'étais depuis cinq ans dans le poste et que les choses ne bougeaient pas, peut-être je finirai par être démotivé, mais pour l'instant non". Moreover, Christina has been able to understand and accept that "il ne faut pas se décourager et prendre conscience que les choses prennent du temps, en tout cas ici pour faire bouger les choses il faut du temps".

Christina strategizes to do rafting on her river zone through a process of learning by taking purposeful and purposive actions within the organizational context. There is also a transactional relationship in the

sense of Dewey between Christina and her context. This relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 10: The transactional relationship between Christina and the organizational context



At the beginning, nothing was clear for her. Christina remembers that she did not even know exactly what she was going to do. It was not necessarily "très facile ni agréable", but gradually "on voit un peu près les choses qui se profilent". Alex helped her to get to know her river zone through some discussions which "remettre des choses noir sur blanc". Then by actually doing the job, she discovers "little by little" the real experience of being a knowledge manager. Over time, Christina is able to "avancer plus vite", "suggérer, avoir des idées, faire des propositions". She is still learning while managing to do her daily job. "I have always been in that phase", she says.

Auditing, maintaining, and nourishing the sharing the database are the intentional actions undertaken by Christina. Over time, she starts to appreciate the role of these actions because of the benefits they bring. She believes that "ça permet de maintenir quand meme un minimum de vie euh... à nos outils, qui contiennent le savoir, et que c'est évident que si si on maintient pas le contenu, si on informe pas les gens sur ce qu'on a de nouveau, on va perdre... d'abord on risque de ne plus pouvoir capitaliser ce qu'on a, et puis on risque de perdre complètement les champs de savoir".

In carrying out these actions, Christina has to purposefully seek help from the strategic helpers, who are supposedly the holders of knowledge, thereby building her forces. It is through seeking help from them that Christina experiences the non-strategic position of knowledge management. She does not feel strong motivation and willingness from them. It seems that they have many other priorities and knowledge management is never on the top of their to-do list. Consequently “le temps passe et les choses n’avancent pas forcément”.

Faced with the non-strategic position of knowledge management, Christina has to “faire avec le temps qu’ils veulent nous accorder” and takes purposive actions whenever appropriate to make them collaborate. For example, she always follows up with the strategic helpers to see how they can progress together on different expertise domains in the sharing database, otherwise, nothing would happen. In her own words: “Il faut en permanence se activer, réactiver, fixer une réunion faire le point, leur rappeler que il faut qu’on avance sur tel ou tel point”.

Due to the nature of her responsibility, Christina is directly impacted by the IT obstacles. The sharing database is “un système qui a été élaboré, décidé”. There is no flexibility for Christina to make any changes. For her, it is like filling in a tax declaration form that is not adequately designed, but “on fait avec on a pas le choix”.

Christina works closely with Alex, the head of the knowledge management function. The function belongs to the performance center of the branch, where all performance improvement activities are initiated and carried out. This particularity of her position makes her experience the non-strategic position of knowledge management. Through daily interaction with Alex, Christina finds that the manager of the performance function does not seem to be “très concerné”. Both of them do not know “dans quelle direction on va à moyenne ou long terme”. They do not know whether what they are doing is important, whether “on sert a quelques choses en fait” and “on peut se demander si si des fonctions comme les notres celle de Alex ou la mienne seront maintenues très long temps”. For her, the knowledge management function does not have “une place très évidente”, “on tient ça au bout de bras”.

Through daily interaction with the strategic helpers, Christina realizes that people never spend their whole day looking for knowledge in the sharing database, only by bringing knowledge to them that they will be interested in using it. That prompts her to purposively create an initiative of informing the other KMers and the strategic helpers of updates in the sharing database. Only when statistics shows that usage of a given document increases when people are informed of its arrival, does she recognize the usefulness of that action. She, then, starts to be more intentional in informing end-users.

With the nature of Christina’s responsibilities and her position, the strategizing actions that she undertakes focus mainly on the marketing and force-building dimensions. She does not seek for sponsorship from the top managers. But she does experience this force-building dimension through her interaction with Alex.

Christina has been able to contribute to “récupérer la confiance des gens”. She states: “on est reconnu par la qualité du travail qu’on fait”. However, people’s hostility towards the sharing database “has only

started to change". It is still a long way to go before the sharing database can become an inherent part of people's life and the knowledge management function can have an accepted place in the organization.

## 2. Alex's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Alex in his experience can be summarized in the following table.

Table 10: Alex's story

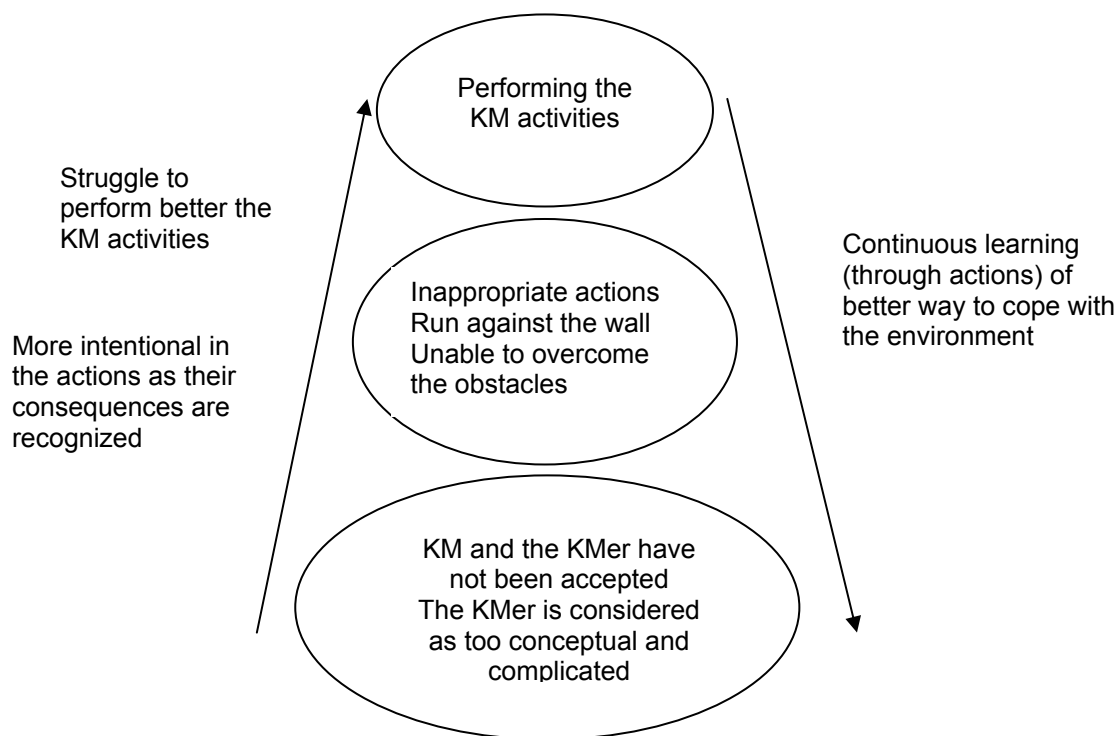
<b>Missions</b>	<p>Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life: sharing database and sharing culture oriented</p> <p>Take care of the sharing database</p> <p>Most directly concerned with the ultimate goal of making a place for KM in the organization</p>
<b>River zone</b>	<p>Long-time integrated river zone</p> <p>Long history of knowledge management</p>
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	<p><i>Obstacles unique to this group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostility towards the sharing database</li> <li>• Existing dynamics of managing knowledge</li> <li>• Saturation in interest in knowledge management</li> </ul> <p><i>Obstacles common with other KMers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing nature of the organizational strategic objectives</li> <li>• Non-strategic position of knowledge management function and its consequences</li> <li>• Organizational culture: the lack of direction from the top management</li> <li>• People's mind-set: inertia of the hostility</li> <li>• Incorrect perception of people about knowledge management and its inertia</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	<p>Communication aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and conduct communication plan and training activities at macro level to promote the knowledge sharing culture</li> </ul> <p>Product aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make a user-friendly image of the sharing database by ensuring and improving the IT quality</li> <li>• Develop new rules and process to optimize the sharing database</li> </ul> <p>Encourage contribution by organizing a competition for the best contribution</p>
<b>Found islands</b>	<p>Existing organizational objectives and priorities</p> <p>Organizational events</p> <p>Existing organizational processes</p>
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	<p>Keep the strategic helpers committed to the knowledge sharing process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical experts and their superiors</li> </ul> <p>Keep contact with the community of knowledge managers for exchanging practices</p> <p>Seek sponsorship from the top managers</p> <p>Look for collaboration with other departments</p>
<b>Means and tools</b>	<p>Definition of objectives and priorities for himself, knowledge sharing module, posters,</p>

	communication stands during organizational events, award 2008 for the best contributions, typology of knowledge documents, identification of organizational objectives and priorities
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Alex is the head of the knowledge management function, in which Christina works. He has been in the position for about three years. Alex is responsible for making the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life and taking care of the sharing database. The job position of Alex makes his responsibility situate on a macro level. He is not responsible for the "petites choses quotidiennes", but rather for developing a favorable context for those concrete tasks. Due to his headship, he is most directly concerned with the mission of making a place for the knowledge management function.

The rafting experience is not very enjoyable for Alex. Dissatisfaction and tiredness can be observed clearly in his experience. His feeling is like "au bout d'un moment, tu t'amuses tout seul sur la piste". It can be seen that embedded in Alex's experience of being a KMer is a transactional relationship in the sense of Dewey between him and the organizational context, in which he learns through intentional actions and practical coping. This relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 11: The transactional relationship between Alex and the organizational context



At the beginning, he was not aware of how difficult it was to be a knowledge manager. He did not realize that in his organization "les choses ne se mettent pas en place", that "pour développer, il faut accompagner la mise en place, il faut s'assurer le sponsorship, et tout ça". Only when taking concrete actions that Alex starts to realize the ferocity of the river zone, on which his position is situated.

One important element that makes up that ferocity is the hostility of end-users toward the sharing database and knowledge management function. This hostility seems very difficult to overcome for Alex



because of the inertia of people's mind-set. He recognizes that "les gens, ils sont empeignés des démarches qu'ils avaient eu avant, dont ils retiennent plus facilement les échecs que les succès...on arrive à faire bouger les organisations mais les esprits et les contenus bougent moins vite".

The long history of knowledge management creates a situation in which the knowledge management function "est comme une vieille dame" and Alex is "trop jeune pour la faire danser". Without technical background and having been in the organization for only three years, he is not considered to be a credible KMer. The sharing database has been in the organization longer than him; he has to work with people, who are more senior than him. The long history has also developed a dynamics that the knowledge management process is supposed to follow. "Il y a quand même une culture, des ancrages qui font que tu ne peux pas tous changer". He uses the term "piège d'autonomie" to describe his situation. Alex can take care of the sharing database the way he wants, but he is not supposed to improve it, it is not his system. Analogically, the situation is: "la vieille dame te demande de la faire danser, mais tu n'es pas le mari, tu va pas décider de changer de partenaire avec qui danser, tu vas pas choisir la musique sur laquelle tu vas danser, par contre c'est à toi de la faire danser".

In the past, knowledge management was considered a strategic priority of the organization. But it is no longer the case. There is a lack of governance on knowledge management. Alex is like an "électron libre", which has to manage by itself to survive in the organization.

Initially, Alex did not recognize right away the necessity of the marketing actions, of finding the islands to shelter the KM activities, and of building stronger force. Wanting to run against the current and remove the barriers too rapidly without sufficient forces made him "glisser sur quelque peau de banane". Through a process of learning by trial and errors, that he terms as "gestation", he has recognized the usefulness of all the three categories of strategizing actions and they become increasingly more intentional in his experience.

However, the way Alex carries out those actions is highly purposive. For example, in terms of marketing dimension, Alex always keeps himself aware of the organizational events, processes, or even daily incidents at work, which are opportunities to convince the strategic helpers and sponsors of the importance of knowledge management. The idea of organizing a competition for the best contributions to encourage further contribution to the sharing database actually emerges from a discussion during an organizational event between Alex and a colleague.

In terms of island-finding actions, Alex tries to make the priorities for the knowledge management function be in line with the strategic objective of the performance department. As the mission of the performance département "has never been clear", he can just be "vigilant sur les événements qui se créent pour pouvoir construire dessus et se tenir prêt".

With regard to the force-building actions, Alex takes advantage of the arrival of new top managers to obtain stronger sponsorship. He stays in touch and maintains the interaction with the strategic helpers to keep them involved in the process. Obtaining help from the strategic helpers is a considerable challenge for Alex, due to his junior status, the non-strategic position of knowledge management, and the incorrect perception of the strategic helpers about knowledge management.

Alex's efforts have contributed to make the knowledge management function be better known in the organization. The sharing database is better organized. The process of maintaining and nourishing is better defined and formalized. The strategic helpers are kept involved in contributing to the sharing database. However, the level of usage is still not considerable; participation of the strategic helpers in the knowledge management process is trivial; Alex has not been able to obtain a strong sponsorship, either at branch, regional, or functional levels.

It is stated by Alex that: "aujourd'hui les graines on a planté pour justement demain semer le changement de comportement, ils n'ont pas encore donné leur fruits". The knowledge management function is still an outsider of the organization, who is not "soumis aux contraintes à des rythmes des usines". He feels that "les activités KM sont vu comme to nice to have" in the organization, "si demain, je m'en vais ou mon poste est ferme, il y a plein de raisons qui pourraient faire que demain nous sommes plus la, ca ne changera pas Lafarge quoi".

Despite all the difficulties in his experience, Alex highly appreciates what he has been able to learn. In his own words: "ces expériences m'ont justement permis de développer les compétences à une certaine employabilité dans le domaine du Knowledge management, et on va dire aussi à la fois sur les aspects Knowledge management, mais aussi j'ai envie de dire, sur les compétences sur ses fonctions qui ne sont pas évidents, ses fonctions qui sont un peu bancales".

### 3. Kathy's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Kathy in her experience can be summarized in the following table.

Table 11: Kathy's story

<b>Missions</b>	Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life: sharing database oriented Play a small role in taking care of the sharing database
<b>River zone</b>	Long-time integrated river zone Long history of knowledge management
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	<i>Obstacles unique to this group:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostility towards the sharing database</li> <li>• Existing dynamics of managing knowledge</li> </ul> <i>Obstacles common with other KMers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-strategic position of knowledge management function and its consequences</li> <li>• Language barrier</li> <li>• IT issues</li> <li>• People's mind-set: inertia of the sharing practice</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	Communication aspect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people to use the database</li> <li>• Convince people to use and contribute to the sharing database during the training sessions</li> <li>• Keep people informed of the evolution in the sharing database</li> </ul> Product aspect:

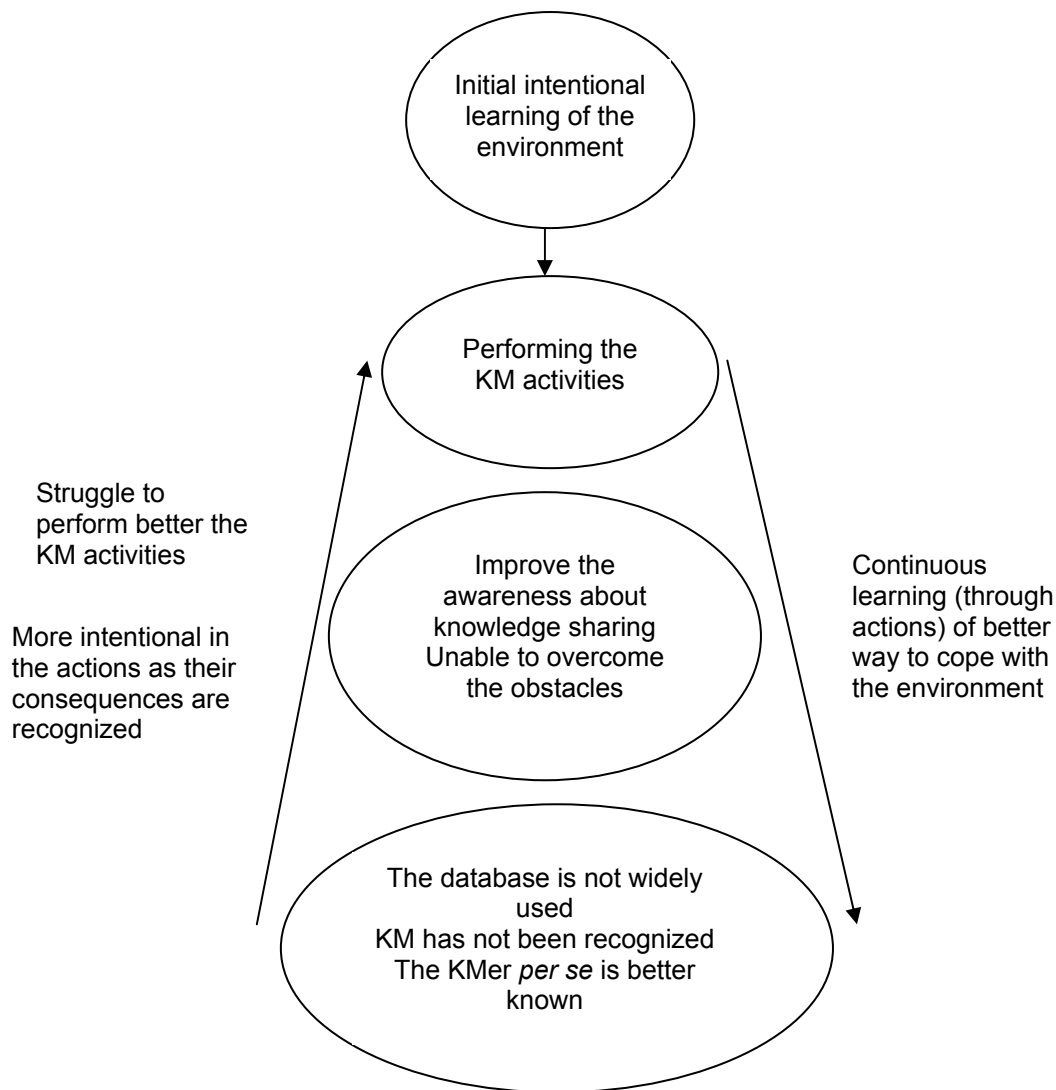
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make an active image of the sharing database by collecting knowledge documents from contributors</li> </ul> Segmenting the customers to carry out marketing actions
<b>Found islands</b>	Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	Rely on the strategic helpers for communicating and educating purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training function</li> <li>• Technical experts and their superiors</li> <li>• Personal network of end-users</li> </ul>
<b>Means and tools</b>	Personal network with the strategic helpers, a mini guide on the sharing database, network of contact people in plants, e-newsletter, training materials and ready-made training materials for the strategic helpers, true success stories on knowledge sharing,

Kathy is a part-time knowledge manager. She also works for the HR department. Kathy has been in the job for about six years. Her work location is in the technical center in Vienna of the branch. Unlike Alex, Kathy deals directly with end-users and contributors. The mission of Kathy is related to the aspect of making people accept the sharing database as part of their working life. She also plays a small part in taking care of the sharing database.

For Kathy, rafting is an enjoyable and interesting experience. She finds what she likes doing being in a knowledge manager position. The position allows her to learn technical knowledge and get contacts with different people. She has always been motivated in doing her job. She has a strong belief that the sharing database is a very good system and it is important to make people use it.

Kathy's rafting experience is a process of intentional and purposive learning to cope with her river zone, which is embedded in the transactional relationship between Kathy and the organizational context in Dewey's sense. It can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 12: The transactional relationship between Kathy and the organizational context



When Kathy started her job, “it was a bit foggy, you did not really know what you should do, what the job was about, everything was new”. And then the knowledge manager’s job description was created, in which “it is clearly stated” what a knowledge manager should do. Kathy recalls that it was “the let’s go phase”, “it was very good” because “we know what our job is”. When Kathy understands more clearly what she is expected in her job, she is “highly motivated” and intentionally starts her marketing actions “to promote the sharing database, to make sure that people know that it exists, and to train people to use it”. Kathy creates for her marketing action a small booklet, which is like a user guide for end-users and helps them learn more quickly how to use the sharing database. This turns out to be an effective tool to help users cope with the complexity of the sharing database at that time.

Kathy relies on the strategic helpers, who are the technical experts in her technical center, to promote the sharing database. This action has a practical-coping nature because the way she does it is: “if there was something new in the refractory part, for example, I talked to the refractory guy and I said look there is information about this, could you explain this to the people by email directly or via me”.

Similarly, Kathy is also in a training network, which serves as her other category of strategic helpers. Kathy explains that whenever she meets the training officers, she always convinces them to tell plant people about sharing knowledge and the sharing database.

The meetings and reunions of experts and plants people are the islands that Kathy is able to find out in order to communicate with people about the sharing database. "If a network meeting is in Vienna", she is "always there" to give a speech on knowledge management.

Gradually, Kathy realizes the importance of seeking help from the strategic helpers and finding islands. She starts trying to find other ways to reach her end-users. By relying on the technical experts' superiors, she starts to get direct contacts with the plants in order to organize her training sessions. She has also been able to integrate a session on the sharing database within the technical training program and the training program for newly recruited engineers. "The idea came up at the same time when the training sessions are organized". She did not really examine in fullest details to see whether it was a good option. For her, it was simply something "logical" to do.

As Kathy is in direct contact with end-users, she experiences the "big problem" of language and IT issues make her life "really hard". Some few drawbacks that she has in her experience are when the sharing database was moved to a new infrastructure. She was "very angry" because instead of having a better system, "it was really a mess" and nothing worked. Kathy's acceptance of this obstacle is seen clearly in her discourse with her training participants. She always tells them that: "this is what we have and we have to use it everyday. Do not complain, it's the way it is and we have to live with it".

It is through training activity and seeking help from the strategic helpers that Kathy feels the hostility and the lack of interest of people towards the sharing database. She says: "you somehow get the feeling why people don't want to use and don't want to contribute, and somehow find a way to overcome them". Some of the strategic helpers are skeptical about knowledge management. Through her training, Kathy also feels the inertia of people's lack of interest towards the sharing database. She says that: "there are people who will not use it even if we tell them that it is a good thing and so on. For the last 20 years I did not use it, so I will not use it now".

Thanks to the training activities, Kathy has been able to establish a network of contact people in plants: "after the training I know a lot of people. So in each plant I know someone". It is this network of contact people and the strategic helpers, who help her keep each group of end-users updated of changes in the sharing database and providing them with relevant and useful knowledge. It is also these networks that help Kathy distribute her e-newsletter, which is sent out every six weeks to keep "the awareness alive".

After the "let's go" phase in her rafting experience, Kathy continues doing her job. "Everything was running fine". But due to the change in organizational strategic objective, Kathy experiences a new phase, the present phase, in which the non-strategic position of the knowledge management function is felt strongly. For the time being, it is not easy to do her job because people have to devote their time and efforts to the existing priorities. Kathy notes that: "I think it would help me if the pressure given by the management was still there". In this phase, the lack of clear direction from the top management is

felt poignantly by Kathy during her interaction with other KMers. She says: “at one point I had the feeling that we are there, but that’s it... this was very sad”. Kathy calls this phase as “knowledge manager, where do we go?”

In some way, Kathy has been able to make the sharing database known and increase the awareness of knowledge sharing. People would share knowledge less often if she did not do anything, but the achievement is not sufficiently significant “to call it a change in the organization”.

Overall, Kathy is somewhat passive in dealing with her river zone. In comparison with her peers, she easily lets herself be moved on by the powerful current. For example, this can be seen in the way she organizes the training sessions in plants. She just does it on request and is not very “pushy” from her side. It is like: “ok I offer it and if you don’t take the offer, ok”. Similarly, Kathy’s performance is evaluated by her line manager, who does not give her specific objectives related to knowledge management. She knows that she does not fulfill her mission, but she is “just happy to do it that way” and does not “see any way to change it”.

#### 4. Mary’s story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Mary in her experience are summarized in the following table.

Table 12: Mary’s story

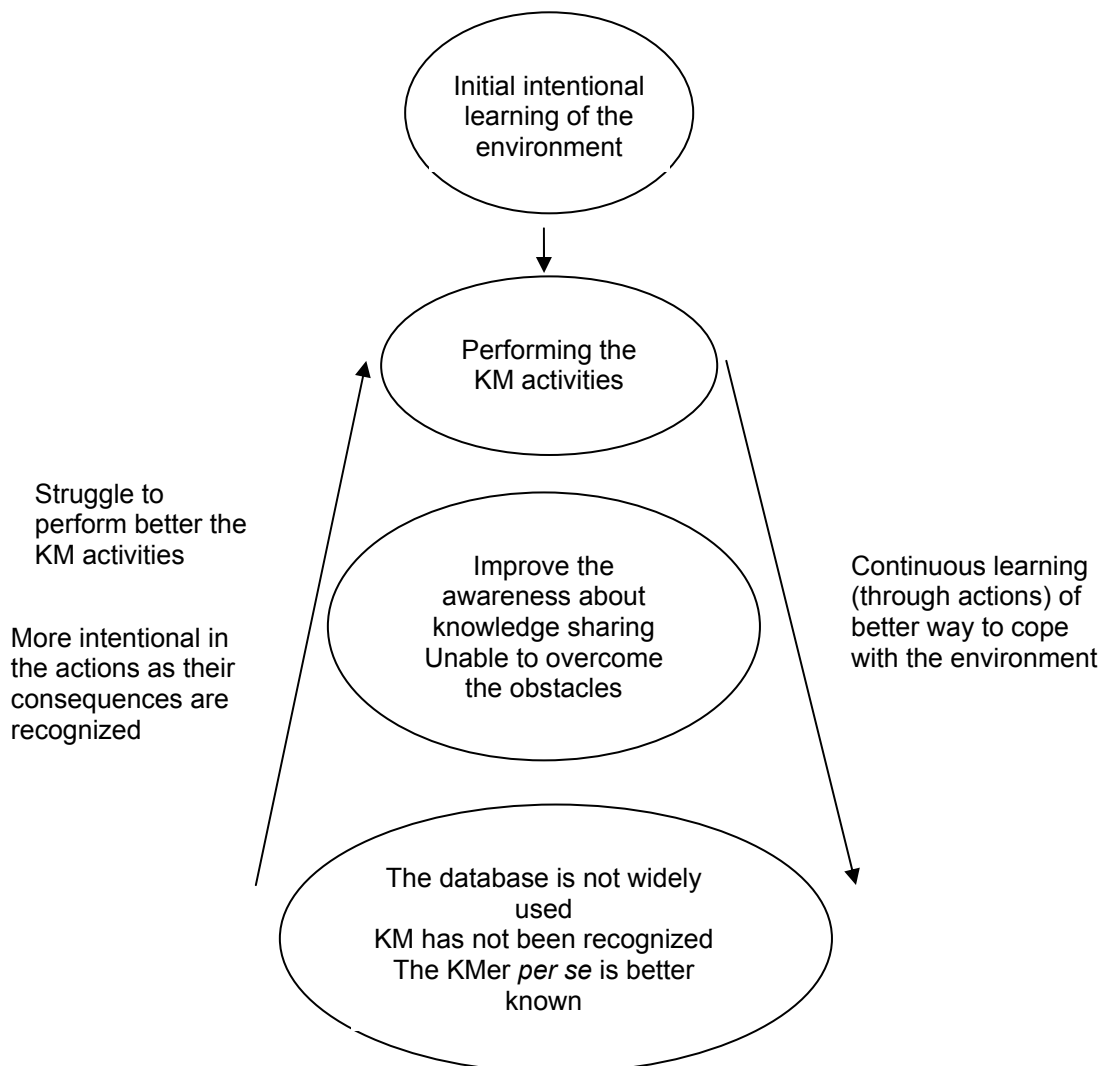
<b>Missions</b>	Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people’s working life: sharing database oriented Play a small role in taking care of the sharing database
<b>River zone</b>	Long-time integrated river zone Long history of knowledge management
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	<p><i>Obstacles unique to this group:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostility towards the sharing database</li> </ul> <p><i>Obstacles common with other KMers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing nature of the organization’s strategic objectives</li> <li>• Non-strategic position of knowledge management and its consequences</li> <li>• Organizational culture: lack of knowledge sharing culture</li> <li>• Changes in human resources</li> <li>• Language barrier</li> <li>• IT issues</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	<p>Communication aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people to use the database</li> <li>• Convince people to use and contribute to the sharing database during the training sessions</li> <li>• Keep people informed of the evolution in the sharing database</li> </ul> <p>Product aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make an active image of the sharing database by collecting knowledge documents from contributors</li> </ul> <p>Segmenting the customers to carry out marketing actions</p>

<b>Found islands</b>	Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	Rely on the strategic helpers for communicating and educating purpose: • Technical experts and their superiors
<b>Means and tools</b>	Training materials, having faith in knowledge management, ability to resist to users' hostility, list of contact people in plants, personal network with the strategic helpers, e-newsletter

Like Yvon and Kathy, Mary is a part-time KMer. She has training mission besides the knowledge management mission. She has been working in the position for about six years. Her job location is in the technical center in France. Mary deals directly with end-users and contributors. The mission of Mary is like that of Yvon and Kathy. It is related to the aspect of making people accept the sharing database as part of their working life. She also plays a role in taking care of the sharing database.

For Mary, her river zone is rough with many difficult obstacles, but rafting is an interesting experience with many positive aspects. She sees that rafting is uneasy but the thrill it brings makes her excited and motivated. Mary's rafting experience is a process of learning to deal with her river zone and its obstacles through the transactional relationship in the sense of Dewey between her and the organizational context. This relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 13: The transactional relationship between Mary and the organizational context



At the beginning, she was “very enthusiastic about the job”, as it corresponded to her ability and her career aspiration. For her, there were many “motivating things to do” and to learn in the post. She started by getting to know the sharing database and the organizational context through interacting with different people.

Then Mary carries out the knowledge management activities. It is when she conducts the concrete marketing actions and does not “prendre le recul”. The intentional marketing action that Mary undertakes is to provide training sessions to people in plants about the sharing database. She travels to different plants to deliver her training sessions. Like Yvon, the way Mary organizes training to end-users is purposive. She says: “il faut tout le temps solliciter les usines pour moi-même programmé mes missions”. It is “toute une phase qui est lourde, qui est : ah oui ça existe”, but Mary sees this phase as “extraordinary” because she has chance to meet different people from different cultures and speaking different languages.

During this phase, Mary encounters IT and language obstacles. The training sessions are often “le grand moment” for Mary. The password issue has made people fed up with using the sharing database. Mary describes the situation as “les gens, ils en ont ras de bol”, “c’est la catastrophe”. The changing nature of IT makes many of her efforts “tomber à l’eau” because the initiatives are no longer applicable to the new infrastructure. She goes to plants to do training, and then “des fois tu revenais trois semaines un mois après, tous les systèmes après a été changé, que du bonheur”.

Mary also undergoes the changing nature of organizational strategic objectives. In the past, when she started her job, knowledge management was “inscrit dans le projet Leader for tomorrow, où là effectivement le transfert a été clairement identifié, clairement écrit, lu par tout” and “ça nous a beaucoup aidé”. Then the organization moves the focus to other priorities and for the time being, Mary does not see any clear strategy of the company on the subject. The knowledge management function exists, but “ne fait que ramer”.

Consequently the way she accomplishes her mission has a very significant practical-coping nature. In her own words: “tu es ton propre acteur, c’est toi qui mets en place tes outils, c’est toi qui mets en place des choses qui te bougent”. This makes her become “initiatrice de beaucoup de choses”. For example, Mary has been able to find out a better channel to deliver training to plant people, an island on which her mission can be achieved more easily. It is the technical training and the training programs for newly recruited engineers, which are organized in her technical center.

Unlike her homologues, initially Mary did not segment the end-users. She remembers that “pour moi, il fallait tout dire à tout le monde”. Then she realized that “il y a un truc qui ne va pas”, and that people were very hostile towards the sharing database. She underwent a stressful period, in which she did not feel motivated being in the position: “j’avais franchement ras de bol”. By the time she is able to reach end-users through the training channel, Mary starts to recognize the importance of making the training materials relevant to different groups of participants. In Mary’s words: “je me suis dit : mais attend les pauvres, c’est, comment dire, on peut pas former sur tous”. At the same time, Mary also recognizes the necessity of actively bringing useful knowledge to end-users by sending e-newsletters to different segments of end-users through their mailing lists. She explains: “je croyais qu’ils vont aller chercher



l'information tout seul comme les grands... mais en fait tu dois amener l'information chez l'utilisateur". It is through practical coping with her situation that Mary becomes more intentional in this marketing action.

As Mary delivers training to end-users, she experiences strongly the absence of the culture of sharing knowledge. She sees that people tend to be: "je mets mon coude, et les autres, il ne faut pas qu'ils les copient sur ce que je fais". With the arrival of the younger generation, the situation is improving because they have "plus d'habitude de se servir aussi du système web".

Mary builds her own force by relying on the strategic helpers. This action of Mary is intentional to the extent that she is aware that "il ne faut pas s'amuser à travailler seul". But the way she obtains help from them has a purposive nature. She explains: "il faut avoir son propre réseau des fois pour avoir une information. On devient, on est beaucoup plus informé, notifié sur ce qui se passe dans chaque domaine".

In Mary's rafting experience, "à force des actions", she has been able to learn that dealing with her river zone requires an orchestration with the environment and not to "se mettre contre-courant". This approach is not easy, as "il faut peut-être du sang neutre aussi de temps en temps là-dedans". She says: "Ça intéresse personne. C'est bien, tant pis. Mais moi, je ne prends plus la tête. Mais après les gens ils m'appellent, je vais leur montrer, ce n'est pas grave. Je suis blasé, quand même". For Mary, "il faut la foi pour travailler dans le knowledge management".

Mary has been able to make her own place in the organization. When people have problems with the sharing database, they know that she is the right person to contact. She has contributed to "démystifier" the sharing database to end-users and "open their eyes" to the benefits of sharing knowledge. She can see daily at work that people start to be interested in looking for knowledge in the database and making their contributions. But "dire que mes actions ont fait un bond à la culture du knowledge management, du knowledge sharing, non".

Overall, for Mary, rafting is uneasy but the thrill it brings makes her excited and motivated. "Il y a des freins, il y a des motivations etc. mais moi c'est un métier qui correspond tout à fait à ce que j'aime faire, animer, utiliser les langues étrangères, aller dans les pays, j'aurais jamais l'occasion à faire par moi-même. C'est une richesse à côté de ça, ce qui est extraordinaire personnellement en tout cas".

### **III. The contented**

At Lafarge, each branch has its own approach in knowledge management. Carol and Helen are not in the same branch as the other five knowledge managers. In their branch, knowledge management does not have a long history. The function has been in place for about eight years. One significant contextual difference for this group is the absence of experts. There are no ones having the status of holder of knowledge. There are only different communities with a head in each expertise. They are the actors, who are expected to help the knowledge managers in maintaining and nourishing the database. Carol comments: "les choses sont plus faciles du coup. Il n'y a pas ce savoir qui est gardé au main des experts, qui auraient tendance à garder le savoir pour eux".

Thanks to the absences of experts, for eight years, the branch has chosen to make everybody involve in sharing knowledge. Anyone, regardless of hierarchical level and expertise domain, has something to share with others and can learn something from others. The validation process of plant contribution is, thus, simpler than in the case of the other five knowledge managers.

The network of strategic helpers and regional sponsors has already existed since the beginning. In each Business unit of the branch, there is one sponsor, who normally is the director of the Business unit, and a Knowledge manager, who plays the role of a regional relay for the knowledge management activities. The existence of regional sponsors and knowledge managers was initially limited to a small number of business units. The knowledge managers, regional relays of Carol, are often the performance managers, who contribute 20% of their time to knowledge management. There is also a steering committee, in which there are representatives of each region and each function of the company. The role of the steering committee is to approve the important decisions related to knowledge management.

Another contextual advantage of this group is its simple and rapid decision-making process, which makes things much easier for the knowledge managers. Carol notes that: “on n'est pas une branche compliquée finalement, ici on décide avec mon patron un plan d'action, et on y va, voilà, on n'a pas besoin de feu vert plus de n+2, donc ça restera simple”.

The context of this group is similar to the struggling one to the extent that the previous KMers were not able to develop an effective sharing database. It did not work properly and was not seen positively by employees of the organization by the time Carol took over the function. But the hostility of people toward the sharing database is not felt strongly by the KMers in this group.

This group has achieved substantial success in building a place for knowledge management in the organization. Sharing knowledge has gradually become an inherent part of people's working life. For example, in comparison with 2007, the number of knowledge document visited increased by 65% in 2008, with 2850 documents visited on average each month. The monthly number of visitors increased from 520 to 727 in 2008. In terms of contribution, the number of contribution is also on the rise from 150 in 2006 to 160 in 2007 and underwent a growth of 66% in the first five months of 2008.

### 1. Carol's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Carol in her experience are summarized in the following table.

Table 13: Carol's story

<b>Missions</b>	<p>Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life: sharing database and sharing culture oriented</p> <p>Take care of the sharing database</p> <p>Most directly concerned with the ultimate goal of making a place for KM in the organization</p>
<b>River zone</b>	<p>Long-time integrated river zone</p> <p>Shorter history of knowledge management</p>

<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	<p>Non-strategic position of knowledge management and its consequences</p> <p>Perception of people about knowledge management</p> <p>Organizational culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of direction for knowledge management</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing culture</li> </ul> <p>Language barrier</p> <p>IT issues</p>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	<p>Communication aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on other KMers to train and convince people, and keep them informed of the evolution in the sharing database</li> <li>• Conduct annual communication campaign</li> </ul> <p>Product aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to make an active image of the sharing database by collecting and relying on the team members to collect knowledge documents from contributors</li> <li>• Contribute to make a useful image of the sharing database by collecting knowledge documents relevant to existing objectives and priorities</li> </ul> <p>Distribution aspect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to improving the IT quality and ensuring simple archive of documents</li> <li>• Encourage contribution by developing a simple validation process and making public recognition of people's contribution.</li> </ul>
<b>Found islands</b>	<p>Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)</p> <p>Arrival of new top managers</p> <p>Existing objectives of the strategic helpers</p>
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	<p>Rely on the strategic helpers to take care of the sharing database and for communicating and educating purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The other KMers of the team</li> </ul> <p>Seek sponsorship from the top management, the regional managers, and functional directors</p>
<b>Means and tools</b>	<p>Communication campaign, identification of the knowledge sharing barriers, message communicated through out the organization about knowledge sharing, identification of organizational and regional objectives and priorities, learning IT knowledge related to the sharing database</p>

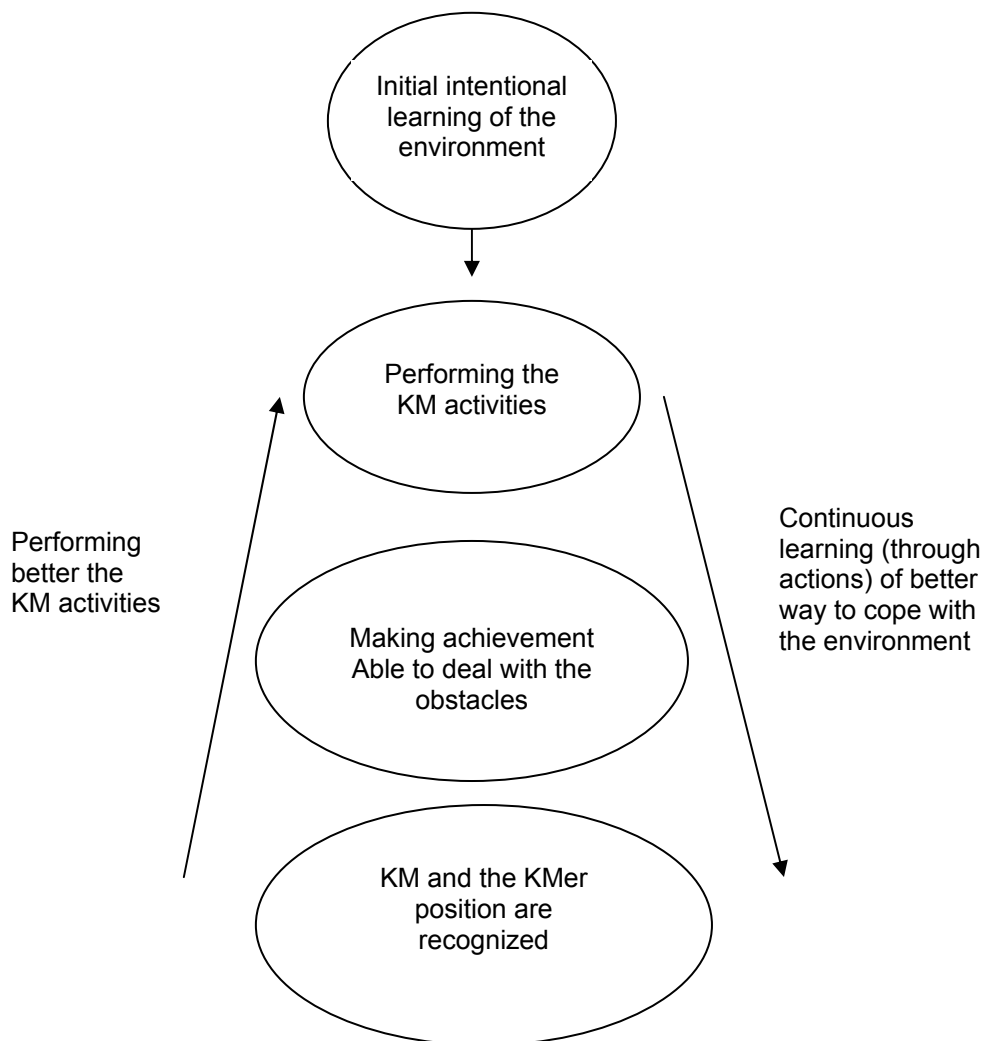
The position of Carol is similar to that of Alex. She is in charge of running the entire knowledge management function in her branch, but does not have hierarchical authority over other knowledge managers. The mission of Carol consists of making the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life and taking care of the sharing database. Like Alex, Carol is most directly concerned with the task of developing an accepted place for knowledge management in the organization.

For Carol, rafting is challenging, but she has been able to overcome the difficulties and make it an enjoyable experience. Knowledge management function has become an accepted place in her organization. Compared to Alex and the other KMers, the success of Carol comes from her less

difficult context, as well as her ability to identify early in her experience the obstacles and the three categories of strategizing actions to deal with them accordingly.

It can be seen that the transactional relationship between Carol and the organizational context, in the sense of Dewey, is embedded in her experience of being a KMer. It can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 14: The transactional relationship between Carol and the organizational context



Carol plan to investigate her context and to do the marketing, island-building, and force-building actions. But the way they are carried out is coping oriented, as detailed below.

By the time Carol started her job, she realized that the sharing database “n’était pas opérationnel”. So she had to spend more than one year to improve the database. That period was not easy for Carol. She explains: “ça était parfois des moments de grande solitude, quand on apprend de nouveaux disciplines qu'on ne connaît pas”.

At the same time, before undertaking concrete actions, she tried to understand her context, identify the barriers that she would encounter and determine an appropriate approach in accomplishing her mission. She is well aware that “ma mission et le contexte seront forcément liés”, and that knowing the

barriers is crucial in achieving success. Carol is able to recognize her barriers, which are then gradually evidenced as she undertakes overt actions. They include language, IT issues, the non-strategic position of knowledge management, the lack of knowledge sharing culture, and the lack of understanding about knowledge management.

Having identified the barriers, Carol starts to define an appropriate approach to accomplish her mission. In her own words: “Ça ce sont les éléments dont on a bien conscience qu'ils sont importants pour notre stratégie de Knowledge management, et rapidement, on a voulu prendre en compte et travailler sur certains leviers”. Carol intentionally defines early in her experience the marketing and force-building actions. She believes that those actions will help overcome the identified barriers.

Carol relies on other knowledge managers to educate and convince people to use and contribute to the sharing database. They also assist her in maintaining and nourishing the database, in facilitating sharing, and in keeping people informed of updates and arrivals of new knowledge documents. They are the strategic helpers in her case. In each business unit, Carol has one knowledge manager, who dedicates 20% of his time to knowledge management. Except Helen, who is Carol's subordinate, the other knowledge managers are not hierarchically dependent on Carol. To make them work, Carol intentionally defines concrete actions and objectives for them to follow. This is one island that she is able to identify. Their task includes “des choses assez concrètes”. On each aspect, they have concrete objectives for each year, and “ils doivent les tenir”. Nonetheless, it happens that a KMer may be more active and another may be less. It is not entirely under Carol's control. The way she keeps them involved is purposive through “les réunions régulières avec eux tout ensemble”, “et moi je travaille aussi tous les jours avec eux... il y a un vrai suivi quotidien”.

Carol tries to build a useful image for the sharing database by a simple archive of documents and by a standardized format for all documents. She brings “un aide concret” to the Business units by providing knowledge documents in local languages, which are relevant to end-users' business objectives. Every year, Carol “travail avec les Business units, et je leur dis: quelles sont les challenges de votre BU cette année ? ... et bien, sur le site, il y a tel et tel document, qui va vous aider”.

One tool that Carol creates in the scope of the marketing dimension is a communication campaign. The objective of that campaign is to “montrer les engagements du management de la branche, et puis c'est de montrer aux employés concrètement les bénéfices qu'ils ont avec le partage, que ça va bien au-delà d'utiliser les outils intranet, que c'est une façon de travailler”. In fact, deciding to conduct this campaign is like making a bet for Carol. She explains: “les gens ici à ce niveau, si vous voulez, sont pour, mais on s'enfiche un peu quoi. Mais si on fait, c'est bien, si on fait pas, ça ne va pas changer leur vie... C'était à nous de nous débrouiller”.

The campaign obtains significant success, as Carol notes: “ça a donné un succès, ça a donné de la visibilité au Knowledge management dans la branche”. This enables her to expand her network of knowledge managers, who have helped her attract more new users to the sharing database. Again, the way she undertakes this action has a practical-coping nature, because “j'étais toute seule pour aller voir les patrons des BU... Parce que finalement, mon patron m'a dit : va, lâchés dans la nature. Il

me soutenait mais il m'a laissé d'aller de toute seule, sans les appeler avant, les gens, j'envoie une collaboratrice, c'est important, rien”.

Carol also relies on a network of sponsors to do her job. In each business unit, besides a knowledge manager, there is also a sponsor, who is often the business unit director. She is aware that “leur rôle est capital... C'est eux, qui vont montrer aux équipes que c'est un sujet important. Si ils font pas, personne va considérer que le sujet est important”. Carol makes sure they truly devote part of their time to knowledge management by making their role simple and concrete. The principal support that Carol asks from them is to “prendre la parole sur le sujet, donner de la visibilité au sujet, faire comprendre à ses équipes, que si les gens partagent, ils en vraiment tireront le bénéfice” and support the knowledge manager in doing his job.

Another useful force of Carol is the existence of a steering committee, in which there are regional sponsors and representatives of each function, such as marketing, finance, or IT. The committee chief is the branch director, who is also the sponsor at the branch level. They have three unions per year and their role is to “valider des grandes décisions, des grandes options que l'on prend”. By involving them in the approval of the important decisions, Carol is thereby able to give a certain degree of legitimacy to her activities and obtain their support for her decisions.

Carol has been able to find out and take advantage of an island, which is the arrival of new top managers. Before their arrival, “la branche s'était donnée les moyens, mais s'est exprimé pas sur le sujet. Et ça c'est un vrai problème de ne pas avoir la visibilité la dessus”. Being new in their positions, the new top managers send a letter to all employees to remind them of the organizational priorities, and Carol was able to persuade them to put sharing knowledge as one of the priorities, thereby strengthening her force.

Overall, for Carol, rafting is a challenging experience. At the beginning Carol was “un peu ramé” with “des moments solitudes”. Being a knowledge manager makes her “avoir beaucoup de cerne”. However, she has been able to deal effectively with her contextual difficulties and make a place for the knowledge management function. Carol notes that “maintenant aujourd'hui on sent que le knowledge management a un poids, on sent que les choses vont dans le bon sens dans la mesure où les sponsors deviennent plus actifs, plus impliqués, on sent que, on regarde, on prend en considération réellement le Knowledge management”. She has been able to build a place for herself within the organization. Her achievement has made the position known and appreciated by people. She states that: “quand je partirai, je suis sûr qu'il y aura plusieurs personnes qui sont intéressées par le poste. Alors que ce n'était pas le cas quand je suis arrivé”. She likes the specificity of the post of knowledge manager, “c'est de donner du service aux gens avec un aide concrète... c'est de faire de la communication sur une problématique business précise... c'est ce qui m'intéresse dans ce poste”.

## 2. Helen's story

The themes identified in Chapter 6 and the tools created by Helen in her experience are summarized in the following table.

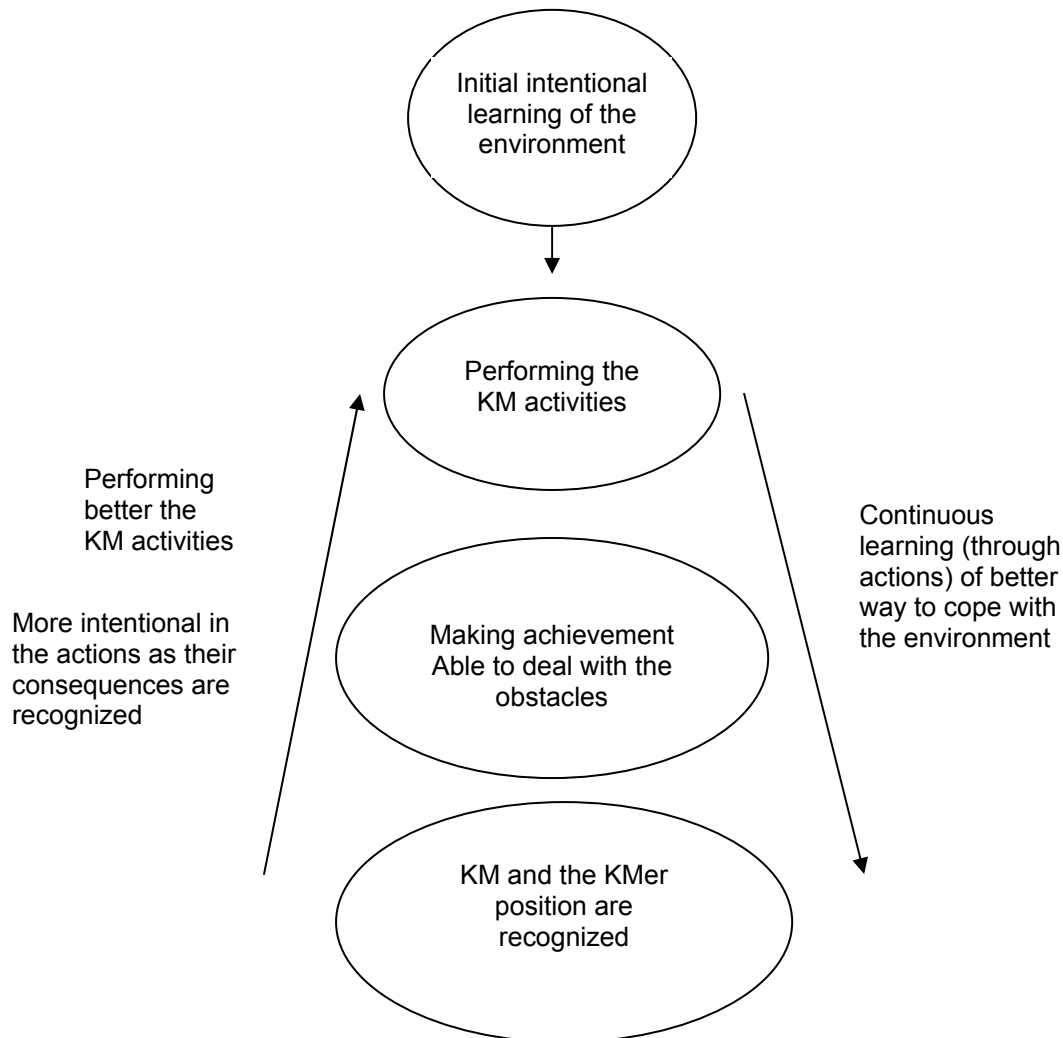
Table 14: Helen's story

<b>Missions</b>	<p>Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life:          sharing database and sharing culture oriented          Take care of the sharing database</p>
<b>River zone</b>	<p>Long-time integrated river zone          Shorter history of knowledge management</p>
<b>Obstacles on the river zone</b>	<p>Changing nature of the organizational strategic objectives          Non-strategic position of knowledge management and its consequences          Organizational culture:          • Knowledge sharing culture          Language barrier          IT issues</p>
<b>Marketing actions</b>	<p>Communication aspect:          • Train people to use the database          • Convince people to use and contribute to the sharing database          • Keep people informed of the evolution in the sharing database          Product aspect:          • Contribute to make an active image of the sharing database by collecting knowledge documents from contributors          • Contribute to make a useful image of the sharing database by bringing to people knowledge documents relevant to their objectives and priorities          Segmenting the customers to carry out marketing actions          Encourage contribution by making public recognition of people's contribution</p>
<b>Found islands</b>	<p>Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)</p>
<b>Strategic helpers</b>	<p>Rely on the strategic helpers to take care of the sharing database and for communicating and educating purpose:          • The community heads          • All senior managers          • Communication departments          Rely on the strategic helpers to overcome IT issues:          • IT department          Network with other people</p>
<b>Means and tools</b>	<p>Schedule of appointments with the strategic helpers, interacting and networking with different people, subscription to association magazines, personal network with communication and IT departments, identification of organizational and regional priorities, true success stories, innovation contest, relationship with suppliers, survey of users' needs and satisfaction</p>

Helen has been working for the company for 14 years and she has been in the position of knowledge manager for 2 years. She works full-time for the post and has Carol as her hierarchical superior. The responsibility of Helen is to take care of the sharing database by maintaining and nourishing it with new knowledge documents. She is also given the objective of motivating people to use and contribute to the sharing database and making it become part of people's working life.

The process of learning through intentional and purposive actions is seen clearly in Helen's transactional relationship in the sense of Dewey between her and the organizational context. This relationship can be represented in the diagram below.

Figure 15: The transactional relationship between Helen and the organizational context



The first phase of her experience is described as to familiarize herself “with the sharing database, with the business processes, with the structure of the organization ... with everything”. The next phase is more about “researching what are the users are looking for, researching what the users have to share and researching what is the best for our organization”. Then she starts “promoting and communicating the benefits and advantages of KS, increasing the utilization of the tools, training the users on how to share knowledge and how to get access to it”, and “maintains and improves all the previous efforts that have been made”. All of these phases come up naturally one after another without Helen deliberately planning for them.

Helen familiarizes herself by networking with many different people and doing a lot of readings. This phase was not totally enjoyable, Helen actually felt very “inadequate” due to her non-technical background. She overcame the difficulty by learning the relevant technical knowledge. She still “feels



that insecurity even now". Those are the difficulties and challenges she feels in her job because "there is no one who can train you'. In order to search for end-users' needs, Helen relies on a survey on users' needs and satisfaction carried out by her predecessor before leaving the post, and "the rest was basically networking and doing random interview, asking people whenever I met them".

After these initial steps, Helen starts to take concrete actions to accomplish her mission. That is when she starts to experience the organizational barriers to her job, which are language, IT issues, the non-strategic position of knowledge management, the incorrect perception of people about knowledge management, and the lack of knowledge sharing culture.

In terms of marketing actions, Helen is supposed to communicate with people and educate them about the benefits of knowledge sharing and the sharing database. She also has to keep people notified of the new arrivals and the improvement in the sharing database. The way she carries out these planned actions is coping oriented. For example, she travels "to the head offices and do a walk around in the offices and talk to people and ask whether they have tried the new tool". Similarly, she brings knowledge to end-users in a purposive way: "because I interact with people a lot, and I can see what some of their needs are. If somebody is looking for something, and I can see that another region has it. I make a mental note... When I see the potentials that I think will be of interest, I talk to the head of community I ask, you know I was at this and this meeting and John was talking about this and this, do you think there is any interest?"

Helen has been able to find out several islands. This action is intentional. One island is the existing strategic objectives on which she attempts to promote the sharing or bring relevant knowledge documents to end-users. However, finding out the strategic objectives of each region cannot be planned in advance. First, they "keep changing all the time". Second, "our leaders are too busy to spend their time to explain to me what they have in mind". Helen has to "picks up their focuses from whatever emails or letters that they send out to people, from the notices that they give on LO today and so on". She "keeps in touch with the heads of community within that region to follow with them what their priorities are and what they want their employees to follow very closely".

Another island is the community meetings in which she can promote knowledge sharing and the sharing database. She tries to "be present at as many of those meetings as possible, so that I could speak about knowledge sharing, the benefits". Such meetings are also occasions for Helen to identify potential knowledge pieces that can be made available for other people. She says: "I identify the hot topic of the day by reading the intranet, by being present at the meetings that taking place, by talking to people... Just keeping in touch and being knowledgeable all the time".

Helen builds her force by relying on the strategic helpers, who are the heads of community. This action is intentional. She plans to contact them on a regular basis to obtain new knowledge for the sharing database, and to rely on them to convince people to share knowledge via the sharing database. They have the power to convince their subordinates of the importance of sharing knowledge. Helen describes the community heads as the "strategic points for the success". Getting help from the strategic helpers causes no difficulty for Helen. She feels that they are willing to help and they see a

value in knowledge sharing. The only problem is that they have many other preoccupations and Helen has to undertake practical coping actions to “be in their face or email them all the time”.

Besides the network of strategic helpers, networking with people and building personal network are very useful for Helen. Her networking is very purposive, as she says: “I interact with people a lot, and I can see what some of their needs are... I just walk around the offices and talk to people and see who are the good targets, good sources, and good resources. I just spend time interacting with people”.

All the three categories of actions are intentional in Helen’s case. But over time she recognizes the importance of these actions. This realization keeps Helen motivated in doing her job, as she sees that what she is doing do bring fruitful results.

Although there are obstacles in Helen’s experience of being a knowledge manager, she still feels that the contextual condition is “absolutely favorable” for her job. It is not a problem for people to share knowledge once she has been able to make them understand the relevance and usefulness. She does not see the turbulence and the obstacles of her river zone as something jeopardizing her life as a knowledge manager.

Like Carol, Helen has been able to build a place not only for knowledge management in the organization but also for her own. The contribution and the usage via the sharing database begin to happen very often. She now has an “open door” wherever she goes. Helen explains: “if I say I’m the KMer and I would like to talk to you about this and this, I’m immediately received very well... In fact even if I want to speak as a KMer of Lafarge North America to a key player in Morocco, if I pick up the phone and I say I’m the KMer, somebody in Canada is looking for a best practice in this and this. That person will immediately feel a connection between Morocco and Canada and speaks to me and tells me I will email you, what is your email address, the connection is immediately established and the door is immediately open”.

Among the KMers in this study, Helen seems to be the one, who is most motivated and enjoys the position the most. She states: “I have not been demotivated since I took over two years ago... I’m never bored. I like my job, I find it exciting. If I managed my time very well, my day passes very very quickly... I’m so passionate about it. I never have time to be bored. No it’s true, people laugh at me and they say only if we could take some of your energy and some of your enthusiasm into our job, we would be so happy... I don’t feel bored. I don’t even know what the meaning of that word is”. Talking about the experience, Helen says: “I feel important, I feel respected, I feel trusted, I feel recognized, and I feel that I have to constantly live up to the expectations of my peers and my superiors”.

#### **IV. Summary**

In this chapter, the experience of each individual story has been discussed. Based on the success of the KMers in making a place for knowledge management in the organization, they are divided into three groups, which are named *the contented*, *the struggling*, and *the defeated*. The contented KMers have been able to build a place not only for knowledge management function but also for the knowledge manager position. The struggling KMers are still on their way to make people recognize the

importance of knowledge management and their role in that process. The defeated KMer has decided to quit the position. The difficulty of the job has made him discouraged.

In each individual story, the elements of rafting experience, including the mission of the KMer, his river zone and its obstacles, the actions undertaken by the KMer, and the means and tools he/she creates, have been discussed. How he/she comes up with such tools and actions in the transactional relationship with the environment and through a learning process have been considered. The building and dwelling modes inherent in the experience of the KMer have been presented. And the rafting experience, as lived by the KMer, has also been detailed.

In table below, the missions of the KMers, their river zones and its corresponding obstacles are summarized to show the variance.

Table 15: Summary of mission and river zone

	<b>The defeated</b>	<b>The struggling</b>				<b>The contented</b>	
	Yvon	Kathy	Alex	Mary	Christina	Carol	Helen
<b>Missions</b>							
Make the culture of sharing knowledge become an intrinsic part of people's working life	x	x	x	x	x (small role)	x	x
Take care of the sharing database	x (small role)	x (small role)	x	x (small role)	x	x	x
Most directly concerned with the ultimate goal of making a place for KM in the organization	-	-	x	-	-	x	-
<b>River zone</b>							
Newly integrated river zone	x						
Long-time integrated river zone	-	x	x	x	x	x	x
History of knowledge management unknown in the river zone	x	-	-	-	-	-	-
Long history of knowledge management	-	x	x	x	x		
Shorter history of knowledge management	-	-	-	-	-	x	x
<b>Particular obstacles on the river zone</b>							
Language barrier	x	x	-	x	-	x	x
IT issues	x	x	-	x	x	x	x

Non-strategic position of KM and its consequences	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Changing nature of organizational objectives	-	x	x	x	-	-	x
Changes in human resources	x	-	x	x	x	x	-
Organizational culture: lack of knowledge sharing culture	-	x	-	x	x	x	x
Organizational culture: lack of direction for knowledge management	-	-	x	-	-	x	-
Saturation in interest in knowledge management	-	-	x	-	-	-	-
Existing dynamics of managing knowledge	-	x	x	-	-	x (but not as an obstacle)	X (but not as an obstacle)
Perception of people about knowledge management and its inertia	x (but not as an obstacle)	x	x	x	x	x	x (but not as an obstacle)

In table 16, the concrete actions undertaken by the KMers are recapitulated. It illustrates the diversity of their marketing actions, the islands that they have been able to identify and take advantage of, and the strategic helpers from whom they receive external force.

Table 16: Summary of the actions of the KMers

	The giving up	The struggling				The contented	
	Yvon	Kathy	Alex	Mary	Christina	Carol	Helen
<b>Marketing actions</b>							
Communication: training	X	x	-	x	-	x	x
Communication: convincing	X	x	-	x	-	x (via team member)	x
Communication: keep people informed	X	x	-	x	x	x (via team members)	x
Communication: communication plan	-	-	x	-	-	x	-
Product aspect: user-friendly image	x (translation)	-	x (IT quality, simple archive)	-	x (updates, maintenance)	x (IT quality, simple archive)	-
Product aspect: active image	x (nourishing actions)	x (nourishing actions)	-	x (nourishing actions)	x (by nourishing actions)	x (nourishing actions)	x (nourishing actions)

Product aspect: a useful image	-	-	-	-	-	x (relevant to existing objectives)	x (relevant to existing objectives)
Segmenting the customers to carry out marketing actions	X	x	-	x	-	x	x
Encourage contribution	x (contribution contest)	-	x (contribution contest)	-	-	x (simple validation process, public recognition)	x (public recognition)
<b>Found islands</b>							
Organizational events (training program, meetings, special events)	X	x	x	x	-	x	x
Existing organizational objectives and priorities	-	-	x	-	-	x	
Existing organizational processes	-	-	x	-	-	-	-
Arrival of new top managers	-	-	x	-	-	x	-
<b>Strategic helpers</b>							
Training function	X	x	-	-	-	-	-
Technical experts and their superiors/ community heads	X	x	x	x	x	-	x
Top managers	-	-	x	-	-	x	
Functional and/or regional managers	X	-	x	-	-	x	x
Other departments	X	-	x	-	-	x	x
Other KMers	-	-	x	-	-	x	-

In table 17, the experience of being a KMer in a multinational, as felt by each individual KMer, is presented. It can be seen that each of them experiences the life as a KMer in a different way.

Table 17: Summary of the experiences of the KMers

The defeated	Yvon	<p>Some aspects of rafting experience are interesting.</p> <p>The obstacles are felt as impossible to overcome.</p> <p>Achievements are considered as trivial.</p> <p>Motivational factor: belief in the need of a long-term effort.</p> <p>The non-KM missions are more meaningful.</p> <p>The extra workload of non-KM missions compels the need to give up the KM position.</p>
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The struggling	Kathy	<p>Rafting is an interesting experience</p> <p>Finds what she likes doing being a KMer</p> <p>Does not feel challenged by the turbulence of her river zone</p> <p>Not compelled by the need to make a name for KM</p> <p>Passive in the rafting team</p>
	Alex	<p>Rafting is not a very enjoyable experience</p> <p>Many obstacles which are too difficult to overcome</p> <p>Many intelligent actions have yet been brought into being</p> <p>An “électron libre” in a “piège d’autonomie”</p> <p>Being in a vicious circle</p> <p>Keep up by the strong belief in his efforts</p> <p>The KM function is seen as “nice to have” and its closing will not change the organization</p>
	Mary	<p>Rafting is dangerous but the thrill it brings is exciting and motivating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to make her own place</li> <li>• Finds what she likes doing being a KMer</li> <li>• Able to “être blasé” via-a-vis the turbulence of the river zone</li> </ul> <p>The KM function is still on its way to gain people’s acceptance</p>
	Christina	<p>Rafting is an interesting experience</p> <p>The KM function is still on its way to gain people’s acceptance.</p> <p>The obstacles do not outweigh the positive side of rafting activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with her achievement</li> <li>• A career opportunity</li> <li>• Learning new things</li> <li>• No direct burden of making a place for KM function</li> <li>• Being new in the position</li> </ul>
The contented	Carol	<p>Rafting is a challenging experience.</p> <p>Being able to overcome the challenge and obtain success makes the experience “a small victory”</p> <p>Able to build a recognized place for not only KM function but also the position of KMers.</p> <p>Finds what she likes doing being a KMer</p>
	Helen	<p>Rafting is an extraordinary experience</p> <p>The obstacles do not make her think that the river zone is unfavorable for KM</p> <p>Being able to overcome the challenge and obtain success</p> <p>Finds what she likes doing being a KMer</p> <p>Able to build a recognized place for not only KM function but also the position of KMers.</p>

In table 18, the dominance of the building and dwelling modes in each KMer’s experience is summarized. It can be seen that a given action may or may not be planned in advance, depending on the individual KMer, but the way it is carried out is always practical-coping oriented.

Table 18: Summary of the dominance of the building and dwelling modes in each KMer's experience

Group of KMers	KMers	Building mode	Dwelling mode
The defeated	Yvon	Marketing actions	Island-finding and force-building actions The way the three categories of actions are carried out
The struggling	Kathy	Marketing actions	Island-finding and force-building actions The way the three categories of actions are carried out
	Alex	Marketing, force-building, and island-building actions become more intentional over time	The way the three categories of actions are carried out
	Mary	Marketing action Force-building, and island-building actions become more intentional over time	The way the three categories of actions are carried out
	Christina	Force-building action	Marketing action The way the three categories of actions are carried out
The contented	Carol	Marketing, island-finding, and force-building actions	The way the three categories of actions are carried out
	Helen	Marketing, island-finding, and force-building actions	Island-finding action The way the three categories of actions are carried out

It can be seen that for each KMer, the rafting experience is unique. In other words, the strategizing process, as experienced by each KMer, is unique. Faced with a unique organizational context, each KMer focuses on different actions in the marketing category, finds his own island and relies on his proper external forces. Each creates his unique set of tools and means to facilitate his job. In addition, the dominance of the building and dwelling modes varies between the KMers' strategizing processes.

From the paradigm case analysis, it can be seen that the KMers' strategizing is embedded in the transactional relationship between them and their environment. The KMers act in accordance with their organizational context. The consequent changes produced in the environment react upon them and their activities. They undergo and suffer the consequences of their own strategizing actions. The marketing, island-finding, and force-building actions are the KMers' response to the obstacles and barriers in the organization. Whether or not they can accomplish their mission really depends on the effectiveness of those actions in relation to their context. Their lives as knowledge managers are also

impacted accordingly. In case of the contented group, the strategizing actions are effective, which further facilitates the KMers' job; when the KMers' job is facilitated, their actions become even more effective; and the circle continues. In case of the giving and the struggling groups, the strategizing actions have not brought significant achievement as quickly as in case of the contented group; consequently their job still encounters barriers and their actions need to be improved; and this vicious circle continues until the KMers find better response to the environment.

In planning and carrying out the three categories of strategizing actions, the KMers are influenced by the "social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them" (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). For example, social practices may be existing norms of knowledge management, material practices may include the given IT infrastructure that influences ways of managing the sharing database, and embodied practices may be the available way of communicating with the strategic helpers to ask for their support. They are also influenced by the organizational features, such as language barrier or frequent rate of human resources turnover. Importantly, it has been revealed that what lead to the intentional actions undertaken by the KMers also include the anticipated consequences of those actions. A KMer undertakes a given action because he knows that it will produce what he needs for doing his job. In case of the contented group, the KMers plan at the beginning all the three categories of actions because they are aware that these actions will help to overcome the barriers they have identified in the context.

The strategizing process inherently contains a process of learning through overt actions. All KMers become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. This learning process is both intentional and accidental, with the KMers being unaware or conscious of it. For example, one KMer may find it logical to seek help after some time working on his own, while another tries to identify most suitable strategies by "trials and errors" after having realized his mistakes.

To sum up, this chapter has discussed the individual stories of the seven KMers, in which their mission, their river zone and the obstacles, their undertaken strategizing actions and their created means and tools, how they strategize in the transactional relationship with the environment and through a learning process, the building and dwelling modes inherent in their experiences, and their lived strategizing experience have been discussed. The next chapter will be devoted to a general discussion and conclude the thesis.



## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of this research, present its contributions, and then provide a general conclusion. The chapter will be organized in four sections. The first section will be devoted to a case discussion on the outcomes of the seven knowledge managers from the strategy-as-practice perspective. The second section will return to the practice perspective, the knowledge manager literature, the pragmatic theory of John Dewey, and the literature of new occupation and professionalization so as to shed more light on what has been found in this research and see what new results it has provided. The third section will present a theoretical discussion on how Dewey's pragmatism may expand further the existing practice theories. It will be followed by a conclusion, in which the theoretical, managerial, and methodological contributions of this research will be presented, the validity of the research and future research directions will be discussed, and a general conclusion will conclude the thesis.

### I. Case discussion: outcome

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) call strategy-as-practice research to speak to more traditional strategic management research by establishing appropriate outcomes from different forms of strategy praxis. The authors discuss about several types of outcomes that strategy-as-practice research may explain, including individual outcomes, group outcomes, strategizing process outcomes, organizational outcomes, and institutional outcomes. There are two types of explanation for these outcomes. Single-case generative mechanisms method examines the implications of what particular strategists do for constructing particular streams of activity. The objective is to explain how a particular outcome is constructed. Through comparative methods, differences in what strategists do are investigated to explain variations in the way that streams of activity are constructed. The objective is to examine whether a variation in the generative mechanisms is associated with a variation in the outcomes.

Despite the fact that it is difficult to identify practice-based outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), by relying on the interpretive phenomenological method, this study has been able to describe four out of five types of outcomes in case of the knowledge managers. These outcomes will be presented below.

#### 1. Individual outcomes

Individual outcomes are related to the individual's personal experience, such as identity, purpose, power and career potential. Individual outcomes can be seen easily in the experience of the KMers in this study. In terms of personal experience, being a KMer is a very enjoyable experience for Helen, a career opportunity and a meaningful experience for Christina, and an interesting experience for Kathy. It is a challenging experience for Mary and Carol. Mary encounters many difficulties but she is motivated by the experience's interesting aspects. Carol is satisfied that she has been able to overcome her difficulty. For Yvon, it is an interesting experience without a satisfying achievement. And Alex sees his experience as a tiring and not very enjoyable battle, but he believes he has gained the necessary competence to eventually succeed, and hence is determined to keep doing the job.

This outcome can be explained by a variety of factors. It is noticed that there are both positive and negative aspects in the experiences of all KMers. The positive aspects vary according to the individual KMer, since each person appreciates different factors and likes to do different things. The negative aspects, as experienced by the KMers, stem mainly from the ferocity of their context and their ability to overcome the obstacles to accomplish their mission. Depending on the dominance of each aspect and the personal attributes of the KMers, each experience may turn out to be more enjoyable or more unpleasant. This is a complex mechanism that will be explained below.

All the KMers appreciate what they have learned in their position. Yvon has had the opportunity to learn new technical knowledge and get to know the working life at factories. Carol, who does not have technical background, has overcome her fear of technical knowledge and learned all IT knowledge necessary to make the sharing database function. Christina has learned “énormément de choses en un an”, from IT skills, communication to document management. Mary says that she has had chance to use foreign languages, to visit and discover different countries, which is “une richesse à côté, ce qui est extraordinaire personnellement en tout cas”. For Alex, “c’est très instructif tout ce que je vis”. Kathy has understood better the technical knowledge of cement production. And Helen has got familiar with “what the company’s business is about”. New knowledge is not the result of intentional learning undertaken by the KMers. It comes along as the KMers manage to cope with their contextual situations, thereby learning new things. It is the positive aspect that brightens their experience, regardless of the difficulties they face with.

All the KMers find what they like doing in their job. Helen is motivated by the interaction she has with the strategic helpers while doing her job and the reading she does everyday to take care of the sharing database. Yvon likes talking to plant people, getting to know their feeling, and seeing the “reality” in cement production. Meeting new people, working with the strategic helpers, helping others acquire the knowledge they need, and the autonomy to take initiatives are the bright side of Mary’s experience. For Christina, becoming a KMer is a new stage in her career after working for twenty years as an administrative assistant. In the case of Alex, despite the burdensome of his experience, “c’est des choses qui m’enthousiasment quand même”. Like Helen, Kathy is enthusiastic about the technical knowledge she has learned and the interaction with people during the training sessions. Providing service to other people with useful knowledge and conducting communication activities on a particular business subject are the factors motivating Carol and helping her keep doing the job.

As discussed, Yvon has been able to undertake some marketing actions, build his force and find out several islands on his angry river zone. But the issues of language and IT cannot be resolved over a short period of time. For Yvon, the mission is seen as doubtfully achievable and the sharing database as a gift that people in China cannot open. Yvon is an ambitious knowledge manager, who is determined to make significant difference. He feels discouraged because his achievement has not been satisfying. The negative aspect outweighs the positive side of Yvon’s experience, making it become an interesting experience without a satisfying achievement.

In Christina’s experience, she has been able to involve the strategic helpers in assisting her with maintaining and nourishing the sharing database. The sharing database is improved and maintained,

although the usage is still insignificant. Christina admits that “on a besoin d’être plus reconnu”, but it is beyond the scope of her mission to convince the organization of the importance of knowledge management. Moreover, Christina has been in the post for only one year and becoming a knowledge manager is a career opportunity for her. She still feels enthusiastic about the job and appreciates the bright side of her experience. The darker side is somehow diminished.

The specificity of Alex’s case is that he has a theoretical foundation on the subject of knowledge management thanks to his academic background. At the beginning, seeing that the existing dynamic of knowledge management was not in line with what he thinks it should be, and being the head of the knowledge management unit, Alex thought he should make changes. A mistake that he made was to “passer en force sans prévenir les gens... pas assez communiquer sur des principes ou des règles qu’on voulait mettre en place, et puis c’est de ne pas avoir suffisamment coacher les sponsors qui sont inévitables dans ces processus de changement“. The result was that Alex just “courir contre les murs”. The experience initially was not at all enjoyable for him. However, gradually, Alex has recognized the importance of the marketing, island-finding, and force-building actions and how to deal more effectively with the organizational context. He has been able to learn new things, but through a painful experience. His achievement has yet been significant, but he now believes that he is on the right track for reaching his objectives and appreciates the route he has gone through. That’s why Alex sees his experience as a tiring and not very enjoyable battle, but believes he has attained necessary competence to eventually succeed, and hence is determined to keep doing the job.

Mary has been able to undertake some marketing actions, build her force and find out several islands, after going through some moments of frustration with unsatisfying achievements, which was inherently an occasion for her to learn to deal more effectively with the turbulence of the environment. Her marketing actions have contributed to making the sharing database known to many people, although the usage rate is still “peau de chagrin”. An important attribute of Mary’s experience is her ability to be “blindé” against the frustrations that the obstacles may bring. For example, one time when there was someone telling her that the sharing database was of interest to no one, Mary said: “c’est bien, tant pis. Mais moi, je ne me prends plus la tête. Ça intéresse personne, mais après les gens, ils m'appellent, je vais leur montrer, ce n'est pas grave. Je suis blasée, quand même“. Mary encounters many insurmountable difficulties, but still appreciates the positive side of her experience.

Kathy’s strategizing actions stem from a process of learning by coping with the environment, but Kathy do not go through any difficult moments like Mary. The achievement of Kathy is modest. She acknowledges that people do not use the sharing database as much as she would like them to. The particularity of Kathy is her passiveness and modesty. For her, making achievement is important, but not something she must obtain at any price. She easily accepts the fact that it may be impossible to overcome the organizational obstacles and is “happy to leave it that way”. That is why Kathy is not so frustrated with the negative side of her experience and still sees its positive side.

Carol consciously plans since the beginning of her job the marketing, island-finding and force-building actions. However, the way she carries out those actions has a practical coping nature. It is the dwelling mode that determines her success. It is also due to the dwelling mode that Carol sometimes feels

lonely and frustrated. She undergoes the situations in which she has “l'impression de passer beaucoup d'énergie négative, alors qu'il faut travailler en intelligence”. Carol has been able to overcome the difficulties and achieve significant success. She has increased the usage of the sharing database and made people become more open toward sharing knowledge. She has been recognized in the organization as a successful KMer. Being a KMer is challenging for Carol, but she is satisfied that she has been able to overcome the difficulties and has made a name for herself.

Similar to Carol, Helen is intentional in all of the three categories of strategizing actions. Her intentional actions come from the job description assigned to her by Carol. Her actions have brought considerable success, even though there exist the difficult moments, when it is impossible to change people's mind-set, and understanding the organization's strategic priorities cannot be fully achieved due to their changing nature. As a KMer, she always feels respected and privileged. The success, together with the positive side of the job, has made her life as a KMer very enjoyable. She considers the obstacles as the challenges to overcome, not the detrimental factors of her experience.

To sum up, the personal experience is the result of a complex and dynamic whole, in which many factors intervene, leading to the dominance of either the enjoyment or the displeasure that the individual KMers experience.

## 2. Strategizing process outcomes

The study of strategizing process outcomes aims at tracing some aspects of what strategists do that explain outcomes in the strategizing process. The strategizing process outcomes that this research identifies can be divided into two types. The first type is related to the experience of Carol and Helen. It includes a more significant awareness of the existence of the sharing database, a more active sharing of knowledge, and stronger support from the top management. This outcome is not measurable. It can only be attested by the annual increase in the number of visitors to the sharing database, the number of consulted documents, and the number of contributed documents. The public message on knowledge management that the top management communicates within the organization is another proof. Such numbers are not directly linked to the organization's financial outcomes, but at least they show the interest people have in knowledge management. Another kind of evidence is concrete success stories, in which knowledge sharing does lead to financial benefits.

The second type is related to the experience of other KMers, including Yvon, Kathy, Mary, Christina, and Alex. They have been able to create greater awareness of the existence of the sharing database and the benefits of sharing knowledge, but an active sharing is still lacking and support from the top management is absent. Again, these outcomes are not measurable. The small number of sharing database's visitors and of consulted and contributed documents are the only evidence. The absence of sponsorship can only be experienced by the KMers through their daily activities, or through the lack of public communication on the importance of knowledge management by the top managers.

The difference between the two types of outcomes stems from the degree of ferocity of the organizational context and the effectiveness of the KMer's strategizing actions. As seen in the previous discussion, there are some major differences between the situation of Carol and Helen and that of the

other KMers. Carol and Helen work in the concrete and aggregate branch, in which there is an absence of experts with the status of holders of knowledge. The existing dynamic of knowledge management depends on a network of regional sponsors, knowledge managers, and community heads and a steering committee. This enables them to more easily involve the sponsors and strategic helpers, and to facilitate sharing between employees at all hierarchical levels. These two KMers also recognize early the need to do marketing actions, to integrate knowledge management within the existing organizational processes, and to seek sponsorship. For the other KMers, the context is much more difficult. The existence of the experts, the language and IT barriers, the hostility of people toward the sharing database, and the misunderstanding that knowledge management simply means stocking documents in a database minimize the effectiveness of their strategizing actions. Besides, Alex, who is the homologue of Carol in the cement branch, goes through a much longer and more painful process of learning by coping with the context. The positive strategizing process outcomes of this group, consequently, take longer time to arise.

### 3. Group outcomes

According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), group outcomes stem from what aggregate actors do. There have been few studies that have made clear and consistent links between what aggregate actors do and the implications of that doing for those actors, and even fewer studies of how variation in praxis between aggregate actors is associated with variation in outcomes for those actors.

In a multinational, it is impossible to succeed by working alone in knowledge management. All the KMers in this research acknowledge that the achievements they can make is the result of joined efforts between all KMers. The strategizing process outcomes discussed previously can be considered as their collective results.

As seen in this research, the strategizing process outcomes are related to the group outcomes. Carol and Helen have been able to make encouraging progress, which in turn, has a positive impact on their image as KMers. Helen feels "important, respected, trusted, and recognized". For Carol, she states that her achievement "a donné un intérêt au poste... demain quand je partirai, je suis sûr qu'il y aura plusieurs personnes qui sont intéressées par le poste. Alors que ce n'était pas le cas quand je suis arrivé. Aujourd'hui j'aurai les noms des personnes en tête qui serait intéressée par le poste... avant le Knowledge manager travaillait un peu seul et il n'avait pas forcément de reconnaissance. Mais maintenant ça commence à venir, reconnaissance de leur rôle, et ça donne un peu de l'attractivité au poste".

The other KMers, including Yvon, Christina, Mary, Kathy, and Alex, have obtained more modest results. Consequently, their image as KMers can be described by Christina as "on a besoin d'être plus reconnu". They have been able to make people understand what each of them is responsible for in terms of knowledge management. For example, people do come to see Mary when they need to know more about the sharing database. Yvon is contacted by people in China whenever they have problem with getting access to the sharing database. Alex is requested by his superior to participate in the formatting and transferring an important technical document to different factories. However, the importance of their role has not been recognized. In the words of Alex, the knowledge management

activities are considered as “nice to have” in his branch. If one day “nous sommes plus la, ca ne changera pas Lafarge”.

The relationship between the group outcomes and the strategizing process outcomes can be explained easily by Dewey’s pragmatic perspective. It is essentially an undivided totality, in which the KMers act and are reacted upon by the environment. Their understanding of the organizational context leads to their strategizing actions, which in turn modifies the environment. They undergo the consequences of such modification in the environment, and adapt their strategizing actions accordingly. This circular process continues as long as the KMers stay in their position.

#### 4. Organizational outcomes

Organizational outcomes lie at the organizational level, which may be considered as the firm’s financial or non-financial performance outcomes.

Perrin (2008) finds that it is difficult to measure the organizational outcomes brought by knowledge management. There is no direct link between the spending on knowledge management and the investment’s return. This is understandable, since the financial benefit of the knowledge exchange or the usage of the sharing database is difficult to quantify. Moreover, as seen in the experience of the KMers at Lafarge, the outcomes of knowledge management come in the long run. It is not by one single communication campaign that the KMer can make people share knowledge with each other. It is rather through regular marketing actions, constant implication of the strategic helpers, numerous emerging islands that a sharing culture begins to emerge.

The only indicators that the KMers have include the number of visitors to the sharing database, the number of consulted documents, and the number of contributed documents. Such indicators just show the general interest people have in knowledge management, but not the organization’s financial outcomes. The only possibility to show the financial benefit of knowledge management is using concrete success stories, in which knowledge sharing does lead to financial savings.

#### 5. Institutional outcomes

Institutional outcomes may span personal and group levels, or group, strategizing process and organizational- level outcomes. The outcomes should not be seen in isolation but as intertwined dynamic outcomes that influence each other.

As discussed in the previous sections, group outcomes and strategizing process outcomes are intertwined in a double relationship between the KMers and the environment. The individual outcomes are also related. The satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the experience of being a KMer stem from a complex dynamics of what the KMers can profit from doing the job, of the ferocity of their knowledge management context, and of their ability to overcome the obstacles to accomplish their mission. In this complex dynamics, group outcomes and strategizing process outcomes are undoubtedly embedded, since how the KMers see their experiences is related to what they have gone through and what they have been able to do. This explanation is logical in the sense of Dewey. As experience is an undivided whole in Dewey’s perspective, it is difficult to trace an exact mechanism in which individual outcomes, group outcomes, and strategizing process outcomes arise.

Since organizational outcomes are difficult to prove in the case of knowledge management, this research cannot provide a discussion on the inter-relation between all the four types of outcomes and examine the outcomes at institutional level. Moreover, the KMers in this study work in a same multinational. The outcomes of their praxis at industrial level or inter-organizational level cannot be determined.

## **II. Finding discussion**

In this section, a return to the practice perspective, the existing research on knowledge managers, the pragmatic theory of John Dewey, and the literature of new occupation and professionalization will be made. The research findings will be discussed in light of these areas of the literature.

### **1. Practice perspective**

#### **a. Knowledge managers as strategizing practitioners**

The findings in this research show that the actual doing of the KMers is a strategizing process.

The praxis of the KMers in this study is divided into three common categories of strategizing actions: marketing, island-finding, and force-building. Within each category, the actual praxis of each KMer is unique due to each individual's particular context and his/her mission. Some KMers may focus mainly on the product dimension of the marketing action, while some others are responsible chiefly for the promotion dimension. The islands are not the same for the KMers. Their external forces differ from one another. In addition, the way the KMers actually conduct these actions varies. This can be seen most clearly in the means and tools that they create to facilitate their job. For Carol, the most powerful tool she makes is the communication campaign. For Helen, it is her relationship with the IT and the communication departments. Christina is very satisfied with her initiative of putting in place a "système de mail de push". For Yvon and Kathy, their tools seem to have less influential effect. Kathy has a small booklet to guide new users how to use the sharing database. Yvon creates training materials on knowledge management for his strategic helpers.

The KMers are like the practitioners, who draw on "a complex bundle of practices involving social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them" (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), to perform their praxis. For example, the social practices are drawn on in the case of Alex, as he is obliged to follow the existing norms of knowledge management. Similarly, Carol makes a bet in carrying out her communication campaign, because the top management is neither for nor against the idea. The material practices clearly influence Helen. The IT issues make her always include a brief instruction on how to obtain a particular knowledge document from the sharing database when she informs people of its arrival. The embodied practices, which are the "repository of background coping skills upon which actors unconsciously draw as part of their everyday being within the world" (Chia, 2004), are seen in the way the KMers seek help from the strategic helpers through constant follow-up.

Moreover, it is found that what influence the KMers' praxis are not only the practices, but also the organizational features. This research groups them under a same category called contextual factors.

In the experience of the KMers at Lafarge Group, there are organizational features, which have an impact on the way they do their job, but are not “social, material and embodied ways of doing”. For example, the language barrier compels Carol to conduct her communication campaign in twelve different languages. The high rate of human resources turnover brings opportunity for Carol to obtain top management’s sponsorship, while forces Yvon to constantly re-train his strategic helpers. Such organizational features are not practices, but lead the KMers to adopt certain ways of doing their job. They should be taken into account while studying the KMers as strategizing practitioners.

Thanks to the framework of Dewey’s perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment, it is revealed that what leads to the intentional actions undertaken by the KMers also includes the anticipated consequences of those actions. A KMer undertakes a given action because he knows that it will produce what he needs for doing his job. For example, Carol looks for support from the top management because she is well aware that their support will make the employees gradually accept the knowledge management function. Alex tries to intergrate the knowledge management activities within the existing organizational processes, because he thinks it is the only way to make the employees participate in sharing knowledge.

Moreover, Dewey’s framework helps disclose that the strategizing process of the KMers inherently contains a process of learning through concrete actions. All KMers become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. This learning process is both intentional and accidental, with the KMers being unaware or conscious of it. For example, Yvon finds it logical to seek help after some time working on his own, while Alex tries to identify most suitable strategies by “trials and errors” after having realized his mistakes.

This has an important implication for the strategy-as-practice perspective, which has considered routinized practices as the only external factor influencing the way practitioners perform praxis. This research suggests that researchers should go beyond the scope of routinized practices, and look at the contextual factors and the practitioner’s orientation towards the future in order to understand in depth their experience and their embedded praxis. Their learning through actions should also be taken into account.

#### b. Building and dwelling mode in the strategizing process of the KMers

From the findings, it can be seen that both building and dwelling modes are present in all the categories of strategizing actions (marketing, island-finding, and constraint-responding). However, the dominance of each mode in each action varies among the individual KMers.

All KMers plan in advance the marketing action, but they always have to cope with the unexpected as soon as the action is implemented in reality. For example, Yvon cannot plan in advance in which plants he is going to deliver training on the sharing database; all depend on where he goes for his non-KM mission. Helen cannot foresee the informal occasions in which she can talk to other people about the benefits of sharing knowledge. For all KMers in this research, the marketing action is dominated by the building mode.



The island-finding and force-building actions may or may not be intentionally planned, depending on the individual KMers. For example, Carol is intentional in gathering external force from the strategic helpers, Alex has only started to recognize the importance of having support of the top management, while Kathy and Yvon have been purposively seeking help since the beginning. Importantly, the way these two actions are implemented is inherently practical coping. Carol prepares in advance that she is going to ask for support from the regional directors, but she can never have a concrete action plan on how she is going to be persuasive in the conversation with those directors. Similarly, Alex plans to identify the strategic objectives of the performance department. But they are not clearly defined and he can just keep himself aware of the organizational evolution to make the knowledge management function be better in line with the performance department's preoccupations.

It can be seen that the dwelling mode plays an important role in the strategizing process. The KMers may deliberately plan or unintentionally carry out their actions, but their situated doing of those actions is always purposive. While the building mode sows seeds, the dwelling mode sees the sprouts come out. Without the dwelling mode, the building mode would not bring harvest. The finding confirms the argument of Chia and Holt (2006) that the two modes co-exist in the experience of practitioners. It represents an implication for the strategy-as-practice perspective that research should pay more attention to the dwelling mode of strategizing.

It is observed that there is a transition from the dwelling mode to the building one, as the KMers continue to do their job. The KMers tend to realize the consequences of their unintentional actions, hence recognize some of their unintentional actions as essential in accomplishing their mission. They then become more deliberate in carrying out the previously unintentional actions. Christina is an excellent example to illustrate this point. She creates the "système de mail de push" simply to help end-users be better informed of the sharing database. Only when statistics shows the increase in the consultation rate, does she recognize the effectiveness of that tool. The inter-relationship between the two modes has never been considered in the strategy-as-practice literature and remains only implicit in the article of Chia and Holt (2006). It indicates another important gap for the strategy-as-practice research to take into consideration.

## 2. Knowledge manager literature

Based on the findings of this research, some criticisms of the existing research on the KMers can be made.

First, this study shows that the actual doing of the KMers cannot be described by a set of pre-defined activities. It is in fact impossible to create a theoretical framework that can be used as the best description of all KMers' job. Doing the job of a KMer is a complex whole, in which the organizational context, the corresponding actions of the KMer, the logic of such actions, the double relationship between the KMer and the context, their emotion and feeling intertwine. The entire experience is contingent upon the particular situation of each KMer, how he responds to that situation, how the consequent changes in the situation react upon the KMer, and how that circular dynamics evolves on over time.

Second, setting pre-defined activities for the KMers, as in the existing research in the literature, means assuming the building mode in the actions of the KMers. For example, activities, such as performing a knowledge audit (Rubenstein-Montano *et al.*, 2001), planning the knowledge strategy (Wiig, 1999), and sitting back and trying to get a view on the state of the knowledge in the organization, and analyzing the strong and weak points of the knowledge household (Wiig *et al.*, 1997), are all underlined by the assumption that the KMers are rationale individuals having a “bird’s eye” view (Chia and Holt, 2008) of the knowledge management landscape. In fact, as seen in this research, the dwelling mode, in which the KMers non-deliberately cope with the daily problems in their experience, is very present in the KMers’ lives. It is the dwelling mode that leads the KMers to succeed in their mission.

Third, the existing research on the KMers has not taken into account the particularity of knowledge management, which is its new occupational status. The activities listed in the studies regard knowledge management as a project that requires planning, implementing, monitoring, and revising. For example, this can be seen most clearly in the framework of Xerox Corporation (1999), which proposes a list of KMer’s activities including discovery of challenges and opportunities, definition of requirements and scope of the project, development of project plan, implementation of plan, and evaluation of results. The studies do not recognize the issue that knowledge management is not automatically accepted in the organization. The exceptions are the studies of Jarrar (2002), Gore and Gore (1999), Wiig (1999) and McCampbell *et al.* (1999). The authors do mention the need for obtaining management buy-in, aligning knowledge management’s goals and strategies with the organizational business strategies, and communicating the vision of knowledge management. These activities essentially represent the marketing, island-finding and force-building dimensions. However, their importance is not emphasized. They are considered only as a small element of a larger set of activities, while they are in fact vital as seen in the experience of the KMers in this research.

There is a research conducted by Perrin (2008) on the knowledge managers at Lafarge Group. The author is also interested in the actual doing of the KMers in their job. However, the research only identifies the observable actions of the KMers. Perrin finds that the KMers’ management actions can be divided into four major categories: knowledge stock, infrastructure, structure and changes. The KMers also face with some dilemmas in their position, including the choice between managing the content or the structure, quantifying or explaining the benefits of knowledge management, stimulating or controlling the social networks, and cultivating these networks or developing knowledge codification tools.

The first and foremost criticism of the study of Perrin (2008) can be made as follows. The study claims to examine the actions of the KMers from a practice perspective. From this perspective, a practice is always a situated practice. It is insufficient to talk about a practice without its contextual and historical origin. The contextual factors recognized in this study consist of the internal customers within the organization, whose demands influence the actions of the KMers, the background of the KMers, the nature of knowledge they have to manage, and the availability of codification tools. However, the KMers seem to be passive actors to the extent that they are influenced *by* the organizational context,

the way they *draw on* the characteristics of the context to act is not mentioned. Only one-way influence is examined in this study. The KMers respond to the environment. But the impact of their responsive actions on the environment, which influence their future actions, remains unexplored. The “wholeness” of the practices of the KMers, i.e. the double relationship between the KMers’ actions and their context in which their practices are embedded, has not been investigated.

In addition, the research of Perrin totally ignores the emotional factor inherent in each KMer’s experience. From the perspective of Dewey, experience is a grist interfused with the way of taking it. There is always a *story* in it. The findings in Perrin’s research do not enable use to see whether the KMers whine through their job, enjoy or suffer being in the position, or struggle with their responsibilities. He uses the term *dilemma*, which is a very emotive word, to describe the difficult situations of the KMers. But the dilemmas that he conceptualizes do not imply any emotional state of the KMers. They are more like simple choices that the KMers have to make without experiencing any mental pain.

The building mode is dominant in the actions of the KMers studied by Perrin. One of the main assumptions of the building mode, which claims that the individual is the *initiator* of activities, processes and practices, can be seen clearly in his description of the activities of the KMers. For example, according to Perrin, Carol, who is also one of the KMers in this research, *decides* to carry out her communication campaign, *has the authority* to appoint local knowledge managers (called strategic helpers in my research), and *utilizes* different types of artefacts for her work. His research does not study her experience sufficiently in depth to realize that the communication campaign is actually a bet she has to make, and that appointing local knowledge managers is a practical coping process in dealing with local executive directors. In addition, the KMers are fully aware of the dilemmas that the author identifies. The choices they make with regard to each dilemma are completely intentional. For example, to solve the issue of quantifying or explaining the benefits of knowledge management, the KMers *propose* the solution of developing both qualitative and quantitative indicators. To deal with the problem of managing the content or the structure, the KMers *identify themselves* as change facilitators. It can be argued that Perrin’s study misses the dwelling mode inherent in the activities of the KMers.

An assumption underlying the research of Perrin is that knowledge *can* be managed. He distinguishes between two types of knowledge: hard and soft. These two categories represent easy-to-codify and hard-to-codify knowledge, respectively. Perrin argues that the KMers adopt different actions depending on the type of knowledge that they manage. A KMer dealing with hard knowledge tends to invest more efforts in developing codification tools and knowledge stocks. Soft knowledge requires attention to be paid to the communication tools and the way knowledge is codified and transferred between people. From the social-process view of knowledge, the creation, diffusion and application of knowledge is situated and heavily influenced by the context of practice. The organization should try to *cultivate* communities of practice, because they favor situated and context-dependent learning and knowledge creation (Wenger, 2004). Based on this argument, knowledge management is essentially management of people, not management of knowledge. It aims at facilitating communication between people, through which learning may occur. Within such communities of practice, whether knowledge is truly

created and then transferred is beyond the control of the KMers. In the case of the KMers in Perrin's study, the claim that they are able to manage knowledge via the communication tools is questionable.

Moreover, the assumption that knowledge can be managed relies on a questionable observation Perrin makes about the types of knowledge that may exist in a given domain of activity. According to his study, in one kind of activity domain, there may be mainly hard knowledge; while in another only soft knowledge exists. This is a one-sided point of view, since situated knowledge exists everywhere, regardless of the nature of the activities of the knowledge holders. Perrin claims that Carol focuses her actions mainly on developing codification tools, because the nature of knowledge in concrete production is easy-to-codify. However, Carol, in her interviews for this research, acknowledges that knowledge creation and exchange do exist within the social networks developed by the organization. She is well aware that sharing knowledge is a way of working that goes beyond using the sharing database. It is beyond the scope of her mission to take part in cultivating those networks. But one day, if for some reason they stop to exist, she will "surely do something to get them back to life".

### 3. The experience of being a knowledge manager in the sense of Dewey

It can be seen that many arguments of Dewey's pragmatism are seen in the findings of this research. First, Dewey believes that there is a double relationship between man and his environment. Man acts in accordance with his surroundings. The consequent changes produced in the environment react upon the human being and his activities. He undergoes and suffers the consequences of his own behaviour. As seen in chapter 6 and chapter 7, the KMers' strategizing process is embedded in that transactional relationship. The marketing, island-finding, and force-building actions of the KMers aim at overcoming the obstacles and barriers in the organization to accomplish their mission. Whether or not they can succeed depends on the pertinence of those actions. Their lives as knowledge managers are also impacted accordingly. This can be seen most clearly in Alex's observation: "les erreurs dans lesquelles je me suis tombé, c'est d'abord d'avoir été très conceptuel, ce qui me vaut aujourd'hui l'étiquette d'un gars très compliqué". More positively, Carol and Helen's achievements have made people grant high esteem to the knowledge manager position. Christina's efforts in taking care of the sharing database have started to turn the hostility of users around.

Second, Dewey argues that the transaction of man and his environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process, in which man is able to examine the interchange between himself and his environment, and gradually learn how to have some control over nature. Living is composed of series of adjustments and learning through experience. Chapter 7 has presented the learning process in each KMer's experience. All of them become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. Alex confirms this point by saying that: "c'est très instructif tout ce que je vis". For instance, after a period of insignificant achievement, Mary realizes that it is essential to segment the end-users to conduct the marketing action. Carol is aware, early from the beginning of her experience, of the necessity to have support from the top managers, while Alex recognizes that only after "avoir glissé sur quelque peau de banane". This learning process is both intentional and accidental, with the KMers being unaware or conscious of it. For Yvon and Kathy, it is "logical" to ask for help from the strategic helpers. They just feel the need for more hands in

doing their job, without having a deliberate plan. Alex, after having made some big mistakes, becomes very conscious in all actions he undertakes. He now always tries to follow a process of “trials and errors”, so as to adopt the best strategies possible to attain his objectives.

Importantly, an argument in Dewey’s pragmatism is the relationship between knowledge and action. Dewey’s notion of inquiry is attached to the actual process of becoming knowledgeable. While thought or reflection must play an important part in this process, it will not result in knowledge. It is only when action follows that the value of the analysis of the problem and the suggested solution can be established. We need overt action to determine the worth and validity of our reflective considerations. Otherwise, we have, at most, a hypothesis about the problem and a hypothesis about its possible solution. This means that in order to get knowledge, we need action. In fact, the KMers learn to cope with the environment through overt actions. For example, Yvon experiences the non-strategic position of knowledge management when he approaches the plant management and the HR function to convince them to evaluate employees on their participation in knowledge management. Carol makes a bet in conducting her communication campaign and the positive results it brings confirm the pertinence of this action. Mary realizes the need to divide her audience into different segments after trying to “tell everybody everything” without success. Similarly, Alex admits that: “les erreurs ou les écueils dans lesquels je me suis tombé c’est d’abord d’avoir été très conceptuel, ce qui me vaut aujourd’hui l’étiquette d’un gars très compliqué. C’est d’abord avoir voulu passer en force ou avoir voulu faire des choses sans prévenir les gens, c’est ne pas assez communiquer sur des principes ou des règles qu’on voulait mettre en place, et puis c’est de ne pas avoir suffisamment coaché les sponsors qui sont inévitables dans ces processus de changement de KM”.

Third, according to Dewey, an imaginative engagement with the future is an important element in the way an actor plan an action. What actors draw on to act intentionally in their particular context include not only an orientation towards the past and the present, but also the future. As can be seen in the experience of the KMers, their intentional actions are influenced by the routinized social, material and embodied practices, by the organizational context, as well as the anticipated consequences of their actions. This is the distinctive contribution of Dewey’s perspective on the relationship between man and the environment in contrast with other practice theories.

Finally, Dewey does discuss about a kind of unity experience may possess: an experience. An experience is a whole and carries with it own individualizing quality of self sufficiency, such as a piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory, a problem receives its solution, or a game is played through. The KMers are able to identify the strategizing actions to deal with their own situation, which then lead to a certain impact on the context. They also undergo the consequences of their actions, thereby becoming able to determine the subsequent actions. For Yvon, who has decided to give up the position, his experience has truly run its course to fulfilment. For other KMers, their experiences still continue. The fulfilment has not been attained because they are still in the position, hence still on the way to learn to respond to their environment. However, in an experience there is more emotion displayed than in the general stream of experience. Being a knowledge manager can be viewed as an experience in the sense of Dewey. There is a “pervasive quality” that permeates the experience of all

KMers in this study. It is a very enjoyable experience for Helen, a career opportunity and a meaningful experience for Christina, and an interesting experience for Kathy. It is a challenging experience for Mary and Carol. Mary encounters many difficulties but she is motivated by the experience's interesting aspects. Carol is satisfied that she has been able to overcome her difficulty. For Yvon, it is an interesting experience without a satisfying achievement. And Alex sees his experience as a tiring and not very enjoyable battle, but he believes he has gained the necessary competence to eventually succeed, and hence is determined to keep doing the job.

#### 4. New occupation literature

##### a. Knowledge manager as new occupation

It is argued that knowledge management is a new function in the organization and knowledge manager is a new occupation. As seen in the experience of the seven KMers in this research, they do perform a new occupation in the sense of Hughes (1958, in Blum *et. al.*, 1988) and Crosby (2002). Hughes (1958) indicates that a new occupation emerges from work "formerly performed by amateurs, or for pay by people with little or no formal training". In fact, apart from Alex, the KMers and even their predecessors do not have formal training in knowledge management. Carol was a communication officer. Helen was working in total quality management. Christina, Mary and Kathy were administrative assistants. Yvon was a technical training officer. Hughes' argument is supported by the statement of Helen that "there is no formal education or training to be a knowledge manager... I don't think it exist anywhere in the world".

They became knowledge managers purely by chance or coincidence. They were offered by the organization to take the position, like Christina, Helen, Carol, Mary, Yvon, and Alex. Kathy became a part-time knowledge manager because her boss, who was supposedly responsible for the job, did not have time and suggested her to take it over.

According to Crosby (2002), "new occupation develops when employers need workers to do tasks that have never been done before". This is the case with the KMers in this study. Mary, Christina, Yvon and Kathy have no predecessors in their organizational entities. Helen and Carol, each of them has one predecessor, who spent just a few years in the position. Alex is a special case. He inherits a function that has existed for twenty years. The function is supposed to archive different knowledge documents but it is given the label knowledge management. As Alex has some theoretical knowledge about knowledge management, he wants to make changes and creates for the function the tasks that have never been done before.

With regard to the process of professionalization, Cooper and Robson (2006) notice a movement towards more historical, critical and theoretically informed studies. Researchers start to be interested in the interaction between individual professionals or aggregation of professionals and the wider context in their attempt to secure professional legitimacy and status. Factors such as the sites of professionalization projects, the agencies where regulation takes place, institutional alignment of the professionals, and how the professionals see themselves start to be taken into account.

The findings of this research provide evidence to this movement. In the experience of the KMers, professionalization happens through the circular interaction between the KMers and their environment. However, it should be noted that it is rather a *non-deliberate* process in this case. The KMers in this study are not aware that knowledge management is a new function and it has not been accepted. They undertake different strategizing actions in order to deal with the organizational obstacles to accomplish their mission, which in turn result in some changes in the environment. If they are able to make the knowledge management function more visible, to convince people of the benefits of sharing knowledge, to integrate the knowledge management within the existing organizational life, and so forth, the function becomes better recognized. Then the strategizing actions are better facilitated, which leads to stronger acceptance. This circular dynamics continues and knowledge management becomes increasingly accepted. This is the case of Carol and Helen. If the strategizing actions are not sufficient to deal with the KMers' situation, they do not result immediately in a more favourable environment for knowledge management. Consequently, the KMers encounter more difficulty in carrying out their subsequent strategizing actions, and a more favourable context for knowledge management is even more arduous to obtain. It is like a vicious circle that they have to struggle to break out. This is the case of Alex, Christina, Mary, and Kathy. Yvon is in a similar vicious circle, but he decides to break out of it by giving up his position.

In the experience of the KMers in this study, there are several key factors, which contribute to helping the knowledge management function and the knowledge manager position reach a legitimate status. First, real benefits of sharing knowledge must be communicated in a convincing way to all the people in the organization. Second, the management at all levels needs to show support for the function. Third, it is a long-term and continuous effort to obtain an accepted place in the organization. And finally, the function must be visible to everybody, from the top managers to line workers.

Whether or not the knowledge managers have attained professional status still remains an unanswered question, at least for the KMers in this study. According to Blum *et. al.* (1988), a new occupation can be granted professional status when there is a common basis for comparing the occupational performance and the activities of occupational members, who have entered the work from distinctively different backgrounds. If no major differences between the groups can be found, we can contend that an occupation has emerged. The KMers in this study have different missions and undertake a variety of actions, although the logic underlying their actions is the same. Consequently, each KMer's status, seen by the employees of the organization, is unique. For example, Yvon is regarded as someone providing training on the sharing database. Christina is more like the administrator of the sharing database. Carol's name is tied to her communication campaign. Helen is known as someone who collects knowledge documents from providers and can provide knowledge seekers with the knowledge documents they need.

The professional status of a new occupation is obtained when there is a possible formation of professional autonomy, stabilization, and maintenance (Forsyth and Danisiewicz, 1985). This is not the case for all KMers in this research. Carol and Helen have been able to make a name for the knowledge manager position. For others, such as Kathy, the job description of her position is going to

be re-defined in a near future, when the organization will be re-structured. This will also happen to Yvon and Mary. This implies that stabilization has not been achieved; the nature of the knowledge manager occupation is still on the way to adapt to organizational changes. Moreover, Alex states poignantly that: "si demain, je m'en vais ou mon poste est fermé, bah fin bon, il y a plein de raisons qui pourraient faire que demain nous sommes plus la, ça ne changera pas Lafarge quoi". This statement points out clearly the unstable status of the KMer.

b. Knowledge management fashion

Scarbrough (2002) argues that knowledge management "certainly falls into the category of management fashion". The author points out that the development of KM exhibits many of the classical features of fashion, including: a diffusion pattern that corresponds to a bell-shaped curve (Scarbrough and Swan, 2001); a high level of ambiguity; and significant evidence of bandwagon effects and intensive media coverage. In 1999, knowledge management was featured in the prestigious *Fortune* magazine as one of the "big management ideas" of the twentieth century (Harrington, 1999).

In fact, the KMers in this study do experience the fad and fashion of knowledge management. Mary states that knowledge management is adopted at Lafarge because it is a management fashion. In her own words: "le Knowledge management, pour moi c'est une belle publicité. Oui chez Lafarge, on fait du knowledge management. C'est une belle vitrine, tu vois, c'est du marketing... Une grosse société fait du knowledge management. On travaille pour l'environnement, on s'occupe de la sécurité. À mon point de vue, il y a beaucoup de choses qui sont aussi incluses, on en parle, on fait certaines actions. Voilà c'est une belle image de Lafarge quoi". It is noted that by the time knowledge management was put in place, it was communicated by the top management as one of the strategic priorities of the organization. Resources and support were available for knowledge management activities. By the time this study is conducted, the organization has turned to other priorities and the non-strategic position of the knowledge management function has become a major obstacle for the KMers.

The ambiguity of the concept is itself a clue to the fashion-setting possibilities of knowledge management discourse (Scarbrough and Swan, 2001). Knowledge management is not easy to define and many definitions supplied in the literature are highly ambiguous. Definitions of knowledge management often have a strong prescriptive element, where knowledge management is understood as "managed learning" and is assumed to have a positive impact on performance. Examples of definitions of KM abound. It can be described as "the explicit control and management of knowledge within an organization aimed at achieving the company's objectives", "the formal management of knowledge for facilitating creation, access, and reuse of knowledge, typically using advanced technology", "the process of creating, capturing, and using knowledge to enhance organizational performance", and "the ability of organizations to manage, store, value, and distribute knowledge" (Vera and Crossan, 2003).

This ambiguity makes knowledge management amenable to multiple interpretations and remouldings which potentially extend its relevance across different organizational settings (Scarbrough and Swan, 2001). The idea can be interpreted and implemented in ways which are appropriate to the context of the potential adopter. For example, the translation of knowledge management into management



practices seems to have taken place primarily under the professional aegis of information system functions (Scarborough, 2002). Knowledge management has been taken advantage by information system specialists to legitimate and mobilize management support for organizational change programs that centered on using IT to capture and codify knowledge (Alavi and Leidner 1997).

As seen in this study, the ambiguity of the term knowledge management results in the misunderstanding of the term by people in the organization. This incorrect perception prevents the KMers from doing their job effectively. Even for people outside the organization, Alex says that: “ça leur paraît parfois pas facile de comprendre à quoi correspond notre travail. Tu es responsable de la production, tu es responsable de l'atelier, les gens voient ce que tu fais, tu es contrôleur de gestion, les gens voient à peu près à quoi sert cette fonction. Tu es animateur des programmes de gestion des connaissances, les gens disent mais ça fait quoi, est-ce que c'est de la formation, est-ce que c'est la communication, est-ce que c'est la performance industrielle. C'est un peu de tout ça. C'est-à-dire que ça passe au milieu de tout ça”.

When grouping the KMers according to their branches to make a comparison, it can be seen clearly that the concept of knowledge management is adopted differently, which results in the difference in the activities of the KMers. In both branches, there is a significant effort to invest in the sharing database, but the way it is organized differs. In the branch of Carol and Helen, they differentiate between the compulsory and non-compulsory knowledge documents. Compulsory documents are the standards imposed by the branch. Non-compulsory ones include best practices, success stories, and external standards. The documents share the same template and cover a wide range of domain, from marketing, to finance and production activity. In the branch of other KMers, the sharing database only serves the technical community, each activity domain having its own document template and structure. The database is extremely heterogeneous, which takes Alex and Christina a lot of time to re-organize and re-classify the documents into three main groups: industrial policies, industrial standards, and know-how.

The KMers are also assigned different missions. While Carol is responsible for developing knowledge sharing tools and motivating people to share knowledge, Alex's official mission is defined as “metteur en boîte” of the knowledge documents provided by the strategic helpers. Alex is like an “électron libre” in his position. With his theoretical knowledge about knowledge management, Alex believes that “metteur en boîte” is just one aspect of knowledge management. He sets for himself other missions so as to be able to facilitate the entire process of using and contributing to the sharing database. Helen is supposed to take care of the sharing database, collect knowledge documents, transfer them when possible, and promote the sharing of knowledge between people in her region. However, in the cement branch, the sharing database is looked after exclusively by Christina. Yvon, Mary, and Kathy assist Christina by collecting a pre-determined number of knowledge documents per year. Their main responsibility is to train people to use the sharing database and convince them of the benefits of sharing. These are examples of the multiple interpretations about knowledge management.

One question that stems from the multiple interpretations and remouldings across different organizational settings of the term knowledge management is: Do the KMers really do knowledge

management? Taking the definitions of knowledge management put forward by Vera and Crossan (2003) above, it can be argued that in the experience of the KMers in this study, the answer for this question is negative. The KMers do attempt to “capture, store and distribute knowledge”. But the “reuse” is out of their control. What they can do is to convince people and rely on the strategic helpers and sponsors to do that job. They act more like the facilitators of the reuse process. The “creation” of knowledge is beyond their power and authority. They can only collect the knowledge that has been created elsewhere in the organization. They are the managers of that capturing process. Contributing to “enhance the organizational performance” is even more difficult to trace, as discussed later in the following section.

In the social-process view of knowledge, knowledge cannot be managed because it resides in people and their interaction (Sutton, 2001). The experience of the KMers in this study supports this view by showing that the creation and reuse of new knowledge are contextually situated. The nature of knowledge in the production of cement, concrete, and aggregate is highly context-specific and difficult to explain in written text. Knowledge tends to manage itself, since the KMers are fully aware that knowledge exchange exists through out the organization, in different types of interactions that they cannot all manage and control.

It can be said that the KMers do not really “do knowledge management” in the sense of the formal definitions of the term developed in the literature. They are rather the knowledge promoters and facilitators.

### **III. Theoretical discussion**

The theoretical foundation of the practice-based research in general and the strategy-as-practice research in particular is derived from a wider ‘practice turn’ in contemporary social theory. Important theorists of this practice turn include Bourdieu, de Certeau, Giddens, and Foucault. In this research, Dewey’s theoretical perspective, which goes beyond what the existing practice theories are able to offer in investigating situated practices, is introduced.

As discussed, Dewey’s perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment takes into account both building and dwelling modes in the strategizing process of practitioners. A distinctive contribution of Dewey in contrast with other practice theories resides in its attention to the focus on not only the past, but also the present and the future in the building mode of human actions. This theoretical contribution will be discussed in this section.

The existing practice theorists tend to give selective attention to the role of habitus and routinized practices, having a one-sided point of view on the circular interactive dynamics between man and the environment (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). By contrast, the philosophy of Dewey goes further than the focus on routinized practices. Dewey’s pragmatism characterizes the man-environment dynamics as a “temporally embedded process of social engagement informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the

moment)". It is constituted by inter-related elements: iteration, projectivity, and practical evaluation (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Moreover, the ways in which people understand their own relationship to the past, future, and present make a difference to their actions. How actors in different periods and places see their world influences their agentic possibility in relation to structural contexts (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

The criticism of the existing practice theories will be presented in the following sections in order to show their selective attention to routinized practices in contrast with Dewey's pragmatism.

### 1. Bourdieu

The theory of practice of Bourdieu (1990) is based upon the argument that objects of knowledge are socially constructed. For him, the underlying principle of this system of construction is a "durable transposable set of dispositions", which he calls "habitus". Habitus is a kind of "mindless" or "unconscious orchestration of actions that does not presuppose agency and intentionality". However, habitus is "neither the blind cultural programming of human behaviour, nor the spontaneous creativity and intention of the free agent". "Habitus, as a set of internalized predispositions, enables actors to cope with unexpected and changing situations by inducing non-deliberate responses that, while always containing a degree of local improvisation, nevertheless reproduce the regularities that make most human actions appear eminently sensible or reasonable". Habitus is a mediating principle between individual practice and what he calls "objective structures". Within the basis process of socialization, the habitus is shaped (in the "heads" of actors) in response to the external conditions of one's life. But the habitus operates in a relation to the external conditions, because "the practices that it generates are externalized in forms and behaviour that once again become part of the objective conditions and thus reciprocally become models for shaping the internalized dispositions" (Turino, 1990).

The focus on routine is reflected in Bourdieu's definition of habitus as "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations", which

*produces practices which tend to reproduce their regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situations, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990).*

It can be said that the idea of habitus illuminates the influences of the past upon the empirical action. Habitus is well-rooted in the physical environments containing actors. It is also embodied mentally and physically within the actors themselves. It can be applied in new as well as familiar situations (Turino, 1990). Through the incorporation of past experiences, social actors develop a set of preconscious expectations about the future, which are typically inarticulate and taken for granted, but nevertheless employed in accordance with the contingencies of particular empirical situations (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). This focus on the iteration dimension is made explicit by Bourdieu when he states that habitus is "opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history... as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects without inertia" (Bourdieu, 1990).

## 2. Giddens

Giddens's notion of structuration is the overarching construct in structuration theory. It refers to how the production/reproduction of social life is fundamentally a recursive process that stretches across time and space (Cohen, 1989, in Rose, 2006). It involves an interplay among "virtual structures and situated practices". Central to this recursive process is the level of practice in that "all social life is generated in and through social praxis".

For Giddens, structures consist of rules and resources. As rules, they are "techniques or generalizable procedures that individuals access when they want to understand or sanction each other in concrete interaction situations". As resources, they consist of two types: allocative, which refers to "transformative capacity generating command over objects, goods or material phenomena", and authoritative, which refers to "transformative capacity generating commands over persons or actors" (Giddens, 1984). He identifies three dimensions of structure: signification, domination, and legitimation. Corresponding dimensions of interaction consist of communication, power, and sanction. They are linked with which the structural dimensions through modalities of interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms, respectively. Social actors draw on structures of "signification" (language and other symbolic codes) to produce/reproduce "communication" (meaningful and understandable interactions via the modality of "interpretive scheme" (background knowledge regarding the codes). When people exercise "power" (influence) at the level of concrete practice, they do so by accessing intersubjective "domination" structures – either allocative (control of materials like budgets) or authoritative (control of people) – through the modality of "facility" (capacity, capability). Finally, social agents are able to "sanction" each other by drawing on "legitimation" structures (moral orders associated with laws, religion) via the "norm" modality (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens (1991) is particularly interested in the concept of routinization. He emphasizes the need for "basic trust" and "ontological security" that drives humans to routinize their practices and to give order and stability to their relationships (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). He gives routinized practical consciousness a privileged place in the explanation of social reproduction and calls routinization the "master key" of his theory of structuration. Such consciousness emerges out of a background of "tacitly employed mutual knowledge" (Giddens, 1979), by means of which social interactions are reflexively monitored.

In the reproduction of structures, Giddens also develops the important idea of recursivity: structures are really only "virtual" structures that must be recursively activated within social practices. The agentic dimension of routinized action resides precisely in the recursive implementation of structures by human actors (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Giddens states: "routines and institutions relate foundationally to the fundamental recursiveness of social life" (Giddens, 1984). He emphasizes recurrent social practices, especially routines in concrete interaction circumstances.

### 3. de Certeau

De Certeau rejects the assumption that people are passive, being guided by the disciplinary force of established rules. For him, they are not simple faceless consumers, but active producers, “poets of their own affairs, pathfinders in jungles of functionalist rationality” (de Certeau, 1984).

De Certeau distinguishes between two types of practice: strategies and tactics. Strategies are only available to subjects of “will and power,” who can influence the rest of the social environment (de Certeau, Jameson, Lovitt, 1980). Other people, however, though lacking power, are not merely passive objects. On the contrary, they are active agents, but their mode of practice is tactical rather than strategic. “While strategies invoke and actualize a schematic and stratified ordering of social reality, everyday practices of consumption (including activities like walking or reading) are tactical in that they continuously re-signify and disrupt the schematic ordering of reality produced through the strategic practices of the powerful” (de Certeau, Jameson, Lovitt, 1980). The dialectic relation of two opposing forces of strategies and tactics is configured by the concept of *la perruque* (literally, “the wig”). This is a French expression that refers to the work one does for oneself in the guides of work done for an employer. It is used to describe how individuals use tactics to carve out a semi-independent domain of practice within the constraints placed on them by the powerful (Mitchell, 2007).

De Certeau never really offers an explanation of tactics that would satisfy social anthropologists (Mitchell, 2007). De Certeau appears to be unwilling to give a coherent answer to the question of where the capacity to generate *la perruque* comes from. He refuses to outline a theory of practice, rather letting a description of practice stand for itself (Mitchell, 2007). Moreover, although de Certeau does not explicitly show his interest in routine and the past, his view of practice implicitly includes them by indicating the dependence of practice on a set of predefined “schemas of operations and of technical manipulations”:

*Everyday practices depend on a vast ensemble which is difficult to delimit but which we may provisionally designate as an ensemble of procedures. The latter are schemas of operations and of technical manipulations (de Certeau, 1984)*

This “ensemble of procedure” invokes no significant difference with the “durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations”, which is present in the notion of habitus put forward by Bourdieu (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

### 4. Foucault

Although the early work of Foucault tends to detach the reproduction of practices from the subject, his later work starts to argue that actors appropriate and incorporate practices while using them to engage with the world (Rasche and Chia, 2009). Foucault, in his early work, relies on the notion of knowledge codes, which are considered as “trans-subjective knowledge orders that exist beyond the subject”. However, his later work assumes that practices are not only restricted to discursive processes but also non-discursive in character. He claims that “knowledge codes are not reproduced independent of the subject through autonomous discourses, but through the subject, who actively incorporates this

knowledge code into his/her everyday routinized practices". Without the necessary interpretation made by actors during their practices, the knowledge codes remain unrealized (Rasche and Chia, 2009).

Foucault's focus on the routinized practices is seen in his definition of practices, which can be summarized as "consisting of routinized interpretations of the self and the environment, the belonging habituated bodily behaviour as well as the necessary trans-subjective knowledge codes that enable these interpretations and behaviours to be carried out" (Rasche and Chia, 2009).

Moreover there have been numerous critiques of Foucault's work (Ahearn, 2001). For example, his definition of power has been criticized for the problematic implications it has for human agency (Bartky 1995, Hoy 1986). For Foucault, omnipresent impersonal discourses so thoroughly pervade society, which leave no room for anything that might be regarded as agency (Ahearn, 2001). Foucault (1978) writes: "power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And power, insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement ... There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject".

The relationship between discourse and the 'subject' is also one of the central problematics of Foucault's work. Foucault appears to conceive discourses as partly autonomous and self-referential systems of meaning. They cannot disclose the relationship between subject and object, discourse and 'reality'. Discourse analysis simply replaces any analysis of how discourse (language, symbols or signs) represents or corresponds to the world (Deetz, 2003; Hardy, 2004).

## 5. Dewey

Dewey does not explicitly discuss about practices, but his philosophy does offer a possibility to study social and situated practices, or practice and praxis in the language of strategy-as-practice research. It enables us to take into account both building and dwelling modes in the strategizing process of practitioners. In the building mode, it also goes further than the existing practice theories and focuses on not only routinized practices but also on the present and the future.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Dewey believes that man, like any natural creature, is a being reacting and interacting with an environment. The transaction between organism and environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its ever-changing environment. Man learns through experience and his adjustments to regain new equilibriums become more satisfactory.

Dewey's concept of experience helps understand man's practices and praxis. Experience is the very way in which living organisms are connected with reality. The content of our experience includes something had, an undergoing of things which "happen to us". It also includes responsive "taking". Experiencing is primarily suffering and enjoyment, the feeling of need and the making of effort, while what is experienced is anything that can occur to anyone. Situation is a chief principle for interpreting an experience. It denotes the entire, pervasive, unique character of all conditions under which and

within which an individual organism functions at a given time, including shared routines of behaviour, such as traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using things.

Experience covers the whole range of human possibilities. Dewey refers to these dimensions as modes of experience. Dewey discusses about a particular type of experiencing called inquiry: the cognitive mode of experience. The transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate one is the natural occasion for the process of inquiry and, therefore, for the transition of experience into the cognitive mode. Inquiry represents a progressive determination of a problem and its possible solution, which takes into account the present and the future. At first, they are vague and occur simply as suggestions that spring up, flash upon us, and occur to us. The suggestion becomes an idea when it is examined with reference to its functional fitness and its capacity as a means of resolving the given situation. This examination takes the form of reasoning as a result of which we are able to appraise better than we were at the outset. One of the key ideas of Dewey's pragmatism is that reality only reveals itself as a result of the activities – of the “doings” – of the organism. Thus, the final test is determined when the individual undertakes actions, so as to institute by means of observations facts not previously observed, and then use to organize them with other facts into a coherent whole. Inquiry implies the building mode and takes into account not only routinized practice, but also an imaginative engagement of the present and the future.

Continuity is also an important principle for understanding experience. Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later one. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. What he has learned in terms of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. The principle of continuity of experience rests upon the notion of habits, which are not, or only are in specific cases, patterns of action but should be understood as predispositions to act. Habit and continuity function below the level of consciousness; they imply the dwelling mode in experience.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

##### **1. Theoretical contributions**

The first theoretical contribution of this research is to introduce a new theoretical perspective that not only enables us to engage with the practice turn in management research, but also goes beyond what the existing practice theories are able to offer in investigating situated practices.

The key limitation of the existing theories of practice is the tendency to restrict the discussion of human agency to its iterational dimension. Practice theorists give selective attention to the role of habitus and routinized practices, having one-sided point of view on the circular interactive dynamics between man and the environment (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). This is not to say that the practice theorists do not see change as possible. Giddens' idea of discursive consciousness and Bourdieu's calls for a reflexive sociology suggest that they believe in a certain increase in freedom and flexibility of action, as one becomes more conscious of one's situation. Giddens's view of human agent is always to “have the

possibility of doing otherwise” (Giddens, 1989). Thus, “the seed of change is there in every act which contributes towards the reproduction of any ordered form of social life” (Giddens, 1993). However, their frameworks do not help us to analyze this possibility, nor do they give us the tools to recognize it in the course of doing empirical research (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). It has been argued that de Certeau, Bourdieu, and Giddens give insufficient attention to the question of how any habitus or structure can produce actions that fundamentally change it (Ahearn, 2001).

By relying on the philosophy of Dewey, this research provides a new theoretical perspective that offers the possibility to go beyond the notion of practice that focuses on human disposition, habits, and the iterative procedural routines, to a more dynamic and creative notion of practice that is needed to understand better the relationship between the individual and his environment (Miettinen, 2006). Dewey does not explicitly discuss about practices, but his philosophy does offer a possibility to study social and situated practices, or practice and praxis in the language of strategy-as-practice research. It enables us to take into account both building and dwelling modes in the strategizing process of practitioners. In the building mode, it goes beyond the focus on routinized practices of existing practice theories and pays more attention to the orientation towards the present and the future. Dewey’s perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment maintains that human actors do not merely repeat past routines, they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action. It pays attention to not only the actors’ orientation toward the past but also to how agentic processes give shape and direction to future possibilities. For Dewey, an imaginative engagement of the future is a crucial component of the effort made by human actors, as they respond to the challenges and uncertainties of social life. Moreover, in Dewey’s philosophy, change is inherent in human life. The transaction between man and the environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which man seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with his ever-changing environment. With his capacity of consciousness, man is able to examine the interaction between himself and his environment and gradually learn how to have some control over nature. Each problem encountered leads to a re-examination of experience in order to include within it new material, more inclusive resolution, and new ways of coping with nature. Man learns through experience and his adjustments to regain new equilibriums become more satisfactory.

The second theoretical contribution of this research is made for the strategy-as-practice literature. It shows that strategizing is not necessarily exclusive to strategists. It may be inherent in the working life of such non-strategists as knowledge managers. In fact, the findings in this research show that the actual doing of the KMers is a strategizing process. The praxis of the KMers in this study is divided into three major categories of strategizing actions, including the marketing, island-finding, and force-building. The KMers are like the practitioners, who draw on “a complex bundle of practices involving social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them” (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), to perform their praxis. For example, the social practices may be the unwritten norms of doing knowledge management, or the behaviour towards the top management while seeking its support. The material practices may be the IT qualities and problems. The embodied practices, which are the “repository of background coping skills upon which actors unconsciously draw as part of their everyday being within the world” (Chia, 2004), are seen in



the way all the KMers seek help from the strategic helpers through constant follow-up and concrete action plans.

Moreover, it is found that what influence the KMers' praxis are not only the practices, but also the organizational features and the anticipated consequences of their intentional actions. In the experience of the KMers, there are organizational features that have an impact on the way they do their job, but are not social, material and embodied ways of doing. Examples include the language barrier and the frequent rate of human resource turnover. Such organizational features are not practices, but they play a role in *leading* the KMers to adopt certain praxis. What also make the KMers deliberately undertake an action are its anticipated consequences. When the KMers are intentional in their actions, they are well aware of what those actions will bring.

Thanks to Dewey's framework, it is revealed that the strategizing process of the KMers inherently contains a process of learning through overt actions. All KMers become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. This learning process is both intentional and accidental, with the KMers being unaware or conscious of it.

This has an important implication for the strategy-as-practice perspective, which has considered practices as the only external factor influencing the way practitioners perform praxis. Strategy-as-practice researchers should go beyond the scope of practices, and look at the contextual factors and what strategists anticipate as consequences of their actions in order to understand in depth their experience and praxis. Their learning through overt actions over time should also be taken into account.

From the findings, it can be seen that both building and dwelling modes are present in all the categories of actions (marketing, island-finding, and force-building). However, the dominance of each mode in each action varies between the individual KMers. A KMer may deliberately plan an action or purposively undertake it, but he/she always has to cope with the unexpected as soon as the action is implemented in reality. This confirms the argument of Chia and Holt (2006) that the two modes co-exist in the experience of practitioners. It represents an implication for the strategy-as-practice perspective to pay more attention to the dwelling mode of strategizing.

Importantly, it is observed that there is a transition from the dwelling mode to the building one, as the KMers continue to do their job. The KMers start to be aware of the consequences of their actions and recognize some of their unintentional actions as essential in accomplishing their mission. They, then, become more deliberate in carrying out the previously unintentional actions. The inter-relationship between two modes has never been considered in the strategy-as-practice literature and remains only implicit in the article of Chia and Holt (2006). This indicates another important gap for the strategy-as-practice research to take into consideration.

The final theoretical contribution of this research is related to the literature on knowledge managers. It is shown that the actual doing of the KMers cannot be described by a set of pre-defined activities. It is in fact impossible to create a theoretical framework that can be used as the best description of all KMers' job. Doing the job of a KMer is a complex whole, in which the organizational context, the

corresponding actions of the KMer, the logic of such actions, the double relationship between the KMer and the context, their emotion and feeling intertwine. The entire experience is contingent upon the particular situation of each KMer, how he responds to that situation, how the consequent changes in the situation react upon the KMer, and how that circular dynamics evolves on over time. A step-by-step account also assumes the building mode in the actions of the KMers and ignores the dwelling mode, which is very present and important in the KMers' lives.

More importantly, this research points out the particularity of knowledge management, which is its new occupational status. Existing studies in the literature have not recognized the issue that knowledge management is not automatically accepted in the organization. Few of them mention the need for strategies to gain acceptance, considering it as a small element of a larger set of activities, while in fact it is vital as seen in the experience of the KMers at Lafarge.

## 2. Managerial contributions

Based on the findings of this research, some recommendations can be drawn for the top managers of multinationals, who want to create the knowledge management function for the purpose of performance improvement, and for the KMers, who are in charge of running that function.

For the top managers, if they want to successfully introduce the knowledge management function, there are several actions to undertake and some aspects to be aware of. First, they need to communicate within the organization about the importance of knowledge management. This can be done during their speeches in the organizational events or via internal communication media. Second, in case of a multinational, involvement of regional and local managers is equally important. The top managers should make them be committed to communicate within their region about the importance of knowledge management and support the KMers in doing their job. Third, in order to make everyone in the organization share knowledge with each other, regardless of the sharing media, it is essential to evaluate their performance on that activity. Fourth, as seen in this study, people tend to work on what they are evaluated and awarded upon. For many, only when sharing knowledge becomes part of their objectives that they make efforts to do the task. Finally, the top managers should be aware that knowledge management brings results in the long term. It is not over a short period of time that people become interested in sharing knowledge. Even when they have an interest, it is crucial to constantly communicate the strategic role of knowledge management and the commitment of the top managers to the subject. Importantly, the top managers should be aware that the direct link between knowledge management and financial outcomes is difficult to measure. The criteria of evaluation should be adapted accordingly.

For the KMers, there are some important qualities that they should try to acquire and some awareness that they should have while doing the job. First, communication skills are crucial. They should be able to communicate with different types of audiences, from the top managers, to regional or departmental managers and line workers, to convince them of the value of knowledge management. Knowledge management needs support from different departments, such as IT or communication, and from the holders of knowledge, such as recognized experts. The KMers should be able to communicate with them about their needs for support. Second, the KMers should be able to integrate knowledge

management within the existing organizational processes to make people accept more easily the function. One way is to make sharing knowledge become part of what people are supposed to do. For example, part of a reunion can be programmed on the discussion and exchange of the participants' lessons learned at work. Another way is to assist people in improving their performance by knowledge sharing. The KMers may try to find out what people's objectives are, what knowledge they would need to attain those objectives, and then bring them with the necessary knowledge. These two qualities necessitate the third important quality for the knowledge managers. They must be good learners and good listeners. To be good learners means to be willing to research for any topics that are relevant to the company's business. To be good listeners means to be able to pinpoint what people think about knowledge management, what they are looking for, what their needs are, all of which are important for the KMers in doing their job.

The KMers should be aware that support from the top management is of crucial importance. It is essential that the KMers constantly keep the top managers implicated in knowledge management, and then communicate through out the organization about their support. Moreover, they should always try to *adapt and act in accordance* with the organizational context, rather than *confront* with the obstacles they may encounter. This point may be applicable to all types of managers, not only KMers, but it is the most important lesson learned by the KMers in this research.

### 3. Methodological contributions

This thesis introduces the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology. This methodology helps put into actions the conceptual framework of Dewey's pragmatism, which has not provided any specific research program for social research. It also represents a new methodological perspective that can enrich management studies in general and practice-based research in particular.

Although Dewey does develop an experimental research methodology, he claims that "until social inquiry succeeds in establishing methods of observing, discriminating and arranging data that evoke and test correlated ideas, and until, on the other side, ideas formed and used are employed as hypotheses, and are of a form to direct and prescribe operations of analytic-synthetic determination of facts, social inquiry has no chance of satisfying the logical conditions for attainment of scientific status" (1938). This point of view toward social inquiry explains why pragmatism proposes neither a specific "program" for the conduct of social research, nor any specific research methods (Biesta and Burbules (2003).

This research implements the investigation framework based on Dewey's pragmatism by using the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology and pragmatism have many commonalities. They share a similar argument on the relationship between man and the environment. Both view the world as a perceived world, oppose the idea that meaning is a given, and reject against the dualism between body and mind, man and nature, subjectivity and objectivity, and the like. Both attempt to interpret descriptively the concrete basis of everyday experience through their respective methods.

It is argued that phenomenology remains rooted in descriptive interpretations of the structures, while pragmatism puts forward experimental research. However, this research shows that it is possible to use hermeneutic phenomenological methodology in a pragmatic research by placing phenomenological description within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification. This is done by a validation of finding at the experiential level of the participants and an internal testing of the analysis process.

This research also shows that the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology can enrich management studies in general and practice-based research in particular. Over twenty years ago, Sander (1982) argues that phenomenology was “a new star on the research horizon” for management studies. It offers an interpretive research methodology that is directed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experience, which is not always possible with other methodologies (Gibson and Hanes, 2003). As seen in this research, this methodology helps reveal the complexity and wholeness of the experience of being a knowledge manager, providing empirical evidence against a step-by-step account of the activities of knowledge managers. Moreover, hermeneutic phenomenology represents a potentially useful methodology for practice-based research. As practice-based research is interested in the situated doing of human actors, the focus on the essence of human experience of hermeneutic phenomenology, then, has direct application. This indicates an implication for strategy-as-practice literature, in which existing research tends to rely mainly on longitudinal, multiple (Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008) or single (Sillince and Mueller, 2007) case study, ethnographic methodology (Rouleau, 2005), grounded theory (Mantere, 2005), or survey-based design (Hodgkinson *et. al.*, 2006). This research shows that hermeneutic phenomenological methodology deserves more significant attention.

#### 4. Validity

It is argued that that positivism’s evaluative criteria are reasonable standards for hermeneutic phenomenological findings in this research. That is, research conclusions should be empirically based; research should strive to be free of personal biases and prejudices; and other individuals should be able to agree that conclusions are justified by the data (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). In this section, the methods used in this research to ensure these evaluative criteria will be reviewed.

The most common criticism of interpretive phenomenological based research is that the subjective influence of the researcher, in both the interviewing and analysis phases, hinders the researcher from coming up with objective and therefore usable data. The first argument against this criticism is that for interpretive phenomenological philosophy, experience is not divided into the categories of objective and subjective (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). No methods are seen as purely objective in the sense of being free of human experience, nor are any methods seen as purely subjective in the sense of being free of external influence. The whole meaning of being objective is different in phenomenological research. Objectivity in this approach means: trying to be as comprehensive as possible in investigating the phenomenon, and utilizing a method or methods which will be as faithful to the phenomenon as possible. There is no way to eliminate the “subjectivity” of research. In fact, phenomenologists believe that it is the very nature of such subjectivity, which allows for greater

objectivity (Hycner, 1999). Second, in this study, validity is obtained through craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), the craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher are essential for validity of the research. Validity is not only a matter of method used. The person of the researcher, including his/her moral integrity, is critical for evaluation of the quality of the knowledge produced. Interviewing is a craft. It rests on the judgement of a qualified researcher. The interviewer is the instrument. The outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer. Craftsmanship validity of this research is enhanced as the researcher is well trained with necessary interviewing skills (Kvale, 1996). Her interview with a doctoral peer is very helpful in this aspect. Moreover, to ensure the credibility of the researcher's influence in the analysis process, checking and rechecking the written memos are done after each interview. The researcher's conclusions are measured against these memos and the participants' stories at every phase of analysis. Each theme is reviewed thoroughly and is not finalized until the researcher is convinced by re-reading, checking and discussion, that it is a faithful representation of the text.

Another criticism is that interviewing a participant about a phenomenon elicits a retrospective viewpoint (Hycner, 1999). The criticism claims that a retrospective viewpoint is not the same as getting a description from someone while an experience is actually occurring. A retrospective viewpoint is altered by time and therefore different from the experience itself. However, it is argued that any description of an experience is already different from the experience itself. Language, by its nature, can distill or enhance an experience. In any case a description is not the experience itself. The best we can do through the medium of language is to be one step removed from the original experience. Consequently a retrospective viewpoint has the same shortcoming as a concurrent description, given the nature of language. On top of that, as the participant describes an experience after some time has elapsed, the verbal description is not "accurate" because of distortions arising from the passage of time. But the advantage is that a retrospective viewpoint may actually allow a much fuller verbal description, because the participant has had an opportunity to reflect back on the experience and to integrate it consciously and verbally (Hycner, 1999). Moreover, the three-interview structure adopted in this study incorporates features that increase the accuracy of the experience described by the participants (Seidman, 2006), thereby enhancing the validity. It places participants' comments in context. It enables us to check for the internal consistency of what they say. The process helps understand how the participants understand and make meaning of their experience. It is argued that if the interview structure allows them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity (Seidman, 2006).

Replicability is that a study can be replicated by other researchers and get essentially the same results. Given the nature of phenomenological research, which is open to multiple interpretations (van Manen, 1990), there are bound to be some finding differences among researchers. Consequently, the control comes from the researcher's context or perspective of data. Once the context and intention become known, the divergence is usually intelligible to all even if not universally agreeable. Thus, the chief point to be remembered with this research is not whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted, but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it (Hycner, 1999). In order to

help readers follow the rationale of the researcher's interpretations, examples of the material used for the interpretations are presented and the different steps of the analysis process are explicitly outlined. This is done by using the "audit trail" developed by Koch (1994), which evolves from the description of the analysis process. The audit trail is also considered a tactic to improve validity of the research (Kvale, 1996), as it helps control the analysis process.

The positivist distinction between discovery and justification is inapplicable to the findings of this interpretive phenomenological based thesis. For positivism, the discovery/justification distinction holds that the means by which knowledge claims are generated must be independent of the methods used to verify them. The distinction's consequence for qualitative research is that the methods used to verify an interpretation are separated from the interpretive process (Thompson *et. al.*, 1989). However, for hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, no conceptual distinction is made between discovery and justification. The method of interpretation affords its own justification (Giorgi, 1986). In this research, verification procedures are internal to the interpretive process (Hoon, 2009). The formulation of concepts, sub-themes, and themes are tentative propositions open for testing. They are tentative in character as these propositions refer to the subtleties of meaning found in the data, but still allow the free flowing interplay of observation and multi-relational reflection. These tentative propositions are tested in terms of adding evidence of the same pattern but also remain open to disconfirming evidence. Concepts, sub-themes, themes, and the connections between them are not static findings but fluid results that are changed and refined within the ongoing analysis and the move back and forth between parts and whole.

Finally, one way to establish research credibility is to determine whether the participants recognize the findings as true to their experience. Van Manen (1990) says that a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience. It is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience, and he calls this the "validating circle of inquiry". The participants are able, at an experiential level to see whether the findings are valid for them. If they experience a spark of recognition, termed the "phenomenological nod" (van Manen 1990), it is a powerful indication that the results of the project are credible. The results of this research were presented to three of the seven participants. They are Carol, Helen, and Christina. Overall, all of them find that the analogical metaphor and the individual stories reflect well their experience of being a knowledge manager. Helen is so impressed with the image of the rafters on an angry river that she asks the researcher to give her permission to present that metaphoric discussion within her branch. She thinks that it is a "very powerful" illustration of her life as a knowledge manager. For Christina, the image is "bien trouvé". Carol finds the results "interesting" and invites the researcher to present them to her community of knowledge managers, in which the knowledge managers of the CAC 40 companies meet every month to share their experience and lesson learned. The three categories of actions represent well the KMers' strategy to deal with the organizational obstacles and achieve their objectives. The findings are confirmed by the participants' experience as well as represent a faithful description of their experiences. For example, in the findings, Christina has not found any island. But during time elapsing between the interviews and the finding discussion, she has been able to find out some islands, which fit into the island types identified in this research. The personal network has not been Christina's

external force in the finding. But it has become one of her important forces. In the case of Carol, her strategic helpers are the knowledge managers in the business units. Then by the time of the finding discussion, like other KMers, she has been able to obtain help from the holders of knowledge, who do not have an official role of helpers, but have the legitimacy to convince other people of the benefits of sharing knowledge.

It should be noted that there are some limitations in this research. First, the finding discussion was not conducted with all seven participants. Some of them had moved to another function, some were unavailable due to schedule conflict. The findings would have gained more legitimacy if all the interviewed knowledge managers had been able to discuss about the analysis of their own experience. Second, to place phenomenology's interpretive description within the context of pragmatic experimentalism, a legitimate way could have been achieved through an analysis of the likely effects of the research conclusions on the meaning of ordinary experience and practical activity for the participants. This could not be achieved due to the time limitation and the significance of the required efforts. Third, the image of the KMers as rafters on an angry river has some limitations. It is common that rafting is a team sport. There is often some coordination between the rafters on a same boat. In this study, the collaboration between the participating KMers is not investigated. Also, the rafters are physically close to each other. But the studied KMers work in different countries around the world; they have a remote geographical distance.

#### 5. Future research directions

Given the limitations presented above, one possible research direction is to conduct a study on the likely effects of the research conclusions on the meaning of ordinary experience and practical activity for the participants. Such study will enhance the pragmatic spirit of this research and at the same time allow us to see how the praxis of strategizing practitioners may be influenced by academic knowledge rather than socially routinized practice.

This research is conducted with the knowledge managers in a same multinational, which has its own contextual characteristics. In order to have a richer understanding of the phenomenon of interest, future research on the knowledge managers in other multinationals in other industries will be needed. This will enable us to compare being a knowledge manager in different contexts, thereby identifying more clearly the role of the context in the strategizing process of the practitioners.

In addition, the theoretical framework and methodology of this research may be applied to the studies of other types of managers. It has been argued that Dewey's pragmatism and phenomenological methodology is applicable to not only the strategy-as-practice literature, but also the practice literature at large. Thus, studying the practices of other types of managers is a promising direction for future research.

Finally, future research may attempt to identify other methodologies that may fit into the experimentalism of pragmatic theory. While interpretive phenomenological methodology has been shown to be in line with pragmatism's spirit, other suitable methodologies should exist. For example, it

is commonly heard that grounded methodology stems from pragmatic theory. This research direction, therefore, deserves future attention.

## 6. General conclusion

Inspired by the lack of research on the practices of knowledge managers in the literature and the existing dominance of the building mode in strategy-as-practice research, this thesis has two attempts. One is to examine how the knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, do their job via intentional doing and practical coping in their particular context. Another is to understand how knowledge managers, as strategizing practitioners, experience their position.

To develop an investigation framework, this thesis relies on John Dewey's perspective on the relationship between man and the environment, which takes into account not only intentional and non-deliberate dimensions, but also the complexity and wholeness of human experience. The perspective is configured by his concepts of experience, situation, continuity, inquiry, and knowledge.

Without a specific research program offered by pragmatism for social research, the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology is adopted in this research. Hermeneutic phenomenology and pragmatism have many commonalities. They share a similar argument on the relationship between man and the environment. Both view the world as a perceived world, oppose the idea that meaning is a given, and reject against the dualism between body and mind, man and nature, subjectivity and objectivity, and the like. It is argued that phenomenology remains rooted in descriptive interpretations of the structures, while pragmatism puts forward experimental research. This research places phenomenological description within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification. This is achieved by a validation at the experiential level of the participants and an internal testing of the analysis process.

In line with the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, the empirical investigation is carried out based on the six inter-related procedures put forward by van Manen (1990). They consist of turning to a phenomenon of interest, investigating the experience as it is lived, reflecting on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the question, and balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Seven knowledge managers of two branches of Lafarge Group are interviewed during two sessions of two hours. They are not chosen randomly because the persons to be investigated must be those who possess the characteristics under observation or those who can give reliable information on the phenomena being researched. Random sampling is not compatible with the hermeneutic phenomenological method. The seven knowledge managers work in different countries, including France, Austria, China, and Canada. The interviews are semi-structured with open-ended questions, in which there is a sequence of themes to be covered, yet there is also openness to change of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the participants. As repeated interviews over time in a study are an essential feature of the hermeneutic



phenomenological method, the interviews follow the three-series model of proposed by Seidman (2006).

The analysis of the collected data aims at reaching an interpretive description of the experience of the seven knowledge managers. The interpretation tools used in this research include the concepts of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, prejudice, the fusion of horizons, and play developed by Gadamer (1975). The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads among the stories of the knowledge managers, and studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality and the contextual root of each story. The cross-case thematic analysis describes the commonalities in the organizational context and identifies the common categories of strategizing actions undertaken by the knowledge managers. It unveils the “pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager, which in turn helps further interpret the data and is confirmed by the data. The paradigm case analysis reveals how each individual knowledge manager experience his/her life as a strategizing practitioner, his/her chosen actions within the common categories of strategizing action, the degree to which the building and dwelling modes dominate one another in his/her actions, and the transactional process, in which he/she comes up with his/her chosen actions in relation to the environment. Seeking the themes is also guided by van Manen (1990) in his suggested methods for isolating thematic statements, which are the detailed reading approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the wholistic reading approach. The move from the grouped thoughts of the participants, to the concepts, sub-themes, and finally, themes is informed by the useful advice provided by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) on coding ideas. In the model proposed by Benner, exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases. It should be noted that cross-case analysis and paradigm case analysis are not two sequential steps. They are rather intertwined in the move back and forth between parts and whole in the analysis.

During the analysis, some tactics are adopted to help enhance the research validity. First, in line with the spirit of Dewey’s pragmatism, internal verification and testing of interpretive description is ensured using the approach proposed by Hoon (2009). The formulated concepts, sub-themes, and themes are tentative propositions that still allow the free flowing interplay of observation and multi-relational reflection. They are refined in terms of adding evidence of the same pattern and also remain open to disconfirming evidence. Second, an “audit trail” (Koch, 1994) is kept to help the reader follow the rationale of the researcher’s interpretations. As phenomenological research is open to multiple interpretations, it is important that a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it. Third, validity is obtained through craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996), which is enhanced by the researcher’s training with necessary interviewing skills. Moreover, to ensure the credibility of the researcher’s influence in the analysis process, checking and rechecking the written memos are done after each interview. The researcher’s conclusions are measured against these memos and the participants’ stories at every phase of analysis. Each theme is reviewed thoroughly and is not finalized until the researcher is convinced by re-reading, checking and discussion, that it is a faithful representation the text. Finally, the findings are discussed with the participants. They are able, at an experiential level to see whether

the findings are valid for them. As the participants all experience “a spark of recognition”, termed the “phenomenological nod” (van Manen, 1990), it is a powerful indication that the results of this research are credible.

The data analysis results in several findings. It should be noted that as the goal of phenomenological investigation is to describe experience in lived rather than conceptually abstract terms, using respondent terms is one procedure for staying at the level of lived experience. This research’s interpretation relies on the respondent’s own terms rather than the researcher’s.

It is found that the main particularity of knowledge management is that it is a new function. It does not have an accepted place within the organization, like marketing or human resources. The knowledge managers have to accept this lack of territory and create strategies to develop a place for the knowledge management function. This specificity is in line with the underlying argument permeating new occupation literature that practitioners of new occupation, whether individual or aggregate, have to make considerable efforts to secure professional legitimacy and status. The essence of doing a knowledge manager’s job can be considered as a strategizing process.

From the data analysis, the “pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938) of the experience of being a knowledge manager is found. The knowledge managers can be compared with the rafters on an angry river, the knowledge management function with the rafters’ inflatable boat, the sharing database with a library on that boat, and the knowledge managers’ strategizing process with the rafting endeavor. As the analysis is a constant move back and forth between checking and re-checking, between parts and whole in a hermeneutic circle and with a “playful attitude” (Gadamer, 1975), this metaphor emerges from the data analysis, and in turn helps further interpret the data as well as is confirmed by the data. The image of such raging river, which has a powerful current and hard-to-negotiate obstacles, represents the difficult, imposing, changing, and at the same time inert organizational context. The obstacles on the rivers, such as drops, rocks and hazards, represent the hard-to-negotiate barriers that hinder them from accomplishing their mission. They embody the inert characteristics of the context. The powerful and always-moving current represents its unstable nature. The current keeps running the way it does. It is impossible for the rafters to raft against the current or to make it less furious. It refers to what the context strictly imposes. The image of the inflatable boat represents the specific nature of the knowledge management function: it does not have an accepted place in the organization, rather it “floats”. The image of a library on the floating boat illustrates the knowledge sharing database, implying that it is unconventional compared to traditional libraries because it is accessible via cyber space and serves users worldwide. It also implies the fact that the sharing database has not been accepted in the organization. Just like the knowledge management function, it “floats”. The knowledge managers are like the rafters, who have to let the powerful current move them on but manage to deal intelligently with the obstacles and dangerous features coming up along their way. They strategize through different actions to protect their inflatable boat from sinking by trying to avoid the obstacles and taking advantage of what is useful for them on the river. The rafting indicates the strategizing process experienced by the knowledge manager.

The cross-case analysis reveals that the hard-to-negotiate obstacles include the language barrier, the organizational culture that is not so favorable for knowledge sharing, incorrect perception about knowledge management, people's mind-set, and IT problems. The unstable characteristic of the context is seen in the new strategic objectives that continue to change, which draw time and efforts of the employees away from participating in knowledge management. The instability is also perceptible in the evolution in human resources, and in the constant changes in IT infrastructure.

Seen from far, the knowledge managers seem to accept the existence of those obstacles and let themselves be moved on by the powerful current, but they do manage to deal intelligently with those forces of nature. From the cross-case thematic analysis, the strategizing actions, undertaken by the knowledge managers, are grouped into three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labelled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively. The intentional category is made of the marketing actions. The knowledge managers intentionally carry out the marketing actions within the organization in order to broadcast the existence of their function and convince people of its benefits. The emergent category is composed of the island-finding actions, i.e. the search for some secure islands on the river, in which the knowledge management function can be protected from the troubled water. It means the knowledge managers try to build a place for their function by integrating knowledge management activities in the existing and accepted processes of the organization. The action has emergent nature because the knowledge managers cannot create the islands; they can just actively look for and take advantage of the islands that emerges during the organizational course of actions. The constraint-responding category consists of the force-building actions, which have the purpose of searching for support that helps facilitate the knowledge managers' job. At Lafarge, the support may come from the top managers, the regional managers, the experts, or people having legitimacy to influence others. Among these three categories of actions, the intentional one is most easily seen. All the knowledge managers talk about the marketing actions as an obvious part of their mission. The other two categories are uncovered thanks to the image of rafters on an angry river, which helps further decipher the data and in turn is confirmed by the data.

The knowledge managers' strategizing process is embedded in their transactional relationship with the organizational context. In this transactional relationship, the knowledge managers act in accordance with their own context, and the changes produced by their actions, in turn, influence their future actions. In this process, they gradually learn how to do their job better, thereby coming up with the three categories of strategizing actions identified in this study. Depending on the individual knowledge managers, these actions have or have not made the context more favorable to their job and created an accepted place for the knowledge management function. From the paradigm-case analysis, the knowledge managers are divided into three groups based on their capability to build a territory for the knowledge management function. Among the seven knowledge manager, one has decided to give up the position, four are still struggling with the obstacles and the powerful current to obtain a place within the organizational life, and two have achieved certain success. They are named the defeated, the struggling, and the contented, respectively.

The analysis also reveals that the lived experience of being a knowledge manager, as a strategizing practitioner, is unique to each individual. It may be enjoyable for one, but challenging and tiring for another, depending on the individual knowledge manager's river zone and the effectiveness of his/her actions. Moreover, the actions in the three common categories vary between the individual knowledge managers. In the marketing category, one knowledge manager may pay more attention to promotion and communication, while another may work more on taking care of the product. In the island-finding category, the islands found by the knowledge managers are not the same. In the force-building category, the external forces gathered by the knowledge manager differ from one another.

Thanks to the framework of Dewey's pragmatism, it is found that the knowledge managers are practitioners, who draw on a complex bundle of practices involving social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them to perform their praxis. It is shown that strategizing is not necessarily exclusive to strategists. It may be inherent in the working life of such non-strategists as knowledge managers. Moreover, it is found that what influence the knowledge managers' praxis are not only the routinized practices, as seen in the strategy-as-practice research, but also the organizational features, and the anticipated consequences in case of intentional praxis. There is an orientation towards the past, the present, and the future in the strategizing process of strategizing practitioners. Dewey's framework helps disclose that the strategizing process inherently contains a process of learning through concrete actions. All knowledge managers become more skilled in dealing with the environment through a process of acting and reacting in their particular situations. This has an important implication that strategy-as-practice research should go beyond the scope of practices, and look at the contextual factors and what strategists expect as consequences of their intentional actions in order to understand in depth the experience of practitioners and their embedded praxis. Their learning through concrete actions to develop praxis should also be taken into account.

Chia and Holt (2006) argue that two modes co-exist in the strategizing of practitioners: building and dwelling. The former assumes the primacy of intentional states and individual motivations and presuppose a relationship of detachment in which an actor is generally viewed as distinct from and acting on a pre-existing external world. In the latter, agent identities and their strategies are simultaneously co-constructed relationally through direct engagement with the world they inhabit; practical actions and relationships precede individual identity and strategic intent. They point out that the existing strategy-as-practice research has focused mainly on the building mode of the strategizing process, while the dwelling mode of strategizing should deserve more attention.

The findings of this research support Chia and Holt's argument. It can be seen that both building and dwelling modes are present in all the categories of strategizing actions (marketing, island-finding, and force-building) undertaken by the knowledge managers. As discussed above, Dewey's perspective helps reveal that the building mode includes not only a focus on routinized practices but also an orientation towards the present and the future. The building mode is dominant in the marketing category of all the seven knowledge managers. However, despite their plan to undertake marketing actions, they always have to cope with the unexpected as soon as those actions are implemented in

reality. With regards to the island-finding and force-building categories, the dominance of each mode varies between the individual knowledge managers. One knowledge manager may plan the island-finding actions while another may unintentionally do them. But it is important to remember that the implementation of those actions always contains the coping with the unexpected. In addition, there is a transition from the dwelling mode to the building one, as the knowledge managers continue to do their job. The knowledge managers tend to recognize some of their unintentional actions as essential in accomplishing their mission. This observation implies the importance of the dwelling mode in the strategizing process. While the building mode sows seeds, the dwelling mode makes the sprouts come out.

Thanks to the pragmatic framework and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, this research is able to identify four out of five types of outcomes of strategy praxis, including individual outcome, group outcome, strategizing process outcome, organizational outcome, and institutional outcome. Individual outcome resides in the personal experience of the knowledge managers. They result from a complex whole, in which many factors intertwine and lead to either the enjoyment or the displeasure of each knowledge manager's experience. Strategizing process outcomes are divided into two types: positive and modest. The difference between the two types of outcomes stems from the ferocity of the organizational context and the effectiveness of the knowledge managers' actions. Strategizing process outcomes are essentially results of collective efforts because the knowledge managers cannot succeed by working alone. Thus, group outcomes are made of the strategizing process outcomes. Organizational outcomes are difficult to measure in the case of knowledge management. The knowledge managers do not have indicators that are directly linked to the organization's financial outcomes. Since organizational outcomes are difficult to prove in the case of knowledge management, this research cannot provide a discussion on the inter-relation between all the four types of outcomes and examine the outcomes at institutional level. Moreover, the knowledge managers in this study work in a same multinational. The outcomes of their praxis at industrial level or inter-organizational level cannot be determined.

Existing research on the practices of knowledge managers tends to provide a list of pre-defined activities that they should undertake. However, this research shows that the actual doing of the Knowledge managers cannot be described by a set of pre-defined activities. It is in fact impossible to create a theoretical framework that can be used as the best description of all Knowledge managers' job. Doing the job of a Knowledge manager is a complex whole, in which the organizational context, the corresponding actions of the Knowledge manager, the logic of such actions, the double relationship between the Knowledge manager and the context, their emotion and feeling intertwine. The entire experience is contingent upon the particular situation of each knowledge manager, how he responds to that situation, how the consequent changes in the situation react upon the knowledge manager, and how that circular dynamics evolves on over time. Setting pre-defined activities for the knowledge managers to follow also means assuming the building mode in the actions of the knowledge managers and ignores the dwelling mode, which is very present and important in the knowledge managers' lives. More importantly, this research points out the specificity of knowledge management, which is its new occupational status. Existing studies in the literature have not

recognized the issue that knowledge management is not automatically accepted in the organization. Few of them mention the need to gain acceptance but consider it only as a small element of a larger set of activities, while in fact it is vital, as seen in the experience of the knowledge managers at Lafarge.

This research contributes to social theory by introducing John Dewey's pragmatism. Dewey's perspective on the relationship between man and the environment not only enables us to engage with the practice turn in management research, but also goes beyond what the existing practice theories are able to offer us in investigating situated practices. His perspective enables us to take into account both building and dwelling modes in the strategizing process of practitioners. Another distinctive contribution of Dewey in contrast with other practice theories resides in its orientation towards the future in the building mode of human actions. The key limitation of the existing theories of practice is the tendency to restrict the discussion of human agency to its iterational dimension. Practice theorists give selective attention to the role of habitus and routinized practices, having one-sided point of view on the circular interactive dynamics between man and the environment (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). By relying on the philosophy of Dewey, this research provides a new theoretical perspective that offers us the possibility to go beyond the notion of practice that focuses on human disposition, habits, and the iterative procedural routines, to a more dynamic and creative notion of practice that is needed to understand better the relationship between the individual and his environment (Miettinen, 2006). Dewey's pragmatism maintains that human actors do not merely repeat past routines, they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action. It pays attention to not only actors' orientation toward the past but also how agentic processes give shape and direction to future possibilities. For Dewey, an imaginative engagement of the future is a crucial component of the effort of human actors, as they respond to the challenges and uncertainties of social life.

In terms of methodological contribution, the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology helps put into actions the conceptual framework of Dewey's pragmatism, which has not provided any specific research program for social research. Hermeneutic phenomenology also represents a new methodological perspective that can enrich management studies in general and practice-based research in particular. This research shows that it is possible to use hermeneutic phenomenological methodology in a pragmatic research by placing phenomenological description within the context of the pragmatic methodology of explanation and verification. This is done by a finding validation at the experiential level of the participants and an internal testing of the analysis process. Moreover, hermeneutic phenomenology offers an interpretive research methodology that is directed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experience, which is not always possible with other methodologies in management research. It represents a potentially useful methodology for practice-based research. As practice-based research is interested in the situated doing of human actors, the focus on the essence of human experience of hermeneutic phenomenology, then, has direct application.

Based on the findings of this research, some recommendations can be drawn for the top managers of multinationals, who want to create the knowledge management function, and for the knowledge

managers, who are in charge of running that function. For the top managers, they need to: communicate within the organization about the importance of knowledge management, make regional and local managers be involved in the process, evaluate the employees' performance on sharing knowledge, be aware that knowledge management brings results in the long term, and understand that the direct link between knowledge management and financial outcomes is difficult to measure. For the knowledge managers, there are some important qualities that they should try to acquire to do the job, including communication skills, the ability to integrate knowledge management within the existing organizational processes, and being good learners and good listeners. In addition, the knowledge managers should be aware that support from the top management is of crucial importance. It is essential that the knowledge managers constantly keep them be implicated in knowledge management, and then communicate through out the organization about their support. They should always try to *adapt and act in accordance* with the organizational context, rather than *confront* with the obstacles they may encounter. This point may be applicable to all types of managers, not only knowledge managers, but it is the most important lesson learned of the knowledge managers at Lafarge.

Although this research has made several important theoretical and managerial contributions, it has some limitations. The finding discussion was not conducted with all seven participants due to their unavailability. To place phenomenology's interpretive description within the context of pragmatic experimentalism, a more legitimate way could have been achieved through an analysis of the likely effects of the research conclusions on the meaning of ordinary experience and practical activity for the participants. This could not be realized due to the time limitation and the significance of the required efforts. Finally, the image of the knowledge managers as rafters on an angry river cannot represent the fact that they sometimes work alone rather than in team. The studied knowledge managers work in different countries around the world. Unlike the rafters, they have a rather remote geographical distance.

Given the limitations presented above, one possible research direction is to conduct a study on the likely effects of the research conclusions on the meaning of ordinary experience and practical activity for the participants. Another is to conduct the same investigation with the knowledge managers in other multinationals or in other industries to compare being a knowledge manager in different contexts, thereby identifying more clearly the role of context in the strategizing process of the practitioners. In addition, the theoretical framework and methodology of this research may be applied to the studies of other types of managers or to practice-based research at large. Finally, future research may attempt to identify other methodologies that may fit into the experimentalism of pragmatic theory. While interpretive phenomenological methodology has been shown to be in line with pragmatism's spirit, other suitable methodologies should exist and they deserve future attention.

## APPENDIX 1: BRACKETING

### I. Context

#### 1. *Lafarge – cement branch*

##### a. The branch

Lafarge is the leader in the international market of construction materials. It has three different branches, of which the cement branch is the biggest one. Lafarge's cement branch has an international present, with 150 factories all over the world.

All cement factories are independent geographically isolated from each other, knowledge sharing between them is difficult. Also, due to the diversity of Lafarge, additional barriers are language and cultural differences.

The organizational culture is not favorable for knowledge sharing. People do not have time to facilitate the process or to participate in that process. Due to the independence and isolation of factories, people do not even have the mind set to share knowledge.

Infrastructure is another barrier. Computers are not available for everyone. They do not have access to the cement portal.

Cement production knowledge is very tacit. It requires hand-on and concrete illustrations to pass knowledge from one person to another. Codified knowledge is not appreciated by the technical community.

##### b. The KM plan

Lafarge's cement branch put in place KM when it acquired Blue Circle. The acquisition made the company the world leader in cement production. As Blue Circle has a very different mode of management and production, with an American culture, KM was initiated in order to transfer knowledge between Blue Circle and the rest of the cement branch. Another reason was to assure the financial analysts of the success of the acquisition, so that Lafarge's stock in the market would not be negatively affected.

The term KM was first communicated by that time. But the management of knowledge at the branch has been going on for over 20 years. A variety of initiatives were introduced with both success and failure.

Ricolfi was the first person in charge of the KM. His boss is Bruno Lafont, who told him that there must be something to do with KM, I give you the task, just don't make any mistake.

In 2004, the strategic program of Lafarge was Leader for tomorrow, of which one important component was KM. So KM had the support from top managers and was also communicated through out the branch. Over time, the new strategic program has become Excellence 2008, which focuses on safety and reduction of production costs. KM is no longer in the interest of the top managers.



Ricolfi, him too, starts to have other concerns. The cement portal project is now the responsibility of Marcela Lorenzi, a communication manager.

## 2. Lafarge – Concretes and Aggregates branch

I do not know very much about this branch. What I was aware is that it is smaller than the cement branch. It does not invest money and effort as much as the cement branch in knowledge management.

### II. The participant

#### 1. Cement branch

##### a. Christina

Christina is a subordinate of the KM manager (Alex). She tends to be passive and just carry out her tasks as assigned. She does have initiatives of her own, but rarely (so far she has made only one initiative – email de push).

Due to her background (administrative assistant), she does not have knowledge about KM. Doing her actual job is a challenge but also a chance for her career. So she may be motivated to do her job.

Being a subordinate, Christina does not have such pressure as that of Alex.

She has been involved in the KM project for only a short time.

She was the secretary of an expert who was very interested in capitalizing knowledge. So she became part of the project through her former boss, who assigned her with KM tasks being part of his interest.

Christina has been working on improving the stock of codified knowledge in the cement portal. She works in collaboration with the DPC experts. Due to her non-technical background, she has to ask for a lot of support from the experts.

Christina is enjoying doing her job.

##### b. Alex

Alex got his job thanks to Jean-Pierre Bayoux. Bayoux was the head of CKHC, the unit in charge of managing knowledge within the branch. Alex was doing an internship with Bayoux and he made good impression. At that time Bayoux was about to move to another position and the organization did not plan to find another person to replace him. He tried to get Alex in with the hope that there would be someone taking care of KM when he would have left.

Alex is an ambitious man. He is motivated but his timing is not favorable. Lafarge's culture and structure are not KM-friendly. Alex does not have technical background and young, which makes the technical community of the branch looks down on him. Alexis not listened in the branch. Bayoux had a much more respected status.

He has to struggle to do his job. But whatever he does has to be in line with the existing system of the branch. Alex cannot create anything new. All of the KM initiatives have to be presented and introduced within the framework of the overall strategy of the organization and the branch.

Alexis very stressed at the beginning, due to the unfavorable situation, the lack of appreciation from others. But he manages to move on. Until now he has been able to confirm his position and get certain things done. He is still stressed now, but he manages his stress much better than in the past.

He wants to build an image of a “nice guy”. So sometimes he has trouble in directing others. He avoids dispute and being bossy but that does not turn out well in some occasions.

There was a period when Alex was extremely stressed. He had to go to the hospital for some time.

In the DPC, Alex's team is called Industrial Knowledge, which is responsible for the cement portal. There is another team who is responsible for the online library Easiplus. The two teams have never tried to work together, although both of them work on capitalizing internal knowledge. Each team worries for its place within the organization, seeking to strengthen its position rather than collaboration with the other team.

Industrial knowledge manages a network of information officers. They are six people from different parts of the world. One of them is a very aggressive person, who does not appreciate Alex and thinks that he's young, inexperienced, and does not have the technical background necessary to do his job. So Alex has difficulty in discussing and assigning tasks to this person. Anyway it is the same difficulty that he has with the technical community of the cement branch.

c. Mary

Mary is the information officer in TCEA. She has been doing the job for six years. Besides the KM task, she has other responsibilities related to technical training.

d. Kathy

Kathy is the information officer in CTEC. In the past, she was an administrative assistant. She has good relationship with the technical experts in her technical center, which helps her a lot in doing her job.

Kathy does not have any complaints about her job, except the issue that she does not have technical background, which sometimes makes it difficult for her to train people how to use the technical portal.

e. Yvon

Yvon is the information officer in China. He has been in the job for only two years.

This is a very ambitious KMer, who attempts to develop a network of KM correspondents in all factories in China.

Yvon is very concerned about the language issue. He always mentions this difficulty while talking about the job of a knowledge manager in China.

## 2. CA branch

a. Carol

Carol is the KMer of CA branch. She has been considered as a successful knowledge manager at Lafarge. Alex often stays in contact with her as a source of exchange for learning experience.

b. Helen

Helen is the knowledge manager of the CA branch in Canada. Carol introduces Helen to me. I did not know anything about her before the interview.

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWING EXPERIENCE

### I. Interviews with the participants

#### 1. *Christina*

Christina was the first person that I interviewed. Because it was the first one, I did not have much experience in asking questions. I did ask for probes and examples when needed, but I followed fairly strictly the interview guide prepared before hand.

Christina's story is not much interesting, due to the time length she has been in the post, the nature of her job, her personality, and her background. The interview confirms my impression that she is rather passive as an actor in KM. It even turns out that she is more passive than I thought.

Because of my involvement in the KM project at Lafarge, I have a general understanding of the organization. This knowledge enables me to understand better what Christina (as well as Alex and Mary) talks about the organization. For example, when she mentions a name, a department, I do not need to ask for clarification.

My knowledge of the KM project at Lafarge also has a reverse effect. There are many things Christina assumes I understand or know already. For example, she thinks I know about the new director of her department who has recently come. So while there are many things I don't need to ask for clarification, there are also other things about the organization that I have to probe for further details.

Our relationship was equal. We are both female; she is not much older than me; her personality is very gentle. I try to be also gentle and not directive in the conversations. Both of us were very relaxed during the conversations. I did not see any misstep that could make her not tell the truth.

During the interviews, Christina does not seem to want to hide her experience from me. From our informal talks outside the interviews, I understand that she agreed to participate in my project simply because she wanted to help me. For her, it is natural to help someone out when it is necessary.

#### 2. *Alex*

The problem is that I knew too much about him, through my own observations and my conversation with other people about him. So during the interviews with him, I had to make significant effort to keep at bay what I already knew about him, meaning trying not to compare what I hear from him with what I knew.

The interviews with Alex were very enjoyable for him because there is someone for him to share his feeling and experience. He saw in me as someone who can understand the difficulties he underwent and the challenges he faced with. So I avoided making comments on his stories, so as to not make the interviews become too friendly conversation. I also tried not to ask leading questions in order to turn his story to what I wanted to hear or what I already knew.

The relationship is equal. Alex is of my age. He is also a nice person. None of us was dominant in the interviewing relationship.

#### 3. *Mary*

I did not know much about Mary. She is a very easy-going person, which made me feel very comfortable talking to her. She was also at ease to talk to me.

Her participation in my project came from her willingness to help other people whenever possible.

The interview with her was easy. Mary likes talking and she likes sharing her experience and her thoughts about knowledge management.

There was one small issue at the beginning of the interview with her. Mary was trying to influence me on my choice of interview participants. I did not go in-depth into the discussion on the subject with her by changing the topic of the conversation. This was to keep the interview focused.

#### 4. *Kathy*

Kathy's first language is not English. Although she speaks English very well, her capability of expressing is limited compared to native speakers.

When I ask her the same questions as Alex and Christina, her answers are always way shorter than theirs. It may be due to her personality (she is not a talkative person) or her language. I think it is due to both. I did not see her having any apparent difficulty in explaining things to me. But I am sure that if English were her native language, she would talk a lot more. I have the same problem. I speak English fluently, but I always give short and precise answers to any questions, I don't have the reflection to keep talking no matter what.

So the interview with Kathy was more difficult than those with Alex, Mary, and Christina. I had to ask more questions. Kathy never said anything if I kept silence and waited for her to continue the conversation. She tended to wait for my questions.

In the interviews with Kathy, I might have some impact on the information collected. This is because I ask many questions. I tried not to be dominant in the interview, through my tone, my way of asking question, my attitude.

The interviews with Kathy were conducted via video conference. There are not many differences between a video conference interview and a face-to-face one. We can still see each other, hear each other well. It is almost like sitting at two sides of a table. I think the video conference facility is not a constraint in the interviews with Kathy. She did not show any discomfort in talking to me via the screen.

#### 5. *Yvon*

Yvon is a perfect English speaker. He has no problem in expressing himself and answering my questions. Unlike Kathy, his answers are often long and informative. The only issue is that sometime he is not clear on what he is talking about, the use of words and the phrases are not totally grammatically correct. I kept asking for clarification whenever necessary.

I did not know much about Yvon before the interviews, so it was easy to keep a formal rather than familiar relationship. Lafarge had just acquired the factories in China recently. I did not know about the context of the China business unit before the interview. Bracketing for the interview with Yvon had no significant problem.

I did not see inequality in my interviewing relationship with Yvon. For him, talking to me was a way to express his disappointment that cannot be shared with others. But he did not see me as an expert that can help him to solve his problems.

#### 6. *Carol*

The problem with Carol is that she tends to talk to me as a representative of the organization presenting about its KM. She uses different PowerPoint presentations to refer to what she is talking about. I tried to solve this problem by steering her back to her own experience. I asked her more about her feeling, her thoughts, and her life as a knowledge manager. All context-related information is given automatically by Carol when she presents her slides without me asking for that.

The interviewing relationship with her is equal, since she is interested in knowing how her job is seen from a more academic perspective. We can both get something from the interview.

Without prior knowledge about Carol and her branch, the interviews with her were not affected by my own perception and prejudice.

#### 7. *Helen*

Helen's native language is not English, but she expresses herself perfectly well.

Like Carol, Helen is interested in participating in the interviews because she wants to see how her job is perceived by a researcher. She also asks me for feedback on what she has been doing and whether she can make any improvement. Also, for the interviews with her, I did not have any pre-judgments.

The issue of the interviews with Helen is that she saw me as an expert in knowledge management, thus able to help her in doing better her job. I had to explain to her what I was looking for in my research to avoid misunderstanding and disappointment from her side.

## **II. Issues in interviewing**

### 1. Language

Language is an issue that I paid important attention to. French and English are not my native language. I always try to make sure that the interviewees understand what I mean in my questions. So I do not ask just one straight question at a time. I often ask one question, and then rephrase it or use synonyms to enable the person really understand my question.

Not all the participants have English or French as their native languages, but they express fairly well in English. I can communicate with them easily.

### 2. Race and ethnicity

The interview participants and I are of different racial background. I am Vietnamese, while my interviewees are western (4 French, 1 Austrian, 1 Chinese, and 1 Canadian). There are no significant historical conflicts between our races. The statement is true for the relationship between me and the interviewees. The racial conflicts do not exist among us. We are of the generations born after the war, we know about it but do not take it as our personal hatred.

For example, in the interview with Kathy, we were chatting at the beginning about the final of the European football cup. She said she supported the Spain because she only hated the Germany. She supported any team playing against the German one. Alex is of my age. He has no painful memory about the war. Yvon is of the same generation as me. Between China and Vietnam, there is no racial conflict from my view point.

### 3. Trust

As I had known those people a little bit by the time of the interview, I gain their trust. They know who I am, who I am working with, what my project is about. The fact that their identities remain anonym in my research also assures them of the confidentiality. They all told me things that they would not tell their colleagues at work. The following quotes are illustrating evidences:

- Kathy: "Alex would kill me if he knew I told you this" (laugh and cover her face with her hands)
- Mary: "je suis franche... il y a des choses que je te raconte qui ne sont pas partageables »
- Alex: "a la DPC, il faut de la patience" ... "pourquoi mon patron prend le risque de reporter la réunion avec moi ?" ... "ce n'est pas propre à la DPC"
- Christina: « Bernard Lebras, qui n'est jamais là... » (low down her voice)

### 4. Gender

There are five female interviewees and two male interviewees. There was neither dominance in any of the interviews due to gender difference nor any sense of intimacy between the interviewees and me. I always kept a formal relationship that is based on respect and trust. Thanks to the kind personality of the interviewees, there was no overbearing in the interviews. Kathy and Christina are even very soft.

### 5. Age

I do not know the age of the participants. Yvon and Alex seem to be of similar age to me. The others are older, but they are not old enough to have a significant generation distance between us.

Except for Mary, no one attempted to direct me in my research, there was no problem of "colleague talk".

### 6. Power position of the participant

Except for Carol, the participants are not in power position. The problem with interviewing elites (Dexter, 2006) just happened with Carol. As I was aware of this, I was able to steer the interviews to the appropriate direction.

## **APPENDIX 3: WRITING JOURNAL (EXTRACT)**

**19-09-08**

My impression first impression: the KMer is in the middle of a circle or a current flowing from the top managers to the operational line people. She has to listen to the top and has to serve the bottom and constrained by a given organizational context with a given condition.

**27-11-08**

I see the final goal of being a KMer as to serve the end users. But they are disconnected from the end users physically and immaterially. The invisible route from a KMer to an end user is filled with many things, e.g. context, culture, IT tools, etc. The experience of being a KMer means trying to overcome the difficulties and taking advantage of the supports that exist on the invisible route connecting them.

This impression is different from what I had on the 19 September. This is a normal evolution as I get to know more data.

For KMers, it is a learning process, learning by doing, in order to accomplish their mission.

I start by reading quickly through all the transcriptions.

**28-11-08**

Another point that I found: there are different types of end users. The KMers have to have different ways to approach different end users.

The KMers can never be alone if they want to accomplish their mission. They need to find supports, people who can help them, the "relay"

The KMers, the end users, the connection between them: a moving whole of interacting parts → the same as in the sense of Dewey

**12-01-09**

For the moment, the research questions are on how the KMer manages to achieve his mission. But the data I got give me information on how the KMer managers to serve the end-users of KM.

One possible paradigm case: KMer always takes into account end-user when carrying out his KM activities. He is end-user oriented/ customer-oriented

The KMers, the end users, the connection between them: a moving whole of interacting parts → this should be one theme

**12-01-09**

I think the analysis should be done by two steps. At the first step, I will do cross-case thematic analysis. This is the analysis of commonalities between cases.



At the second steps, I will do within-case paradigm analysis, and then paradigm cases are also compared for commonalities and differences. Within each paradigm case, thematic analysis is also done.

I need a metaphor to illustrate the connection between KMer and end-users and the effort of KMer to reach them.

The metaphor needs to show: the distance (geographically and relationally) between KMers and end-users, the obstacles on the way to serve end-users (organizational context, etc.), the obstacles are unstable and changing, motivation of KMer, the adaptation and response of KMer to the obstacles, KMer's seeking for help from helpers and sponsors, his learning process, the end-users.

### **15-01-09**

I think the situated doings of the KMer have two interrelated aspects, like the two sides of a coin.

The first side is that the KMer is like a marketing professional, who tries to sell his products to different groups of target customers. The objectives/missions of the KMer are not an end in themselves. The ultimate purpose is to make people within the organization share knowledge with each other, and use the knowledge pool available to do better their job. In order to attain that ultimate purpose, the KMers has to consider the KM initiatives as products that need to be sold and people within the organization are targeted customers of those products. It should be noted that the KMer is more like the marketing professional than the producer of those products. He is not a holder of knowledge and cannot produce the content of the knowledge pool.

The KMer is like a marketing professional to the extent that he segments people within the organization into different groups of customers in order to provide them with suitable KM initiatives and promotion approach.

The KMer tries to put himself in the position of his customers to understand what they really needs in terms of knowledge and the most effective ways to bring them the knowledge they need.

The marketing approach adopted by the KMer is to educate the customers about the benefits of his KM products. At the same time, his marketing is push rather than pull. He brings KM products to the customers rather than makes them come by themselves for the KM products.

The second side of the coin is the process of push marketing and educating customers of the KMer is like building a bridge across a river by a single individual in order to reach the customers at the other side of the river. I use the metaphor of building a bridge across a river to illustrate the challenge faced by the individual and the strategy he takes to overcome those challenges and build the bridge.

The image that the KMer and the customers are the two side of a river illustrates the physical distance and the disconnection between them. The bridge itself is created to indicate the movement to reach the customers by the KMer. The condition in which the individual has to build the bridge indicates the organizational context. The running current of the river represents the obstacles of the organizational context. As building a bridge by only one individual is impossible, the KMer has to ask for help from others.

Building a bridge is also a long run process. The individual cannot build it within one or two days, but rather taking step-by-step progress. Building a bridge is a learning process. The individual has to learn little by little to figure out the best way to build the bridge. He examines the condition in which he has to build the bridge, including the obstacles, and takes the corresponding actions and adaptation.

#### **18-04-09**

The KMers have to be initiators of their actions and strategy because of the non-strategic position of KM and the particularity of KM.

The population under the responsibility of each KMer: to be added.

Networking should be a part of the KMers' force building section, besides the strategic helpers.

#### **05-05-09**

Analysis method:

- it needs to be presented on one separate chapter
- thematic analysis: individual story and then gather them together to make sense of the phenomenon → we have chapter 6
- chapter 7: use part of the analysis conducted for chapter 6, then antenarrative thematic analysis of Boje (2001).

Chapter 7: the points to be covered in each story of the individual KMer;

- mission
- river zone and obstacles
- actions (in terms of the three identified dimensions): how do they come up? (e.g. for Yvon, doing training is assigned by his superior, but the way he does training is up to him, this point needs to be specified → this is linked to the marketing dimension: it is partly imposed, partly independent). If possible, the evolution of those actions over time.
- means and tools, how do they come up?
- Learning process of the predispositions to act: what is it like? i.e. the feeling and emotion of the KMer in that process
- Rafting experience as perceived by the KMer

What I have written in chapter 7 is not sufficiently deep to give a meaningful story of their life as a knowledge manager → need to improve by going back to each transcript and read slowly and carefully.

## APPENDIX 4: DECISION TRAIL

Table 1: Early analysis of the theme Island-finding action (extract)

The KMers	Significant statements	Key ideas	Concepts
Yvon	<p>At China level, I take every chance to deliver training or message of information to ATC engineers. So far, the ATC engineers or other technical centers' engineers, there have network meeting. For example, the process engineers, they have their network meeting in China level, which ATC process engineers and all process engineers of every plant. They get together once a year I think for the network meeting. The same network meeting so exists for quality, for maintenance. They have their network meeting. I have been preparing a very short, like a two-hour workshop, for this network meeting. Normally I will be there to deliver by myself, to introduce this to the ATC</p>	Communicating about KM in the existing reunions	Using the existing reunions for KM purpose
	<p>And also for the ATC technical experts, I have participated in the ATC day to introduce the database to the experts</p> <p>Sometimes I go directly for the purpose of delivering this workshop. Sometimes I go to the plant for the training issue but I take the change to deliver the knowledge sharing workshop</p> <p>For the mission of CPDP I think it has been achieved. It is the advantage of my role because I do training and being an IO at the same time. That means every time there are training related activities, I will be the person to deliver. And CPDP in Chinas has been provided by ATC and at the</p>		

	<p>same time sponsored by our team</p>		
<p>Alex</p>	<p>Je te cache pas qu'on espère de l'arrivée du nouveau patron qu'il veule marquer son empreinte du coup il soit plus incline à vouloir bousculer un peu les habitudes et créer et afficher ses objectives. Je ne sais pas si ca... je pense mais je peux être dans le faux. Les objectives des réunions qu'ils ont un ce moment, c'est ca, c'est essayer de se donner des objectives</p>	<p>Arrival of new top managers may be beneficial. It helps to identify the organizational objectives, thereby the objectives of KM</p>	<p>Aligning KM activities with organizational objectives thanks to organizational change</p>
	<p>J'ai tenu un stand qui présentait les outils, qui présentait les principes de Knowledge sharing lors des réunions régionales des managers de la branche ciment, les fameuses performances days. Donc il a fallu, là aussi, mettre en place des posters, il a fallu créer un stand, il a fallu se demander quels étaient les messages qu'on voulait faire passer. À ces occasions-là j'ai pu aussi intervenir aux sessions ( ? ) (19 :34) pour une part annoncée que je tenais un stand dans la salle de réunion, l'autre aussi pour un peu attirer (19 :40) les foules</p>	<p>Communicating about KM in the important events</p>	<p>Using the important events of the organization for KM purpose</p>
<p>Kathy</p>	<p>But if a network meeting is in Vienna, usually I'm there. I'm invited to give the presentation. I also have the possibility to see people and ask them is it completely new to you, how well I inform, did someone show you when you started in the plant, those kinds of things</p> <p>I try to take the part in all technical training which I organize in CTEC. I try to always have a part on knowledge sharing tool in all trainings</p>	<p>Communicating about KM in the existing reunions</p> <p>Communicating about KM in the training program</p>	<p>Using the existing reunions for KM purpose</p> <p>Using the training program for KM purpose</p>

Christina	Donc la on a une bonne opportunité avec en nouveau patron à la DPC. Parce que Bernard le bras est parti tu sais. Il est parti il travail au Caire et donc Alain Crouy qui est le nouveau patron de la DPC est arrivé début mai. C'est tout nouveau. Donc voilà c'est une bonne occasion de voir si il est intéressé par le sujet la et j'espère qu'il est sera et d'ailleurs	Arrival of new managers may be beneficial. It may help to get more support from the management	Taking advantage of the arrival of new managers for KM purpose
Mary	Alors est-ce que au mois d'avril a en usine il y a un des arrêts de four pour changement de briques qui sont prévues. Tu vois, c'est ça qui est intéressant à voir aussi en usine ce qui est programmé, ce qui est prévu arrive à quelle période, et du coup on peut peut-être nous, à ce moment-là, anticiper pour amener information, pour préparer tel ou tel événement.	Show people the benefit of KM via the important events	Using the important events to make people interested in KM
Carol	Mais le management a changé l'année dernière en septembre, de la branche. Et quand ils sont arrivés en septembre, on a eu deux nouveaux patrons. j'ai obtenu deux, dont ils ont envoyé une lettre aux employés, leur rappeler les priorités de business de la branche. Et j'ai obtenu deux que parmi ces priorités est il y avait le partage de connaissances. Dont ils ont bien affiché comme étant priorité. J'ai toujours dans les présentations aussi, c'est important, tout le monde n'a peut-être pas vu ce message	Arrival of new managers may be beneficial. It may help to get more support from the management	Taking advantage of the arrival of new managers for KM purpose
Helen	I also travel to the head of community. Usually the heads of community are based in the regions' head offices. Most of the heads of community are located there. Each of the regions has its own regional meeting on a monthly basis. So I try to be present at as many of those meetings as possible, so that I could speak about knowledge sharing, the benefits	Communicating about KM in the existing reunions	Using the existing reunions for KM purpose

	<p>I travel between four regions if there is any senior management meeting or you know department meetings where they want me to attend and present the KS initiatives</p>	
<p>People participate in KM when they are evaluated on their participation</p>	<p>You know the only way to do that I think is to include something in their personal goal and objectives. Everyone is obliged to contribute, you know, at least one best practice, or one modification to a best practice, one improvement to a best practice, or one popular standard, or one success story or tool, something to be shared with may be another community or another country or another region. Only then people will think about coming on board. Or also if you prove that you have taken something from another community or another country or region, and implemented it in our own community successfully. That should be part of everybody's goal and objective. Then I think this knowledge sharing culture will be more alive</p>	<p>Making KM become part of people's objective</p>
<p>Communicating about KM in the training program</p>	<p>Sometimes we also have some training session, when we have for example an audience that is already connected. For example we now have our business process SRB, we are going to the ERP program, so we have several training sessions where people have their computers available. I try to be present there to talk for few minutes about knowledge sharing and just to show them how to access the tool and to encourage them to go there if they need any information about their line of work, because even though these are financial tools, everybody is using it, has to use it for their operation system or if you are a marketing person, there are different modules of ERP which apply to these people, so they are there and it's a good opportunity to advertise the tool to training</p>	<p>Using the training program for KM purpose</p>

	<p>For example, when I go to a business process meeting, where they were doing some training for example on a new process for our ERP implementation. I speak to people who are holding the meeting, who are chairing the meeting, and ask them what the meeting is about, then I sort some of the documents which may help them to understand why that process has been changed. For example, if it's process, I make sure to inform the people in the class room that this is the business process that is related to... go and check it... If it's a sale and marketing meeting, there has been some new development in Lafarge value added product, I will make sure I make a presentation to that particular product and how the other countries are promoting that value added product to their customers.</p>	<p>Presenting KM in accordance with the audience's work interest</p>	<p>Aligning KM with the existing organizational objectives</p>
	<p>First of all, at the beginning of the year, every president sends out their strategic imperatives for their region. And usually it shadows what come from the corporate level. How they are planning to achieve their region strategic imperatives, I have to find out and try to see how I can assist in sharing the knowledge with regards to those particular objectives.</p>	<p>Assist people in sharing knowledge related to the organizational objectives</p>	<p>Making KM participate in achieving organizational objectives</p>

Table 2: Development of the theme Island-finding action (extract)

Significant statements	Key ideas	Concepts	Sub-themes	Themes
<p>Je te cache pas qu'on espère de <b>l'arrivée du nouveau patron</b> qu'il veule marquer son empreinte du coup il soit plus incline à vouloir <b>bousculer un peu les habitudes et créer et afficher ses objectives</b>. Je ne sais pas si ca... je pense mais je peux être dans le faux. Les objectives des réunions qu'ils ont un ce moment, c'est ca, c'est essayer de se donner des objectives (Alex)</p>	<p>Taking advantage of the arrival of new top managers to identify the organizational objectives</p>	<p>Making KM serve the organizational objectives</p>	<p>Organizational change</p>	<p>Island-finding</p>
<p>Mais <b>le management a changé l'année dernière</b> en septembre, de la branche. Et quand ils sont arrivés en septembre, <b>on a eu deux nouveaux patrons. j'ai obtenu deux, dont ils ont envoyé une lettre aux employés, leur rappeler les priorités de business de la branche</b>. Et j'ai obtenu deux que parmi ces priorités est il y avait le partage de connaissances. Dont ils ont bien affiché comme étant priorité. J'ai toujours dans les présentations aussi, c'est important, tout le monde n'a peut-être pas vu ce message (Carol)</p> <p>Donc la on a une bonne opportunité avec en nouveau patron à la DPC. Parce que Bernard le bras est parti tu sais. Il est parti il travail au Caire et donc <b>Alain Crouy qui est le nouveau patron de la DPC est arrivé début mai. C'est tout nouveau. Donc</b></p>	<p>Taking advantage of the arrival of new top managers to get sponsorship for KM</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the organizational change</p>		



<p>voilà c'est une bonne occasion de voir si il est intéressé par le sujet la et j'espère qu'il est sera et d'ailleurs (Christina)</p>				
<p>I also <b>travel to the head of community</b>. Usually the heads of community are based in the regions' head offices. Most of the heads of community are located there. Each of the regions has its own <b>regional meeting on a monthly basis</b>. So I <b>try to be present at as many of those meetings as possible, so that I could speak about knowledge sharing, the benefits</b> (Helen)</p>	<p>Taking advantage of the regular reunions to communicate with people about KM and its benefits</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the existing reunions</p>	<p>Organizational events</p>	<p>Island action finding</p>
<p>I <b>travel between four regions if there is any senior management meeting</b> or you know department meetings where they want me to attend and present the KS initiatives (Helen)</p>				
<p>But <b>if a network meeting is in Vienna, usually I'm there</b>. I'm invited to give the presentation. I also have the possibility to see people and ask them is it completely new to you, how well I inform, did someone show you when you started in the plant, those kinds of things (Kathy)</p>				
<p>At China level, I <b>take every chance to deliver training or message of information to ATC engineers</b>. so far, the ATC engineers or other technical centers' engineers, there have network meeting. For example, the process engineers, they have their network meeting in China level, which ATC process engineers and all process engineers of every plant. They get together once a year I think for the network meeting. The same</p>				

<p>network meeting so exists for quality, for maintenance. They have their network meeting. <b>I have been preparing a very short, like a two-hour workshop, for this network meeting.</b> Normally I will be there to deliver by myself, to introduce this to the ATC (Yvon)</p>				
<p><b>J'ai tenu un stand qui présentait les outils, qui présentait les principes de Knowledge sharing lors des réunions régionales des managers de la branche ciment, les fameuses performances days.</b> Donc il a fallu, là aussi, mettre en place des posters, il a fallu créer un stand, il a fallu se demander quels étaient les messages qu'on voulait faire passer. À ces occasions-là j'ai pu aussi intervenir aux sessions de formation pour une part annoncée que je tenais un stand dans la salle de réunion, l'autre aussi pour un peu attirer (19 :40) les foules</p>	<p>Taking advantage of the important events to communicate with people about KM and its benefits</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the reunions that come up</p>		
<p><b>And also for the ATC technical experts, I have participated in the ATC day to introduce the database to the experts</b> (Yvon)</p>				
<p>Alors est-ce que au mois d'avril a en usine il y a un des arrêts de four pour changement de briques qui sont prévues. Tu vois, <b>c'est ça qui est intéressant à voir aussi en usine ce qui est programmé, ce qui est prévu arrive à quelle période, et du coup on peut peut-être nous, à ce moment-là, anticiper pour amener information, pour préparer tel ou tel événement.</b> (Mary)</p>	<p>Taking advantage of the upcoming events to make KM useful for people in the organization</p>	<p>Making KM serve the organizational objectives</p>		
<p>You know <b>the only way to do that I think is to include</b></p>	<p>People participate in KM</p>	<p>Integrating KM to</p>	<p>Existing</p>	<p>Island finding</p>

<p><b>something in their personal goal and objectives.</b> Everyone is obliged to contribute, you know, at least one best practice, or one modification to a best practice, one improvement to a best practice, or one popular standard, or one success story or tool, something to be shared with may be another community or another country or another region. Only then people will think about coming on board. Or also if you prove that you have taken something from another community or another country or region, and implemented it in our own community successfully. <b>That should be part of everybody's goal and objective. Then I think this knowledge sharing culture will be more alive</b> (Helen)</p>	<p>when they are evaluated on that participation.</p>	<p>the employees' objectives</p>	<p>organizational processes</p>	<p>action</p>
<p>Sometimes we also have <b>some training session</b>, when we have for example an audience that is already connected. For example we now have our <b>business process SRB</b>, we are going to <b>the ERP program</b>, so we have several training sessions where people have their computers available. <b>I try to be present there to talk for few minutes about knowledge sharing and just to show them how to access the tool and to encourage them to go there if they need any information about their line of work</b>, because even though these are financial tools, everybody is using it, has to use it for their operation system or if you are a marketing person, there are different modules of ERP which apply to these people, so <b>they are there and it's a good opportunity to advertise the tool to training</b> (Helen)</p>	<p>Taking advantage of the training programs to communicate with people about KM and its benefits</p>	<p>Integrating KM to the program</p>		

<p>Sometimes I go directly for the purpose of delivering this workshop. <b>Sometimes I go to the plant for the training issue but I take the change to deliver the knowledge sharing workshop</b> (Yvon)</p>			
<p><b>I try to take the part in all technical training which I organize in CTEC. I try to always have a part on knowledge sharing tool in all trainings</b> (Kathy)</p>			
<p>For the mission of CPDP I think it has been achieved. It is the advantage of my role because I do training and being an IO at the same time. That means <b>every time there are training related activities, I will be the person to deliver</b>. And CPDP in Chinas has been provided by ATC and at the same time sponsored by our team. (Yvon)</p>			
<p>For example, when I go to a business process meeting, where they were doing some training for example on a new process for our ERP implementation. I speak to people who are holding the meeting, who are chairing the meeting, and ask them what the meeting is about, then I sort some of the documents which may help them to understand why that process has been changed. For example, if it's process, I make sure to inform the people in the class room that this is the business process that is related to... go and check it... <b>if it's a sale and marketing meeting, there has been some new development in Lafarge value added product,</b></p>	<p>Identify the needs of end-users to align KM with those objectives</p>	<p>Making KM serve the end-users' needs</p>	

<p><b>I will make sure I make a presentation to that particular product</b> and how the other countries are promoting that value added product to their customers (Helen)</p>				
<p>First of all, at the beginning of the year, <b>every president sends out their strategic imperatives for their region</b>. And usually it shadows what come from the corporate level. How they are planning to achieve their region strategic imperatives, <b>I have to find out and try to see how I can assist in sharing the knowledge with regards to those particular objectives</b> (Helen)</p>	<p>Identify the organizational objectives to align KM with those objectives</p>	<p>Making KM serve the organizational objectives</p>		

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## Résumé

La littérature en *knowledge management* a connu une croissance exponentielle depuis quelques années, elle aborde une grande variété de sujets. Néanmoins, les travaux de recherche sur les gestionnaires en charge de mettre en place et de gérer la démarche de *knowledge management* sont très peu nombreux. Dans le tournant pratique (*practice turn*) apparu dans la théorie sociale et récemment mobilisé dans la littérature en gestion, la notion d'intentionnalité de l'acteur occupe une place dominante, alors que les pratiques pourraient être lus comme la résultante accidentelle de conditions et transformations de pratiques et discours antérieurs. Afin de contribuer à combler ces manques dans la littérature, mon travail de thèse porte sur la vie des *knowledge managers* dans une entreprise multinationale. Il s'agit de comprendre la nature de l'action que ces *knowledge managers* déploient pour parvenir à accomplir leurs missions dans un contexte organisationnel à la fois contraignant et facilitant où le KM doit se construire une place au sein des préoccupations quotidiennes multiples des dirigeants et des salariés.

Cette recherche s'inspire du pragmatisme de Dewey. La méthode de recherche, construite à partir des travaux de Benner (1994) et van Manen (1990) qui sont ancrés dans la méthodologie de la phénoménologie interprétative, s'appuie sur des entretiens de type récits de pratique. Les participants à notre recherche sont sept *knowledge managers* dans un multinational. Ils sont localisés dans de différents pays, en France, en Autriche, au Canada, et en Chine. Avec chaque participant, nous avons fait deux entretiens approfondis de deux heures. L'analyse se fait en deux temps. Dans un premier temps, une analyse thématique permet d'identifier les points communs dans les expériences vécues par les *knowledge managers*. Elle nous conduit à proposer une image qui sert de fil rouge à notre analyse. Dans un deuxième temps, chaque expérience est analysée comme un paradigme c'est-à-dire une « façon d'être » un *knowledge manager*.

La principale particularité du *knowledge management* est le fait que c'est une nouvelle fonction, qui n'a pas une place déjà marquée dans la vie de l'entreprise. Cette absence de territoire est une des principales réalités affrontées par les *knowledge managers*, qui doivent « faire avec » cette absence de territoire et tenter de trouver une place pour la fonction *knowledge management*. Cette particularité nous conduit à envisager les *knowledge managers* comme des « *rafteurs* », pratiquant le canoë-kayak en eaux vives. La rivière, ses obstacles et son puissant courant, renvoie au contexte organisationnel difficile pour les *knowledge managers*. Les *knowledge managers* tels que des *rafteurs*, sont emportés par le courant qui les fait avancer et menacés par les obstacles. Ils se battent pour empêcher le bateau d'être renversé. Ils agissent pour éviter les obstacles et tirer le meilleur parti du courant.

Les actions des *knowledge managers* peuvent être classées en trois catégories : intentionnelles, émergentes et contraintes. La dimension intentionnelle correspond à des actions de marketing interne. La dimension émergente peut être envisagée comme la recherche d'îlots de stabilité au milieu de la rivière. La fonction *knowledge management* cherche ainsi à trouver sa place en s'intégrant à des processus déjà existants au sein de l'organisation. La dimension contrainte est la nécessaire recherche de soutien que les *knowledge managers* doivent trouver pour mener à bien leur travail. De plus, nous avons identifié trois catégories de *knowledge managers* en fonction de leur capacité à faire avec l'absence de territoire de la fonction *knowledge management*. Parmi les sept *knowledge managers*, un a décidé de renoncer au poste du fait des difficultés, quatre sont toujours en train de se battre avec les obstacles et le puissant courant pour obtenir une place dans la vie de l'organisation, et deux ont obtenu un certain succès.

**Mots clefs:** *knowledge managers*, *knowledge management*, pratique, pragmatisme, phénoménologie interprétative

## Abstract:

Inspired by the lack of research on the practices of *knowledge managers* in the literature and the existing dominance of the building mode in strategy-as-practice research, this thesis has two attempts. One is to examine how the *knowledge managers*, as strategizing practitioners, do their job via intentional doing and practical coping in their particular context. Another is to understand how *knowledge managers*, as strategizing practitioners, live in their position.

To develop an investigation framework, this thesis relies on the pragmatic theory of John Dewey, especially his perspective on the transactional relationship between man and the environment. The empirical investigation is carried out based on the six inter-related procedures put forward by van Manen (1990), which are in line with the spirit of hermeneutic phenomenology. Seven *knowledge managers* of a multinational, who work in different countries, including France, Austria, China, and Canada, were interviewed during two sessions of two hours. The interviews are semi-structured.

The interpretation process relies on the model proposed by Benner (1994), which performs cross-case thematic analysis to show the common threads between the stories of the *knowledge managers*, and studies the paradigm cases using within-case analysis to understand the individuality of each story. Exemplars are used to convey the different aspects of the themes and paradigm cases presented. Validity is enhanced by internal verification and testing of interpretive description, craftsmanship quality (Kvale, 1996), and a validation of findings by the participant. An "audit trail" (Koch, 1994) is kept to help the reader follow the rationale of the researcher's interpretations.

The analysis reveals that the main particularity of *knowledge management* is that it is a new function. The *knowledge managers* have to build a place for the *knowledge management* function through a strategizing process to gain acceptance. The *knowledge managers* can be compared with the rafters on an angry river, with the river indicating the organizational context, and the rafting representing the strategizing process. The *knowledge managers*, as the rafters, are carried on as well as endangered by the current. They fight to protect their inflatable boat from sinking by trying to avoid the obstacles and taking advantage of what is useful for them on the river. From the cross-case thematic analysis, the strategizing actions, undertaken by the *knowledge managers*, are grouped into three categories: intentional, emergent, and constraint-responding. They are labelled marketing, island-finding, and force-building, respectively. From the paradigm-case analysis, the *knowledge managers* are divided into three groups based on their capability to survive the turbulent organizational context and build a territory for the *knowledge management* function. Among the seven *knowledge manager*, one has decided to give up the position, four are still struggling with the obstacles and the powerful current to obtain a place within the organizational life, and two have achieved certain success. They are named the defeated, the struggling, and the contented, respectively.

**Keywords:** *knowledge managers*, *knowledge management*, practice, pragmatism, interpretive phenomenology