Stockholm School of Economics
Institute of International Business
Institute of Management
Master's Thesis 2010

Sustainability Communication

- Identifying and Bridging Potential Gaps

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the communication of corporate sustainability. The purpose is to identify possible gaps in what an organization aims for doing within sustainability, what it actually does within sustainability and how this is perceived by its key stakeholders. In order to identify the possible gaps we study theory and execute a single-case study of the engineering company WSP Sweden, based on interview material, corporate documents and benchmarking. The theory focuses on stakeholder theories, organizational identity processes and the effectiveness of sustainability communication. Our data indeed identifies gaps in the sustainability communication. These gaps are both within the organization itself, as well as between the organization and its external stakeholders. In order to bridge these gaps we recommend, in line with academic theory on the topic, that WSP Sweden adopts a well-defined, interactive and targeted sustainability communication strategy.

Key words: Sustainability, Communication, CSR, WSP Sweden, Gaps, Organizational Identity, Stakeholder

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1. Introduction

Prior to the Deep Horizon oil-spill accident on the Mexican Gulf, British Petroleum (BP) was a recognized, respected leader in sustainability communication – in fact, BP was a long-time "A+" reporter against the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), a winner of numerous international sustainability awards, and a regular top scorer in sustainability assessments (Cart, 2010). As the environmental catastrophe was exposed all across international media, the image of this previously seemingly genuine, progressive, responsible company was drastically shaken all across the globe. The environmental disaster was hardly consistent with the flawless image that BP had been projecting and building for many years (2010). The disaster was, however, perhaps a confirmation of the suspicions that have started to appear regarding companies' sustainability convictions – that sustainability is nothing but a question of green-washing (Morsing, 2003). The environmental tragedy raises a number of interesting questions concerning companies' sustainability activities, in relation to the communication of these activities. Apparently, BP was excellent at communicating their sustainability activities to the outside world – but what was actually going on within the organization? How was this perceived by the stakeholders? How committed was BP management actually to the sustainability activities of the company? Was there perhaps a lack of interest and commitment across the organization?

Companies today not only consider sustainability as an important part of their communication – in an increasingly transparency-demanding society, they are actually assessed on their social and environmental performance (Vrioni and Bronn, 2001, Morsing, 2003). The concept of corporate sustainability has therefore become more than a matter of marketing communication for companies – it has become a strategic objective, and maintaining a sustainable image is considered a competitive advantage (2001; 2003). Sustainability communication budgets have swelled accordingly – sometimes even outgrowing company spending on actual corporate sustainability activities (Morsing, 2003). At the same time, this strategic objective also places sustainability at the core of corporate practice, making sustainability something that concerns each and every employee in an organization (2003).

This thesis explores the relationship between sustainability communication between the company and stakeholders, and the coherence of a company's organizational identity. The case of WSP Sweden, will hopefully deepen our, and the reader's, understanding of how organizational communication, identity and sustainability are interlinked.

1.1 Background

WSP Sweden is a subsidiary to the global design, engineering and management consultancy, WSP Group, a global business providing management and consultancy services. The Company is specialized in property, transport and environmental projects and a large part of their projects aim to help creating built and natural environments in a sustainable way. WSP Sweden originates from the Swedish consultancy J&W that was created in 1938 (WSP Sweden website). In 2001, J&W became part of the British consultancy WSP Group that was established 1970 and listed on the London Stock Exchange.

According to WSP Group's, also WSP Sweden's, HR and Communication Manager and the webpage allabolag.se WSP Sweden's main competitors are ÅF, SWECO, Grontmij and Ramböll. WSP Sweden currently employs 2098 people around the country, who are spread out across 39 local offices all across Sweden, from Luleå to Lund (allabolag.se, WSP Annual Report).

Table 1: Information about WSP Sweden

Total Number of Employees WSP Sweden: 2098 (2009)

Number of Employees per Business Area:
WSP Samhällsbyggnad: 736 employees
WSP Management: 202 employees
WSP Analysis and Strategy: 122 employees
WSP Systems & WSP Brand & Risk: 457 employees
WSP International: 100 employees
WSP Environmental: 237 employees
WSP Byggprojektering: 319 employees

Sources: Allabolag.se and WSP Sweden's Annual Report

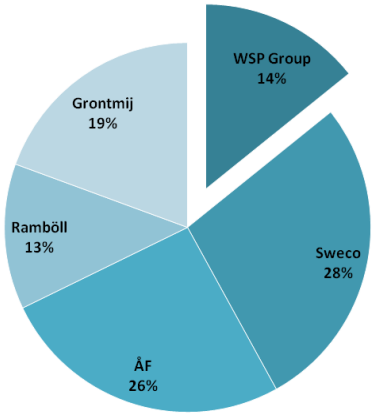
The last decades WSP Group has grown rapidly, not only organically but also through a large number of acquisitions (WSP Group website). The after tax profit for 2009 amounted to approximately 13.5 million pounds for the WSP Group (WSP Annual Report 2009) which equals 151,848,000 SEK at the time the report was conducted 2009-12-31. The Swedish and English markets stand for about one third of the revenues each. The other third of the revenues are generated in the United States (15 percent), Africa, Middle East and India (10 percent), as well as Asia and Australia (7 percent). In 2009 WSP Group had approximately 9,000 employees (WSP Group Annual Report 2009). WSP Group's and its competitors' number of employees and profit after tax for 2009 are summarized in the table 2 and figures 1 and 2 below in order to get an idea about their reciprocal size. The numbers are collected from the respective companies' annul reports for 2009 and where the profit was given in another currency than Swedish it has been converted to SEK via Forex online converter given the exchange rate for on the day the numbers in the reports represents: 2009-12-31.

Table 2: WSP Group's and its competitors' profit and number of employees in absolute terms

Company Name	Profit after tax 2009 SEK	Number of Employees 2009
WSP Group	151848000	9000
Sweco	294600000	5082
ÅF	275337000	4182
Ramböll	135610000	8758
Grontmij	206796840	7105

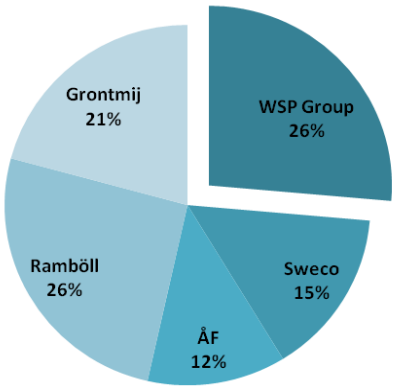
Source: Respective Companies' Annual Reports 2009

Figure 1: Relative Size in terms of Profit after Tax 2009



Source: Respective Companies' Annual Report 2009

Figure 2: Relative Size in Terms of Number of Employees 2009



Source: Respective Companies' Annual Report 2009

As shown by the figures, WSP Group and Ramböll are the biggest companies within their sector in terms of number of employees whereas they are the smallest in terms of profit after tax. ÅF and Sweco, on the other hand, are smallest in terms of employees but largest in terms of profit after tax.

Their clients are roughly half private and half public customers. (WSP I Korthet 2010) and the three main areas of service they ask for is Property, Transport and Infrastructure, and Environmental (WSP Sweden Website). WSP Sweden is a particularly big player within the design, engineering and management Industry.

1.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: Definitions

We will not conduct a literature review of the definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability, as it would not directly serve the purpose of this thesis. However, a brief description of the concept at hand is necessary. CSR refers to the notion that organizations and companies have an obligation to expand their spheres of responsibility. According to Shoemaker et al. (2006), the worldwide quest for developing an ISO-standard for CSR many parties consider the following definition of CSR (ISO 26000: 13):

"Social Responsibility refers to the activities of an organization aimed at contributing to a sustainable society and environment, as well as maintaining the organization's continued existence, by minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive impacts on the society and environment through proactive stakeholder communications and engagement throughout the organization's sphere of influence. Social responsibility is about organizational initiatives that start with, but go beyond, meeting legal requirements and that contribute to social acceptance. An organization only obtains its social acceptance by observing national laws and applicable international agreements and by responding to an everchanging society that has constantly changing expectations" (Shoemaker et al, 2006, page 49).

Werther and Chandler (2006), see CSR in a strategic manner:

“CSR is not about saving the whales or ending poverty or other worthwhile goals that are unrelated to a firm’s operations and are better left to government of nonprofits. Instead, CSR is about the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary issues stakeholders view as affecting the firm’s plans and actions” (Werther and Chandler, 2006, page 9).

These two ideas of CSR are merely two of many interpretations of what CSR is. WSP Sweden has chosen to use a different term in their CSR work, namely *sustainability*. Below is the definition of sustainable development according to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development Report (1987):

”Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

When we describe and discuss theory on the topic, we will use the same terminology as the theory uses, i.e. CSR. WSP Sweden’s managers and employees, however, have their own personal opinions concerning the concepts of CSR and sustainability, why these concepts will be described in an empirical context later on in the thesis. For example, WSP Sweden’s managers have chosen to use the word sustainability to describe the CSR activities. Therefore, for the empirical sections of the thesis, and the analysis, we have chosen to describe the manner in which WSP Sweden employees relate to the term, sustainability. We would like to find out whether there is a unified, coherently and effectively communicated message concerning WSP Sweden’s sustainability work, and will therefore focus on the organization’s own perception of the concept.

1.3 Problem area

Mastering the art of efficient corporate sustainability is increasingly important to companies in a world where the consciousness, interest and debate about global sustainability is intensified every day. However, sustainability appears to be a specifically challenging area of communication, and companies struggle in formulating coherent, believable and credible communication in the area. (Morsing, 2003).

WSP Sweden is sustainability-oriented in its operations, and ambitiously aims to communicate its sustainability activities externally and internally in the organization. However, after becoming acquainted with WSP Sweden’s sustainability profile, we were informed that the management was insecure about its ability to communicate this profile to its employees and to the outside world. This fact was the initial reason why we became interested in WSP Sweden as an object for our case study. From WSP Sweden’s management’s perspective, the management itself felt that it was constantly informing and communicating a sustainability profile to its stakeholders. However, the fact that the management had serious doubts concerning its ability to integrate this profile and identity in the organization indicated that there were potential problems in organizational sustainability communication. This impression was confirmed by the fact that WSP Sweden’s recent colleague poll had shown an increasing mistrust in the company’s ability to “reduce its own environmental footprint” (WSP Colleague Poll, 2010).

WSP Sweden's sustainability profile, in combination with the specific organizational challenges that the company appeared to be facing, made WSP Sweden our company of choice for our case study. More concretely, the initial empirical indication of potential organizational gaps gave us the idea of investigating whether the management's sustainability visions and actions were incorporated in the consciousness of the company's workforce and its external stakeholders. We saw WSP Sweden as a case in which we could deepen our understanding of the relationship between corporate sustainability communication and organizational identity.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is hence to identify potential sustainability communication gaps in order to understand the relationship between stakeholder management, sustainability communication and organizational identity, leading us to the following research question:

Research question 1:
Is there a gap between the WSP Sweden's sustainability vision, sustainability activities, and how these are perceived by the identified key stakeholders?

If such gaps are proven to exist, we aim to analyze the results of our study by identifying the potential challenges pertaining to this specific organization's sustainability communication and how these can be bridged. This analysis will be achieved by addressing a second research question:

Research Qusetion2:
If sustainability communicational gaps can be identified, what communication plan should WSP Sweden adopt in order to bridge these potential gaps?

Conclusively, this area is of special interest not only due to its current societal urgency and relevance, but also because we have identified a potential empirical discrepancy regarding the organization's sustainability communication.

1.5 Delimitations

Firstly, a selected number of stakeholder groups will be taken into consideration as targets for the sustainability communication. In a larger perspective, one could argue that all of society, the environment, and the general public are targets for WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. However, due to limits in time and resources, we have chosen to restrict our study to five stakeholder groups that are accessible to us as researchers. Stakeholders were selected through a selection process guided by Mitchell et al. (1997) and through discussions with WSP Sweden's management.

Secondly, we have chosen to limit ourselves to studying WSP Sweden exclusively, rather than addressing the challenges of the entire WSP Group. Although an international perspective would have been highly interesting from an organizational, management perspective, and although cross-cultural challenges and the addressing the challenges of a global group would have provided yet another dimension to this

thesis, we have chosen to study WSP Sweden only due to lack of time and geographic accessibility to potential interviewees.

1.6 Expected Contribution

This thesis revolves around the challenges of sustainability communication, an interesting challenge in today's organizational landscape. We are convinced that the challenge of handling sustainability communication effectively is a crucial matter for any business manager interested in promoting their organization's efforts in the realm of sustainability in a credible manner. We hope that our conclusions and the potential managerial implications that will result from this argumentation, will serve as a development of current research in this field, and that this case study can be of use in future research in the area. Furthermore, although the findings and contributions are based on data regarding WSP Sweden and, hence, are tailored for this specific organization exclusively, the general identified challenges and ideas of how these can be found and addressed may be relevant for other organizations as well. Especially, the theoretical models used in this thesis in order to address and bridge the potential gaps might serve as basis for other organizations that wish to improve their sustainability communication.

1.7 Disposition

In order to answer the first research question, we will first outline theory concerning organizational identity and image, which gives a framework to describe the various kinds of organizational identity gaps that can arise within a company. This is done in the section of Organizational Theory. Subsequently, in order identify the relevant stakeholders for sustainability communication; we will provide a brief description of stakeholder theory. Next, we will look into theory on CSR communication and how such communication can be performed efficiently, which will be helpful in order to address the potential second research question. By the end of the theoretical part we aim to merge the three theoretical fields into a models that highlights and unite the key theory that is relevant for the aim of this thesis.

Following the theoretical part, the first section describing our empirical findings will serve to identify the key stakeholders of WSP Sweden. Next, we will examine the organizational vision, actions, and perceptions of sustainability through interviews of the identified stakeholders, study of corporate documents and benchmarking of competitors sustainability communication. In this stage we will examine the stated sustainability aims, observing sustainability communication externally and internally in order to see what the company officially aims to do (vision), what the company actually is doing (actions) and what the stakeholders perceive that they are doing (perception). When completed, we can see whether or not there is a gap between visions, actual activities and the activities perceived by the key identified stakeholders.

This will lead us to answering research question 1 and 2 in our subsequent analysis. The analysis is divided into two sections, one serving to answer each research question. Last but not least, a conclusion including managerial and research implications will wrap up the thesis.

2. Theory

In our theoretical framework, we have chosen to combine stakeholder theory with concepts such as organizational identity and sensemaking. We will first present current theory in the fields of Organizational Theory, Stakeholder Theory and Sustainability Communication, and subsequently present a model that illustrates the interlinked relationship between the three organizational fields of research.

2.1 Organizational Theory

This section aims to investigate and outline how organizations perceive themselves and how others see them. Furthermore, we will look into what challenges might occur if these views are not consistent, i.e. if there are organizational gaps. This theory will be later be applied when addressing research question 1 regarding possible gaps in the sustainability visions, activities and perception of WSP Sweden's sustainability work.

2.1.1 Identity and Image

According to Balmer and van Riel (1997), organizational language is not sufficiently precise to dissect the different variables in the corporate and organizational identity, in addition, "there are divergent views within the literature as to what is meant by corporate identity. " (Balmer and van Riel, p. 340, 1997). Albert and Whetten are often referred to as the founding father of Organizational Identity Theory and they define the concept in terms of distinctiveness, i.e. what distinguishes the company from others (Hatch and Schultz, 2004). However, instead of identifying the organization after what it not is in relation to other organizations, Markkanen (1998) defines it as the personality of a company, consisting of tangible matters, such as the organization's core values, basic assumptions and position to its environment, as well as more intangible things such as myths and rituals. Lerpolds et al.'s definition of Organizational Image as the way the *external* stakeholders interpret the organization and the Organizational Identity as the *internal* perception of the organization (Lerpold et al., 2007).

2.1.2 Elements in Organizational Theory

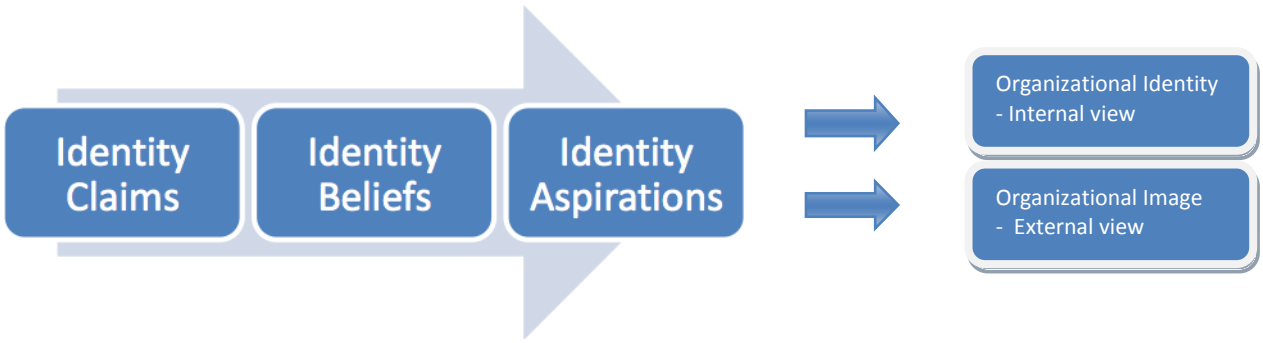
According to Lerpold et al. (2007), Organizational Theory is "engaging and influential conceptualizations of the organizations, which are relatively shared by the members and/or upheld by its leaders, and often emphasized in formal corporate statements (mission, vision, etc.) and expressions (logos, buildings, symbols, etc.)." (Lerpold et al, 2007, p. 2). They refer to the three elements in organizational theory as *identity claims*, *identity beliefs* and *identity aspirations.* (2007). Here follow a short description of every each of the three concepts and they are summed in figure 3.

Identity Claims is mainly what the organization communicates formally and consists of documents as "our mission" and "our value" through channels such as intranet, corporate websites, speeches, and media reports. Through the identity claims people on key positions in the company have impact on how the organizations is perceived internally, through amalgamation of the collective self-definitions, and externally, through communicating an image of how it want the surrounding environment to perceive the organization in order to facilitate its goals. Hence, the identity claims can be seen both as a snapshot of what the organization represent and a tool for how it wants to be perceived. (2007).

Identity Beliefs are the members' shared beliefs of the organization. Of course, the members also have personal perceptions; however Identity Beliefs refer to the collective conceptualizations and these are seen to be relatively central and enduring. The members ascribe the organization these characteristics in order to provide meaning to their experiences and situations. The shared Identity Beliefs can be straightforward tangible associations such as *we are a consultancy firm* and more intangible mental schemes such as *we are environmentally friendly.* In the latter case the beliefs may affect the organizational behavior, such as initiating programs aiming for supporting sustainability projects, in addition to the individual behavior and attitudes. Furthermore, the probability that these Identity Beliefs be enacted in collective practices and decision making increases with the strength of the platform of the collective beliefs which, in turn, increases with the number of the members sharing these Identity Beliefs. Hence, strong common Identity Beliefs facilitates smooth decision-making. (2007).

Identity Aspirations answers the question *what do we want to become as an organization?* Despite the fact that the Identity Beliefs are seen as relatively enduring, organizations faces some change and progress. At these times members can collectively revise and initiate the way they want to be perceived externally and how they view themselves. This is often achieved through heated discussions and the managers often promote the new conceptualization as a response to external pressure. This change is often an adoption to the way they want the organization to be perceived externally and often lead to the introduction of a new organizational image, such as slogans, by the managers. However, the efforts do not always pay off. There is a risk that the new aspired image clash with the existing beliefs and: hence, clashes with the organization's culture. (2007).

Figure 3: Organizational Theory



Source: Authors' graph

2.1.3 Organizational Identity Gaps

Figure 3 illustrates how these three elements affect the Organizational Identity, i.e. how the company is perceived from within the organization, as well as its Organizational Image, i.e. how it is recognized externally. Ideally the image and identity harmonize around a common conceptualization of what the organization is. However, both within an organization and between the organization and its external stakeholders, several gaps can occur. Here follow some common gaps.

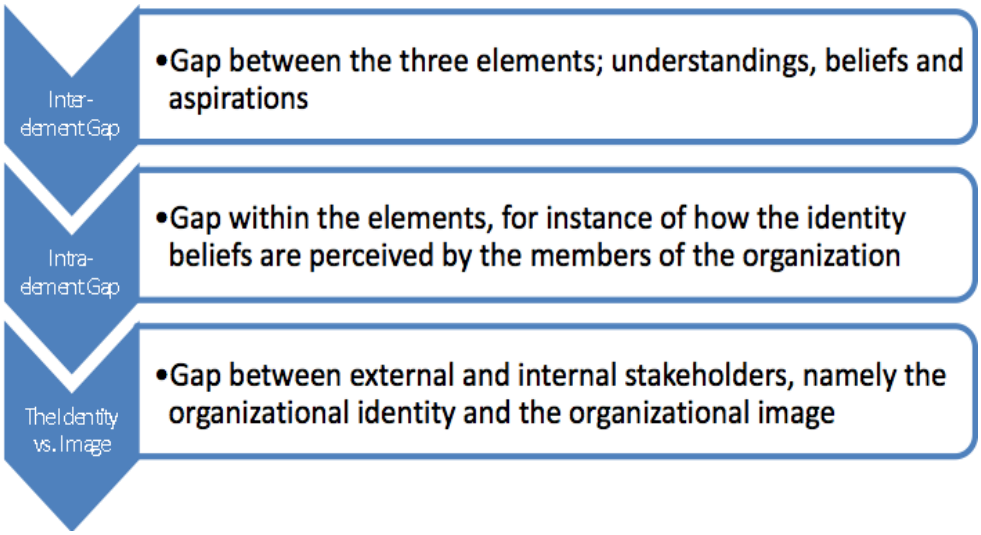
Firstly, there can be a gap between the elements; Identity Claims, Identity Beliefs and Identity Aspirations. According to Lerpold et al., (2007) the perception of the organizational identity is not necessarily unison within the organization; rather there is often a discrepancy between the members' beliefs and understandings of the organization and the managers' aspirations. Hence, there tend to be a gap between the managers' wills, the members perception and also the external stakeholders' views (2007).

Secondly, gaps within the elements may arise – if, for example, several different Identity Beliefs exist simultaneously within the organization. Multiple Identity Beliefs give rise to tensions to the different interest groups in the organization, (Lerpold et al., 2007). According to Markkanen (1998), this internal gap might result from that lack of interpretation into business reality. This might occur if the employees are expected to understand matters that are not familiar to them, if the information is considered irrelevant, or if the communication is too complicated or ambiguous.

Thirdly, there can be a divergence between the internal perception and the external view, in other words, a divergence between the Organizational Image and the Organizational Identity (van Riel, 1995). Discrepancy between the internal and external perception of the organization might lead to ethically questionable tactics, such as manipulation of external images, in order to regain alignment in the views (Gioia, et al., 2000). However, the diverging interpretations might result in positive outcomes given the fact that when the different conceptualizations manifest themselves, they can be addressed, discussed and solved (Gioia, et al., 2000). Markkanen (1998) states that even though the stakeholder itself creates the image, the company can influence by signaling value creation and standards consistently. However, if the company manages to make the image reflect the core competencies coherently, the value and vision of the organization constitutes a competitive weapon (1998).

In conclusion, total consensus does not prevail regarding one universal definition of organizational identity. However, from literature we conclude that the concept of organizational identity includes both tangible and intangible matters, such as core values and rituals, and takes both internal and external stakeholders into consideration. Furthermore, literature mentions stakeholders and members. We draw the conclusion that members can be seen as internal stakeholders, that is; employees and managers. If there is a mismatch in the claims, beliefs and aspirations of the company internally or externally, gaps occur. Literature does not provide a general overview of these gaps; hence, we have tried to summarize the theoretical learning points and indentified three main types of gaps. These are shown in the Figure below:

Figure 4: Examples of Gaps



Source: Authors' graph

2.2 Stakeholder versus Shareholder Theory

This section aims to outline what groups the organization should take into consideration in its operations. Stakeholder theory will guide us in addressing research question 1, regarding possible communication gaps, as it concerns the key stakeholders of the company. Furthermore, in the process of tackling research question 2, it is essential to know which stakeholders are the receivers and originators of the information.

2.2.1 The Shareholder Perspective

The debate whether a *shareholder* or a *stakeholder* perspective should be the paramount way of viewing companies' role in society has been long and divided. Advocates of the shareholder perspective emphasize companies' responsibility towards its owners (Cooper, 2004). The idea is that profit maximization of the firm will lead to wealth maximization of the shareholders and, consequently, will benefit society in general. Friedman, promoting the shareholder perspective, said in 1962 that: "there is one and only one social responsibility of the business- to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase profits so long as it stays in the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition, without deception or fraud." (Cooper, 2004, p. 14). The origin of the shareholder perspective is the libertarian view that advocates the individual's and companies' right to maximize their self-interest (2004).

2.2.2 The Stakeholder Perspective

One of the earliest opponents of the libertarian view, John Stuart Mill, comes from the utilitarian camp and promotes the maximization of utility or happiness (Cooper, 2004). Following up on this tradition of thought, the stakeholder theory strives for identifying numerous groups within society to whom companies have a responsibility (2004). According to Mitchell et al. (1997), the stakeholder approach

broadens the role of management beyond profit maximization to include interests of non-shareholding groups. Furthermore, stakeholder theory seeks to identify the groups that deserve and require management attention. The stakeholder approach is useful when analyzing business ethics, given the fact that it provides a research framework that allows the consideration of societal benefit (Cooper, 2004). Werther and Chandler (2006) state that given that the purpose of the businesses as economic entities is to meet the needs in society and the financial interests of their owners, the most effective way to fulfill this purpose is by considering the values of key stakeholder groups. Furthermore, they emphasize that these non-owner stakeholders are vital for the success and survival of the business.

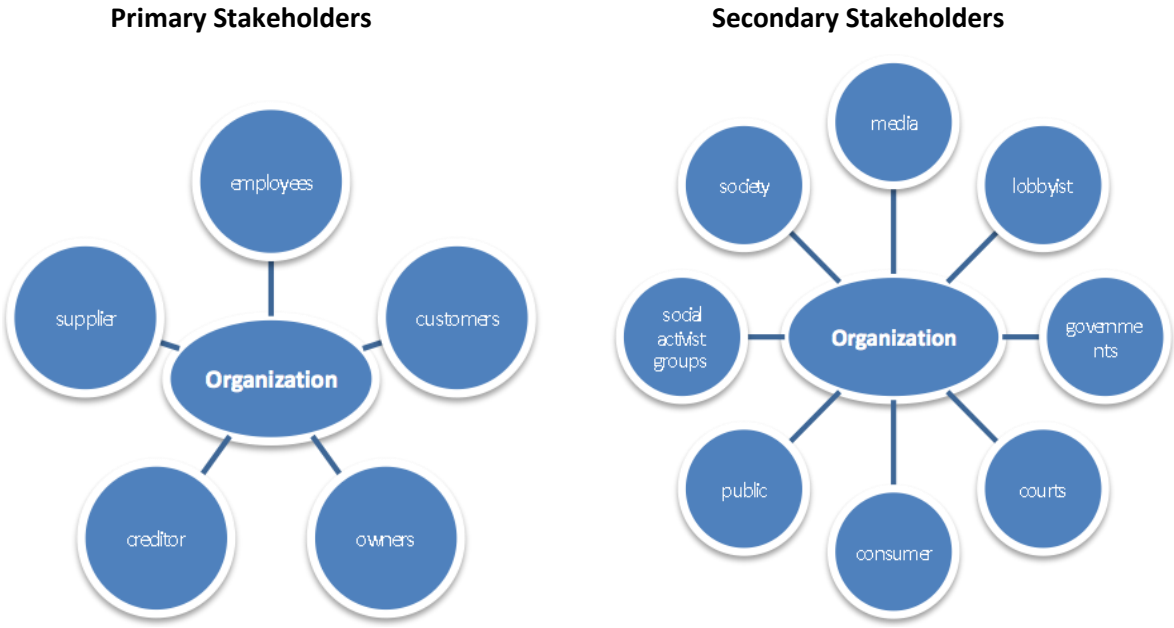
In conclusion, due to the fact that the stakeholder approach includes the shareholders and the logic in that the company is dependent on its surroundings, the analytical framework and foundation of this thesis will be the stakeholder theory.

2.2.3 Identifying General Stakeholders

According to Weiss (2006), a stakeholder is a group or person that has an influence on, or are influenced by, any actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organization. Furthermore, Weiss states that a stake can be past, present or future oriented and is any interest or claim that a person or a group might have in the outcome of the company's actions and policies (2006). Lawrence et al., (1999) state that the number of company stakeholders and their variation of interests tend to be very large and; hence, these stakeholders affect and complicate companies' decision making.

Stakeholders can be divided into primary and secondary (Lawrence et. al., 1999), (Weiss, 2006). A firm's primary stakeholders are for example its owners, customers, employees, creditors and suppliers. The CEO and top-level executives can be identified as both primary stakeholders and representatives of the firm. Secondary stakeholders are all other groups, such as the media, consumers, lobbyists, courts, governments, social activist groups, the public and society. There are somewhat blurry boundaries regarding some of the stakeholder groups; for instance, Weiss (2006) defines competitors as secondary stakeholder whereas Lawrence et al. (1999) define them as secondary stakeholders. In Figure 5 follows a division in accordance with Lawrence et al. (1999).

Figure 5: Primary and Secondary Stakeholders



Source: Lawrence, Post and Weber (1999)

A complementary way of classifying a company's stakeholders is through subdivide them according to Werther and Chandler's (2006) layers-approach that are summarized in figure 6 below. According to this approach there are three main groups the organization should be cognizant with; Organizational stakeholders, Economic stakeholders and Societal stakeholders. Organization stakeholders generally exist within the organization and have more or less direct interest in the success of the company's performance. Examples of main-players in this field are the employees, shareholders and managers. Employees do not only work in order to satisfy their direct physical needs but also seek meaning, pride and satisfaction through their professional life. (2006).

Economic stakeholders are a vital interface between the company and its societal surrounding. Examples of these stakeholders are customers, bankers, creditors and suppliers. It is vital for the company to succeed in making the customers identify with the values and societal position of the firm since it facilitates the customers buying decision and; hence, is profitable for the firm. In that sense, the sustainability policies can be seen as advantageous unique selling points that the customer treasures. (2006).

Societal Stakeholders determines the business setting in which the organization exist through composing laws and norms. Examples of these are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), communities, regulators and the physical environment. Possessing a good dialogue with these serves as an efficient insurance in case something would go wrong with the company. (2006).

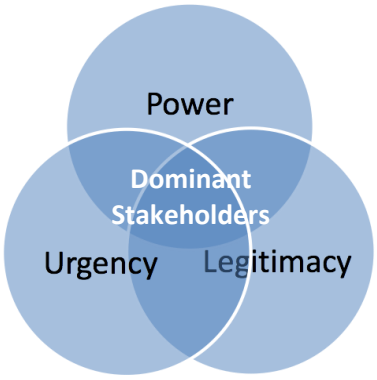
Figure 6: Werther and Chandler's Stakeholder Classification

Source: Chandle rand Werther (2006)

2.2.4 Identifying Key Stakeholders

In order to identify the key stakeholders, Mitchell et al. (1997) addresses the question *To whom (or what) do managers pay attention?;* developing a descriptive theory of stakeholder salience as a development of the more normative stakeholder theory used by Freeman (Hitt et al., 2001). Mitchell et al. (1997) propose that classes of stakeholders can be identified by their possession or attributed possession of one, two, or all three of the following attributes: (1) the stakeholder's power to influence the firm, (2) the legitimacy of the stakeholder's relationship with the firm, and (3) the urgency of the stakeholder's claim on the firm (Mitchell et al., 1997). The following figure 7 visualizes Mitchell et al.'s descriptive model of stakeholder salience (1997):

Figure 7: Mitchell et al.'s Stakeholder Salience Model



Source: Mithell et al. (1997)

All areas in Mitchell et al.'s (1997) diagram constitutes one group of stakeholders, with the dominant stakeholders outlined it this simplified figure. They propose that, although dominant stakeholders can be identified as key based on their possession of power, legitimacy, and urgency in relationship to the firm, it is the firm's managers who determine which stakeholders are salient and therefore will receive management attention. Hence, the stakeholders winning the management's attention will be only those that the managers perceive to be highly significant. These stakeholders can be both latent, i.e. not have any specific relationship to the organization at the moment, and active, i.e. have an ongoing relationship with the company. In this way, former or future employees can for example be considered as important stakeholder groups – all depending on management preferences. Therefore, managerial characteristics are a moderator of the relationships presented by Mitchell et al's descriptive theory of stakeholder salience. For example, Greer and Downey (1982) have found that managers' values relative to social regulation have a strong effect on how they react to stakeholders covered by these statutes. The management's sense of sense of self-interest or self-sacrifice is also a value that theorists see as important in this respect (Mitchell et al 1997).

In conclusion, we will use the agreed approach among stakeholder theorists that a stakeholder is a group or individual that affects or is affected by the organization. However, consensus does not prevail regarding how the stakeholders shall be subdivided. We have found the different classification systems as complementary rather that contradictory. Lastly, once the stakeholders groups are identified, Mitchell et al, use a Venn-diagram model in order to encircle the key stakeholders. This model will guide us in the process of identifying the key stakeholders of WSP Sweden.

2.3 Sustainability Communication

The purpose of this section is to find out if and why sustainability communication is important, to whom it shall be addressed and how it shall be communicated in the most effective manner.

2.3.1 Stakeholder Relationships and CSR Communication

According to Vrioni and Bronn (2001), firms that last in today's business environment are those that manage their key relationships well. Today, "stakeholder relationships are relationships that establish the very context of doing modern business, and create the groundwork for transparency and accountability' (Morsing and Schultz, 2006, p. 325). Following this line of thought, the management of stakeholder relationships is at the core of CSR (Vrioni and Bronn, 2001). Knowing how different stakeholder groups perceive the company and what they expect in return for their support is therefore fundamental when designing communication strategies (Ibid).

Morsing (2003) identifies organizational members as the key targets and receivers of CSR communication. This phenomenon is referred to as *auto-communication*, as the sender of the message is also one of the main receivers. Corporate CSR activities are today a matter of identification; for example, young job candidates make in-depth inquiries about companies' CSR policies and activities before choosing what company to work for. Organizational members are also the first to scrutinize CSR policies and activities. (2003).

The previously described interconnection between stakeholders and CSR communication is, however, criticized by Porter and Kramer (2006). Although they acknowledge that stakeholders' views are important, they maintain that these groups can never understand a corporation's capabilities, competitive positioning, nor needed trade-offs totally (Porter and Kramer, 2006). In seeking to satisfy stakeholders, Porter and Kramer (2006) warn companies from giving up the primary control of their CSR agendas to outsiders. They state that a firm that "views CSR as a way to placate pressure groups often finds that its approach devolves into a series of short-term defensive reactions—a never-ending public relations palliative with minimal value to society and no strategic benefit for the business." (Porter and Kramer, 2006, p.4).

2.3.2 The CSR-marketing Dilemma

Morsing (2003) describes the difficulties that companies face in communicating their CSR practices as inherent. For example, she claims that consumers can become suspicious and skeptical in relation to excessive CSR information from companies, which paradoxically may create a suspicion among consumers that the company is actually hiding something, or is behaving hypocritically. Although firms are expected to communicate their CSR work, many consumers perceive the use of CSR as an element of marketing and PR efforts and consider it distasteful (Morsing, 2003). According to Morsing (2003), stakeholders do not highly appreciate companies that commercialize their CSR extensively. This fact creates a difficult situation for companies, as they must "demonstrate CSR without communicating overtly about it" (Morsing, 2003, p. 150).

2.3.3 Addressing the CSR-Marketing Dilemma

Morsing (2003) suggests that this dilemma can be reduced if companies communicate through clear and conspicuous CSR communication specifically targeted to the different stakeholder groups. The communication of CSR should not be conducted in a *marketing mode* to sell more but rather in a *scientific mode* in order to demonstrate responsible action. This scientific and targeted communication reduces the potential risks of perceived information-overflow of CSR activities, as consumers and stakeholders will not necessarily know about the CSR communication unless they actively search for it. (2003). Moreover, CSR is a moving target, why it is essential for companies to constantly adapt and transform according to shifting stakeholder expectations; expectations that the company should be a part of influencing as well (2006).

According to Vrioni and Bronn (2001), there is a number of additional ways to bridge stakeholder skepticism. Research suggests that increased knowledge will decrease a person's level of skepticism (Szyckman et al., 1997). Hence, it is crucial for communicators to increase the awareness of CSR and emphasize its benefits among persons. Internal and external communication initiatives should therefore use tools means that are designed to inform and to make consumers more aware (1997).

The theoretical base of Morsing et al. (2006) builds on the processes of *sensemaking* and *sensegiving* as forms of communication. Sensemaking is the social process in which people mentally organize and make sense of information in conversations with others, through assimilating written communications and by exchanging ideas. Sensegiving, on the other hand, is the process of attempting to affect others'

understanding and sensemaking of information. They suggest that the inclusion of both sensemaking and sensegiving processes in the communication make managers aware of the need to involve stakeholders pro-actively and continuously. Companies should involve external as well as internal stakeholders in these processes, for there is an increasing need for companies to develop sophisticated two-way communication processes when conveying messages about CSR. One-way information on corporate CSR initiatives it is no longer enough. (2006).

Morsing and Schultz present three current forms of CSR communication – informing, receiving and involving. These three strategies, illustrated in the table 3 below, conceptualize how managers inform, engage with and involve important stakeholders. As the table 2 shows, the *information strategy* is based on one-way communication; the *response strategy* is slightly more interactive as it symbolically involves stakeholders, whereas the *involvement strategy* engages stakeholders in a symmetrical two-way communication. While the response strategy lets stakeholders respond and react to CSR communication, the involvement strategy actually lets stakeholders actively take part in the forming of CSR focus. According to Morsing and Schultz (2006), companies should develop a more inclusive strategy, in which initiative, policies and practices are discussed and formulated collectively.

Table 3: Morsing and Schultz Sustainability Communication Strategies

Table 1: Three CSR communication strategies

	The stakeholder information strategy	**The stakeholder response strategy**	**The stakeholder involvement strategy**
Communication ideal: (Grunig & Hunt 1984)	Public information, one-way communication	Two-way asymmetric communication	Two-way symmetric communication
Communication ideal: sense-making and sensegiving:	Sensegiving	Sensemaking ⇩ Sensegiving	Sensemaking ⇕ Sensegiving – in iterative progressive processes
Stakeholders:	Request more information on corporate CSR efforts	Must be reassured that the company is ethical and socially responsible	Co-construct corporate CSR efforts
Stakeholder role:	Stakeholder influence: support or oppose	Stakeholders respond to corporate actions	Stakeholders are involved, participate and suggest corporate actions
Identification of CSR focus:	Decided by top management	Decided by top management. Investigated in feedback via opinion polls, dialogue, networks and partnerships	Negotiated concurrently in interaction with stakeholders
Strategic communication task:	Inform stakeholders about favourable corporate CSR decisions and actions	Demonstrate to stakeholders how the company integrates their concerns	Invite and establish frequent, systematic and pro-active dialogue with stakeholders, i.e. opinion makers, corporate critics, the media, etc.
Corporate communication department's task:	Design appealing concept message	Identify relevant stakeholders	Build relationships
Third-party endorsement of CSR initiatives:	Unnecessary	Integrated element of surveys, rankings and opinion polls	Stakeholders are themselves involved in corporate CSR messages

Source: Morsing and Schultz (2006)

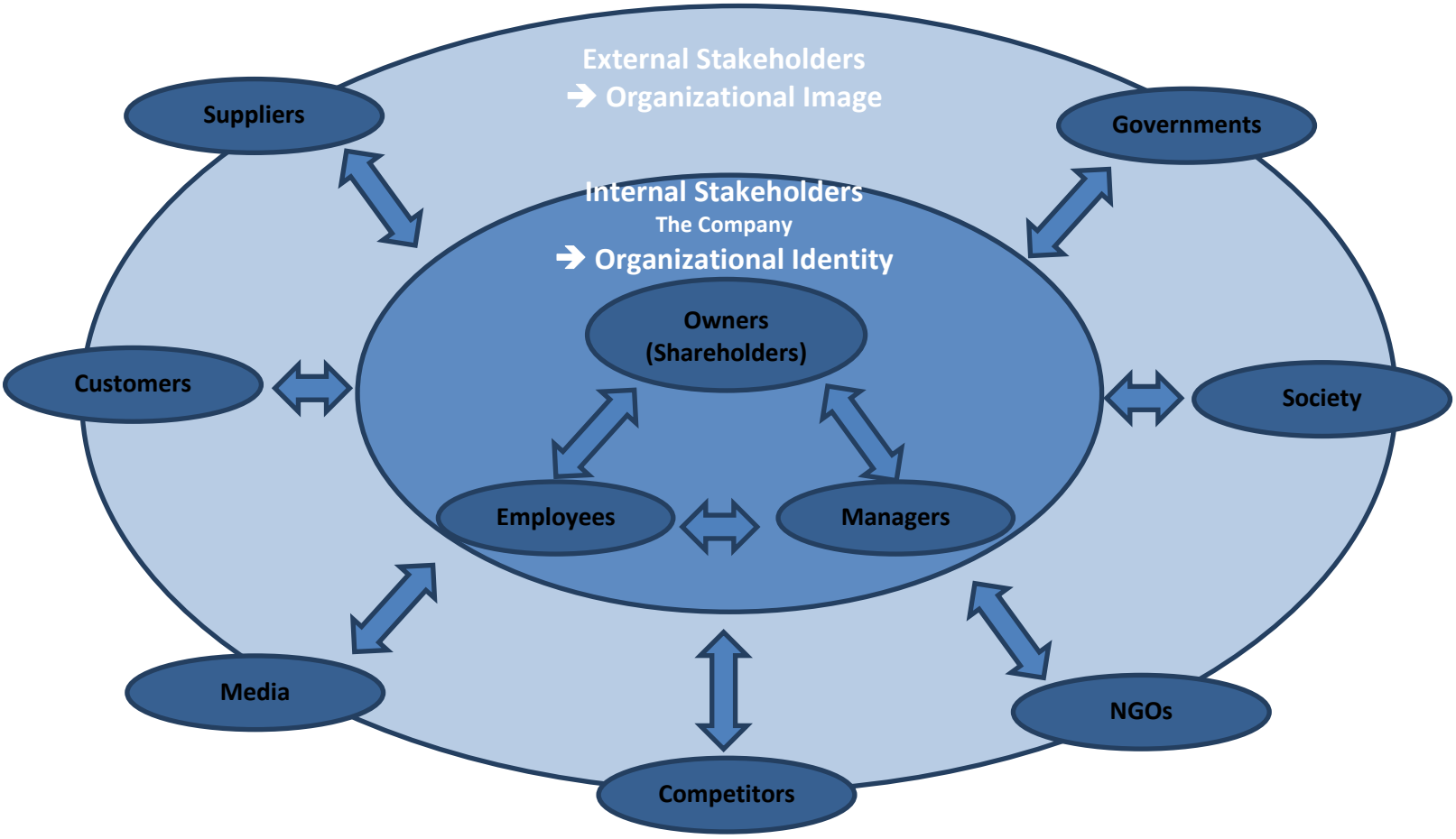
In conclusion, sustainability work can be seen as a strategic competitive advantage and shall be communicated upon. However, opinions differ about how much impact the stakeholders shall have in the process of sustainability communication. Vrioni and Bronn (2001) and Morsing and Schultz (2006) consider stakeholders not only as receivers of the information but also as a channel and initiator of sustainability communication. Furthermore, they state that that in order for the information to be seen as credible amongst the stakeholders it must be updated, relevant, two-way, and targeted. Whereas, Porter and Kramer (2006) see the stakeholders as important receivers of the information but highlight that they are not sufficiently familiar with and cunning about the companies' activities to have a say about its progression of its sustainability work.

We believe that it is essential to take the stakeholders into consideration when forming the activities and communication of sustainability due to the fact that they are the receivers. If the company does not know what actions and information is expected, any communication will be like groping in the dark. Hence, we regard stakeholders not only as receivers of sustainability communication but also as essential channels and initiators.

2.4 Theoretical Conclusions – Summarizing Model of Theory

We could not find any theoretical concept illustrating the external and internal aspects of the organizational structure in a satisfactory way. Hence, we aspire to fill this breach with a normative model that combines organizational identity theory, stakeholder theory and communication theory. In order to address the research question 1; regarding identification of possible gaps in the sustainability visions, actions and perceptions, and research question 2; regarding how to bridge these possible gaps, we felt the need to develop an embracing model that merges the three theoretical parts. This is visualized in figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Summarizing Model of Theory



Source: Authors' graph

The stakeholder theory we have analyzed for this thesis deals with primary and secondary stakeholders or societal, economic and organizational stakeholders; however, organizational identity deals with *internal* and *external* members of the organization. In order to bring together these theories and denominations and make them compatible with out research questions, we prefer the categorizations internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are the individuals that the organization consists of, i.e. employees and managers, while external stakeholders are the actors that have an interest in the organization, but do not operate in it. Examples of external stakeholders are government, society, NGOs, media, customers, competitors and suppliers. This classification facilitates the identification of possible gaps in organizational identity and organizational image since these concepts are partly based on the perceptions of the internal and external members of the organization.

The process of identity beliefs in the theory of organizational identity can be connected with the process of sensemaking in communication theory, in the sense that stakeholders create their own perception of reality based on communicated information and exchanges of experiences. Identity aspirations and identity claims, however, can be seen as means to *achieve* sensemaking and are hence incorporated in the process of sensegiving. In order to attain a common and desirable sensemaking as organizational identity and image, it is crucial to use sensegiving, with communication flowing both to and from stakeholders. Hence, in the figure 8 the arrows are reciprocal in order to indicate the findings from communicational theory that two-way communication is favorable to one-way communication.

3. Method

This chapter aims to explain what methodological choices we have made when executing the collection of empirical data and desktop research, in order to provide understanding and insight in the process of the thesis.

3.1 Choice of Method

3.1.1 Inductive, Deductive or Abductive

In the field of social sciences there are two main methods of how to conduct research – the inductive approach and the deductive approach. The difference in the approaches concerns in what order the data collection and its implications. In the first-mentioned approach the researcher starts off by gathering empirical data in order to deduce the implications of empirical findings on theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In the deductive approach, on the contrary, theories are used to generate testable hypothesizes, data is then collected in order to test the hypothesis (Flick, 2009). There is also an alternative method, called the abductive approach is a mix between the two, which permits the researcher alternate between empirical findings and theory (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2007).

The aim of this thesis is to identify possible gaps in the sustainability vision and actions of WSP Sweden, and how key stakeholders perceive these visions and actions. To seek these gaps we use theory and empirical data as interviews, study of corporate documents and benchmarking. If gaps can be identified, we aim to present a communication plan for WSP Sweden's sustainability work based on empirical findings and theory. In short, we will first study this empirical phenomenon, and subsequently try to understand and analyze our findings using existing academic theory. We will hence apply the inductive method.

3.1.2 Qualitative or Quantitative

Quantitative research seeks findings that can be generalized, while qualitative research seeks to understand behaviors, patterns and processes (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Last mentioned method is appropriate when studying social relations given that it permits multiple perspectives on each situation (Flick, 2009). Also, qualitative data serves to provide illustrative results and are able to provide the actual scientific explanations of facts (2009). Since this thesis aims to identify organizational gaps between actual visions, actions and perceptions, and to form communication suitable to fill these

possible gaps, a qualitative approach will be applied. This approach allows us to study behaviors and patterns that are specific for WSP Sweden and its stakeholders, although without providing a solid basis for scientific generalizations (Yin, 2009; Malhotra, 2007). We do, however, hope that our findings can be used as guidance in other contexts, but keep in mind that our results will be unique for WSP Sweden and cannot necessarily be applied on other organizations.

3.1.3 Case Studies

The qualitative method includes several different approaches, one of which is known as the case study approach. Conducting a case study is a suitable method, when the researcher aims to understand real-life phenomena in depth, provided the researcher cannot control the course of events (Yin, 2009). Therefore, we felt that a case study approach is highly suitable for our particular study. In order to avoid the downsides of the case study method, we will try to fulfill the determinants of the quality of case studies according to Flick (2009); namely, base the results on empirical material, select and apply theory where appropriate, and use a relevant variety of approaches and methods.

Now that we have decided to apply a qualitative case study, we must next decide whether to choose a multiple or single case design. Both methods have their pros and cons: multiple case studies can perhaps be seen as superior given the fact that they allow the researcher to compare and contrast results (Eisenhardt, 1989), whereas single case studies open up for more focused research in one organizational setting (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991) and are more suitable for studies of unique events (Yin, 2009). Since we aim to gain deep insight in one company and one context we will apply the classical single case studies. However, we will execute a benchmarking of other companies regarding their sustainability communication in order to compare WSP Sweden's sustainability communication with other companies'.

3.1.4 Guided, Focused or Survey Interviews

Interviewing techniques can be divided into three categories after how fixed the questions are. In guided conversations, questions are open-ended and interviewers are free to ask about facts and opinions. Guided conversations are constructed more like conversations rather than interviews. Focused interviews, on the other hand, can also have open-ended questions; however the same set of questions must be asked in the research process. Surveys interviews are the most structured and fixed ones and serve to produce quantitative data (Yin, 2009). We have chosen to conduct focused interviews with a proceeding from certain fixed questions but that can be extended and asked in whatever order. The interview questions that we had as basis for the interviews can be found in appendix 2.

In conclusion, we will apply an inductive approach based on a qualitative research method with a single case study. Empirical data will be collected using focused interviews.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Selection of Company

Prior to formulating our research questions or agreeing upon a specific company to study, we decided that we wanted to investigate sustainability communication in a real life context. The company WSP Sweden consults other companies and public organizations in creating sustainable natural and built environments. Sustainability services are consequently part of their daily operations. Our personal assumption was therefore successfully communicating their sustainable activities are essential for business success – a circumstance that made WSP Sweden especially interesting for us and for the orientation of thesis. We wanted to learn how a company's sustainability communication functioned, and what organizational challenges could affect the process. Furthermore, after discussion with WSP Sweden management, challenges in their sustainability communication were revealed which made the company even more interesting as study object. Therefore, we selected WSP Sweden. A challenge for us, however, was that this study had never been performed before, why there is no earlier research method to reproduce. Fortunately, WSP Sweden is geographically limited, so we believed that we had a reasonable possibility to get in contact with key persons and have a good chance being able to go through relevant documents.

3.2.2 Primary Data

Interviews

Based on theoretical research, discussions with management and our own limitations of scope in this study, we identified five key stakeholder groups relevant for WSP Sweden's sustainability communication.

The interviews of the managers primarily aimed to give us an understanding of what the vision of the sustainability communication was, and what sustainability activities they had initiated. The interviews with the identified stakeholders aimed to see how these perceived these activities, so as to investigate whether the sustainability vision and activities differed from stakeholders' perception, which, if so, would indicate a communication gap. Furthermore the interviews served as generator of ideas for the possible communication plan.

After the interviewees were selected, with help from management, we called them and presented us as students from Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) that wrote a thesis about WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. We were satisfied with the majority of our interviews, and suspect that our role as SSE students, rather than WSP Sweden staff, was a door opener in terms of the information our interviewees shared with us. We received, what we believed, openhearted opinions and thoughts, something that may have been more difficult had we introduced ourselves as consultants internal staff. All interviews were about one hour long and were conducted over telephone, except for the manager interviews that were made face-to-face and on repeated occasions. We have chosen not to include names or transcripts of the interviews, as several employees requested the interviews to be

confidential. Table 4 below, however, provides an overview of our interview objects and in appendix 2 the interview questions are attached.

Table 4: List of Interviewees

Stakeholder Group	Interviewee Identification
Managers	Manager 1 Manager 2
Employees	Employee 1 Employee 2 Employee 3 Employee 4 Employee 5 Employee 6
Future Employees	Student 1 Student 2
Private Customers	Client 1 Client 2
Public Customers	Client 3 Client 4

Benchmarking

The benchmarking aims to give an indication of how WSP Sweden performs relatively its competitors in terms of sustainability communication in specific areas, and if they do report on sustainability visions and activities. A quantitative tool will be used, specifically developed by The Institute of Ecological Economic Research in Germany (Institut Für Ökologishe Wirtshaftsforschung, IÖW) for rating and benchmarking companies' CSR communication (IÖW's Webpage). The competitors; ÅF, SECO, Grontmej and Ramböll, were identified as key competitors by the managers as well as allabolag.se. These companies are similar to WSP Sweden in their activities since they also provide sustainability services. In order to make the selection of information as objective as possible, the benchmarking is based on sustainability information in the companies' Annual Reports for 2009 exclusively. All other information such as sustainability information sheets, blogs or newsletters were not taken into consideration, given the fact that it would be impossible to draw a consistent line regarding what information to include and, hence, the choice of sources would risk being arbitrarily selected. Consequently, due to lack of sustainability information in Ramböll's Annual Report, they were excluded from the benchmarking. Table 5 gives an overview of the areas of benchmarking. For a more detailed overview of the criteria, there individual weights and the assessment see appendix 1.

Table 5: Categories for Sustainability Communication Benchmarking

A1	*Company information*, regarding presentation of general financial and organizational facts such as revenue, number of employees and owner structure.
A2	*Vision, Strategy and Management.* This section concerns communication on strategy, management, corporate governance and stakeholder relations and its acquaintance with sustainability.
A3	*Aims and Programs* deals with setting sustainability goals and how to measure their outcomes.
A4	*Respect of Employees' Interests* includes all dimensions of fair employee policy from salary and training to health and diversity.
A5	*Ecological Aspects of Production* touches on use of water, land and energy, waste management and transportation.
A6	*Production Responsibility* concerns environmental, social and customer aspects in the production.
A7	*Supply Chain Responsibility* treats social and environmental issues from the companies' suppliers.
A8	*Social Environment* regards the different societal roles of the companies and its contribution to the society.
B1	*Credibility* grades the assessment, audits, transparency and the board's engagement.
B2	*Comparability* treats used standards, information interpretability and acquisitions from a sustainability angle.
B3	*Quality* touches on the impression of the report such as the text, layout, structure and additional information.

Source: IÖW, Institut Für Ökologishe Wirtshaftsforschung (The Institute of Ecological Economic Research in Germany Secondary Data)

Archival Data

In addition to the interviews, we studied written documents in order to account for the vision of WSP Sweden's sustainability work and their activities. These documents consisted of both WSP Sweden's intranet webpage as well as WSP Group's intranet webpage since the employees at WSP Sweden have automatic access to both from their offices. Furthermore, WSP Group's intranet was linked to a freestanding intranet webpage, *Sustainability Matters,* which also was examined. When the intranets were examined we analyzed the external web-based information from the WSP Sweden's web page. Also printed documents such as annual reports, sustainability brochures, and the employee magazine, *Network* have been studied. In summary, we have aimed at cover all sustainability related information provided by the WSP Sweden. Hence, we have omitted documents written by external partners such as articles in papers. This is due to the fact that if we would have included external information it is hard to control that everything was covered and; hence, there was a risk for biased information selection.

Colleague Poll

Since 2004, WSP Group has executed a yearly colleague poll for all the companies within the group. The colleague poll rendered 1601 interviews for WSP Sweden, and had a percentage of answers of 82 percent. As the poll addressed issues concerning sustainability, corporate responsibility and company

values, it provided us with a couple of interesting insights concerning general employee perceptions of sustainability work.

3.2.3 Selection and Value of Interviewees

We chose to interview six employees of WSP Sweden. The views might differ across the country; hence, the interviewees were carefully selected in order to represent the wide geographic spread of the organization. Two employees was from the very south of Sweden, one was from the north, and three employees work in the middle of Sweden. We also attempted to achieve a representative selection of hierarchical, or professional, positions within the firm, interviewing two local managers, two consultants within differing fields, as well as two employees with administrative roles. However, we can of course not be entirely certain that these individuals represent the views that are spread across the entire organization. To some extent, this fact limits our ability to draw general conclusions about the organization at large, however, we do believe that individual views and perceptions are still highly valuable when we analyze whether sustainability communication has been efficient within the organization.

We chose to interview four WSP Sweden clients, two of them are public and two of them private. This selection was made based on discussions with WSP Sweden's management, also aimed at achieving a representative spread. One public and one private client were from Stockholm, were as the remaining clients were from southern Sweden, and northern Sweden respectively. As we only interviewed four out of WSP Sweden's many clients, it is here also difficult to make generalizations concerning client perceptions throughout Sweden. Client relationships and the interest in sustainability can potentially vary drastically between relationship. However, our aim was to understand the underlying communication interests and perceptions of just a few clients, in order to understand the basic deciding factors that are relevant to WSP Sweden's image and identity in their stakeholder relationships.

Once, we has decided that the interviewees should be of hierarchical and geographical spread WSP Sweden's management helped us contact the right people. Consequently, we contacted relevant people; however, there is a risk letting the management guiding us to the interviewees since the selection is biased. Given the fact that management also has an interest in receiving a view of the organization as correct as possible, we did not find the risk of bias too severe.

3.3 Data Analysis

To facilitate structured collection of the sustainability documents, we summarized archival internal and external data and reflections in one document, this documents serve as basis for the empirical part and the analysis. The interviews were printed as they were executed and the theoretical findings are summed up and presented in the thesis. Next, in order to analyze the desktop research and the empirical findings in a structured manner, we analyzed our findings and presented them with starting point from the subdivisions in the research questions.

3.4 Research Quality

3.4.1 Validity

With validity it is meant whether or not the researcher actually do see what they think they see (Flick, 2009). Three types of validity has been identified, the first, *construct validity,* means having accurate measures for the researched concepts and can be improved by include multiple sources of data in the research (Yin, 2009). The second, *internal validity,* regards the causality and assures that the research really measures what it aims to measure (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and the third, *external validity,* concerns the domain of generalization of the research (Flick, 2009).

We consider the construct and internal validity of the thesis as strong, given the fact that we use accurate sources of data for the case study in the shape of carefully formulated and consistent interviews with identified stakeholders, analysis of documents, theoretical research and benchmarking of selected companies. However, it shall be pointed out that the section regarding *perception* of the sustainability activities is, and should be, subjective since it regards the personal awareness. The benchmarking is assessed by the researcher; however, specific criteria is used in order to decrease the level of subjectivity in the assessment. Furthermore, the same researcher executed all the benchmarking with the purpose of exclude the risk of personal differences in interpretation of the assessment criteria. The external validity is low since this is qualitative research based on a single case study approach. The findings are specific for WSP Sweden; however the overall ideas might be able to apply on broader contexts but shall not be generalized in detail.

3.4.2 Reliability

The reliability of research is determined by whether a new researcher can recreate the study as described in the research, and obtain the same results as the initial researcher (Yin, 2009). Reliability in other words deals with the repeatability of the results (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Hence, in order to attain high reliability the process shall be explained and documented carefully.

According to Yin (2009), conducting good case studies requires certain skills of a researcher, such as good knowledge of the phenomenon, being a good listener, asking good questions and being flexible. In other words, the result of the study to some extent depends on the personal skills of the investigator and; consequently, an inevitable amount of subjectivity affects the results which has a negative impact of the reliability. However, the reliability is strengthen by the fact that all the interviews were recorded simultaneously and summarized in direct connection with the interview. Furthermore, we base all our interviews on specific questions and with a specific aim. However, since *focused* interviews were applied and an *open-ended* approach was used, it was not feasible to follow a printed script to the letter since that would affect the spontaneity of the interview. Also, the interviews were executed in Swedish so there is a risk for loss of facets in the language. Both these have a negative impact on the reliability.

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), validity and reliability measures differ depending on if the study is quantitative or qualitative. Especially the section of whether the results can be generalized. Hence, it is important to have in mind that the *results* from this qualitative case-study does not serve to be

generalized, but rather the theoretical frameweok used in the process to find the results can be used by other researchers.

4. Empirical Findings

In this section, we will first identify the relevant stakeholder groups, which is essential in order to find the key stakeholders of WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. Subsequently, we will account for the in-depth interviews with the identified stakeholders. Finally, we will present our benchmarking of WSP Sweden and its competitors. The findings will be used in the process of finding a possible gap between the sustainability visions, activities and how these are perceived by the stakeholders. Furthermore, the findings will, together with communication research, form basis for the communication plan if the invention of such proves to be needed.

4.1 Identifying Stakeholder Groups

As earlier stated, a stakeholder is a group or person that has an influence on, or is influenced by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of an organization. This quite broad definition can encompass more or less anyone, why we were forced to choose a number of stakeholder that are especially important to the organization at this moment in time.

Following the theory of Mithcell et al., (1997), the salience of stakeholders is determined by three attributes; power, legitimacy and urgency. The identified key stakeholders of WSP Sweden can be both latent and active; hence, possible future employees may be just as an important stakeholder group to managers as current employees. Manager 1 mentioned the following five groups as key stakeholders, describing them as the most salient to WSP Sweden's management at the moment, in the area of sustainability; Employees, Future Employees, Managers, Public Customers and Private Customers. See figure 9. According to Werther and Chandler (2006), the first three identified key stakeholder groups fall under the *organizational* stakeholder category, and the remaining two fall under the *economic* stakeholder category.

As WSP Sweden is a subsidiary of WSP Group, we also contemplated selecting WSP Group as a stakeholder, in order to bring in the owner perspective. It is not unthinkable to assume, for example, that the sustainability profile that WSP Sweden is currently aiming to communicate is based on directives, or guidelines, from its owner – the WSP Group. However, bringing in WSP Group into the analysis of internal stakeholders was complex, as this would extend the scope of the analysis considerably – in adding a international dimension to our study. Furthermore, the relationship between WSP Sweden and WSP Global is intricate, as several managers are managers in WSP Sweden as well as WSP Group at the same time. Having limited our study to WSP Sweden, we therefore decided to focus on the stakeholders that are the "targets" of the company's sustainability communication. However, even though it is not the focus of our study, we will briefly return to the relationship between WSP Sweden and WSP Group in the concluding words of our analysis, as it was proven to be too important to disregard entirely.

We will also discuss WSP Sweden's external communication in relation to the stakeholder group "competitors". However, competitors are not considered key stakeholders in our study, as they are mainly used to benchmark the external communication of WSP Sweden.

As researchers, we discussed this choice of stakeholders, and decided to accept Manager 1's suggestion for our study. We observed that Manager 1 did not expand the stakeholder concept to include broader, concepts – such as "the public", "the future", "our children", or even "the environment". It merely includes the five stakeholders that in the management's view are considered to be the most powerful, legitimate and urgent in terms of sustainability communication. We first thought that representatives from civil society were missing: however, we limited ourselves to study these stakeholder groups since they are closely linked, basically they deal with customers and co-workers, and hence a deeper and more focused analysis could be made. Although we would have potentially liked to expand the realm of stakeholders following our literature review of CSR stakeholder theory – the choice of stakeholders, we believed, signaling WSP Sweden's management view of sustainability communication, was the most relevant to our particular research questions.

After deliberations, this final model displays the selected key stakeholders of the company:

Figure 9: Key Stakeholders of WSP Sweden's Sustainability Communication

Source: Authors' model

4.2 Interviews and Communication Documents

In order to address research question one, we have structured our empirical findings in three sections: Sustainability Visions, Actions, and Perceptions. As earlier stated, the findings will also form idea basis for the communication plan if such shows to be needed.

4.2.1 Identification of Channels

A more detailed study of sustainability communication first requires a brief overview of the different channels that the Company uses to convey its image. Manager 1 divides the platforms into external and internal channels:

External and Internal Communication Channels

1. Projekt & Affärer (Projects & Business): "Projects & Business" has a reaches 22,000 readers each month. Projects & Business includes sector and industry information, and brings up examples of sustainability projects being conducted at the moment.
2. WSP Sweden's website: The website attracts approximately 25,000 visitors each month, and is therefore a key communications channel.
3. Brochures: WSP publishes a number of brochures describing their sustainability work. These brochures are available at WSP offices.
4. Consultants: Manager 1 also identifies consultants as a key communication channels. Employees are in contact with clients, and are carriers of the WSP Sweden's brand in their daily activities.

Exclusively Internal Communication Channels

1. Swedish Intranet: WSP Sweden has an extensive intraweb, which is visited by all employees on a daily basis. The intraweb includes all types of shared relevant information, including sustainability communication.
2. Global Intranet: When logging in on the corporate computers the automatic startpage is the global intranet; hence, this forms an essential channel for internal communication.
3. Network: Network is an internal magazine, which is distributed to all WSP employees. The last issue of Network was entirely dedicated to Sustainability.

Apart from the "Consultant" channel, all internal and external communication will be referred to as "Documents" in the following empirical section.

4.2.2 Sustainability Vision

In this section, we will first account for sustainability objectives: what are the main goals and objectives of the WSP Sweden's sustainability work, according to the Managers. Next, we will take a brief look at key documents and policies that WSP Sweden has made available on their website.

Sustainability Vision: Interviews with Management

According to Manager 1, the fundamental objective behind WSP Sweden's sustainability work is firstly to satisfy stakeholder demands. Externally, WSP Sweden first of all wishes to fulfill its customers' demand of sustainable services. Secondly, WSP Sweden is convinced that a progressive sustainability strategy will lead to new business opportunities, in new areas of activity and with new customers. In fact, sustainability work and business development are closely linked, and they are actively looking to find new opportunities by specializing in sustainable services.

Manager 2 has a similar view of the company's sustainability objectives. Firstly, WSP Sweden works with sustainability in order to be able to promote itself towards specific client groups. Secondly, clients use WSP Sweden's sustainability solutions in order to be able to market themselves. Thirdly, sustainability work is motivated by fear of being caught, i.e. WSP Sweden must live up to its own standards, both in the face of its employees and in the face of other stakeholders. Manager 1 also highlighted that an undertaking of responsibility generates the need for the company to "walk the talk" internally, i.e. the organization must live by the sustainability standards and values that its corporate policies preach.

Manager 1 provided us with a model of how WSP Sweden Management currently defines their idea of corporate sustainability. WSP Sweden recently decided to abandon the term *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR), as they perceive this term as old-fashioned, and instead, replace it with *Sustainability* – an, in their view, more modern and understandable concept.

According to Manager 1, the process of narrowing down the scope and abandoning the CSR-term in favor of the more modern concept *sustainability* was very difficult and time-consuming. Defining the word had been, and still is, complex and problematical. In Manager 1's view, WSP Sweden's understanding of sustainability stems from the issue of population growth and a planet under pressure, which creates a global need of finding sustainable ways of taking care of planet Earth. In essence, Manager 1 argues that WSP Sweden's idea of sustainability is interchangeable with the concept of "environmental consciousness", a concept that is also integrated as one of the WSP Group's five corporate values.

Like in the case of Manager 1, Manager 2 brought up by the complexity of defining the sustainability concept, and what it actually means to WSP Sweden on a practical level. Sustainability is, in his view, quite uncomplicated to deal with on a general level and on a large scale – where one can communicate policies, values and general guidelines. Sustainability is also quite easy to handle on the detailed, micro level, as sustainability then becomes the choice between specific materials and energy, for example, in particular projects. Manager 2 identifies the big challenge as developing a reasonable sustainability idea on the intermediate level, at which he is of the opinion that the concept easily becomes dramatic, fuzzy and difficult to deal with.

However, Manager 2 objected to Manager 1's narrow definition of sustainability, stating that sustainability is a more comprehensive idea: "Fundamentally, we want to do what is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable" (Manager 2).

Sustainability Vision: Documents

WSP Sweden has a number of policies and codes, all published on their public website. Environmental consciousness is integrated as a value in the Company Vision:

"…to be the outstanding supplier of specialist and integrated services in the built and natural environment" (WSP Sweden's website).

The company vision is based on five core values, one of which is sustainability. In WSP Swedish

translation of the vision's core values, "Sustainability" is translated by the term "Environmental Awareness". WSP Sweden's defines its goal as ensuring that "... sustainability is built into everything we do through our long-term commitment to reducing the impact of our business on the environment" (WSP Sweden's website).

The Sustainability Policy, developed in 2009, is according the Communications Manager the most relevant, up-to-date document. The Sustainability Policy expresses goals related to social, economic and ecological factors.

"… We will live up to the expectations on our sector, both by offering knowledge that contributes to an ecological, economically, and socially sustainable future, and by supporting the development of sustainable regions, cities, buildings, infrastructure, transport systems, as well as industrial processes" (WSP Sustainability Policy 2009).

WSP Sweden will live up to these goals by:

1. *Integrating sustainability in expertise, advice and solutions to clients.*
2. *Building competencies and developing WSP services in order to reach new markets and commercial opportunities.*
3. *Managing the environmental and social impacts of WSP activities, to the benefit of all our stakeholders.*
4. *Serving as a beneficial participant in WSP communities.*

(WSP Sustainability Policy 2009)

These four points constitute the core of the WSP Sustainability Policy, and are shared by all companies in the WSP Group.

4.2.3 Sustainability Actions

In this section, we aim to describe the sustainability actions. First, we will describe the actions described to us in interviews with management representatives. Subsequently, we will give an overview of the actions described in WSP Sweden's written communication.

Sustainability Actions: Interviews with Management

Manager 1 says that action is sometimes difficult to coordinate in the international WSP Group, as each company wants to act on its own, culturally specific manner, while still adhering to the greater group. There are however a number of country-specific initiatives that are unique to WSP Sweden. For example, the company has partnered with a school in South Africa in an HIV project, it supports the Swedish charity organization Stadsmissionen, the City Mission, and also works with a project called "Sunwater", a technology that makes unsafe water drinkable by using solar energy. WSP Sweden has also instigated a number of internal initiatives, such as a bicycle pool, a car policy, energy measurements at offices, and official travel policies constitute some examples of internal, employee-related activities that the entire organization has incorporated over the past few years.

Sustainability Actions: Documents

Under the section "WSP Energy Gives Energy" on the website, WSP Sweden presents it projects related to helping clients with energy issues. A large number of projects are described under this section, including the infrastructure development of the town of Masdar in Abu Dhabi – the world's first carbon dioxide-free city (WSP Sweden Website). The website also provides extensive information about the multitude of sustainability projects that WSP Sweden is involved in.

Approximately 13 percent of WSP Sweden services are dedicated to environmental- and energy solutions, in which they consult clients on how to minimize their environmental footprint (WSP Sweden Website). Sustainability projects are described under sections for different industries and sectors – such as WSP Environmental, WSP House and Industry, WSP Management and WSP Industry and Energy. These projects are also all possible to access under a specific Sustainability section, as well as an Environmental section. A large part of the projects focus on finding sustainable energy solutions for WSP Sweden's clients.

A recent project of the Company was the "Cycling CEO", Rikard Appelgren, is communicated on the WSP website, and internally in the WSP organization. During the spring and summer of 2010, Rikard Appelgren embarked on a bicycle tour around Sweden to visit all of WSP Sweden's local offices. It was possible to follow the CEO's now finalized journey across Sweden on the WSP Sweden website. The objective of the journey was to generate good PR for WSP Sweden, as well as to raise money for Solvatten (Sunwater), the earlier mention technology product that helps Kenyan families attain access to clean drinking water.

4.2.4 Sustainability Perceptions – Internal Stakeholders

In this section, we aim to examine how employees and managers perceive WSP Sweden's sustainability visions and activities. Through in-depth interviews, we aim to understand WSP Sweden's employees' impressions and views concerning WSP Sweden's sustainability communication.

Sustainability and the Engineer Identity

One consultant was quite surprised when we asked him about sustainability, initially asking, "Why are you asking me?" as he, as an engineer, perceived himself as relatively detached from the idea of sustainability. In our interviews, both employees and managers brought up the identity and tradition of the engineer as conflicting with the relatively new idea of sustainability: One engineering consultant expressed his was against the idea it: "Knowledge, expertise and the art of engineering are the core and heritage of this company – not sustainability and environmental consciousness. But concrete and bridges just aren't cool anymore" (Employee).

Manager 2 identified the engineering mentality and tradition as something that may be difficult in a sustainability context: "Engineers calculate and do the math, and then they are finished with their work. Sometimes, they don't look at the whole picture. People are shy, so it is difficult to use them as examples. Therefore, it is hard to show others how easy it can be to work with sustainability."

Whereas Employee 4 addressed this issue in a slightly different way: “Sustainability is a very worn concept, engineers and potential employees can easily see through a poorly constructed policy. WSP Sweden has to show what it is actually doing. Sustainability work has to be personalized and be made concrete. Therefore, middle management must be stimulated and motivated to promote this work on a local level”. This quote expresses the need to concretize WSP sustainability work in order to adapt to engineers’ way of thinking – by showing actions.

Several consultants point out that this difficulty in accepting and relating to the idea of *sustainability* could be attributed to the drastic change that as occurred over the past few years – twenty years ago, nobody spoke of sustainability (Employee 2). Today, the company’s internal web and all communication channels are flooded with sustainability information (Employee 1).

Motivation for Sustainability work

The WSP Sweden Management believes that many employees seek to answer the question “what’s in it for me?” in their sustainability work. They believe that employees need a personal motivation to actively engage in sustainability work. Many employees do express a rather pragmatic, business-oriented attitude towards sustainability: ”The sustainability question is important in the sense that it generates money for WSP”, states one consultant (Employee 5). The strongest argument for WSP Sweden to develop and market sustainable solutions is according to him that it will generate money and fulfilling client needs, in helping them live up to laws and regulations. However, other employees, such as Employee 4, are motivated by their personal ideological interest in environmental issues, actively pushing for a more thorough take on sustainability at WSP Sweden. For (Employee 4) there are two components to this broad issue: one, practical questions, i.e. choosing physically using good, recyclable materials etc., and two, a question of each individual’s personal ethical conscience. Manager 2 states that the fundamental ethical question that must be answered in all of WSP Sweden’s work ultimately is*, “Why are we doing this?”*

According to Manager 1, some employees, referred to as “Environmental Talibans” never seemed to be satisfied with these initiatives, continuously calling for a more comprehensive outlook on sustainability, pushing for the initiatives such as fair-trade coffee and organic fruit in all offices. Manager 2, in turn, points out that these young, active employees to an extent put pressure and stress on WSP Sweden management, as they never seem to be satisfied. However, management is equally troubled by the part of the workforce that appears to be uninterested in sustainability.

Practical Obstacles to Communication

One local manager expresses a motivation to engage in sustainability work, but states that she lacks the time and tools to prioritize sustainability – it is a “question of time and money” (Employee 2). Manager 2 and two more employees all contend that employees lack the tools needed in order to share information. Good examples of sustainability work are seldom lifted up. According to Manager 2, this is partly due to what he calls a shy engineer mentality – but it is primarily a matter of resources and tools. Currently, this type of work is entirely up to the local managers, who are under high pressure for time, and lack the resources and tools to prioritize sustainability (Employee 2, Manager 2). One employee

states that she has not even had the possibility to read the latest issue of the internal magazine "Network" due to her high workload and lack of personnel. Manager 2 confirmed her situation: "I don't believe there's a lack of will. If you're an engineer, you think, 'which tools should I choose, which methods'? And then you look at the project budget. That's why it is important to develop concrete tools. Managers and consultants don't have the time to speak to their colleagues."

Defining Sustainability

Just like WSP Sweden's managers, employees appear confused when attempting to describe the concept of sustainability. For example, Employee 4 relates the sustainability concept to her own role in the organization. In her work, she often asks questions such as "What is sustainable design, actually? Does it exist at all?". Others ask: "what is a sustainable bridge? Is it long lasting, or environmentally friendly?" (Employee 3). Manager 2 sees this challenge when trying to communicate the concept of sustainability in external information – for example, what is sustainable versus unsustainable traffic management? One consultant intuitively asked, "What do you mean by sustainability? Do you mean a bridge that lasts?" when interviewed about on the topic (Employee 3).

Organizational Distances

One local manager, who operates in the far North of the country, demands a higher degree of interaction between the Stockholm Headquarters and the local, more remote offices. He senses a gap between Stockholm headquarters and the offices in the countryside, as well as a lack of communication across the distance:

"Decisions are taken in Stockholm, without the input from others. They just pop up on the internal web. I would prefer a scenario where the local offices are at least given the chance to express their views, even if we don't all agree with each other… All those policies are put on the shelf, material is written for appearance's sake." (Employee 1).

A local manager at a local office in the south of Sweden is also concerned that communication is lacking: "I don't receive many signals. Communication doesn't work very well. All I ever hear about is policies. There is definitely a deficiency there. Communication is bad" (Employee 2).

It is however difficult to determine whether this gap merely can be attributed to the distances separating different offices, or whether there is a general communication gap between management and employees. In fact, the Employee 4 based in Stockholm, right next to WSP Sweden's management, holds the opinion that "…the high ambitions of the WSP Sweden management are sometimes difficult to notice in the grassroots of the organization" .

Employee 4 states that there is a great disparity among different business areas in terms of interest and commitment to sustainability; "There is an active interest and push for more sustainability work. Our business area is very engaged and motivated however, other departments are less interested and do not really care".

Employee 2 believes that this spread can be explained by the differing cultures of the various local offices. However, she is of the opinion that the general push for sustainability comes from all directions

and all stakeholders, creating a quite united ambition to move forward. Employee 3's perception is, in contrast, that there is a gap between different business areas: the more "humanistic" areas, such as environmental specialists and architects, are by far more enthusiastic about the sustainability work than for example engineers who develop bridges and roads.

Customer Demands Drive Sustainability

According to interviews with several consultants, internal sustainability development is to a large extent driven by client demands, with clients "keeping the initiative" (Employee 3). According to Manager 2, the degree of engagement within WSP Sweden correlates with the demands from outside stakeholders. He illustrates this correlation by describing the example of WSP Sweden Management, a business area within WSP Sweden that has collaborated with exceptionally demanding public clients that have strongly pushed for sustainable solutions and services. This client demand has in turn generated top sustainability expertise and an increasing interest for sustainability among the employees and managers within the specific business area.

The more skeptical attitude, "Those of us who operate in reality know that clients don't care," is extracted from an interview with Employee 1. This same manager stated that sustainability work is quite unnecessary, as clients do not ask for sustainable solutions; rather, clients ask for "expertise and proficiency". Furthermore, "Reality is all about executing projects, doing business and generating money" (Employee 1).

Manager 2, on the other hand, calls the clients "schizophrenic", in that some have high demands on sustainability, and others are entirely indifferent. According to that interviewee, the most significant reason for not taking action in terms of sustainability is that clients have not asked for it.

One- or Two-Way Communication?

In several of our interviews, coworkers expressed frustration concerning the lack of dialogue and discussion concerning sustainability-related decisions and consultancy projects. "We need a management who listens to us. At the moment, there is no dialogue, nor opportunities to give input. Nobody asks me for my ideas – I have to push for them myself." (Employee 1).

The interviewed Employee 4 mirrors this opinion to a degree, stating that it "misses having and hearing discussions concerning some of the more controversial projects that WSP works with". For example, WSP Sweden is one of the consultancy firms active in developing Förbifart Stockholm, a debated infrastructure project that is currently being built in Stockholm. Employee 4 believes that it is important for WSP Sweden to have the courage to discuss these questions on a strategic business area level. Currently she does not know if this discussion exists at all. An initiative that is looked upon with slight confusion is for example the "Cycling CEO", as it raises questions concerning his usefulness – "Wouldn't he be of more use if he dedicated his time to other activities?" (Employee 4, Employee 1). The Employee 3, on the other hand, expresses his frustration with the car policy and bicycle policies, as they in his view are entirely unsuitable for the great distances and cold in northern Sweden.

However, several employees mention that the breakfast seminars that are regularly hosted at the WSP Sweden headquarters are a positive initiative in terms of information sharing of the company's sustainability work: "Just the fact that they exist is good symbolically" (Employee 4, Employee 5, Employee 3).

4.2.5 Sustainability Perceptions- External Stakeholders

In this section, we aim to examine how potential employees. Private customers and public customers perceive WSP Sweden's sustainability visions and activities and how they think it can be improved.

Potential Employees' Perceptions

We interviewed two students from the Royal Institute of Technology (RIT), Student 1 and Student 2. Both have been in contact with WSP as student representatives for the Company at recruitment events and as supplementary workforce on different occasions.

Student 1 does not think that WSP Sweden has a history of communicating a "sustainability image" any more than other companies, and his impression is that WSP Sweden's sustainability profile is rather new. Presently, however, there is an increasing awareness of the company at the RIT, as WSP Sweden has started to attend career fairs and now sponsors "The Reflecting Engineer" (Den reflekterande ingenjören), a student organization focused on sustainability and engineering. Previously, WSP Sweden has been highly invisible in comparison to its competitors (Student 1).

Student 2's impression is that WSP Sweden has come far in their sustainability work. She is convinced that WSP Sweden should develop the current sustainability profile. A distinct sustainability profile could be especially successful at this stage, as they are yet rather unknown among students in general.

There is a tremendous interest for sustainability among the student body at the Royal Institute of Technology, which is to the advantage of WSP Sweden if the company continues to construct a credible, genuine sustainability profile (Student 1 and Student 2). Student 1 believes that a strategic choice could be for WSP Sweden to communicate an active stance on sustainability, and show their commitment and ambitions: "It would be unwise to "brag" and claim to be something one is not. The struggle to becoming sustainable is however relevant to communicate." (Student 1).

Private Customers

The Client 1 is one of WSP Sweden's key clients. It is a private actor with a developed sustainability philosophy. The company has a company slogan that reads, *"Building for the future"*, and figures that unless there is a sustainable future, the company will have no business opportunities. For them, it is natural to integrate the sustainability concept in their supply chain, especially when they are hired by demanding customers. In its collaboration with WSP Sweden, the Client 1 includes WSP Sweden in its sustainability work. A representative from Client 1 points out that sustainability is an integrated part of their activities; activities automatically become sustainable. Therefore, it is not very important that WSP Sweden communicates sustainable projects of its own.

Client 1 does not perceive WSP Sweden as more sustainable than its competitors. Rather, it sees itself and its customers as the ones driving the sustainability work forward. The factor that decides which company the client chooses to purchase services from, is simply a matter of areas of expertise. Client 1 is not aware of whether WSP Sweden is involved in sustainability work of its own.

Client 2, a second private actor, on the other hand, is slightly less reserved towards sustainability work and sustainability regulations in general. Client 2 hires WSP Sweden for small and large projects, in his case, it works with a relatively small budget with ten employees and 30 million SEK a year. In his work with smaller projects, sustainability is less of an important issue. Client 2 does not know anything about sustainability work, and sustainability has no influence over his collaboration with WSP Sweden.

Public Customers

We interviewed two public clients, which work with sustainability in their core business, developing and changing transport systems in cities, as well as city environmental development. Both clients have the impression that sustainability is part of the core business of WSP Sweden, as they often hire them to work with environmental projects.

These public customers are, not surprisingly, motivated by a different logic in their sustainability work. The two public clients both employ highly environmentally engaged, politically conscious employees, and subsequently have high internal motivation to work with sustainability. In both organizations, price and money is given a different weighting if compared with the private actors – money can never be an obstacle of an environmentally friendly solution. However, there is a responsibility to taxpayers' money.

Neither of the two client representatives have any specific perceptions of WSP Sweden's sustainability activities. However, they both point out that sustainability appears to be important to WSP Sweden, as it is entirely integrated in the company's commercial services: "My impression is that sustainability is part of their core business, since that is what they work with. I don't have the impression that WSP Sweden works separately with sustainability" (Client 3). Sustainability is neither seen as a determining factor in the public organizations' collaborations with WSP Sweden, rather, price and quality are still the decisive criteria in all governmental procurement processes.

Client 3 has perceived that WSP Sweden is engaged in sustainability work through its seminars and reports, although he knows nothing about concrete sustainability projects. For example, WSP Sweden held a seminar about sustainable transports in the Stockholm Region, at which a symbolic ecological lunch was served. In addition, he often comes across WSP Sweden representatives when he is looking for some kind of technical or environmental information. He perceives WSP Sweden employees as knowledgeable and trustworthy, a view that is shared by Client 4. Both public clients believe the best communication to them as clients is that WSP Sweden continues to do a good job, publish interesting reports, and continues to organize sustainability-related seminars.

4.3 Benchmarking the Competitive Landscape

In this section, we aim to compare, rate and analyze the sustainability communication of WSP Sweden's main competitors in order to see whether they do communicate on its sustainability visions and actions.

Furthermore, it serves to identify key areas for improvement for their own sustainability communication and; hence, develop ideas for the communication plan.

4.3.1 Results of the Sustainability Communication Benchmarking

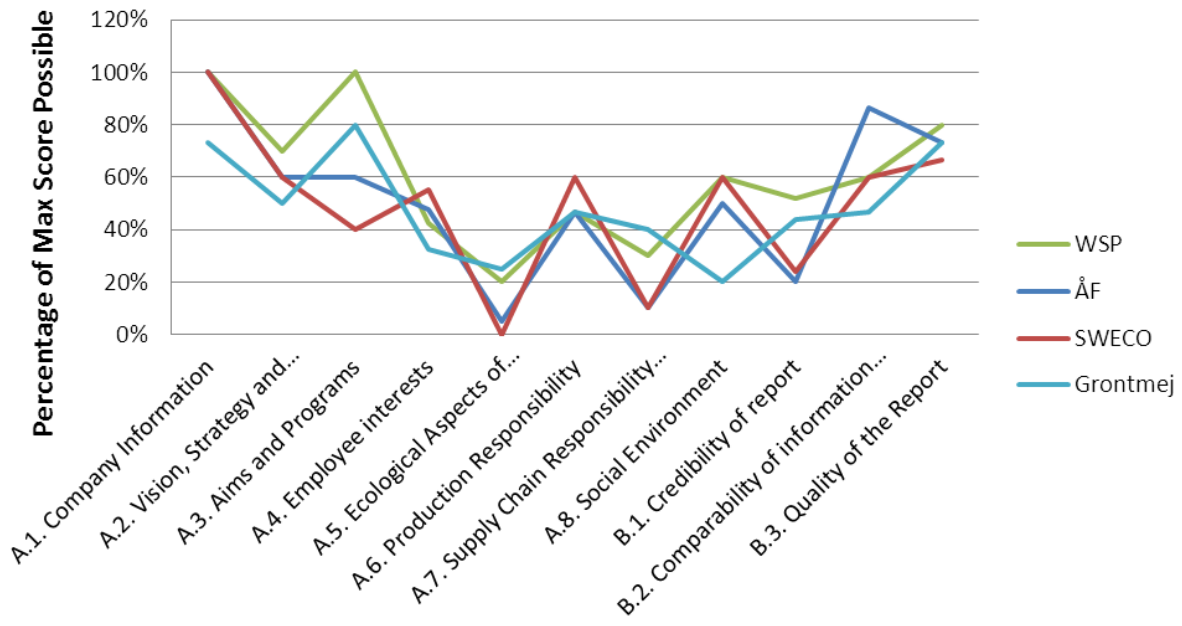
The results of the benchmarking are visualized in figure 10 below. The vertical axis show to what percentage the respective companies fulfill assessment criteria it the sustainability categories on the horizontal axis. These criteria and assessment directions can be found in detail in appendix 1.

The benchmarking reveals that the sustainability communication of WSP Sweden generally keeps the same level as its competitors. The companies' performance are close but WSP is in the top in six out of eleven of the sustainability communication areas derived from the annual report. For example, WSP better communicates sustainability in its Vision, Strategy and Management. Furthermore, WSP does score 100 per cent on Aims and Programs, and hence surpasses its competitors by far. This is a result of the fact that WSP Sweden clearly explains its sustainability goals, methods and achievements.

SWECO and ÅF have correlating peaks and drops in production, supply chain, social environment and credibility. They score exceptionally low on the ecological aspects of production and supply chain responsibility. This means that they deliver poor reporting on sustainability related issues in the production, such as energy and water consumption, emissions, transporting, accidents waste management and land use. However, SWECO rates relatively highest, 60 per cent, on Production Responsibility. This is mainly due to the fact that they take sustainability into account throughout the production and the use of the products and services and the customer focus. In general, it can be stated that the benchmarked companies fail to take costumer focus into consideration.

Grontmej presents overall less satisfying sustainability communication than the other companies; however, they are better than its competitors on providing information of the ecological aspects of production and the supply chain management. This is most probably due that they apply Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI) Standards.

Figure 10: Communication Benchmarking



Source: Authors' graph

Conclusively, WSP Sweden existing competitive advantage is within communication of Aims and Programs. They have to improve within the area of employee interests where they score considerably lower they their competitors; also the supply chain and the ecological aspects of production provides room for improvement for all the benchmarked companies.

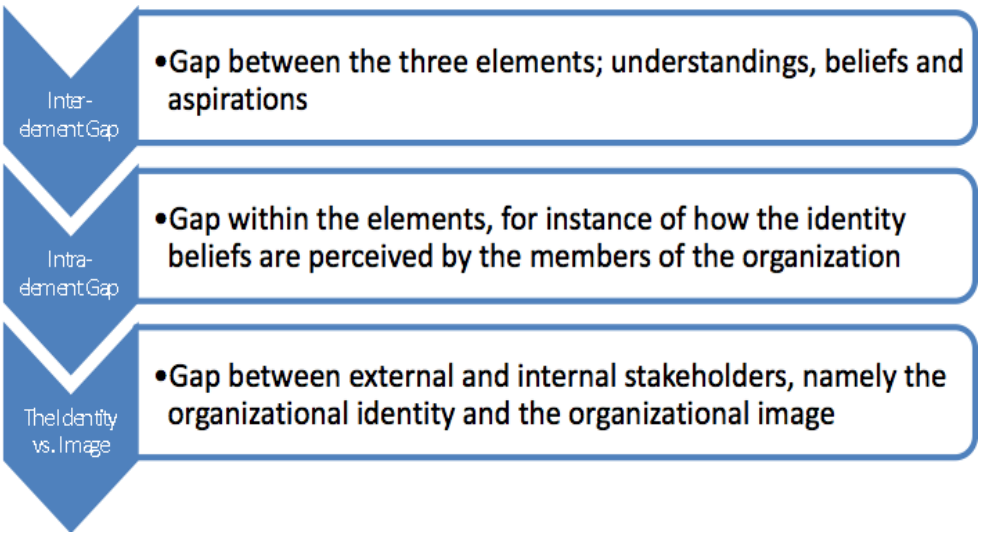
5. Analysis

This section aims to answer the research questions 1 and 2 through analysis of the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis.

5.1 Addressing Question 1

This section aims to answer if there is a gap between the WSP Sweden's sustainability vision, sustainability activities, and how these are perceived by the identified key stakeholders. For this section of the analysis, we have chosen to make use of theoretical concepts concerning organizational theory, stakeholder theory and sustainability. The structure is based on figure 11 that summarizes communication gaps from the theory part of the thesis.

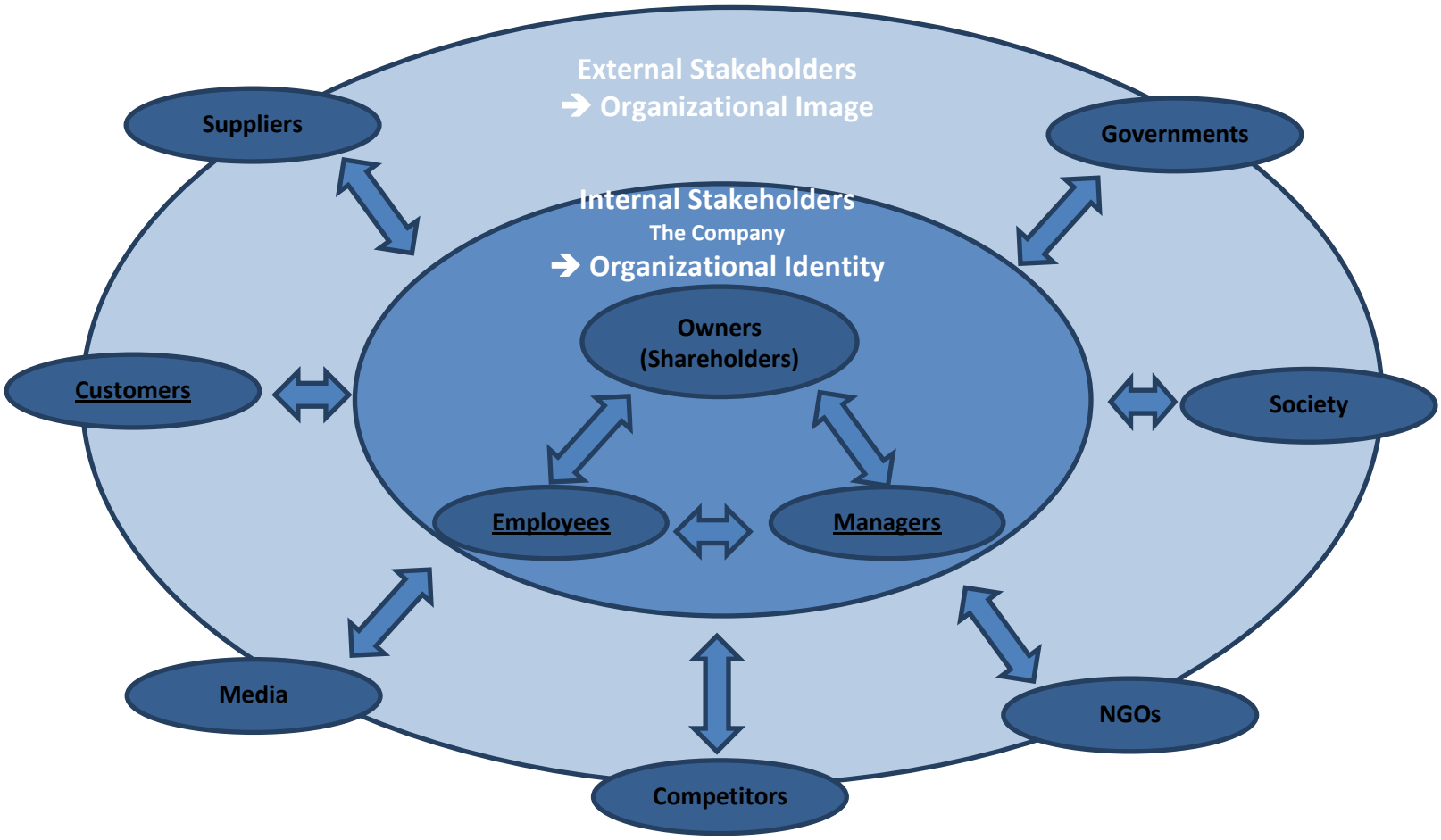
Figure 11: Examples of Gaps



Source: Authors' graph

The following model, Figure 12, also introduced in the theoretical section of this thesis, illustrates internal as well as external stakeholder relationships. In the relationships, and within each stakeholder group of an organization, the gaps described in Figure 11 may appear. The first two gaps concern the inner circle of Figure 12. Communication is illustrated by the connecting arrows, as well as by the spheres, inside which intra- as well as inter-element gaps potentially exist. The arrows illustrate potential interaction and sensemaking between and within the different stakeholder groups. The model is based on Organizational Identity, Stakeholder Theory, and Sustainability Communication.

Figure 12: Summarizing Model of Theory



Source: Authors' graph

5.1.1 Internal Stakeholders and Organizational Identity: Inter-element gaps

Judging from WSP Sweden's high scores in the sustainability communication benchmarking, one would expect that the company orchestrates clear, well-functioning sustainability communication. However, our interviews show a different picture. WSP Sweden's identity claims, i.e. the communicated documents, visions and goals, do not correspond to the general identity beliefs of WSP Sweden's employees. Despite the looks of it, our interviews have also shown that there is a vast variation of beliefs among the company's employees in terms of how the company is actually positioned in its sustainability work, where some employees see great progress, whereas others are unsatisfied. This fact is highlighted by the mentioned WSP Colleague Poll, which indicates that employees perceive that WSP

Sweden's environmental work has actually deteriorated in recent years. These two circumstances indicate that there is what Lerpold et al (2007) describe as an inter-element gap between identity claims and identity beliefs in terms of WSP Sweden's internal perceptions of the company's sustainability work. This inter-element gap can be related to the inner sphere of Figure 12, in which a gap has evolved between employees and managers within the company. There has been no common sensemaking, as illustrated by the figure's connecting arrows.

Similarly, another inter-element gap can be analyzed using Morsing's (2003) concept of over-communication. Even though management literally fills the internal web with sustainability communication, some employees perceive the provided policy information as being excessive. Paradoxically, however, our empirical findings simultaneously indicate that several employees feel that there is *too little* sustainability communication, and are unsatisfied with the signals and guidance they receive from WSP Sweden management in Stockholm. The analysis one can make of this, is one-way sustainability communication actually appears to increase the gap between management and local offices, as information simply appears on the internal web instead of being the result of an interactive communication process – as described by Morsing and Schultz (2006) in the stakeholder involvement communication strategy. Hence, there are several inter-element gaps between identity aspirations and beliefs, in terms of the company's documented visions and objectives.

5.1.2 Internal Stakeholders and Organizational Identity: Intra-element gaps

This section of the analysis also discusses the inner section of Figure 12. We explore the perception of shared key concepts both within and between stakeholder groups – and attempt to understand how different stakeholders understand common aspects of the company's sustainability communication. Potential gaps occur within the stakeholder circles of Figure 12. Ultimately, we have also found intra-element gaps in the external sphere of the organization.

A shared perception of the concept of "sustainability" can assumed to be key when formulating internal and external communication on the topic. Therefore, we were surprised by the fact that the sustainability definitions that we received from two high-level WSP Sweden representatives differed drastically. Furthermore, we were informed about the struggle that the company is having in terms of making the concept clear and understandable for themselves, and in turn communicable to others. Not surprisingly, we discovered that WSP Sweden management's ambiguous perception of sustainability is reflected on the employee level. Due to this confusion of the key word "sustainability", an intra-element gap has emerged within and between management and employees, as well as all three elements as described by Lerpold et al. (2007); identity claims, identity beliefs, and identity aspirations.

A second intra-elementary gap that we discovered, specifically focused on identity aspirations, was the gap between different organizational members' interest and ethical motivation behind performing corporate sustainability activities. Although WSP Management's pragmatic, business-oriented attitude towards sustainability appears to be reflected in the stance of several employees, the attitude is far from coherent in the entire workforce. Our interviews show that employees view WSP Sweden employees work with sustainability in very different ways – some seeing it as entirely useless, while

others are highly motivated to develop sustainability practices, using ethical arguments as guidelines. Further, WSP Sweden's management believes that many employees seek to answer the question "what's in it for me?" to justify their sustainability work. The management's attitude suggests that the WSP workforce ethical motivation is primarily egotistical rather than altruistic, i.e. focused on maximizing each employee's personal gain. However, not only is this perception false – interviews indicate that egoistic attitude is not what is stopping employees from engaging in sustainability work – rather, employees instead seem to lack concrete tools and sufficient information channels to implement, share and develop their sustainability work. This gap also displays a clear lack of two-way communication, as referred to by Morsing and Schultz (2006), in that management is unaware of what actually motivates employees across the organization.

The identity of the engineer emerged as a central theme in our interviews. Several interviews mention the difficulties of working with engineers, claiming that the identity and values associated with an engineer are not congruent with values and ideas related to sustainability communication. This disparity exemplifies yet another intra-element gap that WSP must handle. As Markkanen (1998) argues, the unwillingness to identify oneself with the concept of sustainability may be explained by the fact that WSP Sweden's employees as well as management are forced to understand matters that are not entirely familiar to them, while at the same time, the communication of these matters are too complicated or ambiguous. At WSP Sweden, the personal, individual conviction and area of interest overrides the organization's interest in sustainability.

Our interviews also indicate that the interest in sustainable services and solutions varies largely depending on which business area and which geographic location the organizational member belongs to. Actions, understandings, beliefs and aspirations in terms of sustainability differ depending on business sector, location and role in the company. The quote "…those of us who operate in reality know that clients don't care", is extracted from an interview with a local manager, and illustrates the fact that there is a significant gap between the management in Stockholm and the local area offices. The quote describes a reality out in the countryside, contrasting it with the management world in Stockholm, which is insinuated to be detached from reality. However, we have also seen that certain clients demand sustainable services.

The quote also shows that there is a wide gap between client demands across Sweden, i.e in the external sphere of the organization, as clients in the north "do not care". Overall, customer demands appear to be the driving force behind the degree of employee motivation towards sustainability – in other words, this interest is developed by external pressure, more than internal motivation. Hence, we have identified an intra-element gap that stems from differing client demands, as well as what appear to be local differences in the interest in sustainability. External pressure and demands appear to conflict with internal aims and the search of a coherent identity. Porter and Kramer (2006) criticize an organizational attitude that gives in and chooses to follow stakeholder demands blindly, as they believe it leads to an unsustainable, shallow strategy. And indeed, one can question whether such an internal disparity is sustainable in the long run – there is perhaps, otherwise a risk of the inner sphere of Figure

12 actually bursting. As we will see in the action plan, motivation shall preferably come from within and from the outside.

There is a substantial gap in WSP Sweden's identity in terms of sustainability – in several local offices sustainability is not something that in, Albert and Whetten's phrasing (1985), "distinguishes" WSP Sweden from other companies or from competitors. As we have seen, sustainability ambitions and demands vary between public clients and private clients, between different geographical areas, as well as between areas of activity. Our interviews show that humanistic business areas are more progressive than engineering-oriented areas, and public customers are more demanding than private clients. Moreover, there appears to be a clear connection between client attitudes towards sustainability, and WSP Sweden employee attitudes – sustainability is less interesting to consultants in business areas and places where sustainability awareness is at an early stage among customers. This correlation indicates that there is a lack of CSR sensemaking within the organization – there is no coherent understanding, or culture, around sustainability. Rather, employees share the culture attitude of their customers. This fact serves contributes to the intra-element gap within the company, and serves as a challenge in WSP Sweden's overall stakeholder relations as well – as WSP Sween must develop its own sustainability culture, and at the same time communicate with both the employees with a great interest in sustainability as well as the employees that do not have an interest in the matter.

Unless WSP Sweden develops a coherent organizational identity in this field, future development and credibility in the area may be difficult. As we will see in the next section, this lack of coherence creates difficulties in the company's external communication.

5.1.3 External Stakeholders and Organizational Image: Image vs. identity gap

WSP Sweden's management sees itself as leading in sustainability services, and communicates this fact in its written information. The benchmarking exercise that was conducted shows that WSP Sweden indeed communicates its commitment in its external communication. However, our interviews with clients indicate that these sustainability visions and activities have trouble actually reaching the stakeholders. Moreover, our client interviews indicated that WSP Sweden is not perceived as exceptional in the area of sustainability. Instead, customers cannot tell the difference between WSP Sweden and its competitors in this field. Furthermore, the internal sustainability work of WSP Sweden is not seen as very important by customers, instead, they simply demand that WSP fulfils laws and regulations requirements when they are involved in projects with the client. In terms of sustainability, there is hence a gap between the WSP Sweden's internal identity and the clients' external image. If we again return to Figure 12, this gap occurs between the inner and the outer spheres of the model.

We can also see an identity image gap in terms to WSP Sweden's external communication in comparison to the communication of its competitors. According to the benchmarking exercise, WSP Sweden does well in terms of the content of its external communication, winning over its competitors in as many as six communication areas. WSP Sweden's existing competitive advantage is especially within its communication of Aims and Programs, which deals specifically with expressing the goals and visions of the company's sustainability work. However, as our interviews with clients show, WSP Sweden's

advantage is apparently neither fully perceived, or necessarily seen as relevant, by external stakeholders. Hence, WSP Sweden do communicate sustainability through the Annual Report, but this is not received by the key stakeholders since they apparently tend to not scrutinize the reports, why it is relevant to find alternative channels of communication. This is addressed in the action plan.

As previously mention, we chose not to explore the relationship between WSP Sweden and its international mother company, WSP Group. However, we can speculate whether the poor performance of WSP Sweden's external and internal sustainability communication stems in complicated management relations between WSP Sweden and WSP Group. This would again echo the words of Markkanen (2007), according to whom WSP Sweden's management has been exposed to an unfamiliar concept, as well as fuzzy communication, in turn, leading to inefficient communication. WSP Sweden's management has itself not incorporated the concept, which also would explain the intra-element gaps in regarding the definition of sustainability. In other words, the arrows of Figure 12 are lacking, or damaged, in this communication. If sensemaking and sensegiving around the concept of sustainability doesn't exist on management level, it is understandable that the message becomes disparate and confused when communicated further.

5.1.4 Organizational Gaps

We can thus conclude that there are a number of organizational communication gaps within WSP Sweden. The disparity between local offices, the differing demands from clients, the business area attitude variation and the scepticism towards management communication results in several forms of inter-element gaps, intra-element gaps and image-identity gaps.

Hence, the answer to research question 1 is:

Yes, there are several gaps between the WSP Sweden's sustainability vision and sustainability activities, and how these are perceived by the identified key stakeholders.

Consequently, we will now move on to addressing research question 2, the next step of the thesis regarding what communication plan WSP Sweden should adopt in order to bridge this potential gap?

5.2 Addressing Question 2:

This section aims to address what communication plan should WSP Sweden adopt in order to bridge these gaps? This will be done through analysing the role of the key identified stakeholders sequentially, and suggest a general direction that WSP Sweden's management can choose in order to bridge its organizational identity gaps in terms of sustainability. The communication plan in appendix 3 provides a more detailed recommendation of what actual measures WSP Sweden should take.

5.2.1 Sustainability Communication

Stakeholder Management

As the case of WSP shows us, and as Vrioni and Bronn (2001) contend, the management of stakeholder relationships lies at the core of CSR. WSP Sweden must understand the interests, motivations and needs

of their relevant stakeholder. Unfortunately, the company appears to be lacking a functioning, interactive communication concerning sustainability at present. External stakeholders lack knowledge what sustainability activities WSP Sweden is involved in. Similarly, several employees point to a lack of dialogue concerning both sustainability projects as well as less sustainable ones. Following the thoughts of Morsing and Schultz's (2006) three stakeholder communication strategies, WSP Sweden must actively address their less ethical projects in their dialogue with the staff, otherwise, the company runs the risk of increasing scepticism among stakeholders, even seeming hypocritical. In line with the stakeholder involvement strategy of Morsing and Schultz (2006), Vrioni and Brom (2001) state that increased knowledge will decrease stakeholder scepticism – why opening up for a discussion about more controversial could potentially generate an active involvement and an increased interest among employees.

Private and Public Customers

In terms of WSP Sweden's relationships with private and public customers, consultants expressed a clear understanding of customer demands, and their views were largely reflected in our interviews with customers. WSP Sweden's employees are aware of how different customers perceive them, and what customers expect from them as consultants. The local identification, however, appears to be stronger than the identification with the sustainability aspect of the WSP Sweden brand, creating disparity and internal value conflicts within WSP Sweden.

In the case of corporate CSR information, Morsing (2003) explains that regular communication rules do not apply. While firms are expected to communicate their CSR work, the use of CSR as a very visible component of PR and marketing is often regarded as distasteful (2003). In our interviews, it became clear that customers were uninterested in marketing; rather, they prefer that WSP Sweden simply continues to do a good job, and carries on writing interesting reports and organizing seminars. Since the interest in sustainability evidently varies among employees and customers, communication should in the WSP case, just as Morsing (2003) argues, therefore not be in marketing mode; as such an attitude could result in irritation and appear distasteful to customers. Such a strategy well corresponds with Morsing's (2003) concept of that sustainability communication shall be directly targeted to the respective stakeholder groups and conducted in scientific mode.

Employees

Interestingly enough, WSP Sweden's perhaps most important sustainability communication practices, what Morsing (2003) calls *auto-communication*, in which the senders, i.e. the employees, are also the receivers of the information. In the case of WSP, employees, being consultants, are to a large degree also responsible for customer communication, and are therefore a key target for sustainability communication. Currently, WSP Sweden's management mainly employ what Morsing and Schultz (2006) call an *information strategy*, which hardly involves employees in the dialogue concerning sustainability. By involving employees to a greater extent, management can take advantage of the role of consultants as auto-communicators, in order to incorporate the notion of sustainability within the WSP workforce.

Future Employees

Future employees should according to this line of thought also be involved in a two-way communication regarding WSP Sweden's sustainability strategy. As they sponsors student events, student clubs, and engages students in ambassador programs, developed two-way communication already appears to be well on its way. WSP Sweden can take this relationship even further, by engaging these potential future employees in concrete idea generation concerning sustainability.

5.2.2 Choosing the Right Strategy

In summary, there is a disparity between the visions, actions and perceptions of WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. Several employees perceive communication as extensive, but mainly consisting of policies. Others feel that they don't receive any signals from the management, all they see is policies. These communication glitches indicate that WSP Sweden is having trouble of performing credible action, i.e. "walking the talk" of what the organization preaches in its sustainability policies. Paradoxically, the company has published an abundance of policies and regulation documents; however, these do not appear to be very appreciated or taken in by the organizational members. This phenomenon is closely linked to Morsing's (2003) discussion of over-communication, i.e. WSP Sweden has flooded its employees with information, but unfortunately, suspicion and distaste are the results. Furthermore, benchmarking indicates that WSP Sweden does have ambitious sustainability visions and activities according to the Annual Report 2009. This and the tendency of information overflow, together with the lack among stakeholders to perceive WSP Sweden as sustainable, point to a problem of "talking the walk".

The firm view of WSP Sweden's management is that the fundamental objective behind the company's sustainability work is to "satisfy stakeholder demands" (Manager 1). Our results show that customers have considerable influence over WSP Sweden's sustainability work, and attitudes towards sustainability vary largely depending on which customer consultants happen to be collaborating with, creating value gaps within the organization. This circumstance is, as Porter and Kramer (2006) claim, problematic; as sustainability conducted with such an attitude risks becoming "a series of short-term defensive reactions – a never-ending public relations palliative with minimal value to society and no strategic benefit for the business" (Porter and Kramer 2006, p. 4). WSP Sweden's sustainability focus must instead come from within the organizational culture in a credible interested way in order for it to constitute a competitive advantage. WSP Sweden's concept of sustainability has to become a defined and deeply rooted in the organization.

WSP Sweden's key obstacle to communicating its sustainability strategy is however that the organization conducts one-way communication with employees and stakeholders, which has failed to cement the concept of sustainability, creating substantial identity gaps. We therefore believe that Morsing and Schultz's (2006) theory concerning three communication strategies can serve as a useful base in WSP Sweden's future strategy.

We recommend that WSP Sweden engages in more mutual, symmetrical communication, in order to bridge the gaps that we have found to exist primarily within the organization. In this model,

communication is a two-way process between the organization and the stakeholder, continuously building on the involvement of both parties. Employees within WSP Sweden will according to this model gain insight in, and be able to influence potential strategies and ideas pertaining to sustainability. According to this involvement strategy, the company should not only influence but also seek to be influenced by its employees, private customers, public customers, and future employees. Ideally, both WSP Sweden as well as its stakeholders will be open to change, as a result of engaging in this symmetric sustainability communication model. The strategy rests on the ideas of *sensemaking* and *sensegiving*, as WSP Sweden and its key stakeholders would take part in a collective creation of meaning, as well as the sending of meaning, in this way tackling the complexities inherent to stakeholder management.

Hence, external stakeholders should also be involved in this sustainability communication strategy; however, without dictating it. As our empirical findings show, customers already influence WSP Sweden's sustainability work, as they actually are the initiators of the majority of WSP Sweden's external sustainability projects. Instead of letting customers be the main initiators of sustainability work, WSP Sweden can involve them in dialogue by continuing to organize the mentioned popular breakfast seminars, and by engaging in interactive discussions with customers.

The relationship with future employees, i.e. students from the RIT, is however still largely one-way – in that WSP Sweden is the sender of information, and students are receivers. The relationship could be developed into true two-way communication, if WSP Sweden involves students in idea generation and in interactive activities relating to sustainability.

We recommend WSP Sweden to redefine what sustainability actually means for them as company. This should be done in dialogue with its stakeholders, especially company employees. Once the definition is clear the message of their sustainability aims and activities must be communicated in a scientific and transparent way, targeted to specific stakeholder groups through two-way communication, in order to be credible and avoid information overflow.

6. Conclusion

In this section we aim to summarize the result of the findings, followed by a section of critical views of the thesis. To finish, we open up for discussion and ideas regarding research and managerial implications that might originate from the thesis.

6.1 Conclusion and Summary

The aim of this case study was to examine the sustainability communication of the engineering consultancy company WSP Sweden. Our first research questions was:

Is there a gap between the WSP Sweden's sustainability vision, sustainability activities, and how these are perceived by the identified key stakeholders?

Our empirical findings indicate that there indeed were gaps between visions, actions and perceptions. We identified intra- and inter-elementary gaps, as well as image-identity gaps between WSP Sweden and its stakeholders. The first question hence led us to a second:

If sustainability communicational gaps can be identified, what communication plan should WSP Sweden adopt in order to bridge these potential gaps?

Following our study, we can conclude that sustainability communication is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from organizational identity – rather, communication is an extension of an organization's sense of self. Unfortunately, the disparate attitudes that we have come across, the doubts and the vagueness surrounding the issue from top to bottom in the organization, currently hinder the company from adopting an identity that is coherent with the values that it is trying to convey internally and externally.

Our analysis leads to the normative conclusion that sustainability communication benefits from being an interactive and communicative process, why the management of WSP Sweden should involve its relevant identified stakeholders more actively in formulating, discussing and creating their sustainability work. Following the argumentation of Morsing and Schultz (2006), we suggest that the company moves towards a stakeholder involvement strategy, which assumes active dialogue and sensemaking together with stakeholders, even about more controversial, perhaps unethical projects. We believe that such a strategy can serve to bridge the organizational identity and communication gaps that are creating holes in the WSP Sweden's culture, and employee dissatisfaction, that the company is currently struggling with, as organizational members and key stakeholders actually would be involved in formulating this identity.

If the management aims to continue pursuing and communicating sustainability in its operations, which we are convinced it should as it is a big actor in this field of business, these ideas and values must originate from the actual decision-making core of the organization, namely the management itself. Otherwise, suspicions of window-dressing are inevitable features in stakeholder attitudes. Only then can an organization such as WSP Sweden truly begin to "walk the talk".

Furthermore, WSP Sweden shall improve its communication to its identified key stakeholders regarding what sustainability visions and actions they actually do perform – using a "scientific mode" (Morsing, 2003). In other words, they must "talk the walk". This has been addressed in a communication plan provided in the appendix 3.

We believe that these issues are indeed relevant for numerous companies today, as this study has shown, sustainability communication is a delicate area. Companies must find a way to balance stakeholder demands with diverging internal visions and activities. Furthermore, the theoretical framework and the process used to identify and bridging these gaps might serve as inspiration for other researchers and organizations to identify and bridge potential sustainability communication gaps.

6.2 Criticism

The primary purpose of this thesis has been achieved, i.e. identifying, analyzing and addressing potential communication gaps in WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. However, several methodological and empirical limitations deserve to be mentioned.

Since we chose a single case study approach, we realize that our results are not necessarily possible to generalize – they are primarily relevant for WSP Sweden itself. The case study is based on interviews with a number of WSP Sweden employees and stakeholders. Our empirical findings and our analysis are based on the answers from these stakeholder group representatives. Hence, even though we came across a wide spread of opinions and attitudes, we cannot be certain that the collected impressions from these interviewees represent an entirely balanced picture of the situation at WSP Sweden. However, as Bryman and Bell (2007) emphasize, in qualitative studies as this thesis focus is rather whether the process and not the final results that are possible to generalize. We do believe that the chosen theoretical framework, especially the summarizing model, and the process of finding and bridging the sustainability communication gaps can be applied in future research.

Moreover, during the course of this thesis, we have worked closely with WSP management. This case study can therefore be criticized for having trouble balancing the "consultancy" role with the "researcher" role. However, we became aware of this dilemma at an early stage and have remained conscious of this risk throughout the thesis work, and; have therefore worked actively to ensure that we conduct the thesis from a scientific point of view. However, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that this relationship has had influence over our objectivity and our ability to criticize the company in a sufficient manner.

6.3 Research Implications

As WSP Sweden exemplifies, sustainability is today an integrated part of companies' strategies. The field has shifted from being a matter of cosmetics and damage control, into becoming an integrated aspect of business culture. This fact lays the foundation for a number of interesting topics for future research, involving new theoretical perspectives. Stakeholder theory is no longer sufficient to explain the intricate need and nature of CSR and sustainability communication. It would, for example, be interesting to learn more about how a sensemaking perspective could develop our current understanding of sustainability and how to communicate it most efficiently. Furthermore, this thesis did not include the global and cultural aspects of sustainability communication. We encountered; nevertheless, regional differences. Hence, it would be interesting to include an additional aspect in the process of identifying sustainability communication gaps; namely the geographical..

6.4 Managerial implications

Our analysis leads to the normative conclusion that the management should involve relevant identified stakeholders more actively in formulating, discussing and creating their sustainability activities. Following the argumentation of Morsing and Schultz (2006), we suggest that the WSP Sweden moves towards a "stakeholder involvement strategy", which assumes active dialogue with stakeholders, even in more controversial, dubious projects. We believe that such a strategy can serve to increase the sense

of transparency, bridge possible organizational identity gaps and tackle employee dissatisfaction, as organizational members and key stakeholders actually would be involved in formulating this identity.

Most importantly, the thesis shows that it is hardly possible to communicate a credible sustainability identity unless management, the decision-making core of the organization, has created a common understanding and genuine stance regarding sustainability. Of course it is impossible to avoid gaps entirely – there will always be individual variations of opinion within any given organization. But just as Porter and Kramer (2006) state; external stakeholders are important, letting external actors constitute the biggest driving force behind an organization's sustainability work is problematic. Motivation must come from within.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Competitor Benchmarking

8.1.1 Assessment Criteria

Tool to assess CSR communication policy (Institute for Ecological Economic Research (Germany))

A. Content

A.1. Company Information

A.1.1 Sales, revenues, employees, locations

Weighting: 5

In the report the following data is stated concisely and is quickly accessible and is compared to the values of previous year:

a) total revenue and income, if company is obliged to disclose

b) total number of employees and information to their international distribution,

c) total number of sites and information to their international distribution

d) presentation of relevant developments in these areas.

A.1.2 Business areas, product and customer groups

Major divisions and product groups according to their economic importance (eg sales - or profit, number of employees) are named.

A breakdown of sales and sourcing markets according to regions is provided, as well as an overview over customers by their sector of activity (as long as it makes sense).

Relevant changes from previous year are named and explained.

A.1.3 Ownership and affiliated companies

A comprehensive overview of ownership is provided (shareholders / owners), minority stakes relevant for CSR are accounted for.

A.2. Vision, Strategy and Management

A.2.1 Values, vision and strategy

Weighting: 20

Corporate strategy stated in the report involves principles of sustainability (social, environmental and economic aspects) and is long-term oriented.

In addition, corporate values, corporate sustainability vision (eg in the form of guidelines, codes and guidelines) and long-term business objectives are explained.

The report presents key social and environmental impacts of business activities, it describes the impact of social and ecological environment on business activity (opportunities and risks for business success and competitiveness). In either case both the current status and likely developments are stated.

The company shows, how its communication plan and goals as well as specific measures are derived. Consequences for strategic planning, procurement and sales are stated.

A.2.2 Corporate governance and control

The report shows, how sustainability issues are integrated into the decision making process of the company (structural and personnel integration). This especially concerns the board.

Internal practices or international standards to be used in dealing with conflicts and corruption are explained. Specific corruption risks as well as procedures to deal with conflicts are stated.

The company describes occurred cases of corruption and critically assesses the way it dealt with them.

Rules and structures to ensure legal compliance in environmental law, labor rights, competition law are stated. Major violations are identified, complaints in terms of customer protection are named.

A.2.3 Management approach and tools

The report provides information on essential management systems and the way they are integrated into sustainable development. It includes a description of management systems and standards or guidelines in terms of environmental protection, risk management and accident prevention, human resources, health care. Coordination between management systems with focus on monitoring and control is accounted for (organizational chart?).

Management coverage of domestic and international sites is explained, a positive trend (over 3 years) can be observed.

A.2.4 Stakeholder Relations

A systematic overview of information and communication with internal and external stakeholders is provided. Management of stakeholder expectations, identification of major domestic and international topics as well as most important stakeholder groups are explained. The company states its current principal activities with respect to stakeholders, there goals and proceedings, results and consequences. Stakeholders, involved in preparation of the report are listed, their interest explained.

A.3. Aims and Programs

A.3.1 Are the Goals Attained?

Weighting: 20

It is systematically, logically and clearly written, what sustainability relevant goals have been attained during the report period. The goals set previously are explicitly stated. Failure to attain them or modifications made to them are openly named and explained; further measures to attain previously missed goals can be named.

A.3.2 Objectives and measures

Major sustainability goals are derived from the sustainability strategy and presented as a bundle. They are formulated in a such a way, that the achievement can easily be controlled and quantified, if possible. Major goals are accompanied by relevant actions. It becomes clear, that the company set itself ambitious goals, as their relevance to politics (e.g. national sustainability policy) or industry goals is stated.

A.4. Respect of Employees' Interests

A.4.1 Pay Policy

Weighting: 15

The report provides a comprehensive overview over the corporate pay-policy, its implementation and development in the last 3 years, involving salary, incentive payments and provisions. If applicable, conditions of temporary employment are described. It is explained, how far the pay policy is acceptable for the workers. It is desirable to illustrate the policy of major sites operating in low-cost countries with practical examples. For countries without public pensions or health insurance, standards of social minimal care are stated.

A.4.2 Working hours

The report provides a description of corporate rules and standards for working hours along with rules and procedures to ensure that they are respected. It may include specific information regarding regions or worker groups, such as working hours per day or week.

The report describes models used for determination of flexible working hours, names goals this helps to achieve and proves such information with figures. Working hours models are illustrated not only generally, but also for specific worker groups (e.g. single parents, senior employees) and/or countries and regions.

A.4.3 Education and training

It is shown, how the company builds on individual expertise of employees through education and systematic trainings for workforce. The report contains a corporate statement to education and continuous development of all employees in a coherent workforce development framework.

A description of how individual competence and needs for further education and support are discovered. An overview of focus areas in trainings and other forms of internal knowledge and competence sharing, as well as a statement of their sustainability role are also desirable. Examples of specific educational events are given, along with an assessment of how representative they are for the whole company. Besides, the report contains figures (3-years-trend) of training hours or expenses (at least for domestic sites), differentiated for groups of employees (e.g. junior/senior workforce, management, trainees).

A.4.4 Employees' rights

Changes in number of employees is stated and illustrates, in how far the company respects employees‘ rights. A reference to the relevant Code of Conduct used is included.

The company states, that the freedom of union and the right of collective negotiations are observed. References to organs of employee representation are included (e.g. worker unions). General rules of cooperation with employees are laid out and applied to conflicts of interest; in case when corporate rules are changed, procedures to make those bearable for workers are described. If relevant, compensation is provided through overseas sites.

The report contains information about the development of workforce (number of employee, ratio of half-time or temporary contracts), hires and fires, domestically and internationally. The 3-year-trend is described. Especially the influence of mergers and acquisitions, business sales, outsourcing and site relocation is included.

A.4.5 Diversity and equal opportunities

The report includes rules that hold for the whole company and ensure and promote diversity and equality and chances (meaning non-discrimination on terms of ethical or cultural background, religion, age, sexuality and sex, disabilities). Ways to translate these rules into structures and measures (e.g. diversity management, diversity controlling) are described, whereby special importance is attached to number and management of complaints.

A.4.6 Gender equality

The report contains rules that hold for the whole company and ensure equal rights for men and women. Ways to translate these rules into structures and measures (e.g. gender mainstreaming) are described, whereby special importance is attached to number and management of complaints.

The company provides examples of how equal rights of men and women are promoted and states, whether they are representative for the whole enterprise. Specific topics of interest are trainings and career development of female employees as well as possibilities to combine family and work life for employees of both genders.

Finally the report provides figures and trends on the ratio of women to total number of employees, in mid- and top management along with information on differences in payment between men and women.

A.4.7 Work place safety and health care

The company explains its employee health care policy and presents programs and measures to ensure security at work, health care and eventually prevention of diseases, generally and with respect to specific dangers (e.g. for employees dealing with chemicals). Furthermore, the report contains information on accidents (reportable accidents per 1 Mio.work hours, comparison to previous year data) and days lost (with definition).

If specifically relevant (construction, chemicals, pharmaceuticals) the company states measures taken to prevent professional diseases and quantifies occurring cases.

A.4.8 Job satisfaction and employee retention

Measures, with which the company fosters employee satisfaction and loyalty and sets itself apart as a good employer, are accounted for. The report contains information on surveys conducted with employees on these issues (questionnaires, feedbacks, possibilities to file complaints) and their results.

The report contains information on possibilities of development, career and company life participation of employees, as well as measures taken to improve employees motivation, related to workload, conditions of work and working climate and management quality. Desirable is also information on level and development on employee fluctuation (3-year-trend).

A.5. Ecological aspects of production

A.5.1 Energy consumption and climate change

Weighting: 15

Trends in energy consumption and efficiency, climate protection goals are described, their status and relation to political climate protection goals and industry conventions are outlined. It becomes clear, what measures were taken and in how far the goals were attained. If power is generated internally, efficiency of the power generation facilities is stated and proven with figures. If relevant, the company describes its participation at the European emission trading. Quantitative data regarding use of

renewable energy is provided (ratio of internally generated and acquired power supply). Following data must be provided (3 year trend):

Energy consumption in absolute terms

Energy consumption according to energy carriers: electricity, hearing, mineral oil, gas etc.

CO2 emissions form own facilities and form acquired energy (with calculation methods explained)

Emissions of other greenhouse effect gases (CH4, N2O, HFCs, PFC, SF6, if important) in CO2-equivalents.

Regional differentiation of information is desirable.

A.5.2 Noise and air waste emission

The company explains emissions and air waste related to its production process. The report contains information in how important are the emissions and what the 3-year trends have been. Special attention is paid to acid emissions, emission of NM-VOC5 and heavy metals and particle emission. If especially relevant, concepts and measures to reduce pollution are explained. If important, notes on noise emission, its consequences and measures to encounter them are included.

A.5.3 Raw materials

The report contains a comprehensive overview of sources materials according to substance and quantity. Efficiency of material and its development is commented on; it is desirable to show material costs as percentage of total operating costs. Statements are made about recyclable and ecologic materials used (how important are they in the general context?). Special ecologic features of materials and resources are named.

Material shortages concerning the company are accounted for; concepts to reduce dependence and ensure availability of resources are explained. Following quantitative data (3-year-trend) are necessary:

Use of primary resources

Use of other raw materials

Use of other products and spare parts; transport and package noted separately if important

A.5.4 Waste management

Exact information is given on total amount of waste, types of waste and the ratio of dangerous waste to total waste. If relevant, waste export is commented on. When waste occurs in huge amounts or is dangerous, concepts to avoid, recycle and safe treatment of it have to be included.

Following quantitative data (3-year-trend) are necessary:

Total recyclable / non-recyclable waste

Waste classified into dangerous and non-dangerous types

Total amount of exported dangerous waste, with information on receiving countries (or groups of countries)

A.5.5 Water consumption

The report contains exact data on water taken and used. If especially relevant, concepts and measurements are presented to reduce use in absolute terms or make it more efficient. Region specific water use is explained.

Besides, the company provides information on emissions of toxic materials into water related to its production processes. If relevant, heavy metals, nitrogen, phosphor, CSB and BSB are focused on. In cases of special importance, concepts and measures to reduce emission of toxic materials are presented.

Following quantitative data (3-year-trend) are necessary:

Water used

Waste water emitted (differentiated btw.clear and heavy liquid)

A.5.6 Logistics and transport

The report contains a comprehensive presentation of transport directly caused by the company. When possible, quantitative data (3-year-trend) are provided to:

Transport volume (supply, distribution, business trips)

Types of transport (air, rail, water, pipelines

Environmental consequences

The logistic concept pursued as well as concrete measures to reduce transport and diminish its environmental impact (also for employee transport to work) are presented. Figures prove importance of specific examples.

A.5.7 Production and transportation accidents, emission of chemicals, fuel, oil

Information is given on production accidents, storage or transport which involved harmful emissions or a possibility of such. Occurred damage is assessed (physical damage, employees and land concerned), amounts and reasons of chemical, oil emissions (even if not caused by accidents) are accounted for. Information may be skipped if no accidents occurred in the report period. Companies producing significant amounts of dangerous substances should make a statement even in that case, though.

Following quantitative data (3-year-trend) are necessary:

Number of damage cases in production and storage

Frequency of transport accidents: on streets, on rail, on ship

A.5.8 Protection of nature, land, biodiversity

Business activities in nature as well as their impact on ecosystems are presented (as long as those are crucial). If needed, the concept of protection of nature and variety of species is explained (notation and assessment of danger, control, protection concept and measures). Concepts used to limit use of land are explained. Figures describing the use of land as well as opening of new land along with balancing or „reparation“ measures are presented, as long as those are important.

A.6. Production Responsibility

A.6.1 Social and environmental aspects of product development

Weighting: 20

It becomes clear, that the company is determined to continuously improve its products and services regarding their sustainability profile along the whole supply chain and product lifetime. Sustainability requirements to product development are dealt with, most important aspects are underlined. It is shown, that sustainability issues are integrated into product development and that relevant instruments (ABC-, Cross-Impact-Analysis etc.) are used therefore. The choice of examples of products used is founded on their value for sustainability or their weighting in the product assortment. It becomes clear, that the company follows an ambitious sustainable product policy, e.g. through lists of investments in R&D to support sustainability.

A.6.2 Ecological compatibility of products

The company shows, to what extent products and services offered are environmentally friendly. Attention is paid to the whole lifetime of products, data on raw materials is provided. The choice of describes products and services is founded on their importance for the whole portfolio.

If relevant, the assortment of products and services has to be assessed according to the following criteria:

Energy consumption and climate relevant emissions during product lifetime

Toxic emissions and special environmental risks during product lifetime

Material and resource efficiency:

Use of recyclable or ecologically degradable materials

Recyclability of products and reverse supply chain policy

Offer of resource efficient services

A.6.3 Consumer focus and information

If relevant, the company explains how products and services offered comply with social needs and respects specific demands of minorities. Following aspects can be included:

Health, security and protection of young people

Pricing policy in markets where competition is limited

Process of finding out about customer need and wishes, e.g. through customer surveys; policy and€ practice of customer information and customer protection

Use of information on sustainability and compliance with ethical standards in advertisements

Product information with regard to usage behavior

Information on customer rights (complains, return of products)

Data protection, policy of dealing with customer data and established systems to ensure data security.

A.7. Supply chain responsibility (upstream)

A.7.1 Social responsibility in the supply chain

Weighting: 15

Explanations are provided on how work and social standards are implemented in the upstream supply chain, including direct suppliers and their suppliers. Work and social standards are presented, related to internationally approved norms and standards (e.g. UN human rights). Certified management systems of suppliers are named, or there is a reference to an active system that demands and ensures implementation of those standards (w.g. codes of conduct, procurement charters etc). Regional focuses and focuses of business areas are presented based on an analysis of relevance.

Supplier policy can be qualified as “fair” (implementation support, economically realistic demands, long-term orientation of business contacts etc.)

A.7.2 Environmental responsibility in the supply chain

A.7.2 The company sums up, how environmental standards are implemented with its suppliers and partners. This includes environmental impact of activities of direct suppliers, their suppliers and environmental impact of products delivered and machines used for production.

Certified management systems of suppliers are named, or there is a reference to an active system that demands and ensures implementation of those standards (w.g. codes of conduct, procurement charters etc). Regional focuses and focuses of business areas are presented based on an analysis of relevance.

Supplier policy can be qualified as “fair” (implementation support, economically realistic demands, long-term orientation of business contacts etc.)

A.8. Social environment

A.8.1 Local responsibility as investor, employer, customer and supplier

Weighting: 10

The report contains information on consequences, that company’s activities as investor, supplier, employer and customer have on the community/region it operates in. If applicable, the relations in has with authoritarian regimes is described. The company also accounts for measures taken to manage its influence on the community/region, e.g. by investing into local infrastructure. This information has to be provided on sites that are especially relevant from the point of view of sustainability.

A.8.2 Tax and subsidies

Taxes and subventions (e.g. research grants, employment subventions) are accounted for. Major changes are pointed out.

A.8.3 Contribution to politics and governance

The company states, that its national and international lobbying activities are aimed at cooperative and considerate management of sustainability issues. It engages in sustainability initiatives (in its industry or in a specific region) and participates at the development of sustainability standards.

A.8.4 Corporate citizenship

The report contains a well-founded concept of corporate citizenship, together with a description of activities based on it (e.g. in the domains of sports, culture, science etc). Financial support (charity, sponsoring), cooperation with non-profit organisations ans employees‘ engagement are accounted for (corporate volunteering). The report states clearly, where and at what time the engagement took place. It notes the financial impact of corporate citizenship activities to the company as a while, proves this information with figures.

B Context

B.1. Credibility

Weighting: 10

B.1.1 Board statement

Board responsibility for sustainability is credible. Relations between business strategy and key sustainability requirements are shown. Major results (success or failure) of the reporting period and goals (areas of action and aims) are stated and explained.

B.1.2 Substance: Focus on crucial aspects

All major aspects of social and environmental responsibility are presented and assessed. Links to further information contained in other reports or online can be provided therefore. Choices of focus areas are stated and explained. Activities, not relevant for sustainability are not put into spotlight.

B.1.3 Openness: Naming major challenges and unsolved problems

Environmental and social problems, caused by the industry and the company are named. Relevant problems, conflicts and unsolved questions are pointed at openly. Ambitious solution concepts are presents. Industry conventions to comply with are described.

B.1.4 Audits

The company provides information about the proportion of internally and externally audited sites or business areas, whereby the audits concern issues of environment and employment, at domestic and international sites. Principal results and their consequences are discovered.

Following figures are provided:

Number (or ratio) of sites underlying external environmental audit

Number (or ratio) of sites underlying external audit of work conditions

The ratio of audited sites is assessed in the scope of the company as a whole.

Remark: Audit of suppliers are accounted for under „Supply Chain“.

B.1.5 External assessment

Results of systematic external ratings (ecological, ethical ratings), external reports or reviews of stakeholder opinion are presented. Positive, as well as negative aspects are mentioned. Critical approval of external parties as stated.

B.2. Comparability

B.2.1 Communication of accounting rules

Weighting: 5

Information is easy to follow, time and space units (business areas, sites) are clearly named. The degree, to which the information is applicable to affiliates, is also described. Accounting rules are defined in

order to include activities and regions relevant to sustainability. Major ownership relations are accounted for, as well as minorities relevant for sustainability.

B.2.2 Communication of principles of finding and interpreting information

Data and information allow for quantitative time comparisons, comparisons with other companies, cross-check with goals. Possible inaccuracies in data are pointed to. For calculations, computation procedures are described, standards used (e.g. from the Greenhouse Gas Protocol) are mentioned.

Time series contain references to influence factor (sites relocations, change of assortment). Data is organized to allow for comparison despite the changes. Comparisons with other companies are objective, limitations are named.

B.2.3 Major developments during report period

The company explicitly reports sites‘ relocations, openings and closings of sites, for both domestic and international locations. Business acquisitions, sales and mergers are noted with consequences for sustainability explained.

B.3. Quality

Weighting: 5

B.3.1 Structure

The report structure allows to easily overview and access principal topics and content and to look for more detailed information.

This structure is clear, logical and understandable, the report contains a tables of contents and probably an Index of objects or something similar.

Related subjects could be linked together. For reports having both a print and an online version the same or two closely related structures must be used. The „sustainability pages“ are presented on the company web site in a visible and centralized way. Pure Internet reports provide search and selection options, adapted to the need of different user groups.

B.3.2 Text

Text aims to authentically transmit the sustainability challenges the company is facing and the progress it has made. It is stringent, hands-on, understandable wording is used. Terms and abbreviations are defined, formal or technical processes are accessibly explained. Actors, time, reasons and consequences of events are clearly named.

B.3.3 Layout

The layout of the report supports reader-friedliness and understanding of content. It is neatly structured through titles, subtitles, topic descriptions a.o. Additional information (possible on the Internet) is underlined. Illustration and photos are relevant, commented on and presented in a consistent way.

Internet reports are provided with an easy-to use print layout

B.3.4 Pictures

For visualization and easy understanding of material (descriptions and figures) the report contains pictures, graphs and tables. Those provide short comprehensive illustrations to complex information, organizational structures, technical processes etc. Graphs illustrate data and facts about company achievements as well as their development, without distorting proportions; exact figures are on the graphs. Tables are compact and easily understandable.

B.3.5 Contact information

Readers are encouraged to contact the company and can easily access contact data (company's main address, including the website, address, phone number and e-mail address of the CSR department and the name of a person to contact). For Internet-based reports the responsible departments or people are easy to reach through links to their e-mail address or special contact links.

B.3.6 Additional information offered

The report contains links to other internal and external sources. Internal materials are made available and easily accessible through the Internet. Internet links to external materials lead specifically to the requested material or the a page, from which it is easily accessible (e.g. through a GRI-Index).

Online information: The company provides CSR relevant news, a newsletter, tickers and optionally an archive of documents. External news and documents are directly linked in.

8.1.2 Results of WSP Sweden's Sustainability Communication Benchmarking

A Communication Content	ÅF	SWECO	Grontmej	WSP	HSBC
A.1. Company Information					
A.1.1 Sales, revenue, employees, sites	5	5	5	5	5
A.1.2 Business areas, product and customer groups	5	5	3	5	3
A.1.3 Ownership and affiliations	5	5	3	5	3
	15	**15**	**11**	**15**	**11**
	100%	**100%**	**73%**	**100%**	**73%**
A.2. Vision, Strategy and Management					
A.2.1 Values, vision and strategy	3	5	3	5	3
A.2.2 Corporate governance and control	3	3	3	3	3
A.2.3 Management systems and instruments	3	3	3	3	5
A.2.4 Stakeholder relations	3	1	1	3	5
	12	**12**	**10**	**14**	**16**
	60%	**60%**	**50%**	**70%**	**80%**
A.3. Aims and Programs					
A.3.1 Goal attainment	1	1	5	5	5
A.3.2 Aims and measures	5	3	3	5	3
	6	**4**	**8**	**10**	**8**
	60%	**40%**	**80%**	**100%**	**80%**
A.4. Employee interests					
A.4.1 Remuneration policy	3	5	3	5	5
A.4.2 Working hours	0	1	0	0	0
A.4.3 Training programs	5	3	3	3	3
A.4.4 Respect of employees' rights	3	5	3	1	3
A.4.5 Diversity and "chance equality"	3	3	1	1	5
A.4.6 Equality of sexes	3	3	1	3	3
A.4.7 Work place safety and health care	1	1	1	1	5
A.4.8 Work force satisfaction and loyalty	1	1	1	3	5

	19	**22**	**13**	**17**	**29**
	48%	**55%**	**33%**	**43%**	**73%**
A.5. Ecological Aspects of Production					
A.5.1 Energy consumtion and climate change	1	0	3	3	5
A.5.2 Noise and waste emissions	0	0	1	1	3
A.5.3 Raw materials	1	0	1	1	0
A.5.4 Waste management	0	0	1	0	3
A.5.5 Water consumption	0	0	1	0	3
A.5.6 Logistics and transportation	0	0	3	3	5
A.5.7 Production and transportation accidents, emission of chemicals, fuel oil	0	0	0	0	0
A.5.8 Protection of nature, land use, variety of species	0	0	0	0	3
	2	**0**	**10**	**8**	**22**
	5%	**0%**	**25%**	**20%**	**55%**
A.6. Production Responsibility					
A.6.1 Social and ecological aspect of product development	5	5	3	5	1
A.6.2 Ecological profile of products	1	1	3	1	0
A.6.3 Customer focus and information	1	3	1	1	5
	7	**9**	**7**	**7**	**6**
	47%	**60%**	**47%**	**47%**	**40%**
A.7. Supply Chain Responsibility (Upstream)					
A.7.1 Social responsibility of supply chain	1	1	3	3	5
A.7.2 Environmental responsibility of supply chain	0	0	1	0	1
	1	**1**	**4**	**3**	**6**
	10%	**10%**	**40%**	**30%**	**60%**
A.8. Social Environment					
A.8.1 Local responsibility as investor, employer, customer and supplier	1	5	0	3	5
A.8.2 Taxes and subsidies	3	3	3	3	3
A.8.3 Political and governance contribution	3	1	1	3	3

A.8.4 Corporate Citizenship	3	3	0	3	5
	10	**12**	**4**	**12**	**16**
	50%	**60%**	**20%**	**60%**	**80%**
B Form of Communication					
B.1. Credibility of report					
B.1.1 Board statement	3	3	3	5	5
B.1.2 Substance: Focus on crucial aspects	1	1	3	3	3
B.1.3 Openness: Naming major challenges and unsolved problems	0	1	1	1	5
B.1.4 Audits	1	0	1	1	3
B.1.5 External assessment	0	1	3	3	5
	5	**6**	**11**	**13**	**21**
	20%	**24%**	**44%**	**52%**	**84%**
B.2. Comparability of information provided					
B.2.1 Communication of accounting rules	3	3	3	3	1
B.2.2 Communication of principles of finding and interpreting information	5	3	3	5	3
B.2.3 Major developments during report period	5	3	1	1	3
	13	**9**	**7**	**9**	**7**
	87%	**60%**	**47%**	**60%**	**47%**
B.3. Quality of the Report					
B.3.1 Structure	5	3	3	5	5
B.3.2 Text	1	3	5	3	5
B.3.3 Layout	5	5	1	5	5
B.3.4 Pictures	3	3	5	5	5
B.3.5 Contact information	5	3	3	3	5
B.3.6 Additional information offered	3	3	5	3	3
	22	**20**	**22**	**24**	**28**
	73%	**67%**	**73%**	**80%**	**93%**

8.2 Appendix 2: Guiding Interview Questions

8.2.1 Frågor till Medarbetarna

- Vad är WSPs vision?
- Berätta om WSP Sveriges kärnvärdering ”Miljömedvetenhet”.
- Berätta kort om företagskulturen: vilka egenskaper särskiljer WSP från andra företag? (”United in our difference?”)
- Vad lockade dig att söka dig till WSP (hållbarhet)?
- Finns det en genuin etisk drivkraft inom WSP?
- Vad gör WSP inom hållbarhet?
- Hur uppfattar du WSPs kommunikation kring hållbarhet?
- Känner du till WSPs Hållbarhetsstrategi? Den nya policyn om företagsetik? Andra dokument som anger etiska/hållbarhetsriktlinjer för organisationens medarbetare?
- Uppfattar du att WSPs hållbarhetsarbete är en del av kärnverksamheten eller är det ett avgränsat verksamhetsområde?
- Är miljömedvetenhet/hållbarhet en vägledande/grundläggande princip i ditt arbete?
- Upplever du att miljömedvetenhet/hållbarhet en vägledande/grundläggande organisationen som helhet?
- Har WSPs hållbarhetsarbete utvecklats/förändrats på ett märkbart vis de senaste två-tre åren?
- Är Du en aktiv del av detta arbete? Vem deltar aktivt i hållbarhetsarbetet?
- Skulle du vilja engagera dig mer?
- Finns det ett engagemang som fångas upp av ledningen/som inte fångas upp av ledningen?
- Hur upplever du den interna kommunikationen kring WSPs olika hållbarhetsinitiativ?
- Vilka åtgärder skulle främja kommunikationen inom organisationen?
- Känner du att du har inflytande/påverkansutrymme inom organisationen?
- Vilka åtgärder skulle förbättra WSPs interna kommunikation om hållbarhet?
- Vilken typ av satsningar skulle hjälpa till att synliggöra WSPs hållbarhetsarbete? (Till exempel en Sustainability Day?)
- Tycker du att ”den enskilde WSP-medarbetaren i dagsläget kan se sin roll och vad som kan göras i det lilla för ett hållbart samhälle”?
- Förmedlas denna inställning till kunder och samarbetspartners?
- Känner du till projektet “WSP Real World Learning” I Sydafrika? Finns det andra, liknande initiativ?
- Hur fungerar er ”Sustainability Champion”?
- Vad är det viktigaste delarna av ert hållbarhetsarbete?
- Vad tror du ledningen tycker är viktigast?

8.2.2 Frågor till Managers

- Berätta om WSPs interna hållbarhetsarbete.
- Känner du till projektet ”WSP Real World Learning” i Sydafrika? Berätta!
- Hur kommuniceras arbeten och projekt inom hållbarhet i dagsläget?
- Upplever du att WSP framgångsrikt lyckas förmedla en korrekt bild av sitt hållbarhetsarbete internt? Till sina kunder? I media?
- Upplever du att det finns ett gap mellan WSPs hållbarhetsarbete och hur detta arbete uppfattas av medarbetare på företaget? Av kunder? Av allmänheten? I media?
- Varför tror du att det finns ett sådant gap?
- Vilken typ av satsningar tror du skulle hjälpa till att synliggöra WSPs hållbarhetsarbete? (Exempelvis en Sustainability Day?)
- Vilka åtgärder skulle kunna förbättra WSPs hållbarhetskommunikation till Dig som klient?
- Hur har det fungerat med er ”Sustainability Champion”?
- Vad är det viktigaste delarna av ert hållbarhetsarbete?
- Vilka delar tror du medarbetarna tycker är viktigast?

8.2.3 Frågor till kunder (privata & offentliga)

Hållbarhet i företaget (kunden):

- Är hållbarhetsarbete viktigt för ditt företag? Varför?
- Hur arbetar ni med hållbarhet?
- Vem är ansvarig för ert hållbarhetsarbete?
- Är hållbarhetsarbete viktigt när i era samarbeten med andra företag?
- På vilket sätt? Varför?
- Från vilket håll upplever du att kraven på hållbarhetsarbete kommer?

WSPs hållbarhetsarbete:

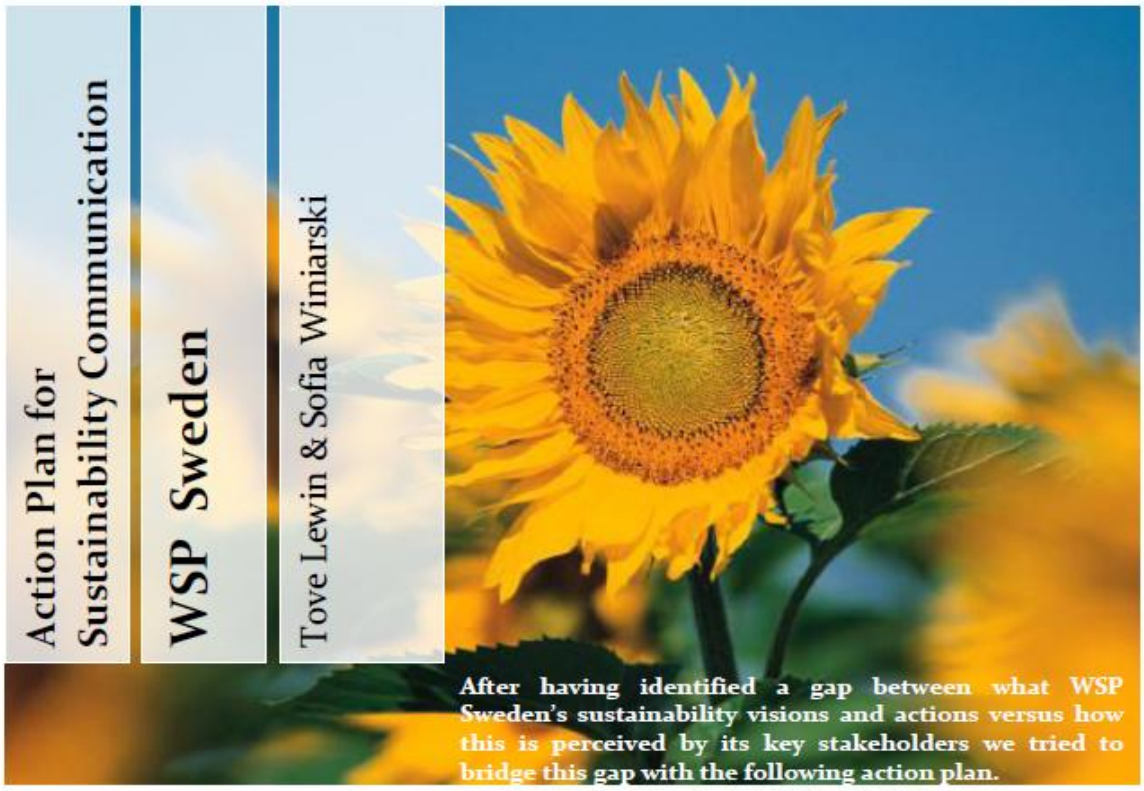
- Upplever du att hållbarhet är viktigt för WSP? Har detta någon inverkan på er relation?
- Är hållbarhetssatsningar en avgörande faktor för ert samarbete/i era gemensamma projekt med WSP?
- Hur uppfattar du WSPs hållbarhetsarbete? Tycker du att det utgör en del av kärnverksamheten eller är det ett avgränsat verksamhetsområde Vilka värderingar förknippar du med WSPs varumärke?
- Är miljömedvetenhet/hållbarhet en vägledande/grundläggande princip i WSPs
- arbete?

- Upplever du att WSPs hållbarhetsarbete har utvecklats/förändrats på ettmärkbart vis de senaste två-tre åren?
- Känner du till miljö/hållbarhetsrelaterade projekt som WSP är involverade?
- Tycker du att WSP lyckas utnyttja sin expertis för att främja hållbara lösningar i sina samarbeten? (”Actively manage the environmental and social impacts of our own operations for the benefit of all our stakeholders.”)

WSPs hållbarhetskommunikation:

- Vilken typ av satsningar skulle hjälpa till att synliggöra WSPs hållbarhetsarbete?
- På vilket sätt vill du nås av WSP’s hållbarhetsarebete. (Nyhetsbrev, hemsidan,
- kundmöten, media?)
- Vilka åtgärder skulle kunna förbättra WSPs hållbarhetskommunikation till dig
- som kund?

8.3 Appendix 3: WSP Sweden's Communication Plan



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8.3.1 Background

Benchmarking of competitors and analysis of existing sustainability communication indicate that WSP Sweden does have an ambitious sustainability vision and that they do perform activities in line with these visions; however, interviews with the stakeholder groups reveal that these visions and activities are not fully perceived. Hence, a gap has been identified between WSP Sweden's sustainability vision, their sustainability actions they actually perform and how key stakeholders perceive company performance. These gaps constitute challenges in WSP Sweden's sustainability communication. The identified key stakeholder groups are employees, future employees, managers, public customers and private customers.

Purpose & Desired Outcomes

Following communication plan aims to outline these challenges and suggest concrete actions that the organization can take in order to bridge these gaps. The conclusions from the communication plan are stem from a study in which interviews were conducted with the respective stakeholder groups.

The desired outcome of this plan is primarily that WSP Sweden communicates its sustainability commitment to its stakeholders in a more efficient manner. Sustainability will be a concept that is fully integrated in the organization. There will be a shared understanding and commitment to WSP Sweden's sustainability work. Employees will embrace working in a "sustainable" manner, and believe in the company's genuine ambition to do so.

Current Attitudes

A benchmarking that was conducted against competitors showed that WSP Sweden communicates its sustainability activities well externally, in terms of making available the required information in the annual report. Also, analysis of printed and online information indicate that WSP Sweden does have an extensive sustainability work. However, employee interviews show that this communication has not been entirely integrated in the organization. Although some employees are highly committed to sustainability in all areas, others are less engaged, and some are confused about what sustainability actually is.

8.3.2 Strategic Communication plan

Due to the fact that WSP Sweden already has ambitious sustainability visions and activities, but that these are not really perceived by its stakeholders; focus will be on how to improve their sustainability communication rather than coming up with new actions. However, sometimes these goes hand in hand. Hence, this section aims to give an overall picture of what WSP Sweden should focus on in their sustainability communication, followed by a more detailed communication plan in the next section.

Strategic Considerations

Management must formulate a clear idea and commitment to sustainability, and involve key stakeholders in the work of, primarily, formulating the idea and, secondly, implementing the sustainability visions and activities. A red thread of the sustainability communication should be followed in terms of layout, vocabulary and communication channels. A starting point to measure a potential change in attitudes is the employee pole. Also, a continuous dialogue must be initiated with local managers and consultants.

• *Things to think about:*

WSP Sweden is a large, geographically scattered and decentralized organization. The challenge of the management is therefore listening to, and taking in the spread in attitudes.

• *potential pitfalls or anything that could put the process off-track*:

Lack of commitment and authenticity could risk putting the process off track.

Failure in formulating and creating a true common organizational identity

Target Audiences

Primarily, WSP Sweden must reach its organizational members. As consultants, organizational members will in turn communicate and affect external stakeholders and can hence be considered as a strategic channel of sustainability communication. Communication will be channeled through the vehicles in place (newsletters, internal web, website), but also through interactive discussion forums in which they can listen as well as be listened to.

WSP Sweden's new internal web can become a lively place for dialogue and discussions. The company must make it simple to use, interesting for employees, and aesthetically pleasant.

Key Messages

WSP Sweden also promotes engagement, initiatives and ideas – how can we develop our sustainability work together?

WSP Sweden will use its engineering expertise to become number one in sustainability solutions. WSP Sweden is united by its difference.

A key message is that WSP Sweden is a serious actor that *Walks the Talk*, that is that they not help the clients to become more sustainable, but also perform ambitious sustainability activities themselves. However, in order to use this as a competitive advantage WSP Sweden have to communicate upon their sustainability visions and activities efficiently, that is; *Talk the Walk*.

Spokesperson(s)

The Sustainability Champion will together with the management initially deliver WSP Sweden's key messages. However, in order for the message to be incorporated in the organization, this will be a process where employees and local managers also accept and deliver these messages. The word of mouth mechanism will be key.

Tools

WSP Sweden will embark on a new official sustainability mission; rather, management must change the way it communicates with WSP Sweden as an organization – from one-way communication to two-way communication.

Therefore, e-communications components and multi-media communication are specifically important in order for WSP sustainability to become interactive and integrated in the organization. Also, employees, and especially the consultants, shall be seen as a communication tool to a greater extent since they are the front-figure towards the client.

8.3.3 Detailed Communication plan

In this section a more detailed communication plan for WSP Sweden´s sustainability communication is presented, based on the six most frequent identified issues in the communication of WSP Sweden´s sustainability work. The solutions shall serve as basis for idea generation.

Issue: Ambiguity concerning the definition and delimitation of Sustainability

"Sustainability – what do you mean by that?"

"What is a sustainable design? What is a sustainable bridge?"

Although sustainability is part of WSP Sweden's core activities, and despite the fact that the company employs a number of experts on sustainability techniques of all sorts – there is some confusion regarding the definition of sustainability at WSP Sweden. Currently, there appear to be as many perceptions of sustainability as there are organizational members. We believe that reason for this ambiguity is that WSP management has yet to consciously integrate, and hence communicate, a coherent definition of what the concept of "sustainability" represents for WSP Sweden as an organization – both internally and externally.

For example:

The interviews indicate there exist diverging ideas of what sustainability really implies, given the fact manager representatives have different definitions of "sustainability". Furthermore, some employees do not seem to know the definition and limitations and some confuse *sustainable* with *resistant/long-lasting*.

On the webpage of WSP Sweden in English the section is called *Corporate Responsibility* and not *Sustainability* as decided, whereas the Swedish one uses the word Sustainability.

Also in the core values one of the five bullet points regards sustainability. For WSP Sweden in the English translation of that bullet is phrased as *sustainability* whereas the Swedish translation is *Environmental Awareness* (Miljömedvetenhet).

Unless a coherent definition is agreed upon and truly integrated within WSP Sweden's management, stakeholders will continuously be confused in terms of the sustainability intentions and actions of WSP Sweden.

Solution: WSP Sweden's management must agree upon a definition for its sustainability-work that stakeholders within and surrounding the organization understands. Theory suggests using two-way communication as a method of formulating common goals and values, in other words,

involving employees and customers in the process of defining sustainability. This definition will then provide guidance regarding the concrete strategy that WSP Sweden should embark on, in terms of corporate responsibility.

Suggested actions to include the stakeholders in the process of defining sustainability are to hold workshops and training on the matter involving both middle management and employees from local offices. Also, the seminars have shown to be appreciated and; hence, seminars dedicated the boundaries of sustainability involving external and internal stakeholders should be provided. This could be complemented by case discussions, ethics discussions on blogs, and during weekly information meetings.

In order to enhance the perception of unanimous sustainability communication the printed and online information should be harmonized not only in terms of vocabulary but also in terms of visual presentation such as colors, font and content.

Issue: One Way Communication

The interviews reveal that some employees felt that the sustainability communication was a monologue rather than a dialogue. We also found that WSP Sweden employees lack the tools to share information across the organization. Some managers lack the time and resources to prioritize sustainability.

Solution: The internal web should be developed and include user-friendly tools, examples, technologies, suggestion of how to increase sustainability internally and towards customers.

The communication tools with chat functions shall be developed and used more frequently by the management so that visiting the chat becomes a natural daily habit for the employees in order to gain and share information and ideas. Furthermore, the external webpage should provide an interactive service so that future employees and customers will have the opportunity to discuss and learn about WSP Sweden's sustainability work, such as a blog, or chat opportunities.

Moreover, the future employees sense of partaking can be increased through organizing a competition where the students are invited to come up with creative solutions to real-life sustainability challenges that WSP Sweden faces.

Furthermore, social media, such as a Facebook group for WSP and Twitter, could be used as an information tool to communicate new sustainability matters that are more PR-oriented, such as "The cycling CEO". This allows for immediate information where the receiver gets the opportunity to actively partake and comment. Another relatively cheap, updated and fun way

of reaching out to stakeholders is by posting videos on YouTube. For example, a video about exciting WSP project, such as the world's first CO2 neutral city Masdar, is likely to attract attention and the commenting function allows for stakeholder involvement.

The global intranet provides blogs and calendars. So should also the Swedish Intranet. A sustainability blog where the employees themselves can blog with comment function and a calendar with environmental activities should be provided.

Under the tab *Network* on the global intranet the WSP's internal networks are presented; however, a sustainability network is lacking. Such a network should be initiated in order to enable the interested employees to engage.

WSP could introduce an on-line idea box where the employees can hand in proposals for sustainability actions such as fair-trade coffee and fruit, two-sided printing, and automatic lighting systems. Furthermore WSP Sweden could initiate an external network where they exchange with their customers other companies' ideas of how to become more sustainable internally.

Issue: Perceived Window-Dressing

WSP Sweden scores high in the benchmarking that was conducted to compare WSP Sweden's sustainability communication to other companies operating in the same field. WSP Sweden fulfills the basic demands concerning a Sustainability Plan, an Ethics Plan, an Employee Policy, sustainability is incorporated as a company value – and indeed, the WSP Sweden communicates its engagement on its company website. The company's sustainability work is appreciated among several employees, who feel that WSP is on the right track doing a good job. However, it appears as if this communication has not been entirely incorporated within the whole organization. Rather, employees express skepticism towards policies and shelved documents – instead, they demand action.

Solution: WSP Sweden must focus its communication on what it does, rather than describing goals, ambitions and policies in order to be more credible. Communication should be action-oriented, in order to increase credibility and involve stakeholders in the communication. By action-oriented, we mean becoming involved in specific events, and mainly, truly describing the projects and the work that the expert engineers and consultants of WSP are involved in.

I order to act locally rather than talk centrally there should be regional theme-weeks at the WSP offices around Sweden. The theme shall be sustainability; however the exact activities are decided locally. Simultaneously there can be a competition where all employees in Sweden are

given a step-counter and the office that has walks the largest number of steps per person wins. This in order to improve employee health.

Issue: Talking the Walk needed

WSP Sweden is involved in two types of sustainability work. Firstly, there are the sustainability services that are incorporated in services provided to the company's customers. Secondly, there is their own sustainability work that they do internally in order to improve their own operations and minimize its negative environmental impact. The first type of sustainability work is incorporated in practically all texts and hence much communicated. However, the second one, being just as important in order for WSP Sweden to be considered a credible company that walks the talk, is not communicated as explicitly, which is seen in lack of structured information online and in the interviews.

Solution: Our analysis indicates that the problem is not that WSP Sweden lacks its own sustainability work, however, the communications about it is rather disorganized in terms of how it is presented. In order to communicate more efficiently on what WSP Sweden aims for doing and does in order to improve their own sustainability work, such as they the car-pool and the offering of company bicycles, they should have a separate tab on the internal and external webpage named S*ustainability*. Here the agreed definition of what WSP Sweden refers to when talking about Sustainability and what the company itself does in order to be s sustainable operator in society. Suitable fields of information could be Environment, Employee Policy and Social Projects depending on what definition and narrowing is chosen.

Issue: The Engineering Identity and the Sustainability Identity

WSP Sweden's management expressed concern over the organizations' deeply-rooted engineer mentality – engineers are said to rather look at concrete problems than concepts, and are perhaps more skeptical than others towards concepts such as "sustainability" and "CSR". This perceived conflict was partly confirmed by employee interviews; however, there is a large spread of mentalities within the organization. Management must address this disparity, and make sure to include, and listen to, those engineers who are more skeptical – finding a way to package the idea of sustainability in a manner that suits the engineer identity (i.e. making concrete).

Solution: Perhaps, engineers tend to demand more fact-based figures on sustainability related matters such as CO2 emissions, water usage and number of days of illness. Communication should therefore be in scientific mode rather that marketing mode. Hence, it could for example

be relevant to provide in-depth articles in internal magazines with the technical background to sustainability activities and services so that the engineers can understand why it is good.

Another way of addressing this issue is to provide the engineers with an instrument that facilitates harmonized sustainability communication. Under the tab *Means of Assistance* documents aiming for supporting the consultant in its daily work are provided, and here is potential for having slides upon WSP Sweden's sustainability work. Such documents could also be provided under the tab *Bidsupport,* which offers standard texts about WSP that can be used in the bid process.

Issue: Information overflow

The internal and external websites contain much sustainability information but it is difficult to know to whom it is addressed. Our interviews with WSP Sweden stakeholders have shown that different stakeholder groups demand different information. Therefore, WSP Sweden needs to reflect carefully on what information is relevant for what stakeholder. Theory points out that and overload of information can raise suspicions of window-dressing, or even worse, that a company is hiding something.

Solution: Stakeholder specific information tailor-made for the respective receiver group, since all information is not relevant for all stakeholders. Under the tab **Communication** to customers and employees should be well chosen and in the form of activities, reports and seminars. Customers are interested in the kind of sustainability communication that, in turn, facilitates their communication with their stakeholders. For example, some customers expressed demand from their clients on codes of conduct in the supply chain. Hence, it is vital that WSP Sweden has a clear and updated code-of-conduct sheet on the webpage and that all of their consultants are familiar with it and can presented it on selling meetings with their customers. The employees however, are rather interested in what is done at the office in terms of sustainability and how the organization works with sustainability internally and externally.

Providing behind the scenes trips to WSP Sweden's offices to students as future employees in order to let offer them insight how they work with sustainability in its daily life. This is an opportunity for WSP Sweden to attract new talents and inform them about the company but also a way to show that WSP Sweden really cares about sustainability matters and that they are a transparent company that can afford being scrutinized.

A sheet summarizing sustainability-related information with vision, actions, achievements, challenges and hard facts such as CO2 let outs and water consumption for the last five years. The material should be easy to assimilate and be presented in tables, figures and graphs. For

example, the global intranet provides a tab *Facts and Figures*, here is potential for sustainability key figures.

The clients demanded quick and updated information about WSP Sweden's sustainability work in shape of quarterly newsletters. Also, one idea that came up during the interviews was to have short information about their sustainability activities in the end of the e-mail where it normally says, "Keep the forest in mind – do not print without cause". This text is easy to up-date, free to use distributed to everybody that have e-mail correspondence with WSP Sweden. The text could either be about their sustainability visions or about recent activities and projects.

WSP Group provides a more extensive annual report including sustainability, whereas WSP Sweden provides a shorter and less informative annual report on the Group's performance including a page on sustainability and provides a sustainability report separately. There is no reason to assume that the Swedish stakeholders demand less information on sustainability. Hence, if two separate annual reports are to be provided in English respective Swedish the content should be the same. We propose having an exact copy of the English version of the Group's annual report in Swedish or only providing the annual report in English.

8.3.4 Communication Plan Summary

Overall, WSP Sweden's sustainability communication must become more interactive, up-to-date, focused and targeted. What is sustainability, and what is the actual objective behind WSP Sweden's sustainability work? Here is a table outlining the issues we have identified:

Issue	Solution
Ambiguity Concerning the Definition and Delimitation of Sustainability	• Internal workshops and training • Seminars • Case discussions and ethical discussions • Harmonized Visual Communication
One Way Communication	• Internal and external chats • Student competitions • Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) • YouTube movies • Blogs • Online Calendars • Sustainability Employee Network • Online idea-box • Initiating Idea-Exchanging Network
Perceived Window-Dressing	• Sponsor Sports Activities • Theme-Week • Competition between offices
Talk the Walk Needed	• Separate Sustainability Section Online • Subsections on Environment, Employee Policy and Social Projects
Organizational Identity	• Scientific-mode Communication • In-Depth Articles • Support Documents to Harmonize Sustainability Communication
Information Overflow	• Tailor-made Stakeholder Information • Available and Clear Code-of-Conduct Sheet • Available and Clear Employee Policy • Behind the Scenes Trips • Sustainability-summary Sheet • Quarterly Newsletters • End-of-email-information • Consistent Swedish and English Annual Reports Including Sustainability