



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



# **Improving coolant filling for a shift towards electric vehicles**

## **A production improvement study at Volvo Cars**

*Master's Thesis in the Master's Programme  
Quality and Operations Management & Production Engineering*

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CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
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[New Volvo XC40 T5 plug-in hybrid, Volvo Cars Press Picture]

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# Abstract

The automotive industry is facing a technology shift, from traditional petrol and diesel cars into electric powered cars, due to a sustainability awareness from the market and technological advancements. To take part of this technological shift, automotive manufacturers need to develop and produce cars run by a whole new power train. Volvo Cars state that their sustainability goal is to bring 1 million electrified cars to the streets by 2025. To be able to do this, the manufacturing units need to adapt the production to meet new technical requirements and standards that is set for the new car models. A car powered by a battery will need a larger cooling system than what is needed in the petrol and diesel cars due to that not only the motor will need cooling, but also the battery.

This study is mapping the current filling capacity of the coolant filling station at Volvo Torslanda and evaluates potential improvements in order to increase the coolant filling station to meet future arising demand.

This was done by collecting qualitative data in terms of interviews and quantitative data in terms of process data and pressure measurements. This created an understanding of the process and map of the current state of the coolant filling station could be done.

The main findings are that the coolant filling station doesn't run on its full capacity. There are wastes in terms of waiting times from the operators and the equipment isn't trimmed to perform at its best. To improve this, recommendations on applying visual management and actions to trim the equipment are suggested. Upon these suggestions a future state map was developed and a maximum filling volume of 21,8 liters for the improved station was calculated.

Keywords: Coolant filling, Process optimization, Value stream mapping, Six-sigma, Automotive manufacturing



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## Abbreviations

C1, C2, C3, C4 - Abbreviation for equipment number 1-4 on line 1:42 in VCT

DMAIC - Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control (six-sigma method)

EV - Electric vehicle

ICE - Internal Combustion Engine vehicle

Line 1:42 - Location of the coolant filling process in VCT

ME - Manufacturing Engineering department at VCT

R&D - Research and Development department at VCT

SIPOC - Supplier-input-process-output-customer diagram (six sigma method)

TC - Final assembly plant at VCT

TOC - Theory of constraints

Tooling - Facility, Tooling and Equipment department at VCT

TPS - Toyota Production system

VCT - Volvo Cars Torslanda plant

VED - Diesel engine vehicle

VEP - Petrol engine vehicle

VSM - Value Stream Mapping

# 1 Introduction

*This chapter contains an introduction to the present study. It begins with a background to the study, followed by the purpose, its research questions and finally delimitations of the study.*

## 1.1 Background

The automotive industry faces a change in customer demand and technological advancements (Knupfer et al., 2017). Due to raising costs on fossil fuel and an increasing sustainability awareness, the market has started its migration towards fossil free powered vehicles. Volvo Cars state that their sustainability goal is to bring 1 million electrified cars to the streets by 2025 (Volvo Cars, 2016). The sustainability needs to be aligned in the whole value chain, from material to customer. This includes the manufacturing, which is facing new challenges associated with changed product designs. When starting to produce new car models, there is a collaborative work between the Research & Development (R&D) and Manufacturing Engineering (ME) departments in order to prepare the production for the upcoming models. The new car models can cause both design and production challenges. The design challenge is to design the cars in a way that emphasizes line production without compromising with the functionality of the car and also adopt the cars for a new power train containing a large battery. Manufacturing challenges can occur due to the new designs, where the production plants need to adopt its current facilities into being able to produce the new car models.

The upcoming new models at Volvo Cars are electric vehicles (EVs). In comparison to internal combustion engines (ICEs) the EVs uses a completely different power train design. Instead of a combustion engine the electrical vehicles are equipped with an electrical motor, and instead of consuming either diesel or petrol the cars power comes from a large battery.

Considering the major design change of the EVs, both R&D and ME needs to prepare for change.

This study will look into one of the challenges that might arise with the introduction of EVs in the future. As mentioned the EVs' power comes from a large battery instead of a combustion fuel. Battery packs generate a large amount of heat when providing an electrical motor with power. This affects the design of the cooling system of the car, in comparison to an ICE the EV needs cooling not only for the motor but also for the battery. This means that the cooling system for an EV could be significantly larger than for an ICE.

The cooling systems are filled with coolant liquid, a water and glycol mixture, at the coolant filling station located at line 1:42. The coolant filling station in Volvo Cars plant Torslanda (VCT) has four filling equipment. A car is filled with coolant by one equipment that moves along the line simultaneously with the car.

The increased volume in the future cooling systems for EVs can cause the cooling filling station in VCT to be at a critical point. There is an uncertainty in the capacity of today's coolant filling station and the ability for the station to meet the future requirements, which are of high uncertainty as well. Volvo initiated this study to investigate the uncertainty and to identify the capacity of today's process of filling coolant liquid in VCT.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to map the current filling capacity of the coolant filling station at VCT and evaluating potential improvements in order to increase it to meet future arising demand.

## 1.3 Scope

The conducted case study will focus on answering the following research question and sub questions.

- How will the transformation towards producing electric vehicles affect the coolant filling requirements in the production?
  - What parameters affect the coolant filling station to improve its capacity and how are they improved?
  - How should R&D, ME and Tooling at VCT collaborate to support this transformation?

## 1.4 Delimitations

The study is limited to mapping the coolant filling process in the Volvo Cars plant in Torslanda. Volvo has similar processes in the rest of their production plants, but these will not be included due to limitations in costs and travel possibilities.

A number of assembling activities are performed at the coolant filling station, which are not related to the coolant filling process, these activities are not included in this study. This study has only included an investigation on the activities with a direct link to the coolant filling process.

The suggested improvement actions that has been developed in this study were not implemented due to the limited period of time the study was performed.

## 2 Theory

*The following chapter describes the theoretical frameworks used in the methodology when conducting this study. Covering the fundamentals of Lean production, Six Sigma, capacity and capability measurements, process mapping theories and filling of liquid systems.*

### 2.1 Processes and process mapping

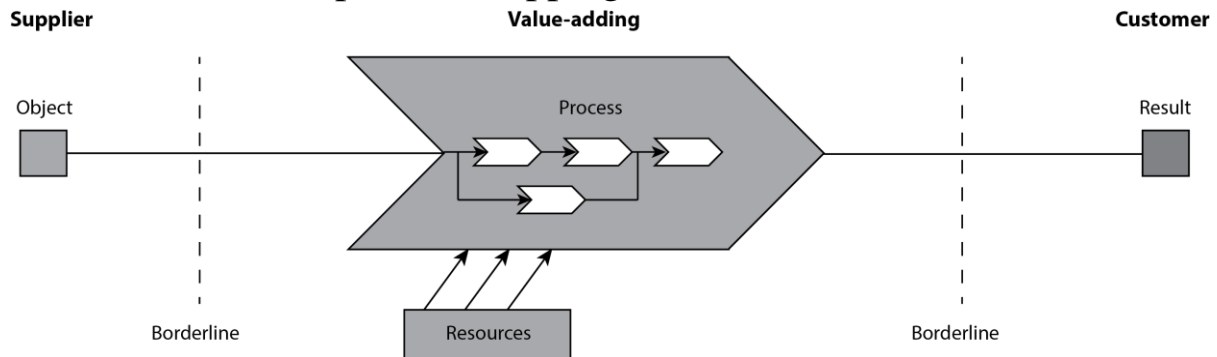


Figure 1 - Process definition reproduced from Bergman and Klefsjö (2010)

Bergman and Klefsjö (2010) describe a process by the definition “a process is a network of activities that are repeated in time, whose objective is to create value to external or internal customers”, illustrated in Figure 1. The purpose of each process is to satisfy its’ customers with the smallest possible resource. When improving an existing process, it is important to understand the process as it is before the improvement work takes action. It is crucial to understand for who value is created and what it consists of. Therefore, being systematic when describing the process at an initial stage of improvement work is needed. To gain knowledge about the process, process mapping can be applied. Process mapping can be performed in different ways, i.e. using a flow chart to identify different activities within a process, or a block diagram to identify where within an organization activities are performed (ibid.)

Damelio (2011) describes the reasons for mapping a process in the following terms; visualize the work performed, identify functions within the process, mapping relationships between functions, improve measurement and improvement capabilities. Bergman and Klefsjö (2010) mentions that the knowledge that is created by defining and mapping a process is highly valuable in itself, since it is an excellent way to further continue with improvement work, as it generates a shared picture of the current situation. According to Kalman (2002) process mapping is both a process intervention as well as an analytical tool. As an analytical tool, process mapping works to visually describe how activities are performed to show cross-functional relationships in organizations. As a process intervention it works as an action learning tool. When constructing a process map it facilitates inquiry and dialogue between departments and becomes a catalyst for change. There are several types of process maps; value stream maps, process hierarchy map, subprocess map, flowcharts and block diagram. It is common to be needed to use several different process maps on one process, depending on the level of the map. (ibid)

A process map also acts to show the inputs to a process and their effect on the output. The inputs can, depending on their characteristics, be categorized into three groups; controllable inputs (C), standard operating procedures (SOP) and noise (N) (Hammersberg, 2017). Controllable inputs are inputs that can be changed to see effect on the output. Standard operating procedures describe how the process is run and are often rules and constraints that need to be fulfilled, and thereby cannot be changed. Noise are inputs that are hard or too expensive to control but that affect the output, for example the humidity or air temperature (ibid.).

## 2.2 Filling of liquid systems

When filling a system with liquid, which could be anything from filling one liter milk pack with milk or a coolant system within a car containing small hoses with coolant fluid, two techniques are considered to be used; gravity filling or evacuation filling. Gravity filling is performed by letting the fluid flow into the system from an opening with a set volume and is normally used when filling e.g. milk packs. When filling, the air within the system is let out through an opening or a vent to avoid over pressurizing the system. When filling more complex systems that contain a number of components on different height levels, it is hard to let the air out when using gravity filling. Air might get trapped in the system which affect the total volume being filled to be lower than what is wanted. To overcome this, evacuation filling is used. Automotive manufacturers use the evacuation filling method to ensure the right level of liquid by minimizing the air left in the system in several liquid filling operations, such as coolant fluid filling and brake fluid filling (Pourmovahed et al, 1999). The study by Cerilles (2005) describes the filling process for brake fluid filling using evacuation fill. The process contains of several steps that needs to be performed: Evacuation 1, Leak check, Evacuation 2, Fluid fill, Leveling/Purge/Scavenge. Mali (2016) also confirmed this method of filling and also includes the step of performing a pressure test which is specifically used for coolant systems. Through pressurizing the system with air before the evacuation step is initiated it is ensured no leakages occur. Cerilles (2005) performed a study comparing different vendors of equipment for filling liquids in a manufacturing environment. The conclusion is that the evacuation filling method is the “best-practice” and most equipment vendors are supplying their customers with this method.

## 2.3 Capability

A process’ ability to produce units within set tolerance limits is called its capability (Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010). Measuring capability is normally done over a set of time using statistics from the process control. Variation within capability over a period of time might occur even though elimination of all potential causes has been done. This can be due to variation between different working shifts, machines or product specifications. Capability measures are divided into machine capability and process capability. Machine capability is estimated by analyzing a homogeneous set of data from, for example, the same machinery, the same set-up or the same working shift. Process capability needs data collected over a longer period of time, since a process average might vary (ibid.).



## 2.4 Machinery capacity

Lödning and Rossi (2013) mentions that it is usually hard to appreciate the flexibility of machinery capacities but mentions a number of alternatives on how to do this. A company can change the amount of machinery by buying or renting new machines and thereby increase the capacity. This is preferable when using standard machines with short delivery lead times. Another alternative is to change the intensity on the existing machinery. This could be increasing the cutting speed of a machine. Changing intensity could also be to optimize the programming of the machinery but requires that it has not been used to its full potential until now. The possibilities for increasing the intensity of machinery are, though, often very restricted in the industrial practice (ibid.).

## 2.5 Lean Production

Lean production is a production philosophy originating from Toyota Production System (TPS). It is a broad subject which considers many aspects of a system, from the people in the system all the way down to the detailed pieces of a single process. The main focus areas in TPS is eliminating waste and establishing a corporate culture that at every occasion emphasis continuous improvements (Liker and Hoseus, 2008).

Within Lean production “learn by doing” and “go to Gemba” are commonly used to get to know process (Liker and Hoseus, 2008). Learning by doing means learning a process by being a part of it and by executing the work tasks. In traditional lean fashion, this is done by observing the process at Gemba, which means standing and observing in the factory and progressively gather more knowledge about the process. It is deeply rooted in the Toyota culture how important it is to fully understand a process to be able to improve it (ibid.).

### Seven wastes

Within Lean production there are seven wastes that are considered and tried to get eliminated to reduce the non-value adding work (Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010). In Table 1 these seven wastes are listed with a description upon each one of them. Slack et al. (2010) describe the elimination of waste as one of the major parts of Lean. For example, this could be done by conducting a value stream mapping of the process to determine what activities that are value adding and which activities that are non-value adding. In the end, the customer doesn't want to pay for non-value adding activities, only the value adding ones.

Table 1 - Seven wastes of Lean according to Bergman and Klefsjö (2010)

<i>Overproduction</i>	<i>Producing products before they are required. It is a waste to produce too much, too early or too fast. Pull scheduling, producing products until when they are needed is wanted.</i>
<i>Waiting</i>	<i>People and parts waiting for a cycle to finish is considered waste as no value-adding work is performed.</i>
<i>Unnecessary transportation</i>	<i>A transport of goods does not create value itself. If an unnecessary transport can be eliminated, waste has been eliminated.</i>
<i>Over-processing or incorrect processing</i>	<i>A process producing defect products or products in need of adjustments must be adjusted.</i>
<i>Excess inventory</i>	<i>Products and materials waiting in storage do not create value. It also hides balancing issues and late deliveries from suppliers.</i>
<i>Unnecessary movement</i>	<i>People and parts being moved during work is not value-adding. These movement should be eliminated or decreased to the biggest extent.</i>
<i>Defects</i>	<i>Producing products with defects that needs rework is a waste. Inspecting products is also a waste that could be eliminated by producing the right products.</i>

## 2.6 Visual management

Using visual management is a way of communicating a state of a process or to visualize a problem so that everyone can see it (Liker and Hoseus, 2008). Visual management can be used in a line production for communicating the current state of a process to the operator. Strong visual control is according to Liker and Hoseus (2008) when the visual control directly indicates if the process reaches outside of the standard. By indication, the system should both provide a value for the deviation and give some sort of signal that the deviation has occurred.

According to Tezel, Koskela and Tzortzopoulos (2016) visual management can have a good effect on reducing wastes, production costs, quality problems and safety issues at the operational level, which might lead to economic gains for an organization. Tezel, Koskela and Tzortzopoulos (2016) further mentions a number of functions that visual management fulfill, and why visual management is actual applied in production environments. One function is discipline, which is closely related to process standardization, and acts through visual management to communicate process requirements, work instructions and process flows in an easily understood manner. Discipline leads to consistency in terms of reduced variability by reducing human errors. Visual management acts to achieve another function, job facilitation that relieves people's effort, both physical and psychological, on routine work by providing

them with sufficient aids. By using visual clues, wastes in terms of waiting, unnecessary movement and searching for products can be eliminated (ibid.).

## 2.7 Six Sigma (DMAIC)

Six Sigma was developed in the late 1980's within Motorola's Communications Division in order to handle customer complaints regarding warranty claims and focusing on reducing unwanted variation (Barney, 2002; Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010). Since then Six Sigma has been widely spread around the world and is today common in several different industries and companies. Schroeder et. al (2007) have developed a definition on what Six Sigma is, based on interviews with several organizations working with it. It is clear that different organizations might have various definitions on what Six Sigma is, based on their own operations and in what way Six Sigma is applied. Although, the purposed definition developed by Schroeder et. al (2007) goes: "Six Sigma is an organized, parallel-meso structure to reduce variation in organizational processes by using improvement specialists, a structured method, and performance metrics with the aim of achieving strategic objectives."

In Six Sigma, a structured method called DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) is used for members of a project to follow to solve problems and improve processes. Following a structured method helps the project team to not jump into conclusions and helps ensure a wide search of alternative solutions among the way (Schroeder et al. 2007). Lokkerbol and de Mast (2012) claims that DMAIC functions as a problem structuring device that breaks down a problem into subtasks within the DMAIC-cycle into deliverables. By doing this, the user finds a strategy for analyzing and solving a problem, and thus structure it up by hand.

The different stages of the cyclic process DMAIC have some similarities to the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle and includes several tools that are commonly used, such as the Seven Improvement Tools and the Seven Management Tools. These include, among others, control chart, histogram, scatter plot and interrelation graph, all with the prime function to structure and analyze numerical and verbal information (Bergman and Klefsjö 2010). The define stage focuses on defining the problem and creating a project plan where the inputs to the problem (X's) and outputs (Y's) are described and approved by the project team. This includes mapping the process and its customers, both internal and external, and planning for the project execution. The measure stage continues by getting to understand the current state of the process by collecting reliable data that will be used to expose the underlying causes of the problems. The data is used to set a current state value stream map that confirms the current process flow. The data collection can consist of both quantitative and qualitative data depending on the problem. The analyze stage is where the data collected in the measure stage is analyzed to generate theories that explain potential causes to the problem. Data charts are used that show the link between the process inputs (Xs) and the critical outputs (Ys). In the improve stage, solutions are developed that will be able to solve the problems with the inputs that affect the outputs. The solutions are evaluated and optimized and a "to be" value stream map is developed. The solutions get tested in a pilot testing to document the new data created and whether the solutions are working accordingly to the plan. When this is done, a preparation for a full-scale implementation is made. Finally, the control stage is where the project is completed by handing over the improved process to the process owner including procedures for maintaining the gains.

The documentation that is handed over usually includes before and after data, control documents, a system for monitoring the solutions implemented and completed project documentation (George et al. 2005). It is important to know that the DMAIC cycle is an iterative process where the project team always should be ready to be able to jump between the stages when new data and findings have appeared.

## 2.8 Theory of constraints

Theory of constraints (TOC) was a concept developed by Eli Goldratt in the 1980's and the concept about how to improve and manage how a system constraint performs in the context of the whole system (Cox and Schleier, 2010). TOC can be described as looking at systems and processes as a chain, where the chain is not stronger than its weakest link. Even though the system or process is improved, but the weakest link is still the same the overall result will not be improved.

When applying TOC, the first task is to understand the system, its goal and measurements. When having this knowledge, you are able to adapt the five steps (Cox and Schleier, 2010):

1. Identify the constraints.
2. Decide how to exploit the constraints.
3. Subordinate/synchronize everything else to constraints.
4. If needed, elevate the system's constraint.
5. If the constraint has been broken, go back to step 1.

TOC looks at a system with the eyes of cause-and-effect logic and focuses on managing the system constraints, interdependencies and variability (Cox and Schleier, 2010).

### 3 Methodology

*This study has been conducted as a case study with both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The study has adopted Six Sigma and its DMAIC approach to structure the collection and analysis of the data. This method was chosen due to the characteristics of the present study, which contained a significant amount of quantitative data. The Six Sigma methodology has several tools to be use for this kind of data and which makes it a good approach. The following chapter describes the methods and tools used to conduct this case study and the risk factors involved.*

#### 3.1 How the study was performed

Figure 2 describes how the study was performed in order to fulfil the purpose with the study and to answer the research questions. Step 3 and step 4 has been an iterative process where the data collection has been done on questionings arising from the mapping process, see Figure 2.

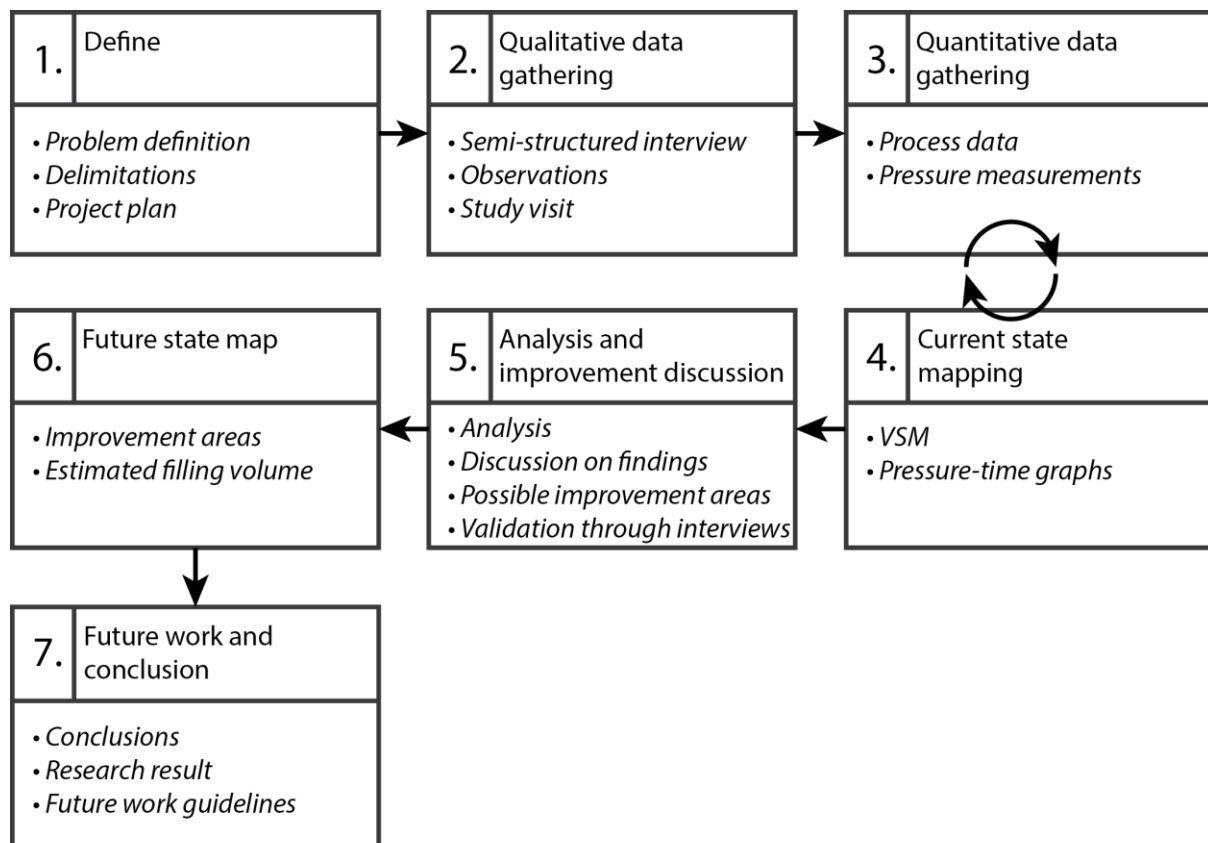


Figure 2 – Overall illustration that describes how the study was performed

#### Step 1: Define study

The first step was to define the goals with the study. This was done through interviews with the different stakeholders within the study in order to set a clear goal, defined research questions and set delimitations of the scope. A project plan was developed with time limits for the different upcoming steps.

## **Step 2: Qualitative data gathering**

When the scope was set an initial data gathering was done to get a picture of the process as it is today. This was made through semi-structured interviews to get a picture of the organizational structure around the process. By observations at the coolant filling station an understanding of how the operators and the filling equipment perform their operations was developed. A study visit to Volvo Group Tuve plant was done to get a picture of how a coolant filling process was done in other contexts.

## **Step 3: Quantitative data gathering**

Quantitative data were gathered in three ways. First, unprocessed raw-data from the filling equipment were gathered to get statistics on lead times from the process. To dig deeper and to see the actual filling process, pressure measurements were performed on the expansion tank while executing the equipment filling process.

## **Step 4: Current state mapping**

The first part of the purpose with the study was to map the capacity of today. By using the gathered data, the current state was mapped. Several mapping tools were used to bring a detailed picture of the as-is performance of today.

## **Step 5: Analysis and improvement discussion**

When the mapping had been performed, an analysis of the current state was done in cooperation with the regarded units at Volvo. Discussions on general findings of the current state and development of improvement efforts were discussed and examined.

## **Step 6: Future state map**

After developing suggestions for improvement, a future state map was created. This includes the implemented improvement suggestions and an estimated maximum filling volume.

## **Step 7: Future work and conclusion**

The final step was a conclusion upon the work performed within the study and the results achieved. At last, the research questions were answered.

## **3.2 Data collection**

*Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through the study and the research strategy therefore has a mixed methods approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011).*

### **Qualitative data gathering**

*The methods used in this chapter have been a part of the qualitative data gathering.*

#### **Observations - walk the process**

Liker and Hoseus (2008) explains how looking at graphs and collected data is not enough to get the whole picture of a process and its occurring problems. By walking the process, and observing a production cell, things that are not visual in graphs can be found such as waste, how operators follow standardized routines and the use of visual management. To be able to get to know the actual filling process and how machines and operators integrate with each other

it is crucial to observe the process. Observation of the process was done through several visits to the factory and the station. Observations were conducted both together with representatives from different departments and individual visits by the study group. During the observations notes were taken and different areas were observed, such as process times, team boards, equipment controllers and product specifications.

## **Interviews**

Interviews is a prominent data collection strategy in both qualitative and quantitative research. A semi-structured interview is a type of interview where the interviewer has a set of questions prepared in advance but where he is able to be flexible and ask follow-up questions based on the responses and the interviewee's perceived knowledge about the station (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Interviews were conducted with employees involved in the coolant filling process from ME, R&D and the tooling division, see Table 2. In the define phase, the purpose with the interviews were to get a picture of how the different departments are involved in the coolant filling process, to define the problem statement and to get to know the coolant filling process. The interviews were semi-structured since the interviewee's backgrounds and knowledges differ depending on their role, which caused the follow-up questions to be slightly different. The main questions from the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix I. The interviews had the purpose of creating an understanding on how the organizational structure is built around the coolant filling station. It was essential to know how different divisions work towards the station and how they interact between each other.

The interviews were held in Swedish due to the interviewees main language. To analyze the information gathered in the interviews, the information was coded to identify themes among the responds (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The information was used to create the problem statement and create an organizational structure to identify the information flow between the departments.

Table 2 - Data on performed interviews

<b>Interviewee Title</b>	<b>Division</b>	<b>Date</b>
Commodity Engineer	ME	22/1 2018
Commodity Engineer	ME	22/1 2018
Commodity Engineer	ME	22/1 2018
System Commodity Engineer	ME	24/1 2018
Manager Powertrain Installation	ME	1/2 2018
Manufacturing Engineer	ME Core	1/2 2018
Product Development Engineer	R&D Outer Cooling	5/2 2018
Equipment Engineer	Tooling	6/2 2018
Senior Project Manager Equipment	Tooling	6/2 2018
Industrial Engineer	Industrial Engineering	9/2 2018

## SIPOC

A SIPOC diagram (supplier-input-process-output-customer) is a process mapping tool used to highlight critical information in a study's early stage. It helps the research team and its sponsors to agree on the scope and boundaries of the project and that the outputs of a process match the inputs (George et al., 2005). Depending on the process the supplier and customer can be both internal or external customers. Creating a SIPOC is best done by a team with widespread knowledges of the process so that the essential outputs and customer requirements won't be missed. It is filled out by first deciding on what the output is. Then deciding on who the customer is. Then the actual process is defined and named. Next, the input to the process is identified and at last, the supplier of the input is examined (Hammersberg, 2017). The sequence of filling the SIPOC diagram is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 – SIPOC structure, numbering corresponds to the order of the steps when constructing a SIPOC

5	4	3	1	2
Supplier	Input	Process	Output	Customer

In this study a SIPOC was constructed in the define phase to determine the process outputs and inputs. The data for the SIPOC was gathered through observations and interviews.



## Quantitative Data collection

*The methods used in this chapter have been a part of the quantitative data gathering.*

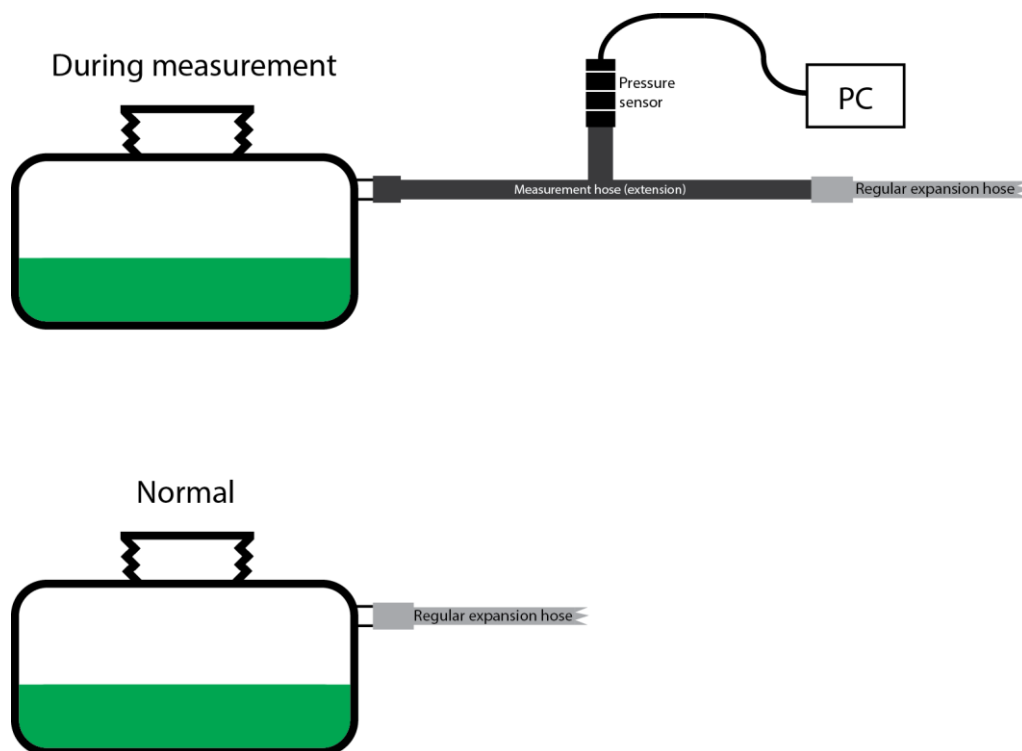
### Process Logs

In VCT there is a server that saves log entries from different equipment lines, which includes log-data from the coolant filling station and its equipment. This server's datafiles are reachable from within the Volvo network and the log-files are continuously updated. The log files cover the different equipment activities and also the interactions from operators that trigger sensor changes. The log files consist of every log entry sent from the line and equipment, which can cause a problem when analyzing a specific process. In this study Python and Microsoft Excel was used to filter out the relevant data from the raw data. The time stamps filtered out along with the corresponding event occurring at the given time stamp from the log-file were analyzed by visualizing the data and split the data up into different categories.

### Pressure testing

To evaluate the process steps within the equipment cycle, pressure testing in the expansion tank was performed. The pressure testing is a method that has been developed in-house by R&D and similar studies on equipment filling and pressure testing has been made by Mali (2016). R&D has provided the study with some less accurate pressure measurements from earlier studies. Since evacuation-filling is based on pressurizing the system, this measurement method is a good way to identify how the filling is performed.

The pressure testing was performed with a pressure sensor and a measurement PC-software. The pressure sensor was mounted with a custom hose that extends the expansion hose from the expansion tank, as seen in Figure 3.



*Figure 3 - Pressure measurement setup, illustrating expansion tank while measurement equipment is mounted (during measurement) and expansion tank without measurement equipment (normal)*

The data obtained from a pressure measurement consist of pressure values (bar) and the corresponding time value. The measurements were performed at 10 Hz and all data was exported to an Excel-file. From the raw data a pressure-time line plot was drawn. The different process steps were identified by matching the time stamps from the process monitor with the pressure measurement graph.

### **Value Stream Mapping**

Value stream mapping (VSM) is a rather simple but efficient tool for mapping a product flow. VSM takes both information and material flow into consideration. It has a primary focus on decreasing lead times, minimizing waste and what activities that are value-adding (Rother and Shook, 2003). As described by Locher (2008) a VSM should be conducted in 4 steps; preparation, current state mapping, future state mapping and implementation. The most significant importance is to map the current state in a detailed way, so it can be improved according to the shared vision for the process flow. The VSM traditionally follows one product and defines the different value-adding and non-value adding activities in the flow. Identification of future improvements can preferably be made by identifying the different types of waste in the process (Locher, 2008).

In this study a VSM was used to map the process, by identifying the different process steps. The current state VSM showed the activities performed and their time utilization. From this it could be found whether the activities were value- or non-value-adding. By making a future state VSM in the end of the study the effects on taken improvement actions was visualized.

### **Data stratification and distribution analysis**

The data that has been collected during this study is considered to be primary data, which are data collected upon the actual case of this study. The use of primary data gives the study a high trustworthiness, where conclusions are based on data of the specific situation that is investigated.

When evaluating a set of data, regarding lead times within the coolant filling process received from the process monitoring, an analysis is required to find the proper lead times for the current state VSM. In activities performed by operators there might be variations due to various reasons such as random events, new operators, different operators and so on. To analyze the data and its distribution and finding the overall mean times of the operator times boxplots were used. Boxplots provided an instant picture of variation and might give insight into strategies for finding what caused the variation (George et al. 2012).

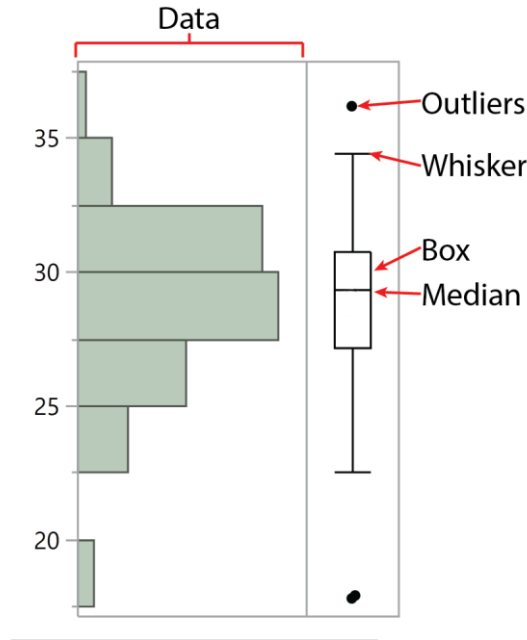


Figure 4 - Box plot, arrows and notations describing the different part of a box plot.

A boxplot, see Figure 4, comprises the data into what the name says; a box. Inside the box 50% of the data set, the 2nd and 3rd quartiles, is shown. Outside the box the rest of the data is shown by “whiskers” which is a single-line that is above or below the 2nd and 3rd quartile. Outliers is shown as separate markers. Times outside the box can be deviating from the standard operating procedure due to break or disturbance in the production. The times inside the box are therefore used for the current state VSM. The box plots were created with the statistics software JMP Pro.

Regression modelling is a method that can be used to identify patterns and predict process outcomes, by analyzing the function  $Y = f(x)$ , (Rhinehart, 2016). For example, to determine the volume (Y) and how it is dependent of the time (x). One can with a large data set predict the function  $f(x)$  to estimate Y. In this study the estimated volume for a specific process time will be calculated with the following linear equation;

$$Volume = a + b * process\ time$$

The variables  $a$  and  $b$  are determined from the data set using the prediction modelling method in JMP Pro.

However, as Rhinehart (2016) also mentions it can be hard to determine which type of model to use for a prediction and which data points that represent the whole population in an appropriate way without bringing to complex data into the regression model. As mentioned above a validation of a data set using box plots can be helpful for prediction modeling.

### 3.3 Ethical consideration

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) there are four main areas regarding ethics that need to be taken into consideration when conducting a research involving humans. These four areas are harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. Harm to participants can involve different types of harm, from physical harm to harming a participant’s

self-esteem or career opportunities. Avoiding harming the participating people within the scope of the study will be done by letting them be fully anonymous if this is wanted. The second area is the lack of informed consent, which is about not giving the whole background information of the study such as scope and reason to conducting the research. Avoiding this will be done by always giving a participant information on what the study is about, why it is done and what their role might be in it. Linked to this is the invasion of privacy aspect, which due to the degree of informed consent can vary the perception of privacy. The last aspect, deception, is about giving readers another picture of the research than what it is. Overall in this research, a high level of transparency towards people coming across the study have been of high importance to obtain a high ethical level without harming participants.

## 4 Results

*This section presents the results of the data collected as well as suggested improvements upon the results.*

### 4.1 Organizational structure

An important part of defining a project is to define the different people involved in the process, as mentioned by Damelio (2011). Through the semi-structured interviews held, information was gathered regarding collaborations in between different units an organizational chart has been constructed, Figure 5. The main departments within this study are ME, R&D and Tooling. The organizational chart, see figure 5, shows the representatives from each department that has been involved in this study. ME Cooling installation provides the coolant filling process with work instructions containing process times for the operations that needs to be performed on the production line. ME Cooling installations work is mostly concentrated to manual labor and does not include more than a machining time for the equipment. The difference between ME Cooling installation and ME Core is that ME Core is working in earlier stages of projects. R&D provides both Tooling and ME with technical instruction and requirements that need to be fulfilled. The technical requirement contains information about quality targets that needs to be archived, for example the level of coolant fluid in the system after the filling process is concluded. Tooling are responsible to purchase, operate and maintain equipment according to technical requirements from R&D. Industrial Engineering (IE), Process Engineering is a production technician that works closely to the production line with continuous improvement projects and securing the daily drift.

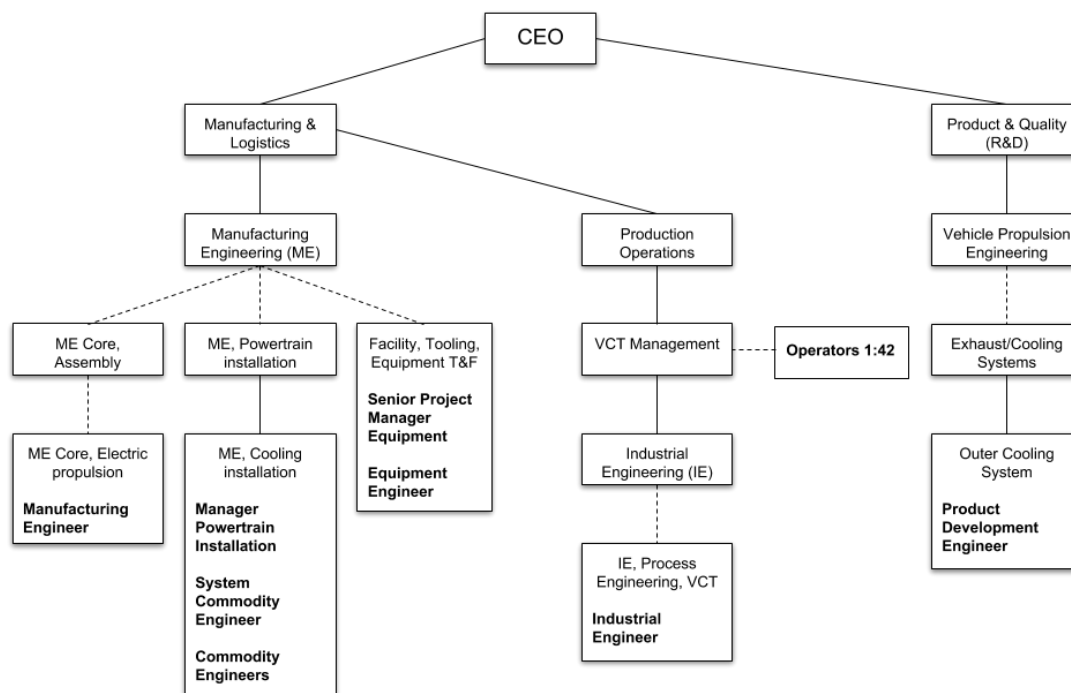


Figure 5 - Organizational chart

What was concluded from the interviews among the ME and Tooling workers, was that they experienced that the technical requirements from R&D could be delivered at any time and also that these requirements could be required to be implemented right away. This could result in problems due to that ME and Tooling need to make fast decisions and implement new solutions right away, without the needed time to explore options to meet the requirements.

What was also observed during this study was that the responsibility areas surrounding the coolant filling station are to a great extent divided into the different departments. It is unclear if there is anyone who has an overall knowledge and responsibility over the coolant filling station. Responsibilities and knowledges are divided among the departments depending on characteristics of task. This goes against the statement made by Liker and Hoseus (2008) who claims that to be able to improve a process it is important to fully understand it.

## 4.2 SIPOC

Table 4 – SIPOC process map

<b><i>Supplier</i></b>	<b><i>Inputs</i></b>	<b><i>Process</i></b>	<b><i>Output</i></b>	<b><i>Customers</i></b>
<i>Previous station</i>  <i>Fluid supplier (fluid machinery)</i>	<i>Production schedule</i>	<i>Car arrives</i>	<i>Filled fluid tank</i>	<i>Next station</i>
	<i>Empty fluid tank</i>	<i>Operator pulls string</i>	<i>Equipment measurement data</i>	<i>End customer</i>
	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Equipment goes down</i>	<i>Line measurement data</i>	
	<i>Coolant fluid</i>	<i>Mount hose</i>		
	<i>Software</i>	<i>Filling</i>		
	<i>Operators work</i>	<i>Dismount hose</i>		
		<i>Equipment goes up</i>		
		<i>Equipment return</i>		

The input and output of the station is illustrated in a SIPOC, Table 4. The SIPOC was developed after the interviews to get a good picture of people involved in the study as well as the process in a large scope. The SIPOC is a rather simple input and output process in the sense of products. A non-filled car enters the station and the output should be a filled car. However, an important output of the station is the data acquired by the process monitor, for both the equipment and the manual work. The process steps are described in more detail in Chapter 4.3.

### 4.3 Station layout

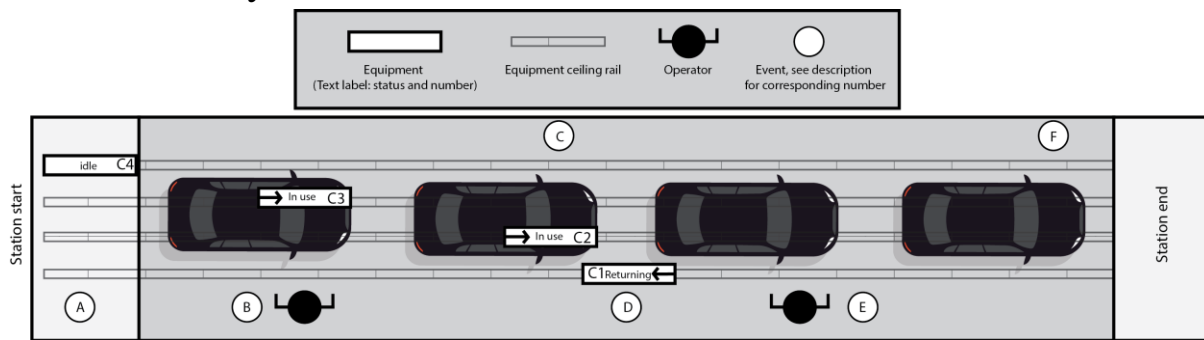


Figure 6 - Station layout, VCT line 1:42 seen from above. Illustrating the station and the equipment placement.

The coolant filling station (1:42 in VCT) is illustrated with a view from above in Figure 6. The station layout is based on the observations at the production line and was constructed by upon the findings. The coolant filling station contains four filling equipment (C1-C4) mounted in the roof following the cars above them. The scenario in the figure could be a real setting where one equipment is idle (C4), one is assembled (C3), one is filling (C2) and the last one is returning to its home position (C1). This station, including the operators and the equipment, was defined as the Overall process within this study.

According to the held interviews the station has four filling equipment but is calculated to be able to run on three of these. The reason to why there are four equipment is to be able to run the operations if one breaks down or needs maintenance. The takt time is 58,2 seconds and the cycle time for three equipment is 174,6 seconds. The line speed is 0,103 m/s and the return speed of the equipment is 0,667 m/s.

The following section describes the different steps performed along the line and are indicated by the letters A-F in Figure 6.

- A. The equipment moves along a rail mounted above the car in the roof, parallel to the line. The equipment's starting position is placed right before the start of the actual station. The equipment returns to the idle-station when finished processing a car and waits until the next car arrives.
- B. When a car arrives at the station, an idle equipment starts to move along the car. From this point an operator can initiate the first process step by pulling a string (Arm up/down string in Figure 7). The equipment arm (Equipment arm in Figure 7) goes down to operating position. Further on, the operator takes the nozzle (Hose with nozzle in Figure 7) from the equipment arm and places it on the expansion tank (Expansion tank in Figure 7). The filling sequence is then initiated when the operator pushes the start button located on top of the nozzle.
- C. The car and corresponding equipment moves along the line, while performing the filling sequence.
- D. The equipment alerts the second operator with help of a blinking light and an audio signal when the filling sequence is completed. The second operator then pushes the stop button and places the nozzle in the nozzle holder and pushes a button on the equipment arm that retrieves the it.

- E. When the equipment arm reaches its top position, the equipment changes direction and starts to move back along the rails to the idle position at the start of the station.
- F. Finished filled car is handed over to the next station.

In addition to the activities described above, the operators do perform some other assembling operations that is performed during and after the filling process.

Figure 7 illustrates a side view with a mounted nozzle on the expansion tank, which is a snapshot of the process at letter C in Figure 6.



Figure 7 - Illustration of equipment filling car at station 1:42 in VCT

To emphasize data evaluation and deeper understanding in the process the station has been split up into smaller process steps. The following list describes the process steps and refers back to where the specific process step is happening along the line in Figure 6 (indicated by (#) where # corresponds to the lettering).

- Car arrival (A) - From the point where the equipment starts to move along a car until operator pulls the strap to initiate the equipment arm to go down.
- Arm going down (B) - Operator pulls string to initiate the equipment arm to go down and waits until it has reached its bottom position and is ready to provide the operator with the nozzle.
- Arm down to nozzle taken (B) - Time from equipment arm is down until the operator takes the nozzle out of its holder.



- Mount nozzle (B) - Operator takes the nozzle from the nozzle holder and mounts it to the expansion tank and starts the filling sequence by pushing the start button on the nozzle.
- Equipment filling process (C) - From operator pushing the start button until equipment has finished the filling sequence and signaling with light and audio.
- Filling finished to dismount (C) - From the equipment filling process is finished until the operator starts dismount the nozzle by pushing the stop button.
- Dismount nozzle (D) - Operator pushing stop button and dismounts the nozzle. Placing the nozzle in the nozzle holder on the equipment arm.
- Nozzle returned to arm going up (D) - Time from operator has returned the nozzle in the holder until button pressed signaling the equipment to retrieve the arm to the top position.
- Arm going up (D) - Time for equipment arm to move from bottom to top position.
- Equipment returning (E) - Time for equipment to return back to the start (to the idle station)

## 4.4 Cooling system architecture

The cooling systems are different depending on the type of motor system. Currently both petrol (VEP) and diesel (VED) engine vehicles are produced. Some of the systems also have an electric motor in addition to a petrol engine, which means that it is a hybrid vehicle. The hybrid cooling systems have a larger volume than the non-hybrid cooling systems. The motor systems can also be of different, ranging in power and addons like heaters. All these variations cause the coolant systems to have a varying volume and complexity.

To simplify this study the variety of cooling systems used today can be categorized into two groups. In the following chapters the hybrid cars will be referred to as large systems, approximately 13 liters, and the non-hybrid cars as small systems, approximately 9 liters.

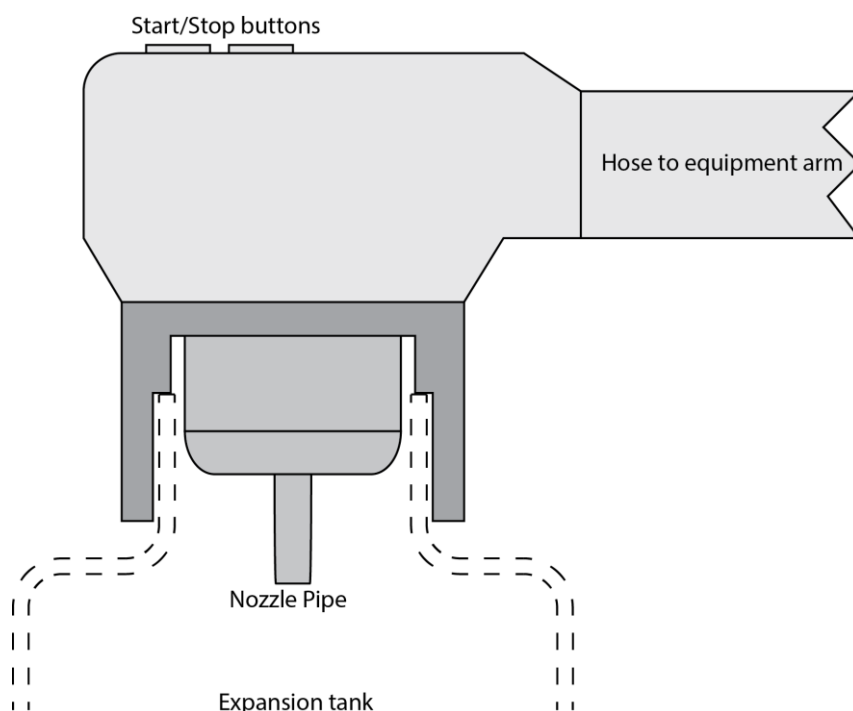
## 4.5 Equipment filling process

The four equipment are purchased from the equipment manufacturer Agramkow but are fully owned and operated by Volvo. Therefore, Tooling has the ability to change the parameters within the equipment. The equipment is controlled by an equipment control system. In the equipment controller panel at the station a set of input parameters can be set to control the equipment process, see Appendix II . The parameters can be divided into different categories;

- Time parameters - executes an operation for set time or a waiting for a set time.
- Pressure parameters - target pressures or safety levels, which a process step should archive or stop at if exceeded.

The equipment filling process can be broken down into smaller process steps. From the process monitor, meetings with Tooling representatives and observations at the production line the following equipment filling process steps has been defined;

- Initiating - fastening nozzle griper to expansion tank
- Evacuation 1 - evacuate air from the system to a predefined vacuum pressure, targeting 40 mBar.
- Vacuum test - perform a check that the desired vacuum pressure is reached and ensure no leakages occurred.
- Evacuation 2 - perform one more vacuum suction to ensure that the predefined vacuum pressure is still reached.
- Filling - initially, the equipment uses the under-pressure created in the cooling system to inject the liquid. When the system is reaching atmospheric pressure, the equipment forces liquid into the system until an over-pressure of 1.5 bar is reached. In this stage, the system is top-filled.
- Pressure test - ensures that the over-pressure is stable to determine that there are no leakages in the system.
- Leveling - due to the system being top-filled, in the leveling phase the equipment sucks liquid out of the system and dropping the pressure to around 1 bar. The leveling is controlled by the pressure drop and the nozzle pipe, see Figure 8. The pipe is designed so that it reaches as far into the expansion tank as the required level of 48 mm with a tolerance of  $\pm 2$  mm, x1 in Figure 9, that is specified in the technical requirement by R&D. This level is a quality requirement, if the level is too low there is a risk of needing to refill the coolant system since the level decreases when the car is driven.



*Figure 8 - Equipment nozzle mounted on the expansion tank*

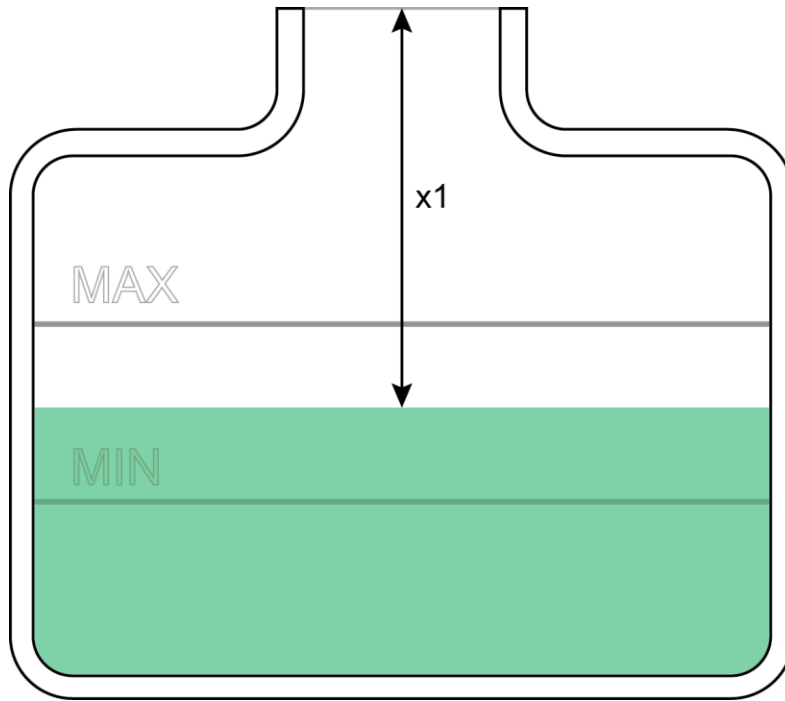


Figure 9 - Expansion tank with technical requirement (x1)

## 4.6 Analyze of overall process

The overall process includes the main process steps within the coolant filling station including both the filling equipment and the operators. Starting with Car arrival and ending with the Equipment returning. The process times acquired from the process monitor are based on one week's production, week 9 in 2018. The sample size is approximately 4000 produced cars. The data contains times for each process step for each produced car.

When regarding the average times for each process step it can be identified which of the process steps that utilize the most amount of time. Figure 10 shows two stacked columns with each process time, illustrating the time for the whole process divided into large systems and small systems.

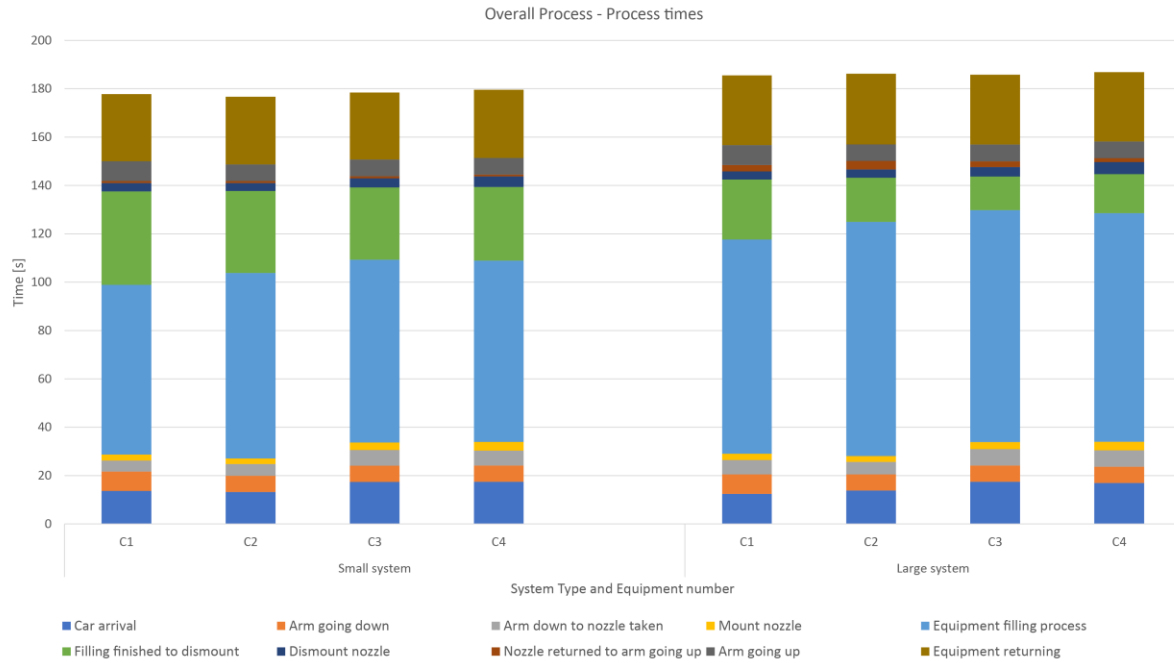


Figure 10 - Overall process times, divided by equipment and system type

Appendix III contains the distribution box plots of the times for each process step. Table 5 and 6 contains the times for each process step. The time presented is the average time of data within the box of the boxplots.

Table 5 - Overall process times for small system

Process Step	Time [s]	Variation [±s]	Equipment
Car arrival	15,1	7,1	C1-C4
Arm going down	8	0	C1
	6,7	0	C2
	6,7	0	C3
	6,7	0	C4
Arm down to nozzle taken	5	2,9	C1-C4
Mount nozzle	2,4	0,3	C1
	2,2	0,3	C2
	3	0,4	C3
	3,6	0,5	C4
Equipment filling	70,2	0,5	C1
	76,6	0,7	C2
	75,5	0,6	C3
	75,5	0,6	C4
Filling finished to dismount	31,6	13,2	C1-C4
Dismount nozzle	3,4	0,6	C1
	3,3	0,6	C2
	3,7	0,5	C3
	4,3	0,5	C4
Nozzle returned to arm going up	0,7	0	C1-C4
Arm going up	8,2	0	C1
	6,9	0	C2
	6,9	0	C3
	6,9	0	C4
Equipment return	28,2	1,7	C1-C4

Table 6 - Overall process times for large system

Process Step	Time [s]	Variation [±s]	Equipment
Car arrival	15,1	6,8	C1-C4
Arm going down	8	0	C1
	6,7	0	C2
	6,7	0	C3
	6,7	0	C4
Arm down to nozzle taken	5,6	2,7	C1-C4
Mount nozzle	2,5	0,5	C1
	2,4	0,4	C2
	2,9	0,3	C3
	3,5	0,5	C4
Equipment filling	88,6	0,3	C1
	96,8	0,4	C2
	95,9	0,3	C3
	94,7	0,4	C4
Filling finished to dismount	14,9	10,7	C1-C4
Dismount nozzle	3,3	0,6	C1
	3,3	0,7	C2
	3,7	0,8	C3
	4,5	1	C4
Nozzle returned to arm going up	2	0	C1-C4
Arm going up	8,2	0	C1
	6,9	0	C2
	6,9	0	C3
	6,9	0	C4
Equipment return	28,9	1,5	C1-C4

The variation is significantly higher on three process times; car arrival, arm down to nozzle taken, and filling finished to dismount. This is due to the mentioned times are highly operator dependent. The operators do perform other operations that aren't associated with the filling process which can cause variations.

The process times indicates that there is a variation between the different equipment. The equipment filling time is remarkable in this aspect, where C1 performs better than the other equipment with a mean time of 70,2 seconds for a small system in contrast to around 76 seconds for equipment C2-C4. The distribution of data points for the equipment filling process, including both small and large systems is visualized in a scatter plot seen in Figure 11.

Variation in mount nozzle and dismount nozzle occur due to the equipment placement, the distance from the equipment arm to the expansion tank differs between the equipment.



Figure 11 - The equipment filling process time for each serial number (each produced car has a unique serial number).

Waiting is one of the seven wastes according to the Lean philosophy (Liker and Hoseus, 2008). Waiting is a major contributor to longer utilization times of the equipment. The following process steps are considered as waiting; car arrival, arm down to nozzle taken, filling finished to dismount. By illustrating the value-adding process steps and the non-value-adding process steps in a simplified VSM, see Figure 12 for small system and Figure 13 for large system. The VSM is based on the process times in Table 5 and 6.

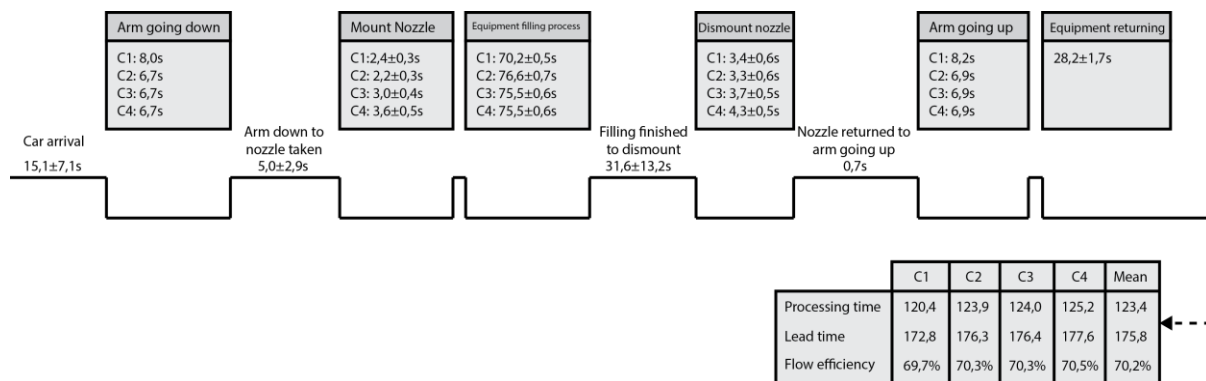


Figure 12 - VSM - Small system

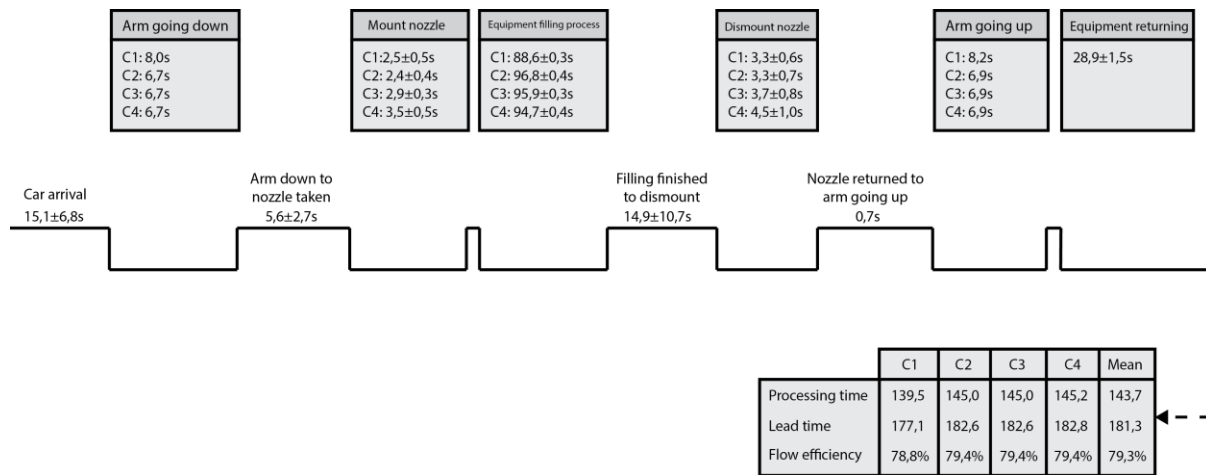


Figure 13 - VSM - Large system

The VSM illustrates the process times (grey boxes) and the waiting times. The processing time for each equipment indicates the performance, which once again shows that C1 performs the process steps faster than C2-C4. The lead time is the total time that one equipment is occupied. By dividing the processing and the lead time the flow efficiency is calculated. The flow efficiency indicates how much of the total time that is utilized by the process steps. As seen, the flow efficiency is in average higher on the larger systems, this due to the waiting times are less on the large systems.

#### 4.7 Analyze of equipment filling process

When analyzing the overall process, it was identified that the equipment filling process is the process step that utilizes the largest share of the total process time. To examine further, the equipment filling process was analyzed separately, through investigating the process steps within the equipment filling process.

Two types of measurements were performed on the equipment filling process; time measurements and pressure measurements. The time measurements are based on the same data sample as the time measurement on the overall process, through data gathering in the process monitor. Figure 14 shows the equipment filling process steps for small and large systems.

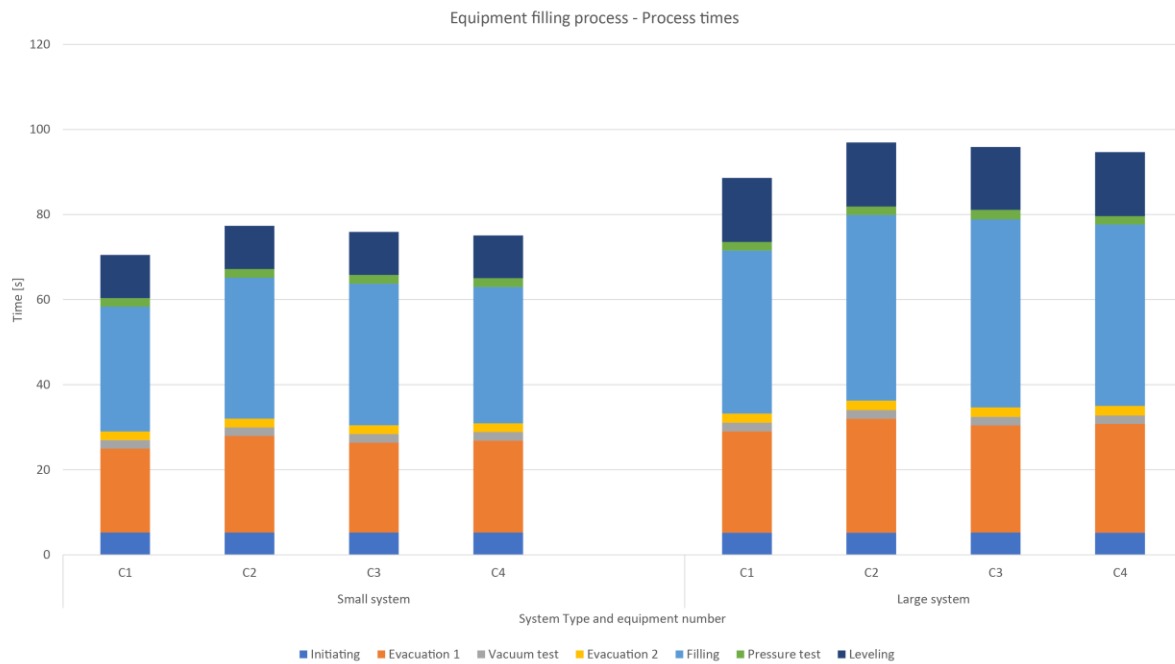


Figure 14 - Equipment filling process times, divided by equipment and system type

Table 7 and 8 contains the times for each process step. The time presented is the average time of data within the box of the boxplots, see Appendix IV.

Table 7 - Equipment filling process times for small system

Process Step	Time [s]	Variation [ $\pm$ s]	Equipment
Initiating	5,2	0	C1-C4
Evacuation 1	19,7	0,2	C1
	22,4	0,2	C2
	21	0,2	C3
	21,6	0,2	C4
Vacuum test	2	0	C1-C4
Evacuation 2	2	0	C1-C4
Filling	29,2	0,4	C1
	32,8	0,4	C2
	33,1	0,4	C3
	32	0,4	C4
Pressure test	2	0	C1-C4
Leveling	10	0	C1-C4



Table 8 - Equipment filling process times for large system

Process Step	Time [s]	Variation [ $\pm$ s]	Equipment
Initiating	5,2	0	C1-C4
Evacuation 1	23,8	0,1	C1
	26,7	0,1	C2
	25,2	0,1	C3
	25,5	0,1	C4
Vacuum test	2	0	C1-C4
Evacuation 2	2,2	0,1	C1-C4
Filling	38,3	0,3	C1
	43,6	0,3	C2
	44,1	0,3	C3
	42,7	0,3	C4
Pressure test	2	0	C1-C4
Leveling	15	0	C1-C4

The variation in the equipment process times is overall small or none at all. However, there is some variation in Evacuation 1 and Filling. This variation origins in the variety of cooling systems, as mentioned in Chapter 4.4. The measurement proves the thesis that the variation is small and that the systems can be categorized into large and small systems.

There is a number of input parameters in the equipment controller, see raw input data for the equipment controller in Appendix II . These inputs have been divided into controllable (C) and standard operating procedure (SOP) (Hammersberg, 2017). In this case, the controllable inputs are time considered to be set to a fixed value that can be changed without affecting the quality and performance of the output of the equipment filling process. The SOP-inputs are considered not to be changeable since those inputs are controlled by set target limits to be reached and are only affected by the design of the cooling system. The following, table 9, shows which of the times that can be regarded as controllable (C), where a change can be made, and standard operating procedure (SOP).

Table 9 - Categorization of equipment filling process times by controllable (C) and standard operating procedure (SOP)

	C	SOP
Initiating	x	
Evacuation 1		x
Vacuum test	x	
Evacuation 2	x	
Filling		x
Pressure test	x	
Leveling	x	

Initiating, vacuum test, evacuation 2, pressure test and leveling are all controllable factors that are executed for a predefined time in the process controller. Evacuation 1 and Filling are standard operating procedures that are executed based on a target pressure value and system volume and are therefore controlled by the type of system that is filled.

## 4.8 Pressure Measurement

To evaluate the equipment filling process, further pressure measurements have been performed. The pressure measurement data is gathered from 18 different cars by attaching a measurement equipment to the expansion tank. All four filling equipment has been covered in the measurement. At least two measurements have been performed on each equipment at separate occasions. The result of the measurement is pressure-time graphs that indicates the pressure change in the equipment filling process. By matching the timestamps from the process monitor and the corresponding pressure measurement graph for a specific car, the different steps can be visualized. Figure 15 shows one example of a pressure measurement, with process steps indicated.

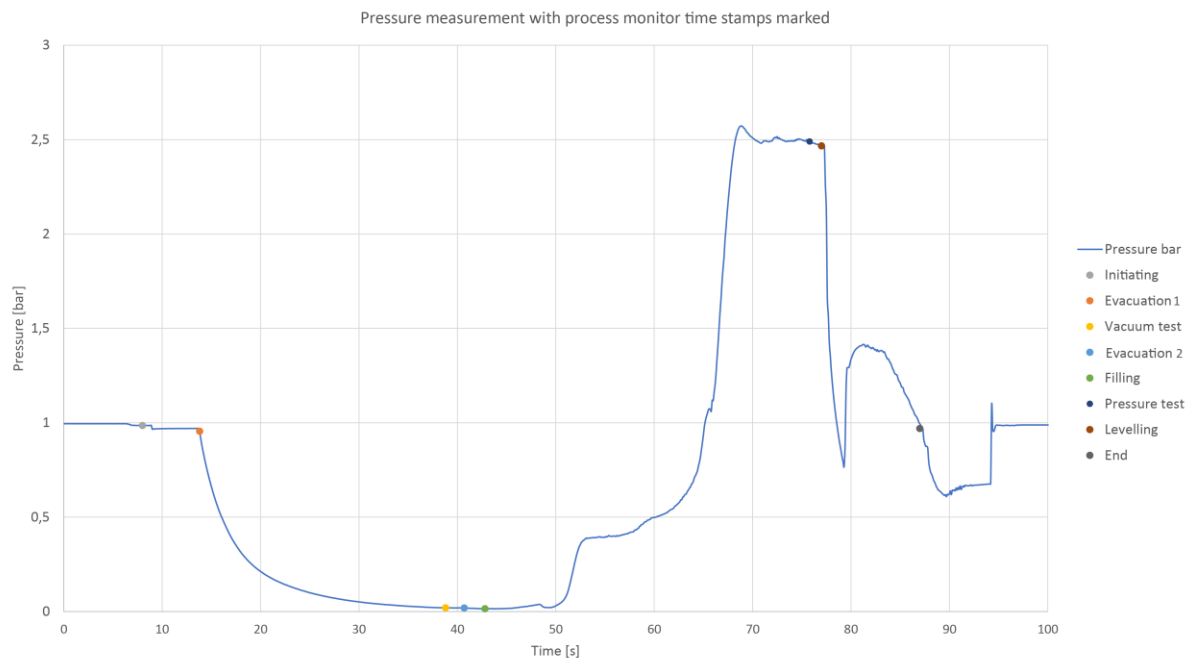


Figure 15 - Pressure measurement with time stamps (markers) indicating the start of each process step within the equipment filling process.

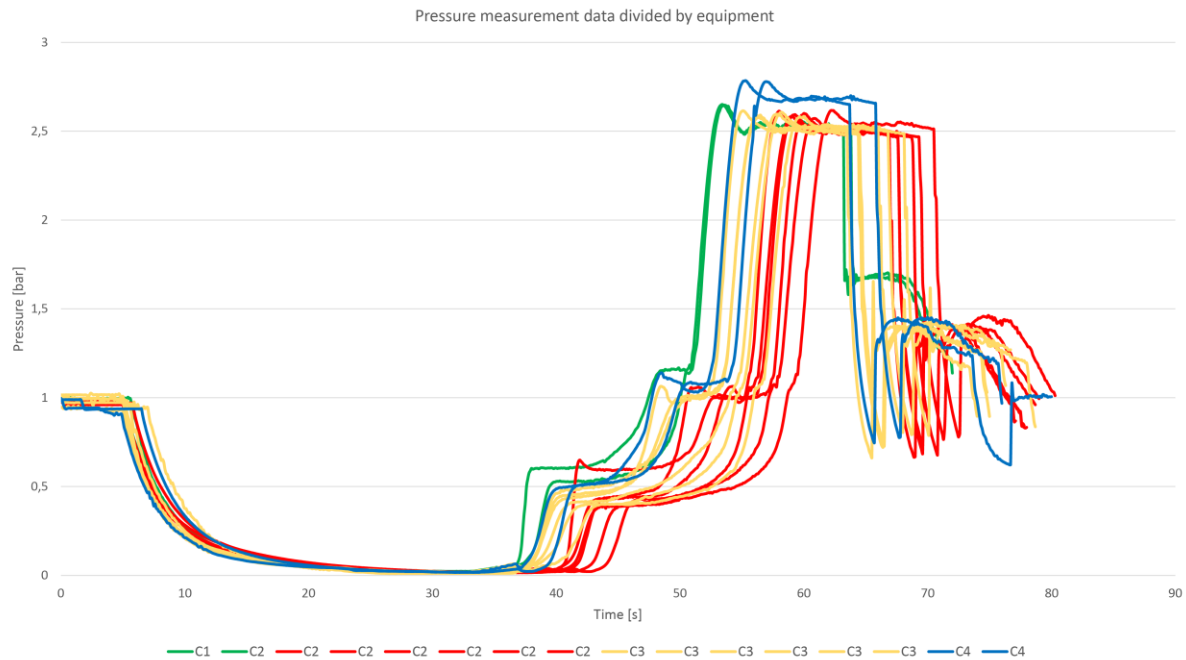


Figure 16 - Result of pressure measurements performed at line 1:42 in VCT. Color coded by equipment (C1-C4).

In Figure 16 all the pressure measurements are shown. The different colors indicate which equipment it corresponds to. As seen in Figure 16 there is a difference in performance between the equipment. It can also be identified, from the process monitoring, that the different equipment performs differently.

To be able to recognize where the equipment differs in detail, the different process steps has been plotted separately. This illustrates variation in a clearer way than illustrating the complete measurement in one graph and makes comparisons of the systems and equipment more convenient. Through the interviews performed and the meetings held with R&D and Tooling, each process step has been discussed and possible factors that can be changed has been identified.

### Initiating phase

The initiating phase has a fixed-time in the equipment controller of five seconds for all equipment. During this time the nozzle gripper needs to fasten to the expansion tank. Observations at the production line has showed that this is done in one second, which indicates that there is room for improvements.

## Evacuation 1

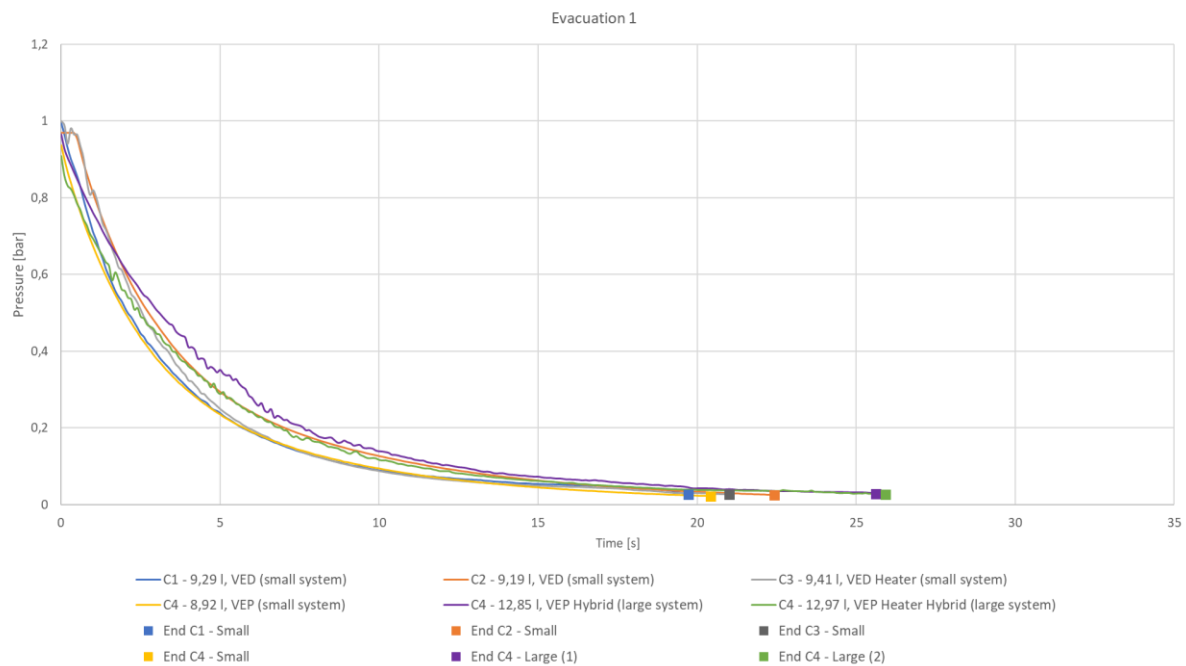


Figure 17 - Evacuation 1 process step from pressure measurement

The Evacuation 1 for the different equipment is illustrated in Figure 17, where the time when it is done is indicated by a marker. Factors that according to R&D and Tooling affect the time it takes to evacuate a system is the volume and complexity of the cooling system. In this case the focus is to determine a process step time for a large system and small system. The process has a target value, to reach below 40 mbar before executing the next step (vacuum test), this has been confirmed by R&D to be a correct level to avoid quality defects.

As seen in Figure 17 and Table 7 and 8 there are variations between the equipment. Equipment C1 performs evacuation faster than the rest. According to the performed measurements, the time it takes to evacuate a system is mostly affected by the systems volume, the different equipment are stable, and the evacuation times do not differ from one time to another.

## Vacuum test

The vacuum test is a fixed-time of two seconds in the equipment controller. According to Tooling this is time dependent because of that the system needs to stabilize to be able to measure if the pressure is steady. The vacuum test is stable across all equipment and system types.

## Evacuation 2

Evacuation 2 is performed to ensure that the vacuum pressure is still at 40 mbar. As seen in Table 7 and 8, evacuation 2 takes about two seconds for both small and large systems and can be considered as controllable.

## Filling

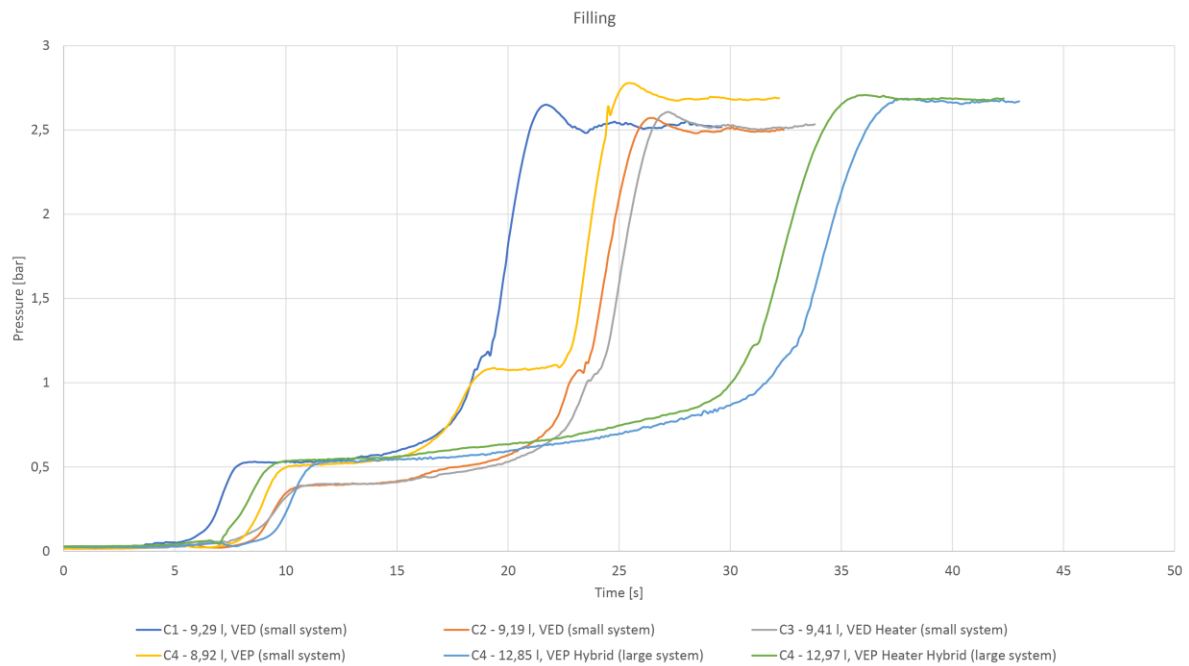


Figure 18 - Filling process step from pressure measurement

The filling cycle, see Figure 18, as well as evacuation 1, mainly depend on the volume of the system. Comparing the different equipment in the pressure-time graphs and the measurement data in table 7 and 8, it has been identified that C1 is performing better than the other three equipment.

As seen in Figure 18 the pressure is stable for more than 5 seconds in the end of the filling sequence. This is due to a fixed parameter in the equipment controller.

## Pressure test

The pressure test is performed in the same way as the previous mentioned vacuum test, see above for details.

## Leveling

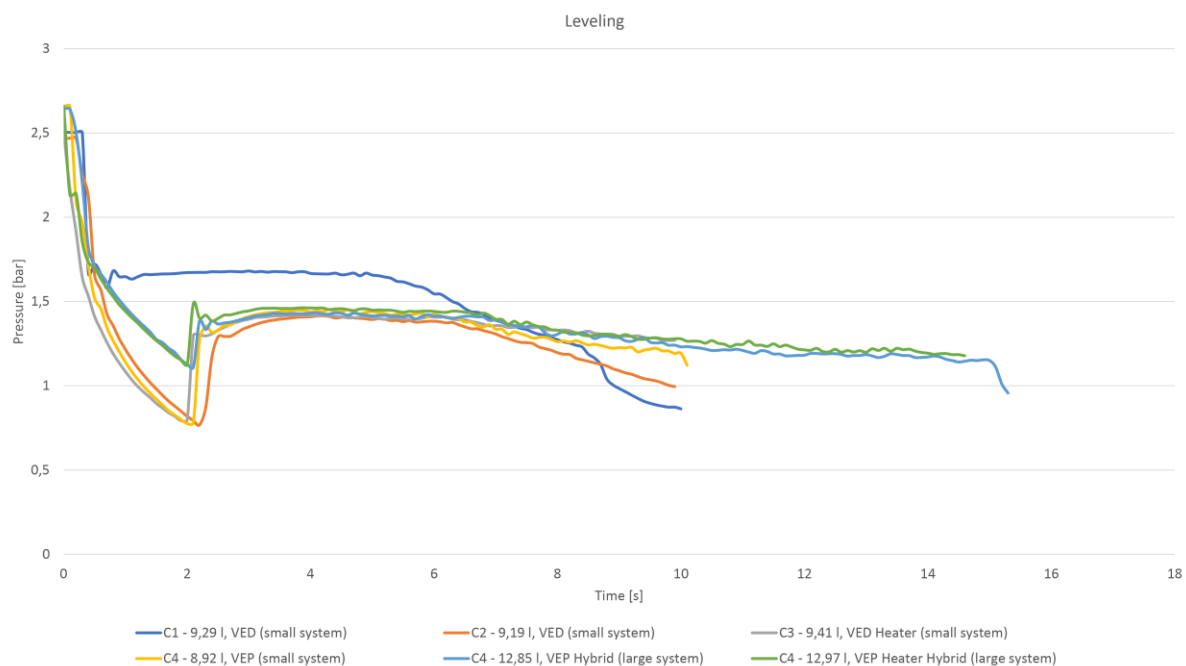


Figure 19 - Leveling process step from pressure measurement

The leveling time is a fixed time, it is 10 seconds for small systems and 15 seconds for large systems. Both times, for small and large system could be shortened, as seen in Figure 19 the pressure reaches a stable pressure earlier than 10 seconds for small systems and 15 seconds for large systems.

From observations at the production line it has been identified that the liquid level is stable after about five seconds from initiating the leveling phase.

## 4.9 Improving the process

According to Bergman and Klefsjö (2010) about eliminating waste with a lean approach the current state VSM can be evaluated and waste can be eliminated. The waiting times from the current state VSM are the following; car arrival, arm down to nozzle taken and filling finished to dismount. Due to the fact that operators need to walk between different cars the process times for car arrival and filling finished to dismount are not set to 0 seconds. Table 10 suggest the new times to be applied in the future state VSM for the above-mentioned waiting times.

Table 10 - Suggested improved process times

Process Step	Current state time [s]	Future state time [s]
Car arrival	15,1	2
Arm down to nozzle taken	5	0
Filling finished to dismount	31,6	3
Nozzle returned to arm going up	0,7	0,7

To be able to decrease the waiting times, developing a visual management onto the station is suggested (Tezel, Koskela and Tzortzopoulos, 2016). Visual management was implemented at the brake fluid station in VCT, from where inspiration have been gathered. It is suggested

to mount screens onto each equipment that is easily viewed by the operators and contain the following information:

- When the equipment is idle the screen indicates when the current equipment will start to move along with a car using a time countdown. This is to give the operator sufficient information on when the operator needs to be ready to pull the string and thereby being able to do it within two seconds from the equipment is starting to move.
- When the string has been pulled, the operator should stay in position and immediately mount the nozzle and start the filling. From the data analysis and observations, it is proven that this is done at some times, while at other the operator pulls the string and then walks to perform other tasks which results in waiting times.
- When the filling has started the screen should show every process step of the filling including a countdown that indicates on how much time is left until the process is done. As before, this would serve as an aid towards the operator to be able to be in place to dismount the nozzle within three seconds. The audio and light signal used today should be improved with a clearer light and louder audio signal.

Through observations and interviews with the operators at the station it has been determined that the stress level on the station can be high. This is due to that equipment process is hard to monitor while performing other assembling activities. Visual management gives the operators the opportunity to have a better overview of the ongoing equipment filling process. This might have a positive impact on the social sustainability on the station, by decreasing the stress level.

The next step in optimizing the station for the future state, the equipment filling process should be optimized. Considering the pressure-time graphs and the collected data it has been identified that the process steps are currently controlled by an input in the process controller. The following improvements can be made on the equipment process:

- ***Shorten the initiating step to 2 seconds*** - The initiating step improvement is based in the pressure measurement and the time measurement of the nozzle gripper fastening on the expansion tank. Due to the equipment is idle waiting to execute evacuation 1 after the gripper has fastened on the expansion tank the time can be shortened to 2 seconds without risk of nozzle gripper failure.
- ***Shorten the waiting time from filling pressure achieved until pressure test starting from 5 seconds to 0 seconds.*** - According to R&D and Tooling this time could be changed without compromising the quality of the operation. A previous measurement gathering performed by R&D in the Volvo plant in Ghent, Belgium, confirms this possible improvement. The more optimized equipment in Ghent don't have a delay after reaching the target pressure, instead the pressure test is performed right away.
- ***Shorten leveling from 15 and 10 seconds to 5 seconds.*** - Observations of the leveling in VCT indicates that the targeted level is archived after 5 seconds. The pressure measurement also indicate that the pressure has reached 1 bar and is stable after 5 seconds. Onwards, the pressure is stable until the current ending after 10 seconds for

small systems and 15 seconds for large systems. The leveling step could be set to 5 seconds for all systems.

As a result of the suggested improvements, a pressure-time graph has been developed, see Figure 20.

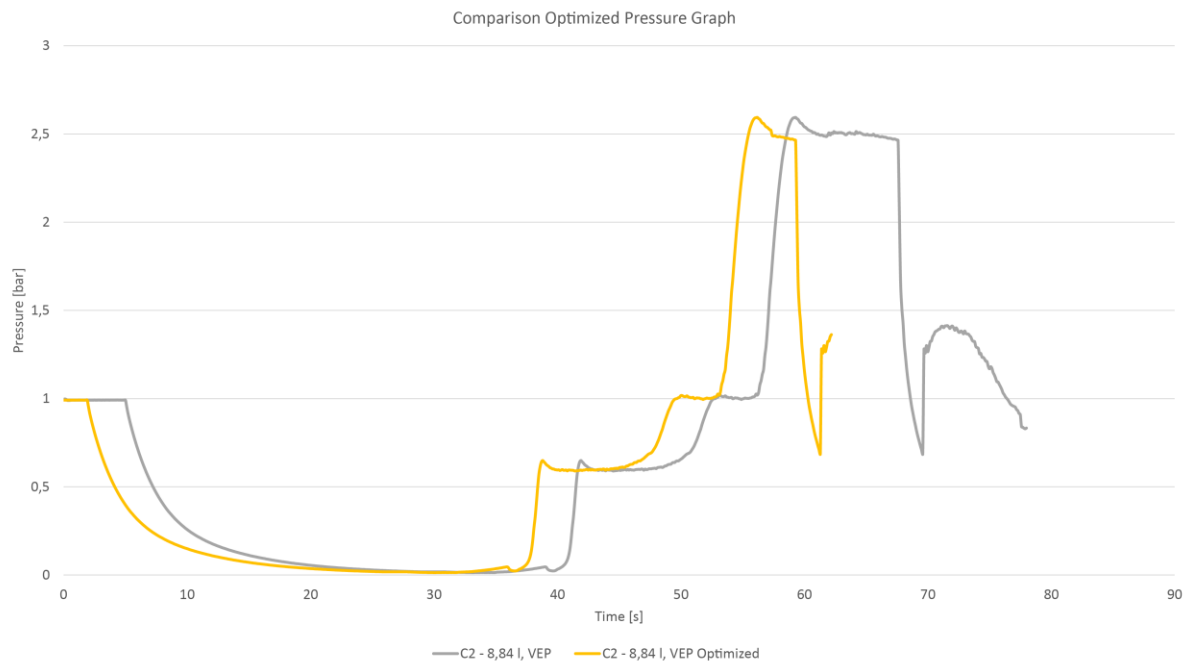


Figure 20 - Optimized pressure-time graph on the equipment filling process

As seen in Figure 20, by removing the waiting times the equipment filling process time is significantly shorter. From about 78 seconds to 62 seconds, a 16 seconds gain on small system. The target pressures in evacuation 1 and filling are still reached.

To be able to estimate a maximum filling volume some pre-calculations are needed. The maximum time for Evacuation 1 and Filling needs to be determined. In table 11 the maximum cycle time per equipment was calculated, by knowing the line speed of 0.103 m/s and equipment return speed of 0.667 m/s. Table 11 shows the result for both three equipment, as the current setup is, but also the result for four equipment. According to interviews with Tooling there is a possibility to invest in an additional equipment without rebuilding the whole line, which would increase the machinery capacity (Lödding and Rossi, 2013). Therefore, a calculation with four running equipment has been included. As have been mentioned earlier in Chapter 4.3, three equipment in this case are four equipment in total, where all four are used but the production can still pursue if one breaks down.

Table 11 - Maximum allowed cycle time and travel distance for three and four equipment

Number of equipments	3	4
Max cycle time/equipment [s]	174,6	232,8
Distance before returning [m]	15,6	20,8
Equipment forward [s]	151,2	201,7
Equipment return [s]	23,4	31,1



Knowing the maximum cycle time for one equipment and subtracting the total time used for all other activities, except Evacuation 1 and Filling, the maximum times for Evacuation 1 and Filling for three and four equipment was calculated, see table 12.

Table 12 - Evacuation 1 and Filling (total time for both process steps) calculation, Evacuation 1 and Filling = Max cycle time - sum of all other process steps

[s]	C1	C2	C3	C4	C1	C2	C3	C4
Number of equipments	3				4			
Car arrival	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Arm going down	8	6,7	6,7	6,7	8	6,7	6,7	6,7
Mount nozzle	2,4	2,2	3	3,6	2,4	2,2	3	3,6
Initiating	5,2	5,2	5,2	5,2	5,2	5,2	5,2	5,2
Evacuation 1								
Vacuum test	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Evacuation 2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Filling								
Pressure test	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Leveling	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Filling finished to dismount	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Return nozzle	3,4	3,3	3,7	3,7	3,4	3,3	3,7	3,7
Nozzle returned to arm going up	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7	0,7
Arm going up	8,2	6,9	6,9	6,9	8,2	6,9	6,9	6,9
Equipment return	23,4	23,4	23,4	23,4	31,1	31,1	31,1	31,1
Max cycle time	174,6	174,6	174,6	174,6	232,8	232,8	232,8	232,8
<b>Evacuation 1 and filling</b>	<b>107,3</b>	<b>110,2</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>108,4</b>	<b>157,8</b>	<b>160,7</b>	<b>159,5</b>	<b>158,9</b>

#### 4.10 Estimate filling volume

To estimate and determine process times for Evacuation 1 and Filling separately, linear prediction models were used. As seen in Appendix V the measurement data for each equipment has been analyzed with a linear approximation. The result from this models are 8 linear functions, one for each Evacuation 1 in each equipment and one for each Filling in each equipment. The equations estimate the volume for a given time. The function is as follow and the values for a, b are shown in Table 13.

$$Volume = a + b * Filling Time (1)$$

$$Volume = a + b * Evacuation 1 Time (2)$$

Table 13 - a and b for equation (1) and (2), for evacuation 1 and filling for each equipment

	a	b
C1 - evacuation 1	-9,099	0,939
C1 - filling	-2,985	0,424
C2 - evacuation 1	-8,035	0,763
C2 - filling	-1,753	0,332
C3 - evacuation 1	-9,828	0,898
C3 - filling	-1,813	0,330
C4 - evacuation 1	-11,112	0,938
C4 - filling	-2,018	0,349

Using the maximum cycle time calculations and the Evacuation 1 and Filling time (Table 12) together with the estimation functions in Table 13 a maximum filling volume was estimated for each equipment. Calculations were made on a scenario with three respectively four running equipment, see Table 14.

Table 14 - Estimated maximum volume calculation, based on equation (1) and (2) and the total evacuation 1 and filling time from Table 12

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C1	C2	C3	C4
Number of equipments	3				4			
Max cycle time [s]	174,6	174,6	174,6	174,6	232,8	232,8	232,8	232,8
Evacuation 1 and filling [s]	107,3	110,2	109,0	108,4	157,8	160,7	159,5	158,9
Filling [s]	69,4	71,0	73,2	72,0	104,2	106,2	110,1	108,8
Evacuation 1 [s]	37,9	39,2	35,8	36,4	53,6	54,5	49,4	50,1
<b>Estimated max volume [l]</b>	<b>26,4</b>	<b>21,8</b>	<b>22,3</b>	<b>23,1</b>	<b>41,2</b>	<b>33,5</b>	<b>34,5</b>	<b>35,9</b>

As seen in Table 14 C2 has the lowest maximum filling volume of 21,8 liter. Applying the theory of constraints (Cox and Schleier, 2010), it is concluded that C2 is the constraint at the coolant filling station. Since a system is not stronger than its weakest link, the coolant filling station should be planned upon capacity of C2.

The future state VSM, see Figure 21, is based on the capacity of C2, with a filling volume of 21,8 liter and the improvement suggestions where the waiting times have been eliminated.

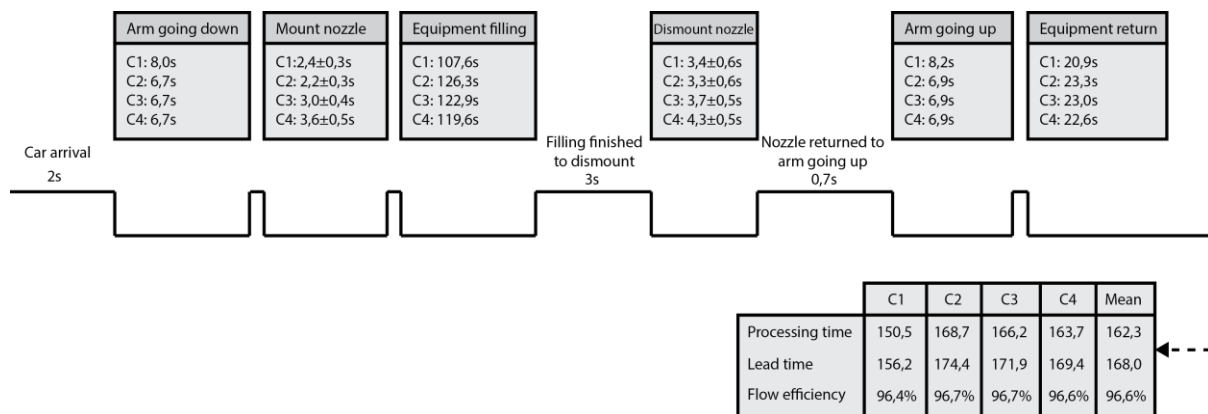


Figure 21 - VSM - Future state, based on 21,8 liter

When comparing the current and future state VSM, the main difference is shortened waiting times and increased flow efficiency. Process time and lead time differ less and as a result the flow efficiency is significantly higher in the future state. Due to the more efficient flow the return time for the equipment has been shortened.

To visualize the suggested improvements even further Figure 22 shows a comparison in overall process time for a small system, with the process without improvements on the left column and with improvements suggestions on the right column. This indicates that with the improvement suggestions the current small system could be processed on the station in about 100 seconds in comparison to around 180 seconds as it is today.

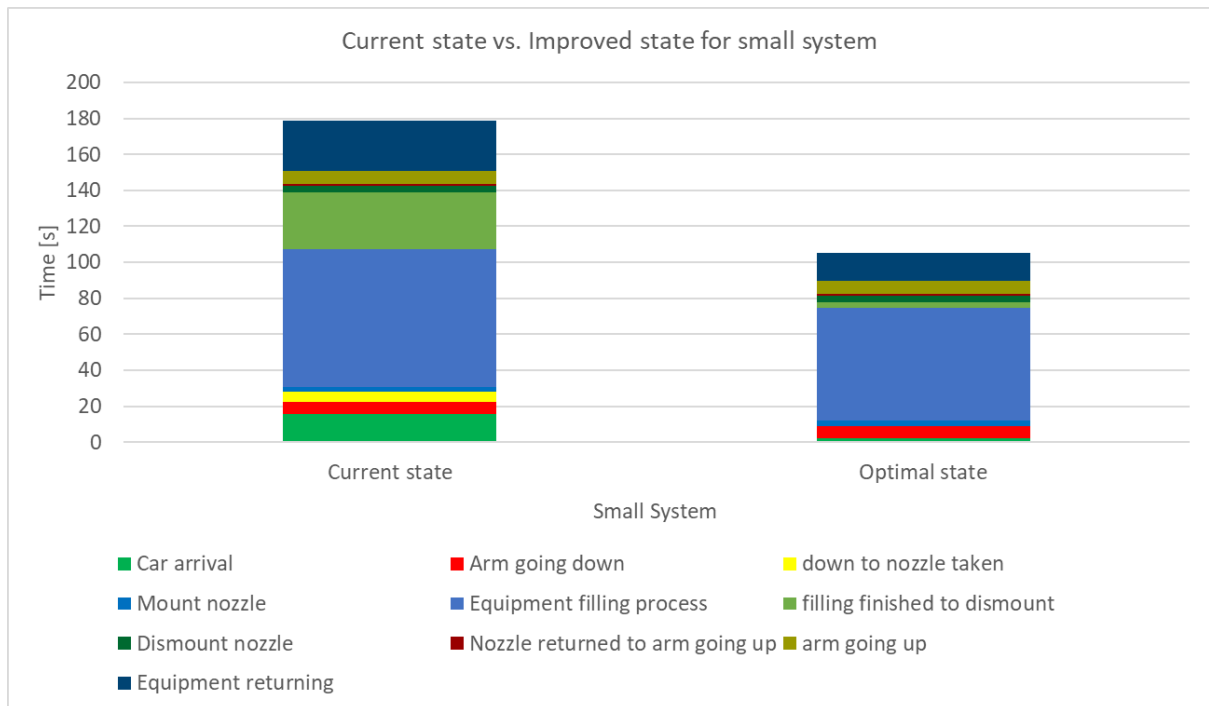


Figure 22 - Comparison process time for small system, without (left) and with (right) improvement suggestions

## 5 Discussion

*The background to why this study was executed was the knowledge of that the first fully electric cars will start being produced in the upcoming years. There has been a common knowledge that the cooling systems of these cars will be bigger, since a battery needs more cooling capacity than a diesel or petrol engine. This requires Volvo to adapt the production to fit for the larger cooling systems, and the questioning have been whether the existing station including its layout and machinery will be able to fill the future cooling volumes. This section contains discussions on the results and learnings from the study as well as how Volvo can benefit from this study and take the work even further.*

### 5.1 Discussions on the result

The study has been successful in terms of mapping the station and creating an understanding of how it works. Parameters have been identified that affect the output of the station, the volume to be filled.

The capability of a process is its ability to produce an outcome within set tolerances (Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010). The machinery capability of the coolant filling stations' equipment has been evaluated and the results indicate that variation occur between the different equipment. All the equipment are programmed with the same input parameters and the variation in performance might occur due to variation in quality. This variation has not been evaluated during this study. The different equipment has been purchased in different occasions, which could mean that the variation occur due to that the supplier has delivered equipment with quality differences. Another potential cause could be that rework or maintenance has been performed by Volvo, which has caused differences in components within the different equipment. This is suggested to be further evaluated, perhaps by involving the supplier.

When analyzing the current state VSM, it was identified that waiting times from the operators had the largest impact on the equipment lead times. To be able to eliminate the wastes, as suggested, by using visual management as an aid for the operators to get a better picture of the process further changes are required. The operators perform assembling activities at the station, but since the scope of the study was to map the coolant filling this was a delimitation and have not been considered. To decrease the lead times, rebalancing will be needed which prioritize the filling process and its process steps. The assembling work tasks will be needed to be fitted thereafter and might need to be moved to other production stations as well.

In addition to that visual management will serve as an aid that will lead to decreased lead times, a dimension of social sustainability could also be improved by implementing it. Since it gives the operators a better view of the process, the visual management can also serve as an aid to decrease the stress level at the coolant filling station. By knowing for how long the process has left until the operator needs to be at a certain place, the operator will be able to plan his surrounding work tasks without having to be observant on whether the filling process is done or not. So, visual management could both increase the capacity of the coolant filling station as well as the well-being among the operators regarding their stress-levels.

Estimated maximum filling volumes has been calculated for each equipment based on the data collected and measurements that has been performed. The calculations were made by linear regression modeling due to the data set collected, which calculates a linear relationship between volume and time. Since the data contains two sizes of cooling systems, named small and large systems in this study, a linear regression was preferred. Though, the data indicates that the filling time is exponential towards the volume which means that filling a larger system would be faster in terms of liters per second. The estimated volumes are therefore regarded to be a bit lower than what might turn out to be the real result after implementing the suggested improvements.

What was discovered during this project was that there are similar liquid filling stations in Volvo Cars plants that have been improved in certain ways. The brake-fluid filling station in VCT has equipment that is working similar to the coolant filling station. Here, the station is equipped with visual management and some operations performed have been automated to decrease the work tasks done by the operators. Another example, at the Volvo plant in Ghent, Belgium, the coolant filling station has three equipment, in contrast to four at VCT, and are still able to perform the operations with the same takt. According to interviews, this was because of constraints that did not allow Ghent to have four equipment and they were thereby forced to optimize the current equipment. These two examples indicate that it might exist in-house knowledges that can be applicable somewhere else within the organization.

One of the improvements includes investing in a new equipment, this means that five equipment in total are used on the station. This option might be initially costly due to rebuild of the line and purchase of an equipment. Another issue that might occur if investing in a fifth equipment is the length of the line. If Volvo decides to invest in a new equipment one thing to consider is that four equipment can be used at the same time without the need to extend the lines length.

What has occurred to be a problem during our investigation is to get the estimated values for the filling volumes on the first car models entirely powered by electricity. It seems to be an uncertainty within the organization which origins in the development departments where different numbers have occurred on different occasions. For a ME-unit that want to base decisions on facts, the communication with development departments are of high importance. If the facts are uncertain the result of a production preparation can also be uncertain. According to Lean philosophy it is important to understand the process to be able to improve it (Liker and Hoseus, 2008). As seen during this study there might be lack of overall knowledge about the process, because of the departments are focused on their specific tasks. A possible way for different departments to obtain a better knowledge about the station is to continuously share knowledge about changes and improvements. One example, Tooling might be able inform ME about technical advancements in visual management systems for equipment, which could emphasize the design of work instructions. Another example, R&D and Tooling might be able to communicate on how advancements in equipment technology might impact the design of the vehicles.

## 5.2 Study methodology and future studies

Volvo has a history of producing cars and are used to continuously initiate new car projects. However, Volvo will be facing a great challenge and technological changes within production when the new electric car models start being produced. The power train is different from what has been experienced since the start of the company. The production lines will need to adapt and many stations, in addition to the coolant filling station, will face new technical requirement and work tasks. Learning points from this study is that knowing what to prepare for and knowing how operations are performing today facilitates a transform into a technological shift.

The six-sigma and DMAIC approach that has been followed in this project has been successful. The DMAIC approach has encouraged to use structured methods and tools to break down an initially broad problem description into smaller manageable areas. The method has encouraged to ask “why” and by iterating finding the root cause to smaller problems. The downside of using DMAIC and six-sigma is to know when to stop iterating and breaking down the problems into smaller areas. In this study, it could have been possible to go even deeper into the technicality about the equipment and investigate components within the equipment for example.

Volvo could face the same kind of challenges at other production plants worldwide where the electric cars will be produced. The same methodology used in this study, could be used to investigate and analyze the stations within other Volvo plants. Starting off by defining and mapping the station in detail to understand what input and output parameters that affect the station. Collecting quantitative data from the process monitor and pressure measurements. The two quantitative data sets provide future studies with data suitable for identifying possible improvement areas on both station and equipment level, resulting in a potential maximum filling volume.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim with this study was to map and see how the current state of the coolant filling station at VCT would fit into a predicted increase of coolant systems in the upcoming car models. The capacity and the operations have been well fitted for the today's takt of production and has not required any radical improvement efforts. To answer the research questions the coolant filling process and its surrounding organization has been examined and will be answered in this section.

Two critical parameters have been identified that affect the capacity of the coolant filling station and which has a potential to be improved.

- The first parameter is wastes within the process in terms of waiting times by the operators. To decrease these waiting times our recommendation is to start using visual management to a greater extent where the operator can see when it is time to perform the next operation and thereby improve the overall efficiency of the process.
- The second parameter in the coolant filling station is the actual filling process. The filling process was examined, and it turned out to be sub optimized. Improvement actions would make the filling more effective, resulting in a capacity of filling more volume in a shorter amount of time.

Collaboration between R&D, ME and Tooling to support future transformation

- The future technical requirements need to be communicated to all involved departments in a more structured way. R&D needs to in an early stage involve Tooling, to ensure that the vehicle designs are as smoothly as possible to implement in the factory.
- ME and Tooling needs to have a common understanding about the bottlenecks in each station and together with production technicians balance the stations around the bottlenecks to ensure as little waste as possible.
- ME and Tooling should consider using visual management on equipment with critical lead times to ensure that the work standard is followed.
- Future improvement projects should investigate and share lessons-learned within the company globally. For example, the improved coolant filling station in Ghent, the knowledge should be shared among all Volvo plants.

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## **Appendix I – Interview questions**

**Statement to interviewees:** We are investigating the coolant filling station and the changes that might occur when transitioning from ICE's to EV's.

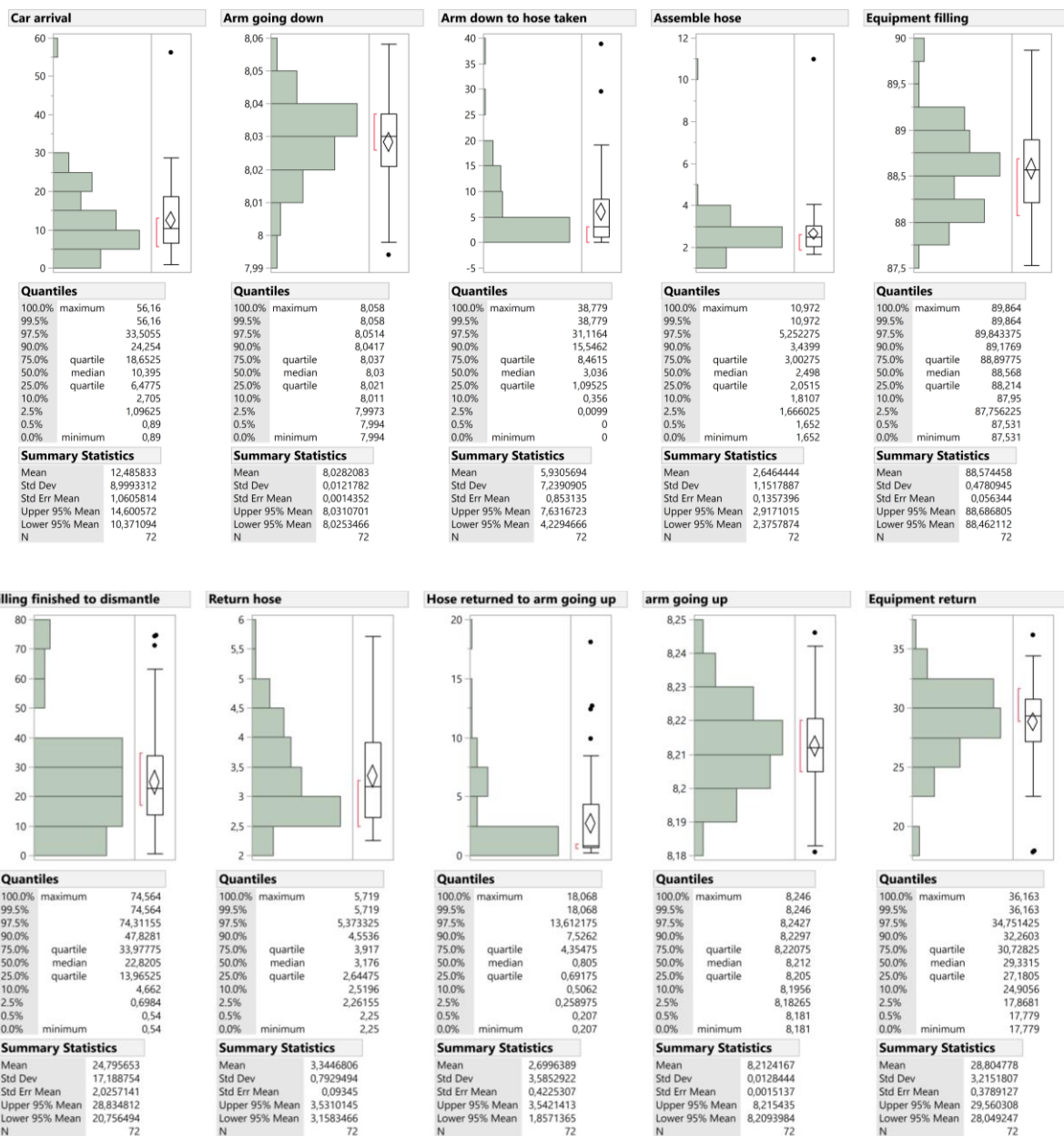
- Regarding the statement, what would your desired result from that study be? What do you want to be reported?
- Do you have any specific details about the topic that you would like to know more about?
- If the station is rebuilt/changed, who are involved, and are you involved?
- What are your biggest challenges in a transformation from ICE's to EV's?

## Appendix II – Process controller inputs

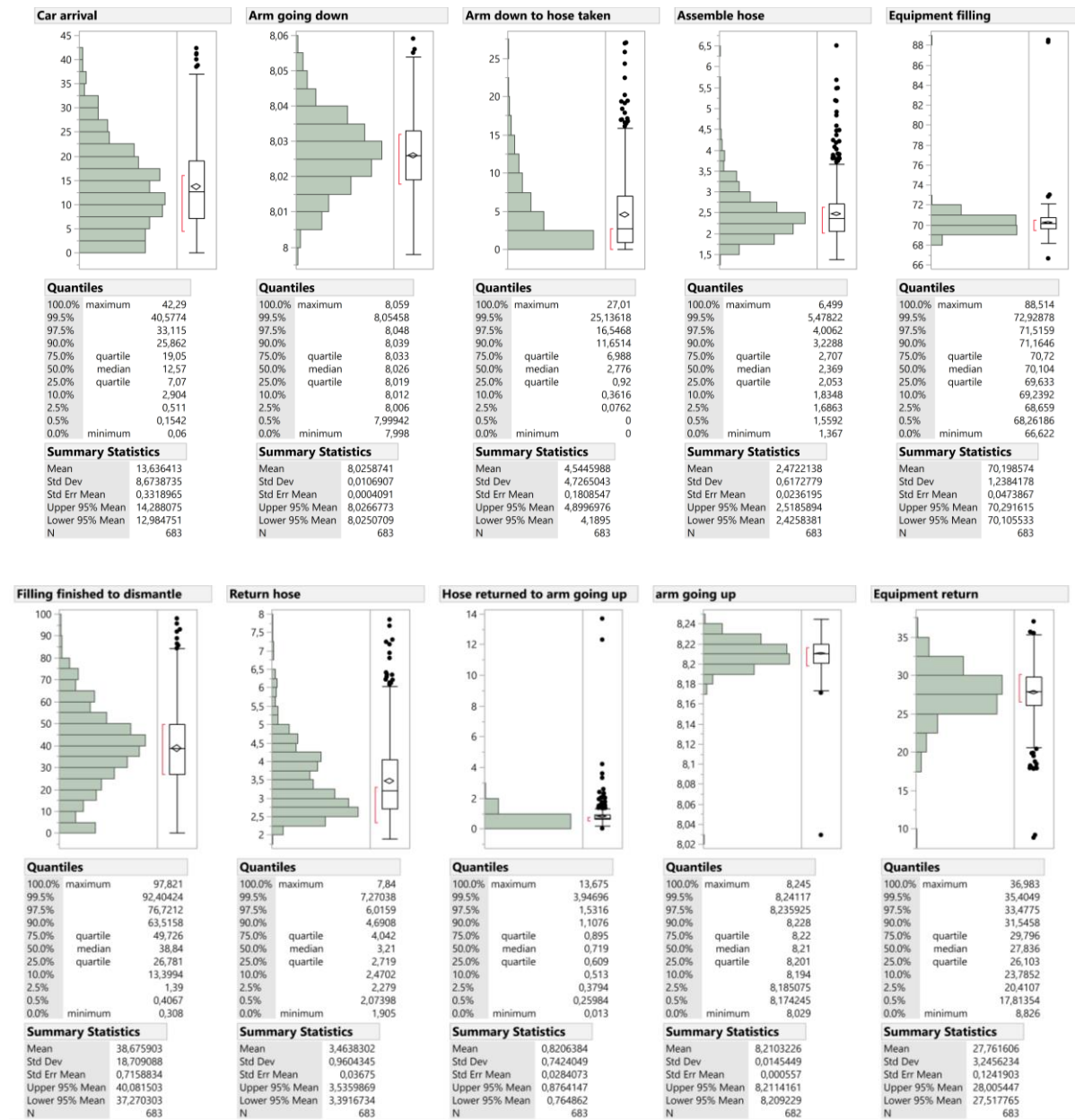
	C1	C2	C3	C4	
<b>Pressure test setting motor</b>					
Step30, air inlet level (Pset3)	1,5	1,4	1,5	1,4	bar
PF30A_T, already filled	2	2	2	2	s
PF30B_t, major pressure leak	60	60	60	60	s
Step30_t, Delay on PSet3 and dPset1	15	15	15	15	s
Step31, Air pressure test level (PSet2)	1	1	1	1	bar
Step31, Air press. Diff level (dPSet1)	3	3	3	3	mbar
Step31_T, pressure test time	5	5	5	5	s
PF31_T, Delay on dPSet1	5	5	5	5	s
<b>Evacuation Setting Motor</b>					
Step40,42, Evacuation level (PSet1)	40	40	40	40	mbar
Step40_T, Delay on PSet1	5	5	5	5	s
PF40A, Major vacuum leak level (PSet3)	70	70	70	70	mbar
PF40A_T, Major vacuum leak time	40	30	30	30	s
PF40B_T, Minor vacuum leak time	90	95	90	95	s
PF41, Vacuum test level (Pset2)	60	60	60	60	mbar
Step41_T, vacuum test time	2	2	2	2	s
Step42, delay on PSet1	2	2	2	2	s
PF42_T, Minor vacuum leak time	15	15	15	15	s
<b>Filling settings motor</b>					
Step52, fill pressure level (PSet3)	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	bar
Step52, flow level FSet1	5	5	5	5	p/s
Step52_T delay on PSet3 and FSet1	5	5	5	5	s
PF52A_T time out filling	99	99	99	99	s
PF52B, min filling volume	8	8	8	8	l
PF52B, max filling volume	15	15	15	15	l
PF53, Fill pressure test level (PSet2)	1	1	1	1	bar
Step53_T, Fill pressure test time	2	2	2	2	s
Step54_T, leveling time	15	10	15	10	s
Step54, leveling level (PSet1)	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,6	bar

# Appendix III – Boxplots for overall process

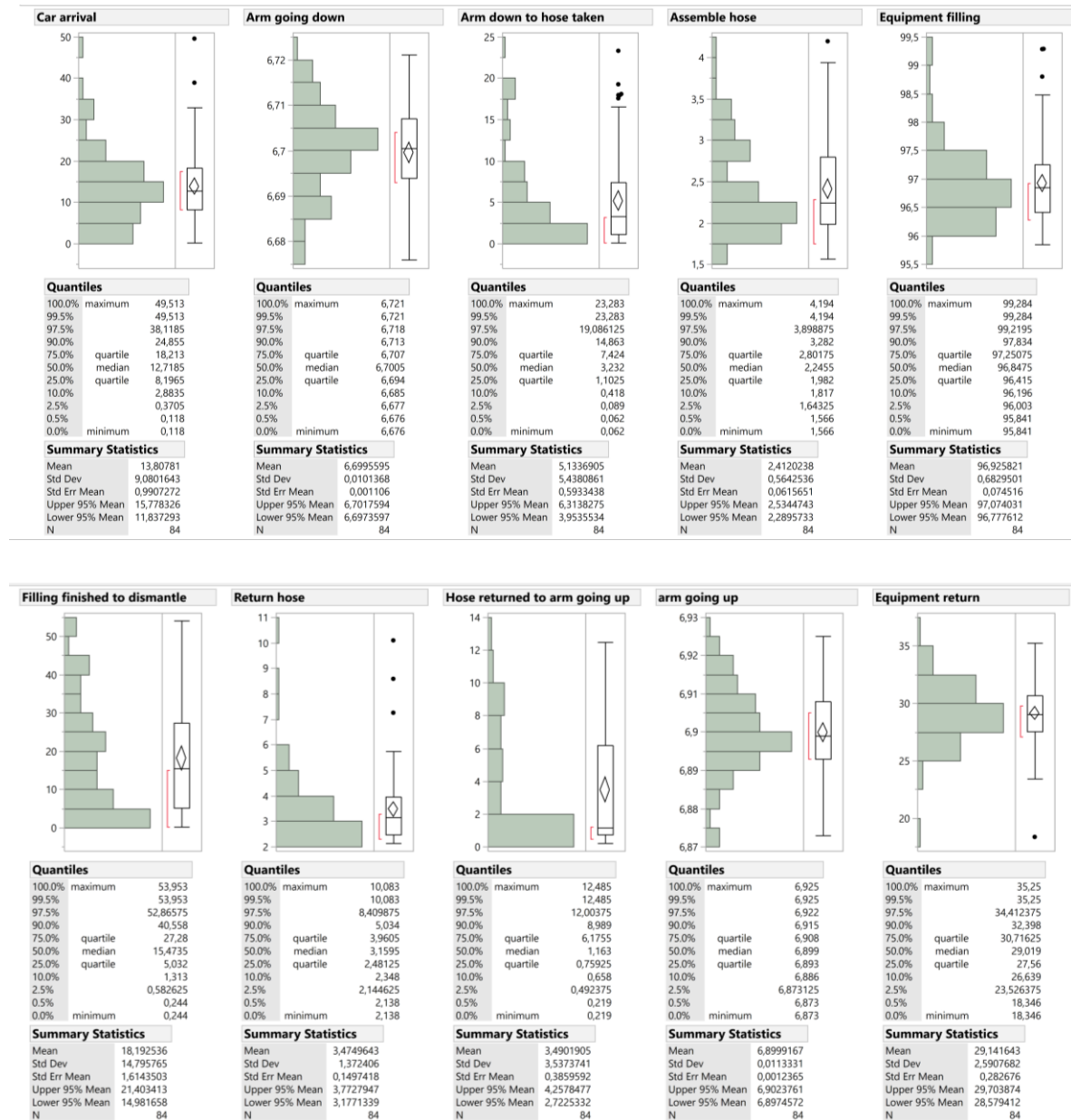
## C1 – Large system



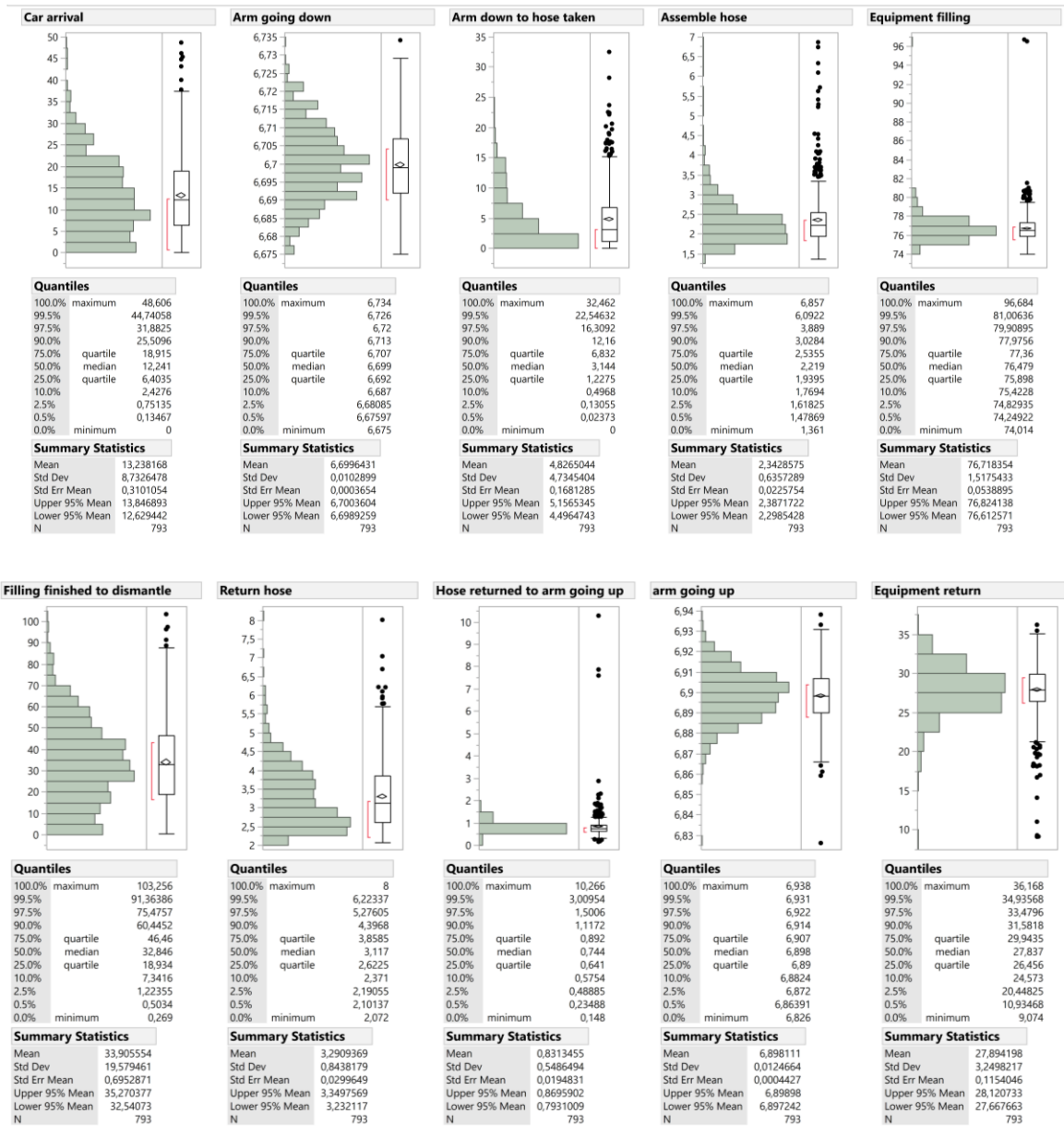
## C1 – Small system



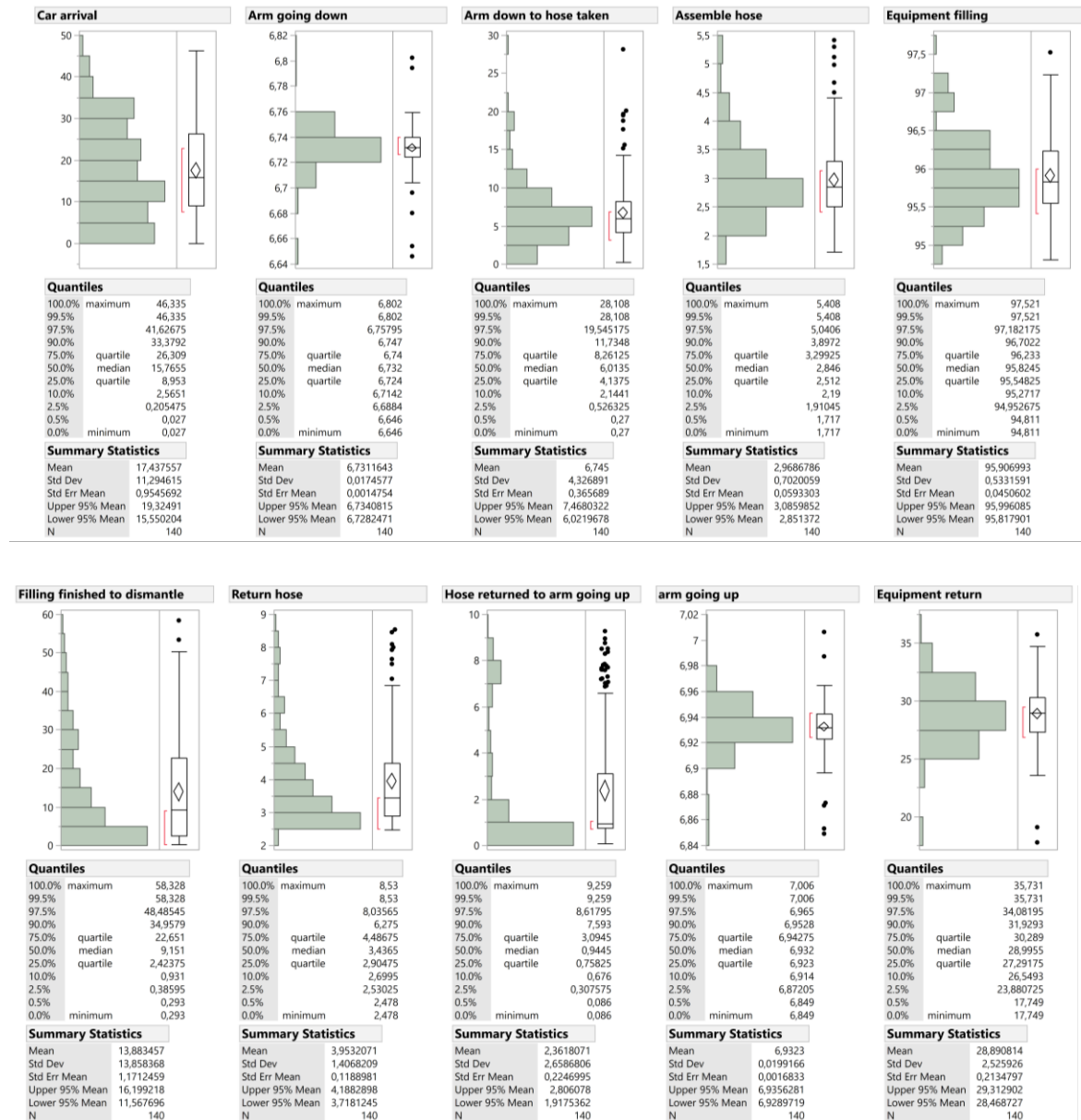
## C2 – Large system



## C2 – Small system

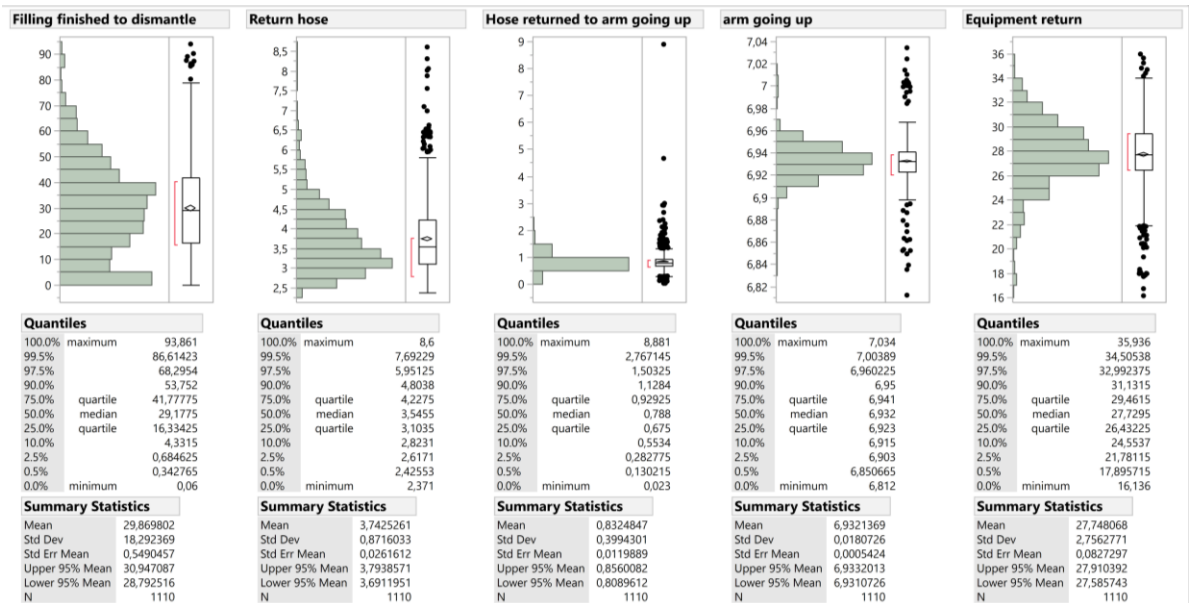
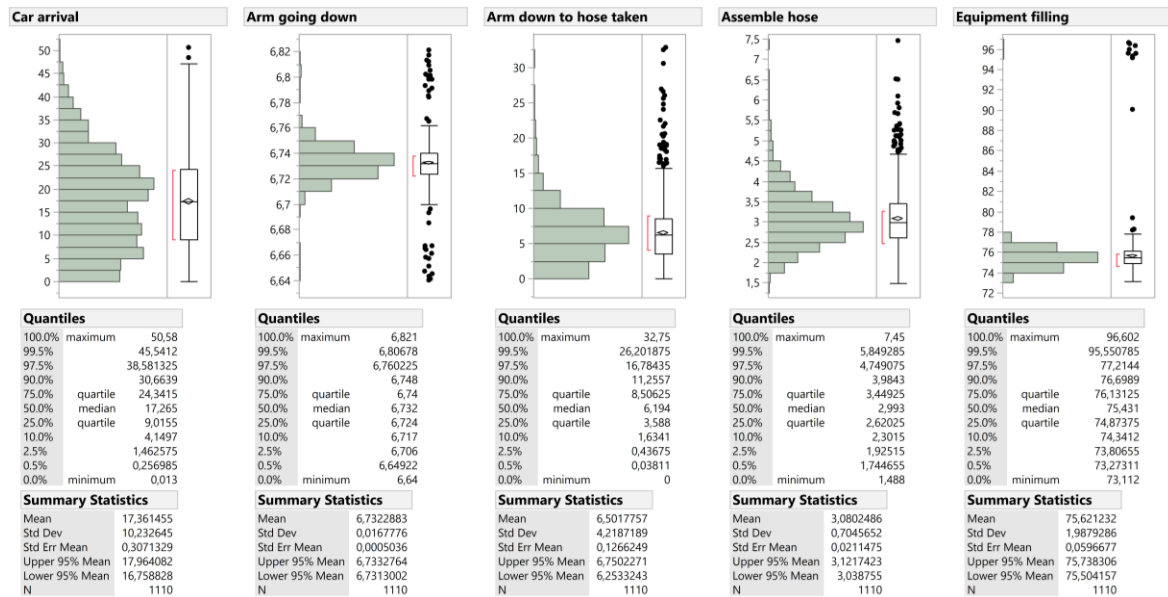


## C3 – Large system

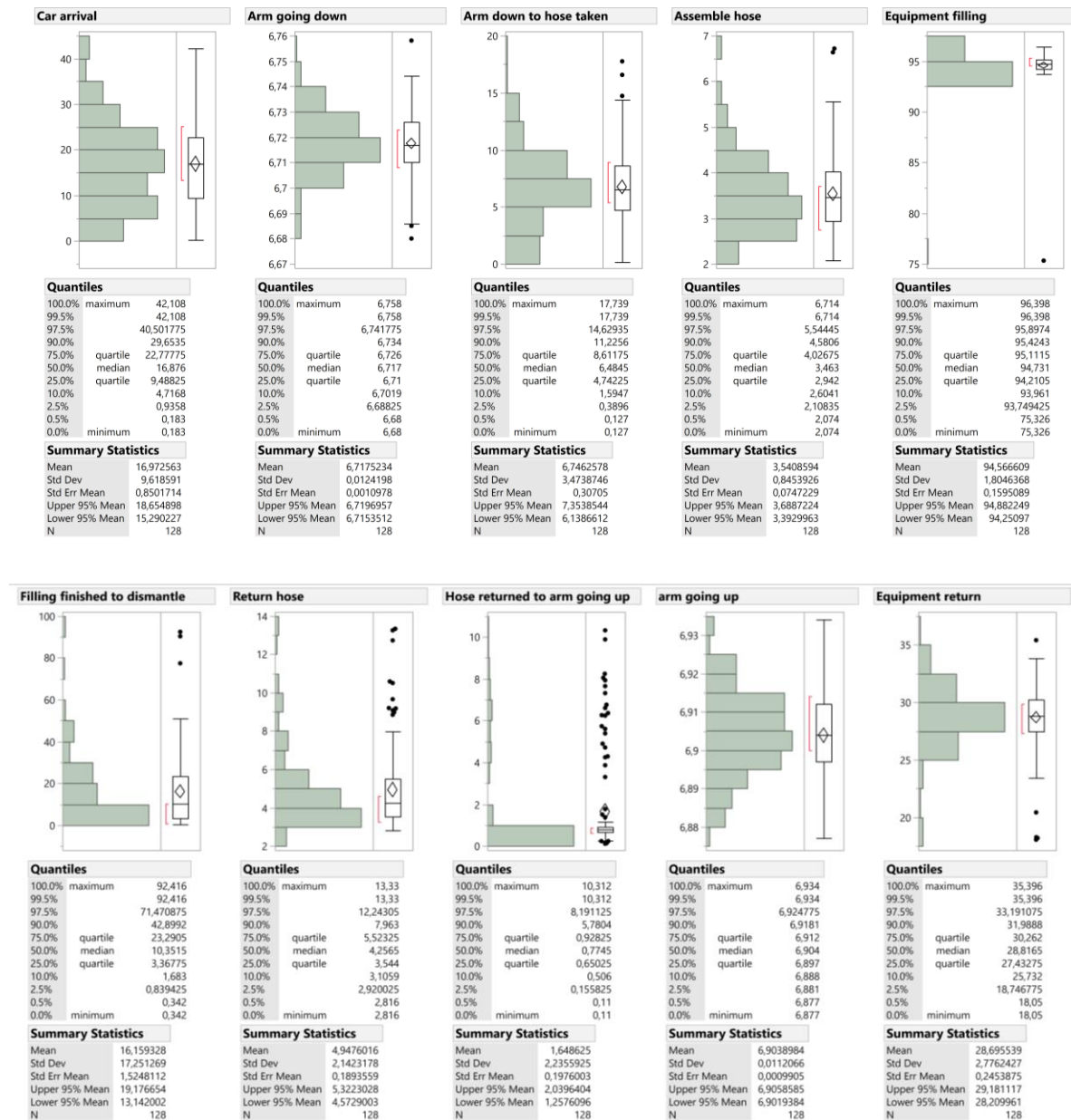




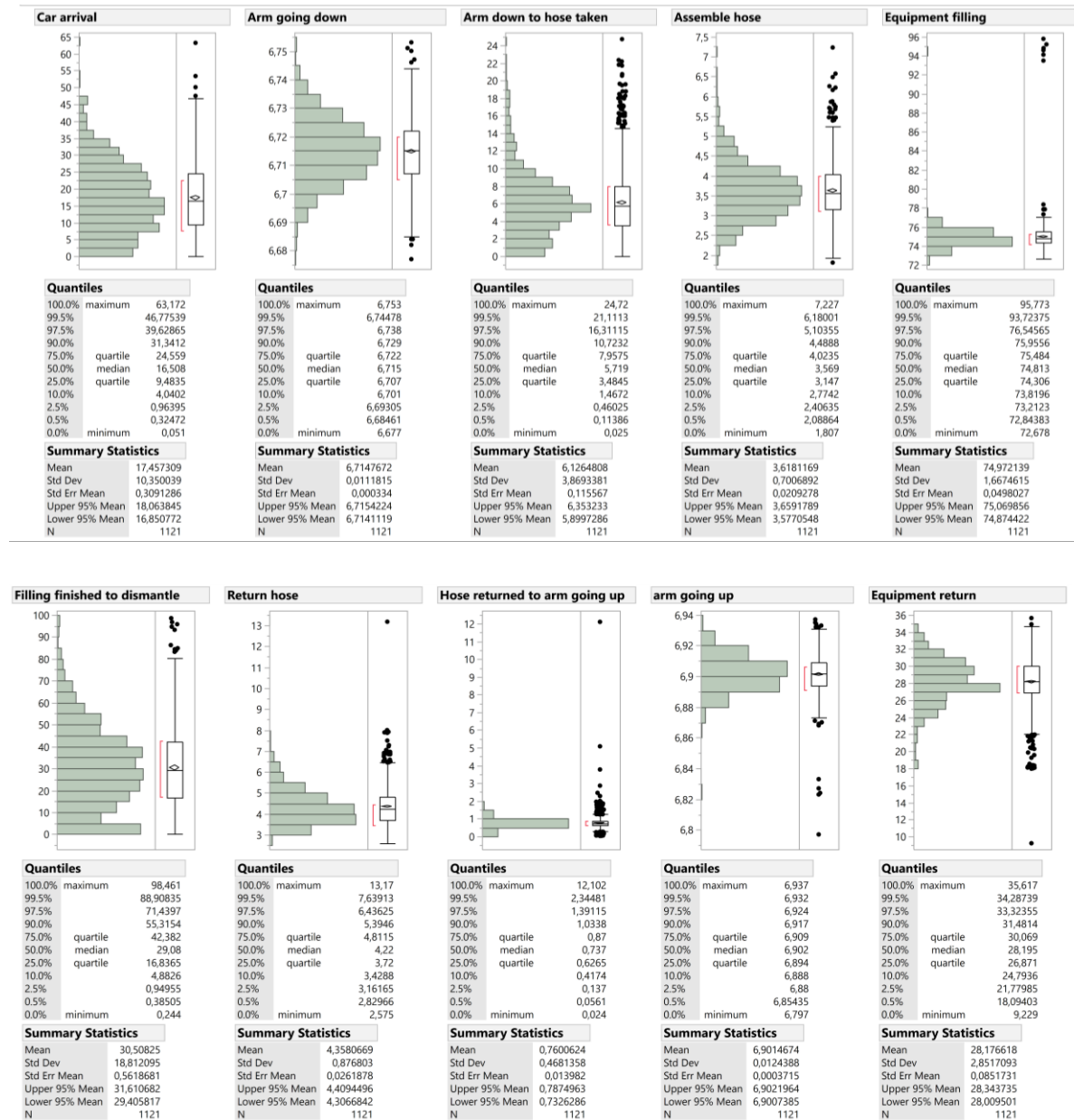
## C3 – Small system



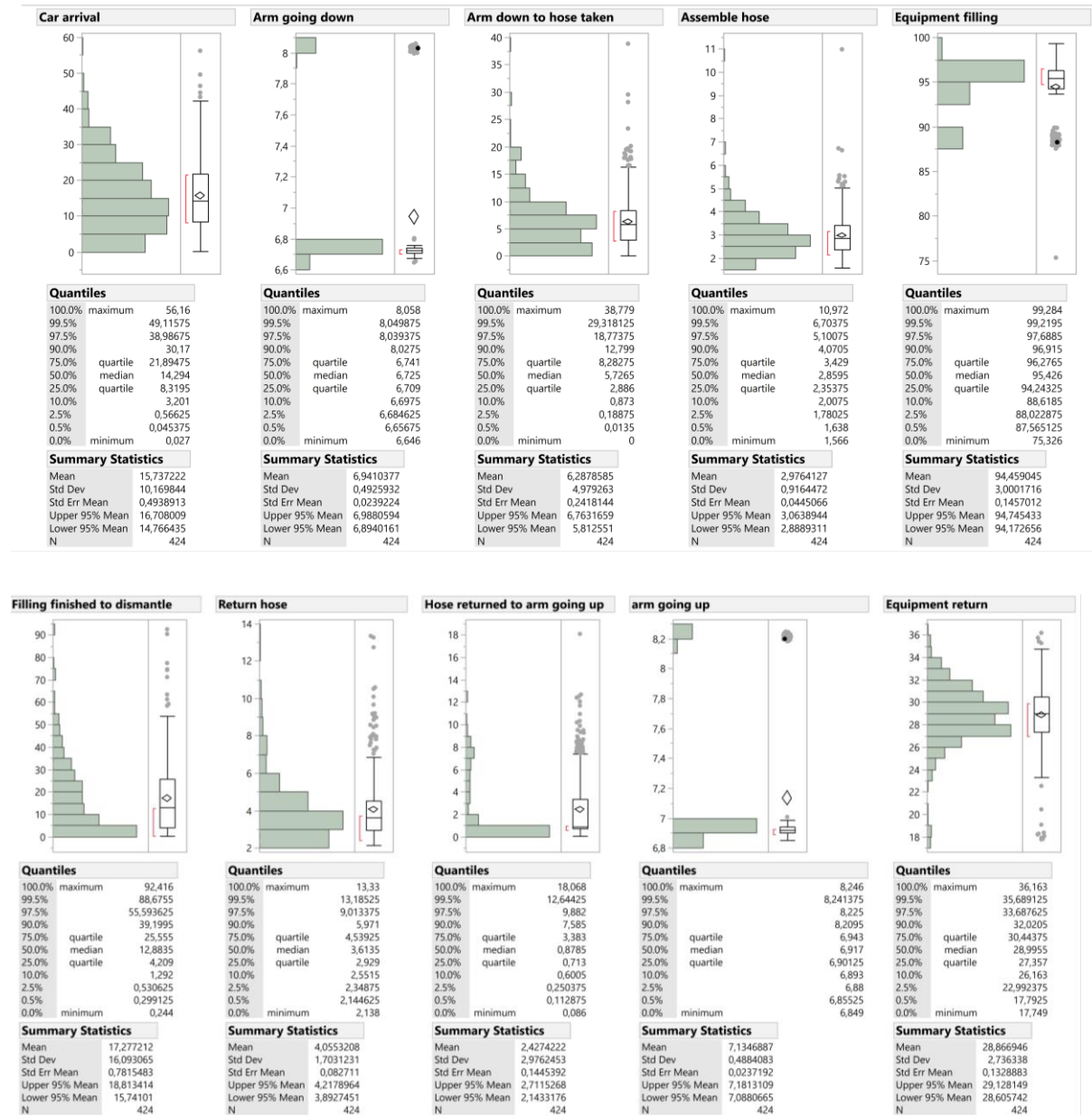
## C4 – Large system



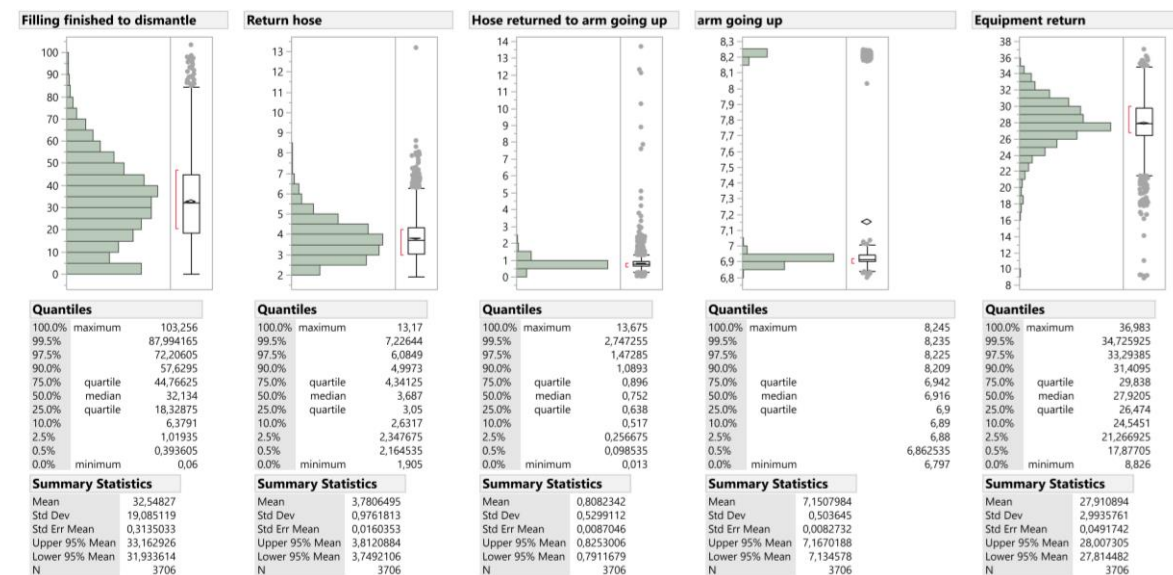
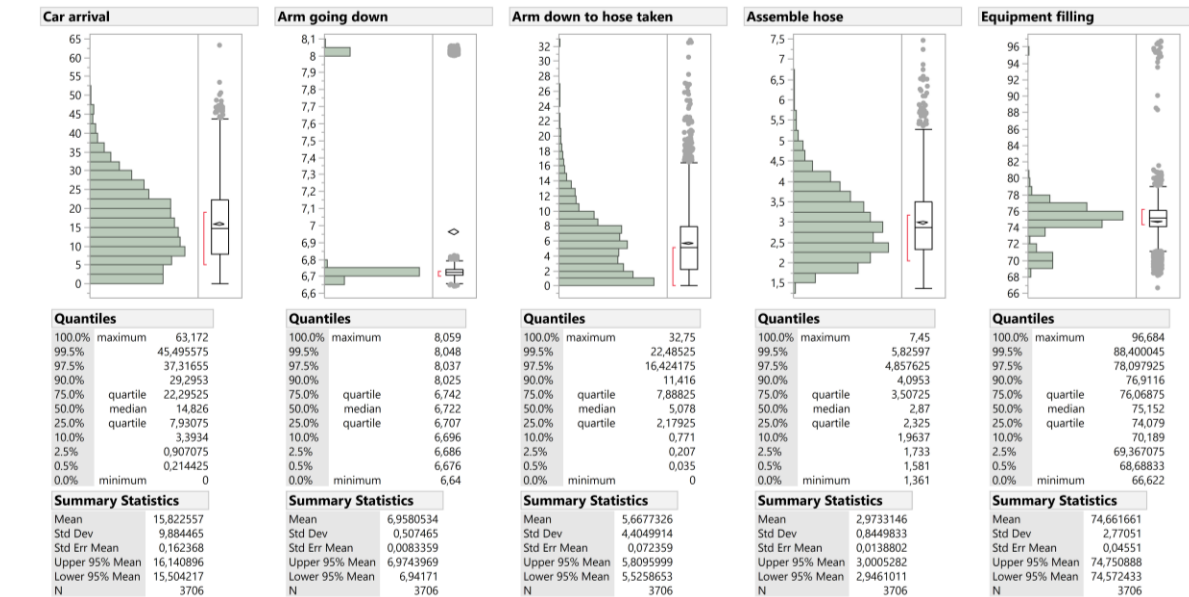
## C4 – Small system



## Total (C1-C4) – Large system

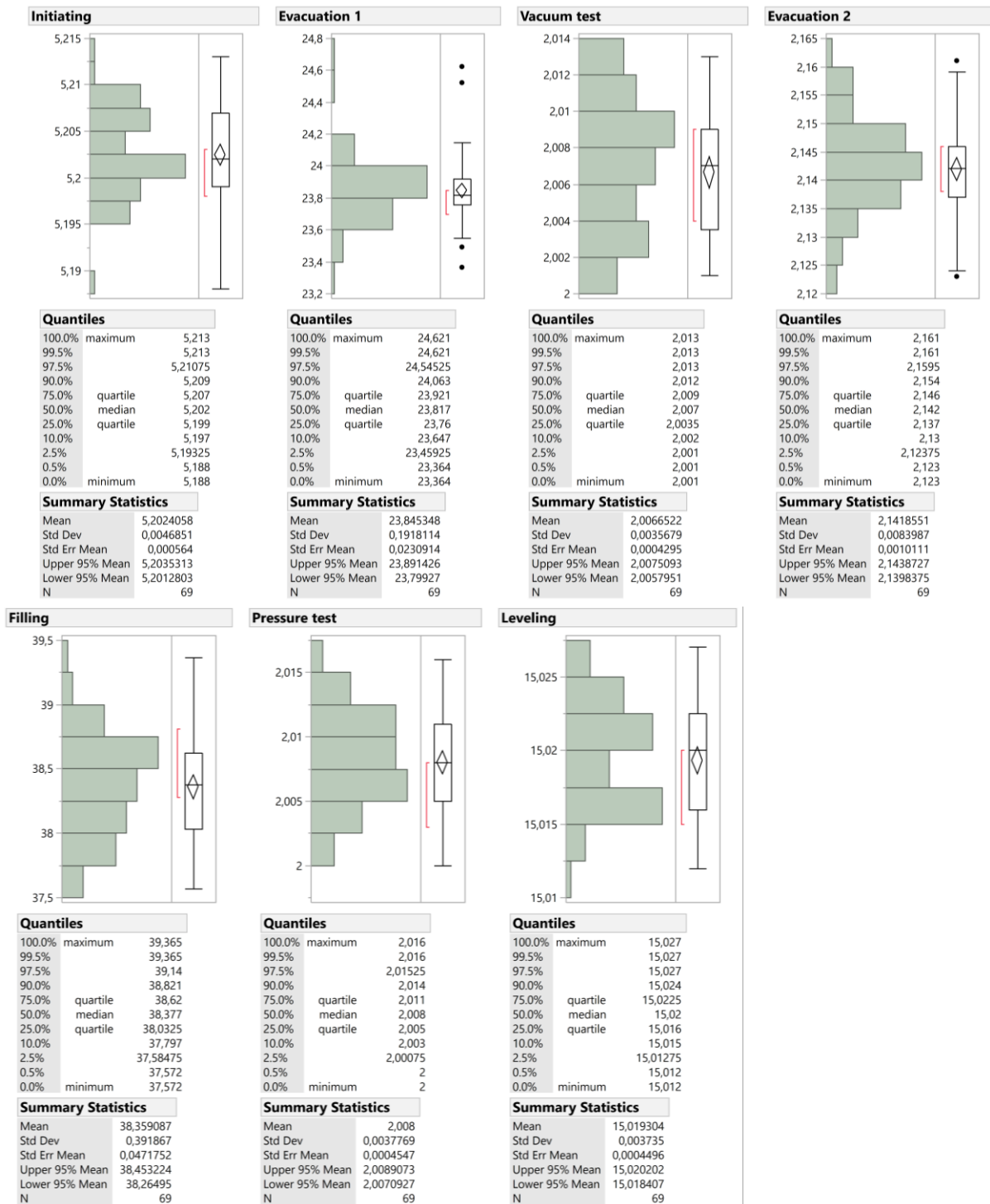


## Total (C1-C4) – Small system



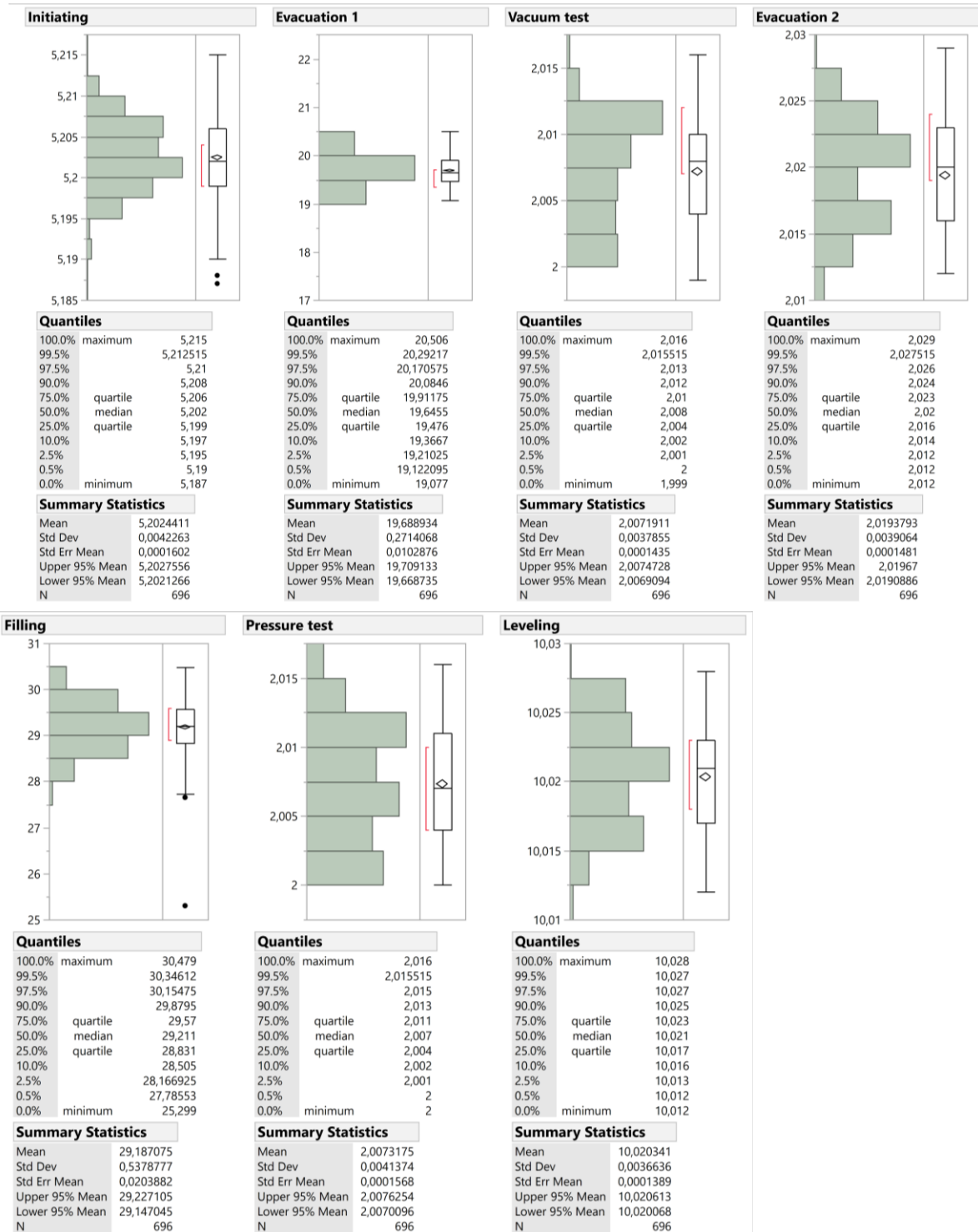
# Appendix IV – Boxplots for equipment filling process

## C1 – Large system

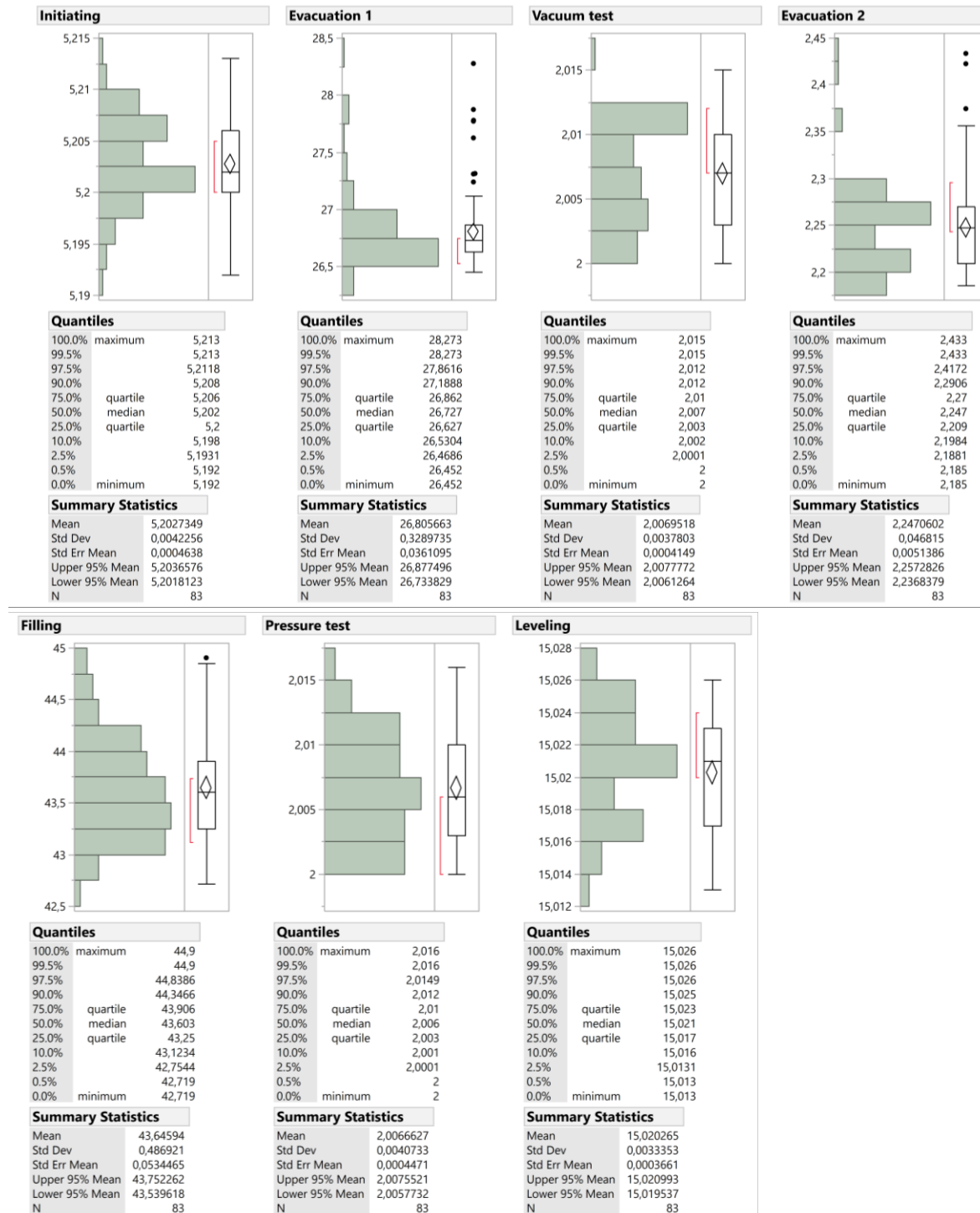




## C1 – Small system

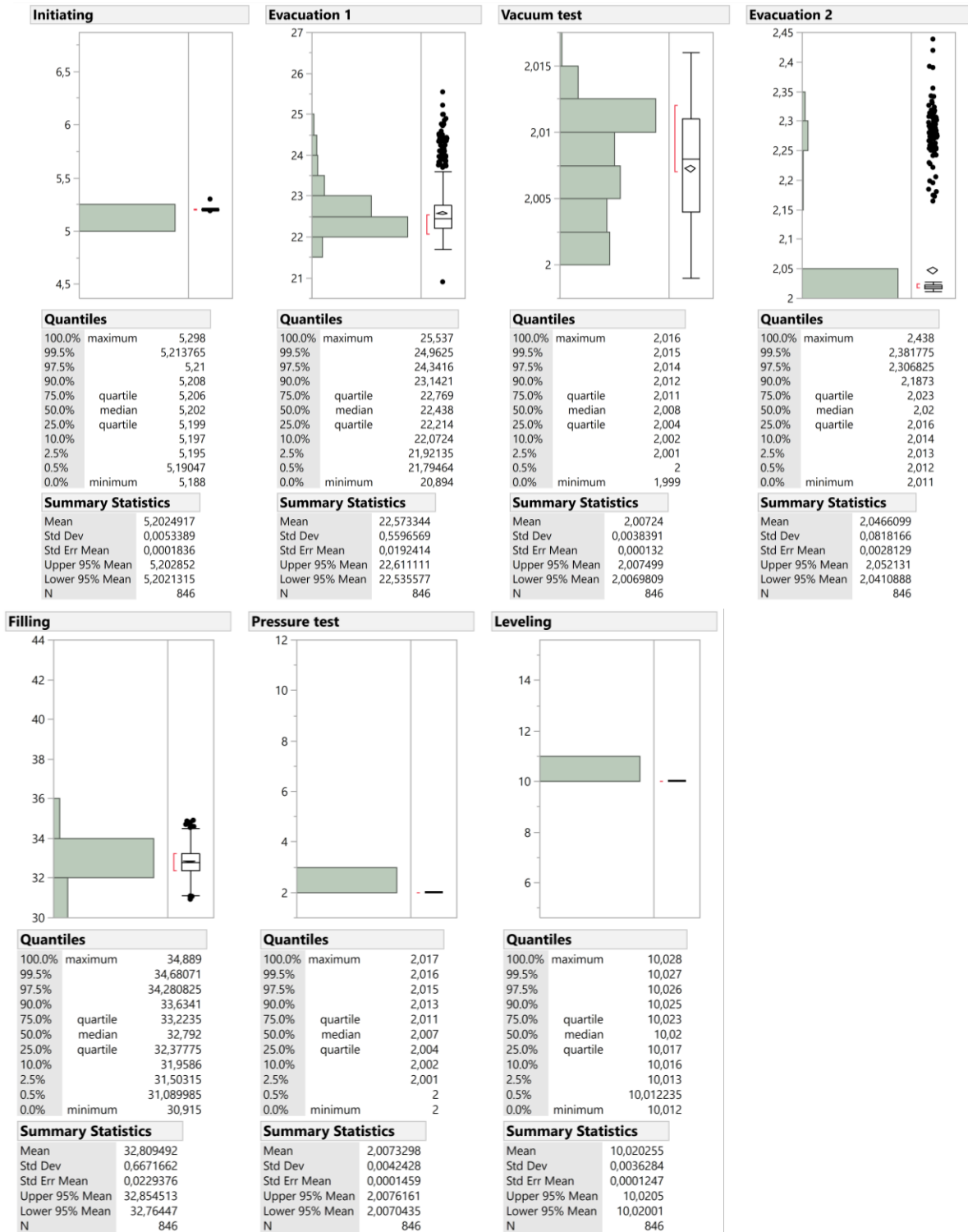


## C2 – Large system

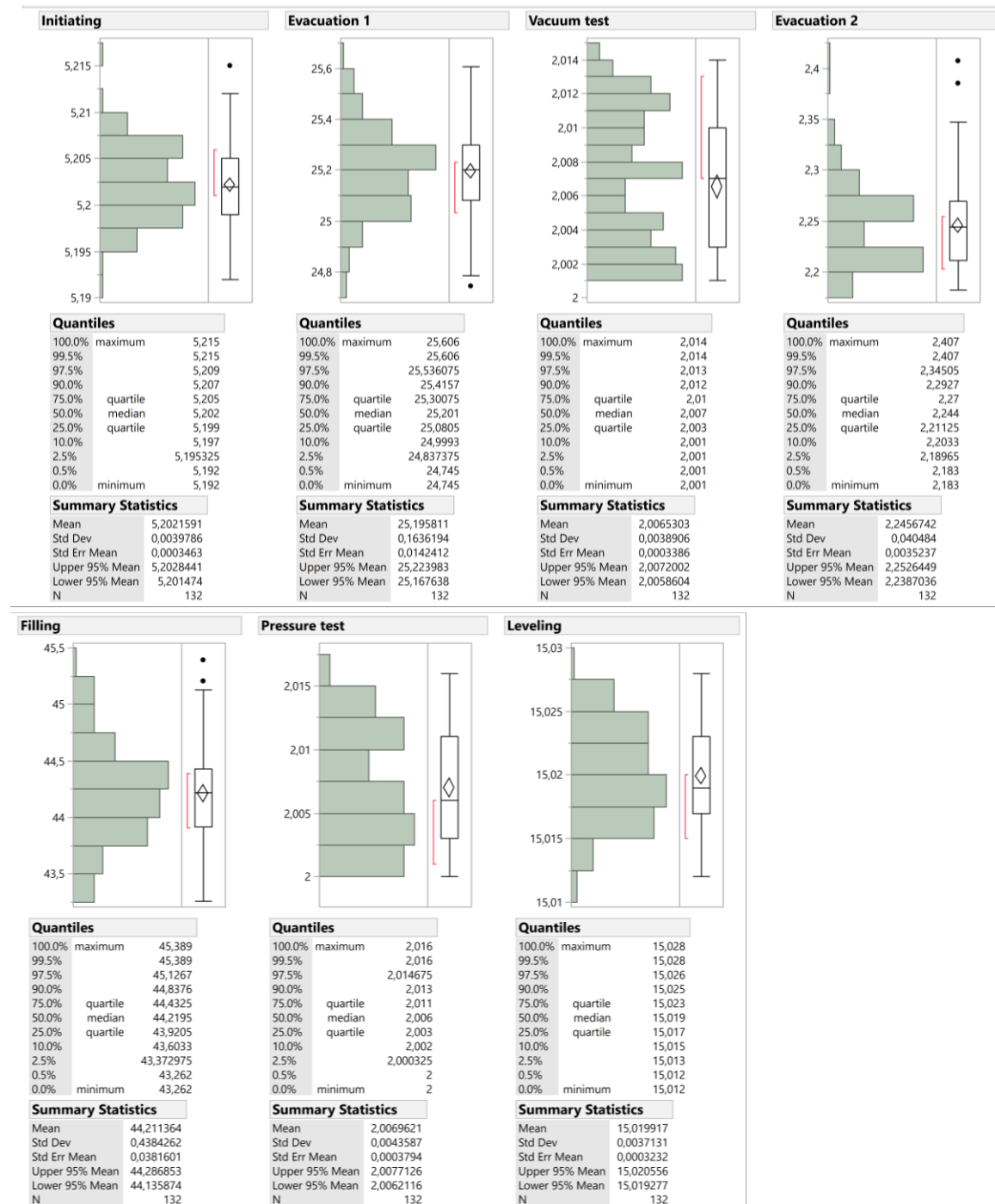




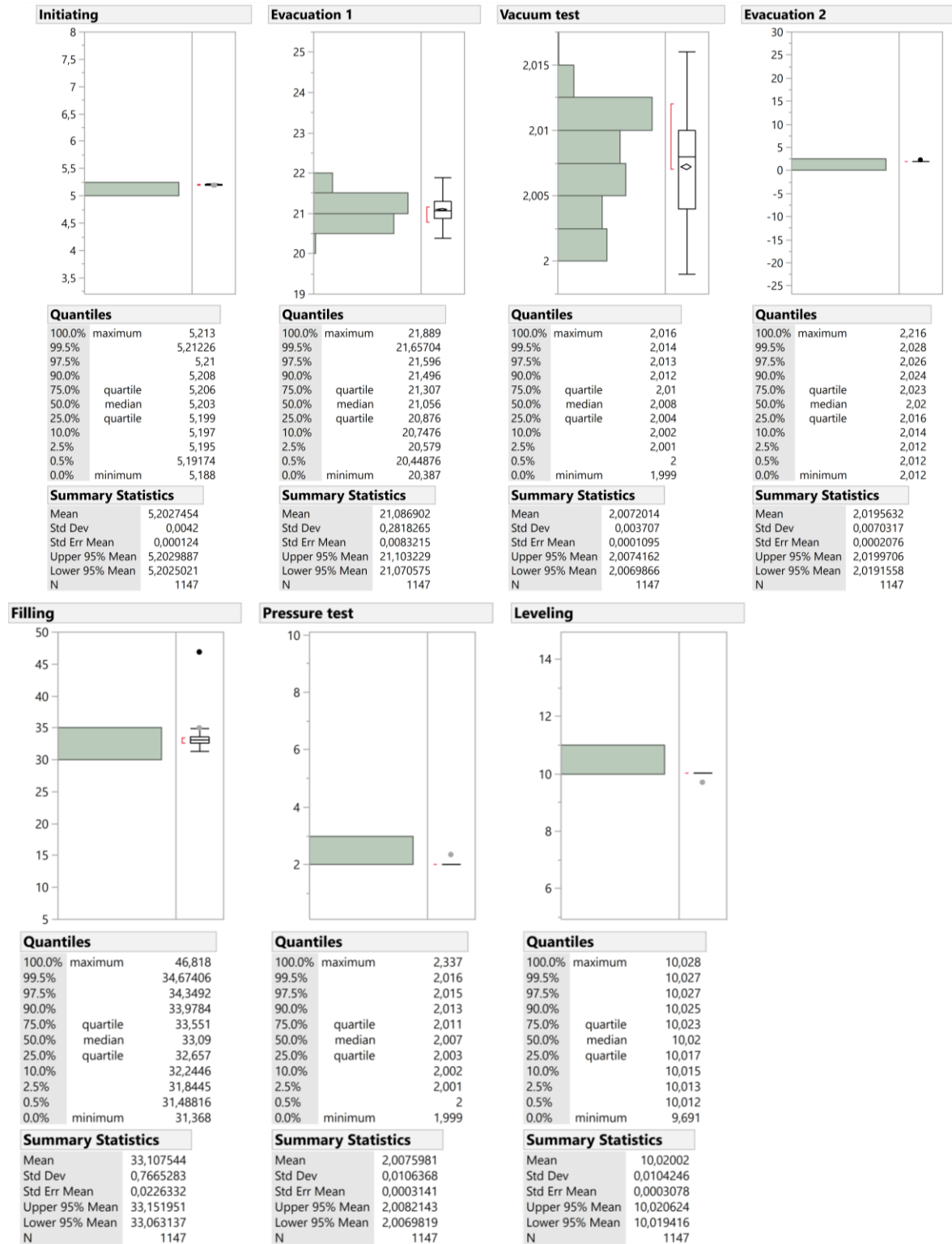
## C2 – Small system



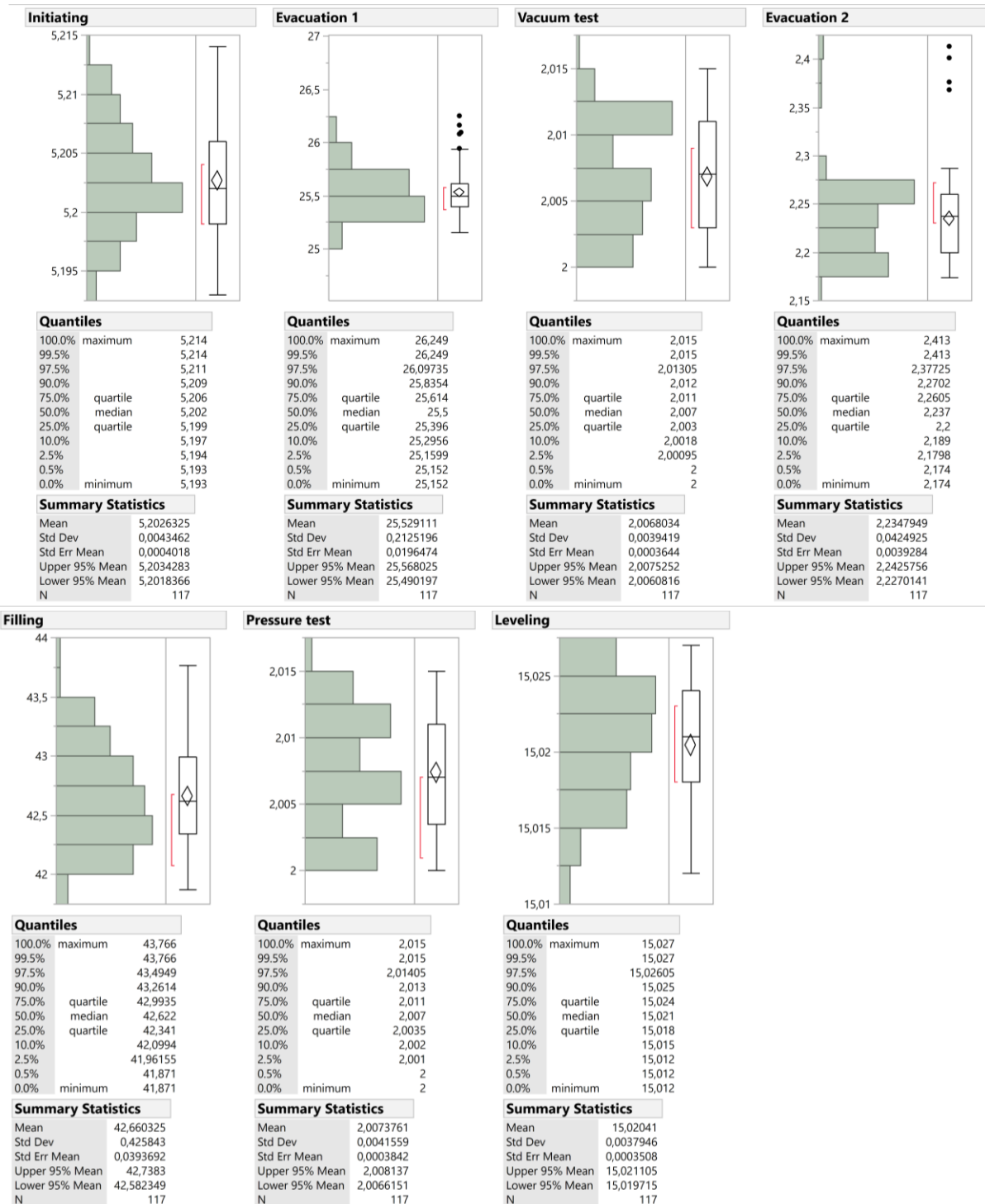
## C3 – Large system



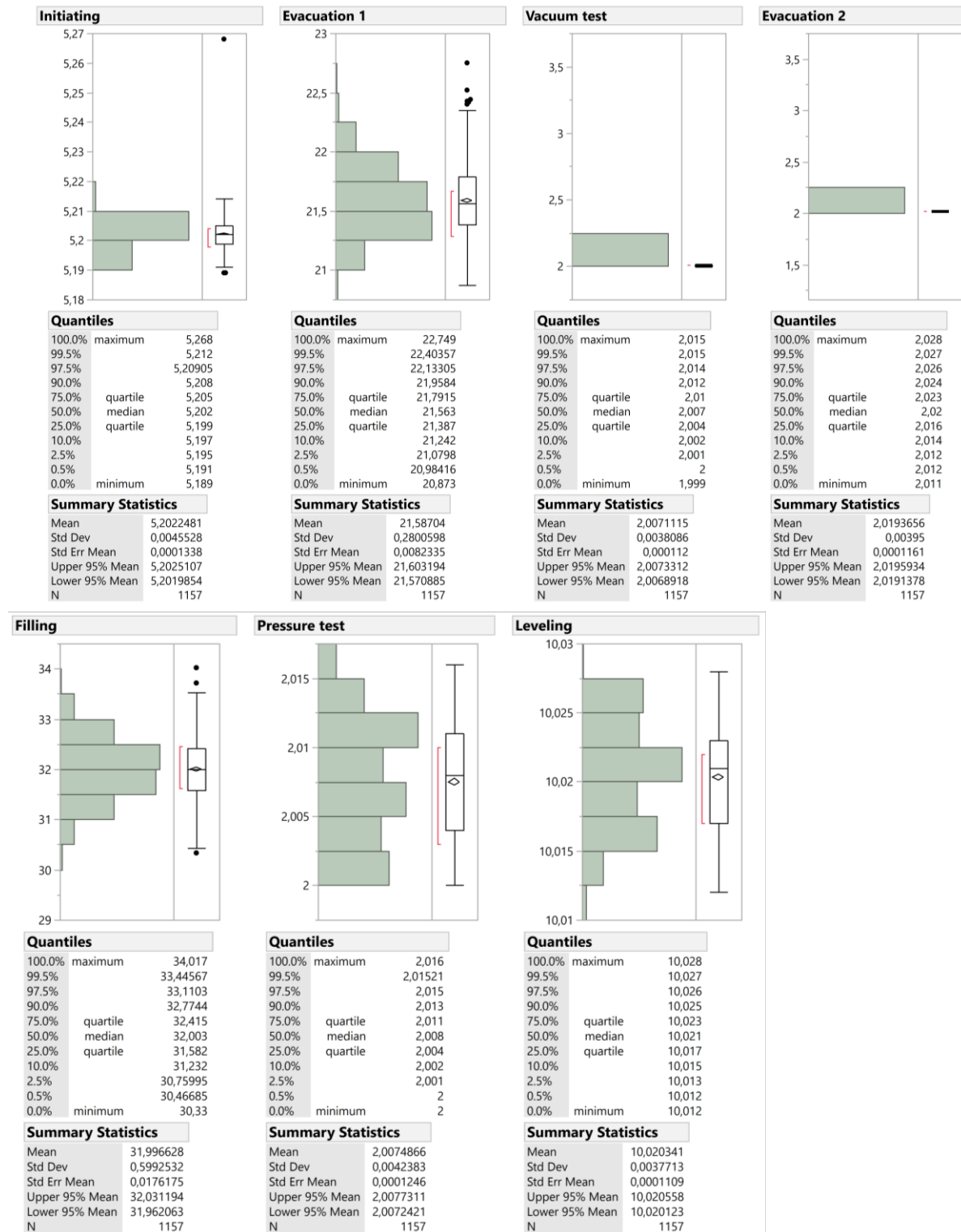
## C3 – Small system



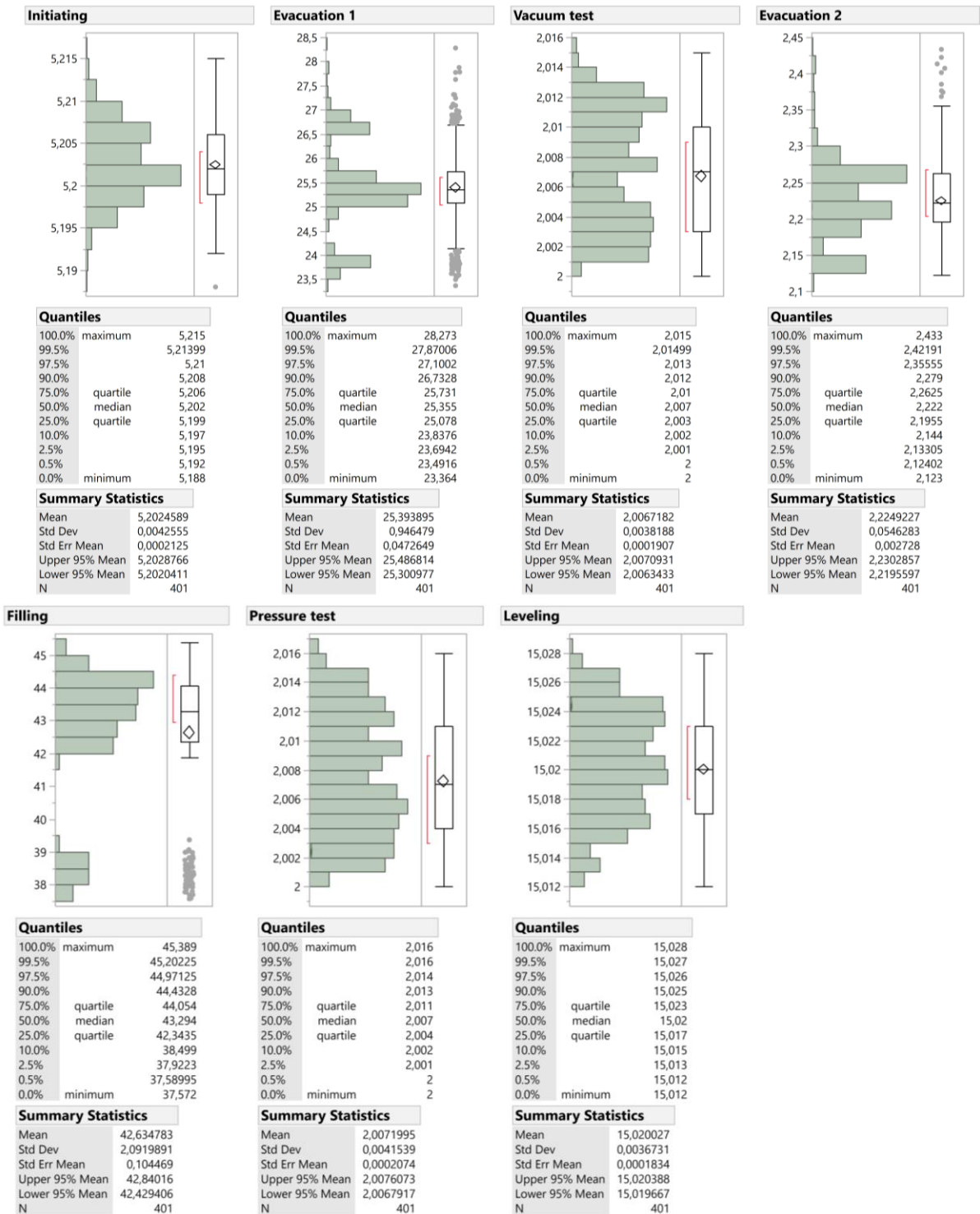
## C4 – Large system



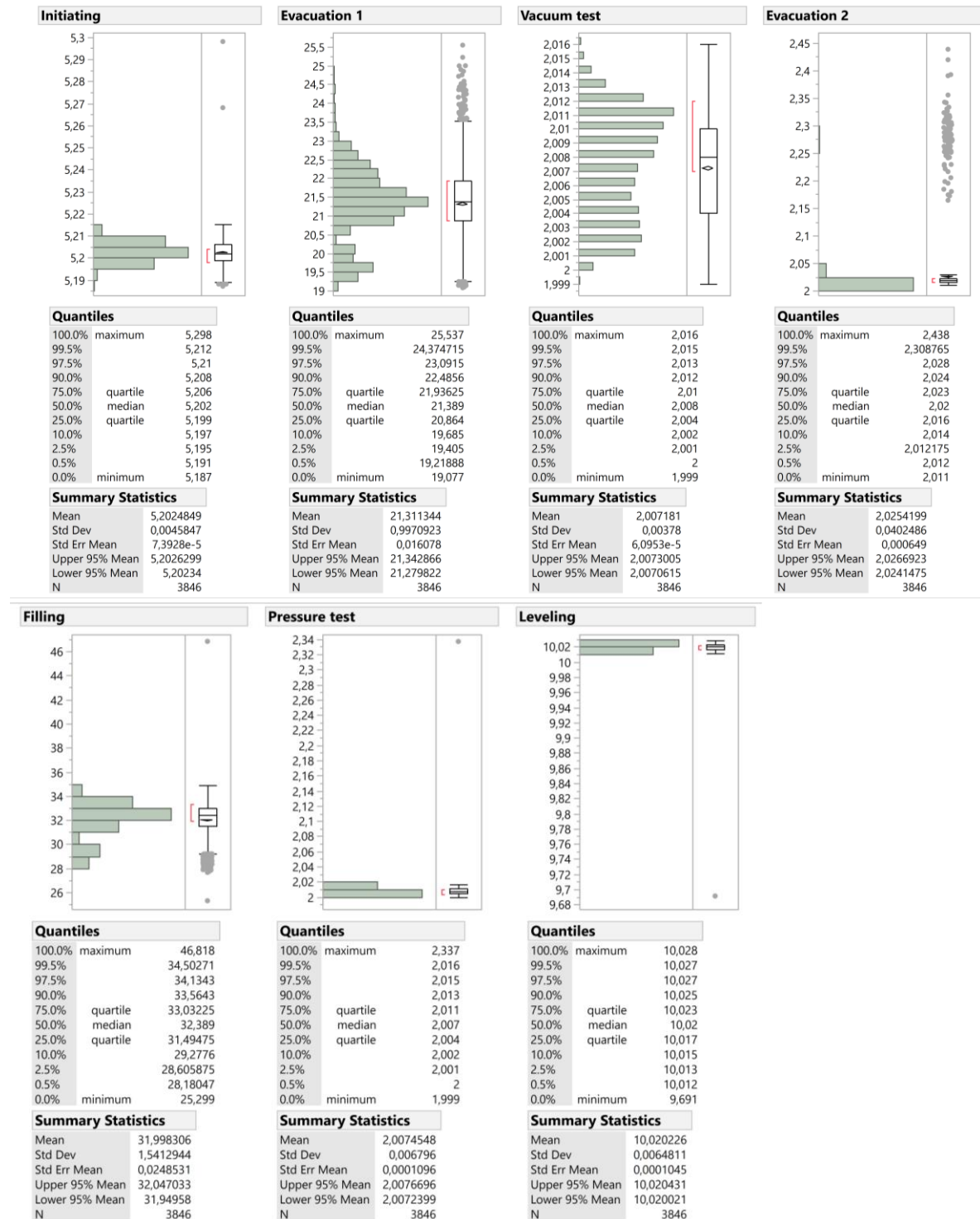
## C4 – Small system



## Total (C1-C4) – Large system



## Total (C1-C4) – Small system



### Filling

Quantiles		
100.0%	maximum	46,818
99.5%		34,50271
97.5%		34,1343
90.0%		33,5643
75.0%	quartile	33,03225
50.0%	median	32,389
25.0%	quartile	31,49475
10.0%		29,2776
2.5%		28,605875
0.5%		28,18047
0.0%	minimum	25,299

Summary Statistics	
Mean	31,998306
Std Dev	1,5412944
Std Err Mean	0,0248531
Upper 95% Mean	32,047033
Lower 95% Mean	31,94958
N	3846

### Pressure test

Quantiles		
100.0%	maximum	2,337
99.5%		2,016
97.5%		2,015
90.0%		2,013
75.0%	quartile	2,011
50.0%	median	2,007
25.0%	quartile	2,004
10.0%		2,002
2.5%		2,001
0.5%		2
0.0%	minimum	1,999

Summary Statistics	
Mean	2,0074548
Std Dev	0,006796
Std Err Mean	0,0001096
Upper 95% Mean	2,0076696
Lower 95% Mean	2,0072399
N	3846

### Leveling

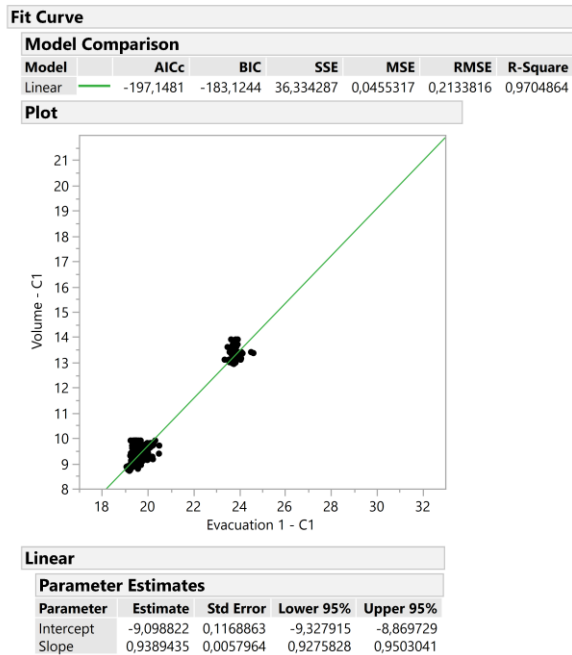
Quantiles		
100.0%	maximum	10,028
99.5%		10,027
97.5%		10,027
90.0%		10,025
75.0%	quartile	10,023
50.0%	median	10,02
25.0%	quartile	10,017
10.0%		10,015
2.5%		10,013
0.5%		10,012
0.0%	minimum	9,691

Summary Statistics	
Mean	10,020226
Std Dev	0,0064811
Std Err Mean	0,0001045
Upper 95% Mean	10,020431
Lower 95% Mean	10,020021
N	3846

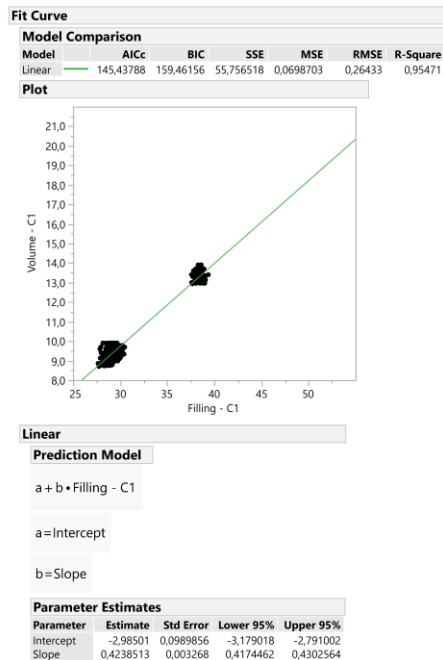


# Appendix V – Prediction modelling, linear regression

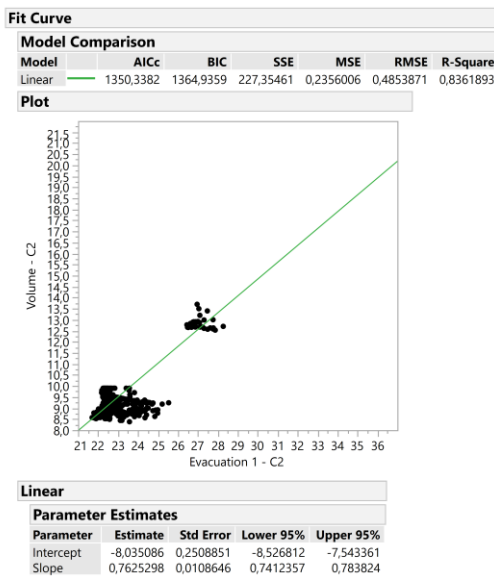
## C1 Evacuation 1



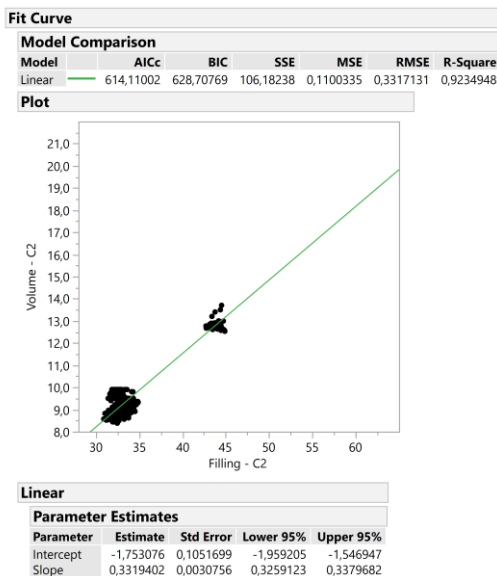
## C1 Filling



## C2 Evacuation 1

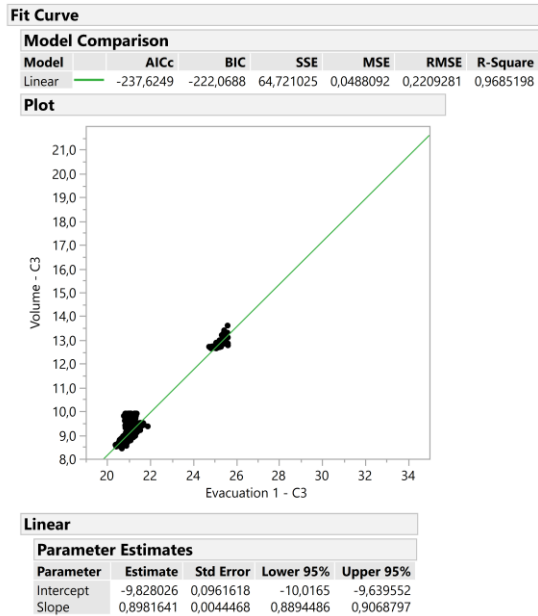


## C2 Filling

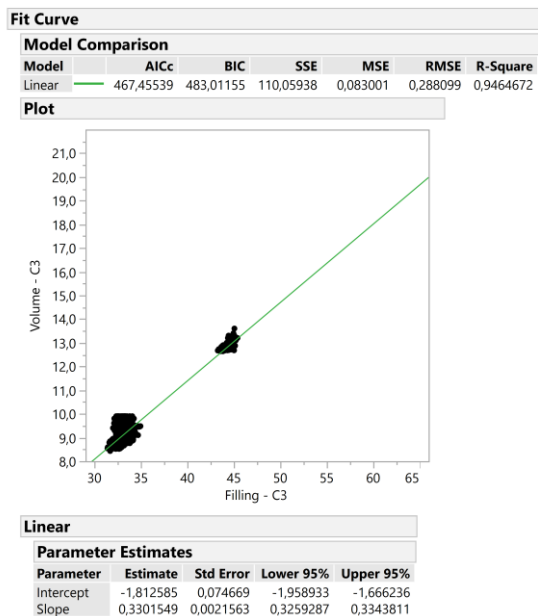




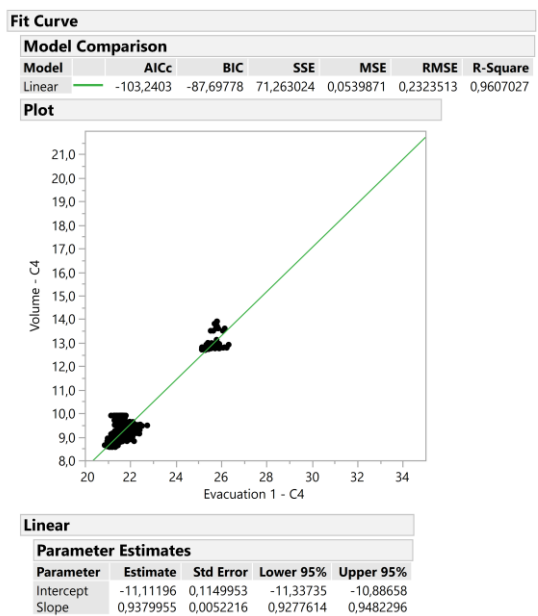
## C3 Evacuation 1



## C3 Filling



## C4 Evacuation 1



## C4 Filling

