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Let’s talk about sustainability

A qualitative study on the experiences with internal communication in a sustainable context

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A qualitative study on the experiences with internal communication in a sustainable context

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Abstract

Previous research suggest that sustainability could be a subject which is complicated to communicate, and that may affect individual tension levels. Thus, the purpose of this thesis, was to explore how organizational members experience the internal communication on sustainable change. From this, the intention was to provide practical insight on an individual level that could improve our understanding of internal communication in a sustainable context, and moreover aid organizational sustainable development. To approach the research question, six interviews were conducted with managers and employees in a case company, which was currently working towards a sustainable production. Further, an interpretative phenomenological analysis was applied to the data from these interviews. The results from the analysis implied that interactivity and involvement was recognized as aid aspects in the sustainable communication. Results also suggested that opportunity of involvement was related to a more balanced internal communication as well as more proactive responses towards the communication. Lastly, findings highlighted the experienced content of sustainable communication, as well as the process that was used to communicate these.

The thesis takes on experiences from a management as well as an employee level and offers in-depth insight through these. In conclusion, the thesis suggests that employee involvement should be considered as an important tool for sustainable communication. It also suggests that research should explore the role of involvement in sustainable communication. Lastly, it recommends more research on sustainable messages in organizational contexts and why these are used.

Keywords: -internal communication, sustainable communication, stainable change

Sammendrag

Tidligere forskning viser til at bærekraft kan være et emne som er komplisert å kommunisere, samt at dette kan påvirke individuell anspenthet Formålet med denne oppgaven var dermed å utforske hvordan medlemmer av en organisasjon opplever intern kommunikasjon på bærekraftig endring. Med dette ble oppgavens intensjon å fremlegge praktisk innsikt på et individnivå hvilket kan hjelpe oss å skjønne intern kommunikasjon i en bærekraftig kontekst, for så å bistå organisasjoners bærekraftige utvikling. For å svare på problemstillingen ble det gjennomført seks intervjuer med ledere og ansatte, i et case-konsern som for tiden jobbet mot en bærekraftig produksjon. En fortolkende fenomenologisk analyse ble videre anvendt på dataen fra disse intervjuene. Resultater fra analysen antydet at interaktivitet og involvering ble gjenkjent som bistående aspekter ved kommunikasjon på bærekraft. Funn fra oppgaven antydet også at muligheter for å bli involvert i den bærekraftige kommunikasjonen ble relatert til en mer balansert intern kommunikasjon, samt mer proaktive responser til kommunikasjonen. Videre, så belyste funnene erfaringer med innholdet i kommunikasjonen på bærekraft, samt prosesser som ble brukt for å kommunisere disse.

Oppgaven tar utgangspunkt i opplevelser fra deltakere på et ledernivå i tillegg til et ansattnivå, og gir et inngående innblikk i deres erfaringer. Oppgaven konkluderer med at ansattes involvering bør tas i betraktning som et viktig verktøy for bærekraftig kommunikasjon. Den foreslår videre at forskning bør utforske involvering og hvilken rolle den spiller for kommunikasjon på bærekraft. Til sist foreslår oppgaven mer forskning på bærekraftige budskap i en organisasjonskontekst og på hvorfor disse blir brukt.

Nøkkelord: -intern kommunikasjon, bærekraftskommunikasjon, bærekraftig endring

Preface

In advance to writing this thesis I was utterly inspired by the fantastic way in which psychology finds its home in peculiar places, and specifically its merge towards environmental issues. When it all comes down to it, it is the individual that makes up the mass and the mass that makes the difference. Besides the opportunity to expand my knowledge on this topic, I learned much about the qualitative research process and academic writing. Through the project I received substantial amounts of help and guidance. By that I would like to thank my supervisor Fay Giæver, for great advice and for being a swift ninja at answering my every question. During the project I gained particularly memorable experiences from the interviews, where I truly had to learn by doing. On that note I would like to thank the project participants for sharing their fascinating experiences and for their willingness to participate. Humbly and in return, I hope that what I have produced could be of interest to them. I would also like to thank SINTEF for their immediate attentiveness to my interests during my internship period with them, and for their bridging help in contacting the case company.

Writing a thesis in 2020 has been a somewhat challenging affair, which taught me a lot about myself. Amongst other things, how utterly dependent I am on leisure and social stimuli in order to work effectively. However, despite the social deprivation I was given enormous support from the people that surrounds me. Specifically, I would like to thank my partner, my friends and my family for their patients and support. Lastly, I would also like to thank my fellow students for their input and for two fun and memorable years.

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Introduction

More than before, national sustainability programs seem to shepherd organizations towards sustainability. For example, target 8.4 under the Norwegian government's *Follow-up Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals* for 2030 is about "…improving global resource efficiency and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Accordingly, we could expect more legislations that aim for sustainable business and production. The Brundtland report introduces what is considered the most popular definition to this concept: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1975). From this, one could understand sustainable development as an aim to exploit natural resources in a pace that will not negatively inflict later generations. In an organizational context literature speak of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which concerns how societies and stakeholders inquire companies to take responsibilities for their social and environmental surroundings (Gruber et al., 2017). Because of recent environmental focus, the environmental aspect has started to demand more gentle practice in relation to natural resources (Norton, 2007). On a national level we see large organizations such as Equinor refocusing their field towards more sustainable means of profit (Sætre, 2018). In addition, there is a trend for businesses to adapt to environmental management systems (Frondel et al., 2018).

Whereas businesses like these are quick to communicate their sustainable changes and accomplishments to potential customers and other external agencies, less organizational focus and respective research approach the internal communication (Brunton et al., 2017). This has been explained in that organizations are more prone to seek external loyalty, and make sure that their efforts on environmental concerns are communicated to consumers and external stakeholders. Which is reasoned in that, such loyalty have shown to increase revenues and result in less organizational crisis (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Brunton et al., 2017). At the same time it has been emphasized that equal focus should be given to external and internal matters when it comes to communicating sustainability (Genç, 2017).

The literature states that well-working internal communication is crucial during organizational change (Bel et al., 2018; Daly et al., 2003; Elving, 2005; Kitchen & Daly, 2002) and further that sustainable development is hard to achieve without well-working internal communication (Genç, 2017). Research on sustainability imply that communication plays an important role in further development in organizational contexts. This relationship could be explained according to two natural characteristics of the sustainability subject. For one, that there are social discourses on the topic (Newig et al., 2013). Meaning that people disagree on the extent of the issue and on what measures are most effective to achieve sustainability. From a day-to-day perspective we see this all the time, people who believe that climate related issues are urgent while at the same time are uncertain of how they should contribute to any difference. Another concern that characterize sustainability, is that the subject is highly complex (Meijer & Hekkert, 2013). This could be in the sense that some measures might negatively affect other sustainable concerns. For example, the choice to use less plastic on product protection during transport might in turn increase the chance of damage to the product. This might result in a damaged product, which is not again a sustainable prospect.

Because of these characteristics, sustainable development could cause reactions of scepticism and confusion (Genç, 2017). In an organizational context, communication becomes essential in order to clarify the goals and the specific values that the organization is working towards, but also in order to lay down concrete strategies and explain how these act to achieve sustainable goals (Meijer & Hekkert, 2013). When an organization directs and includes all its members toward ethical responsibilities like this, it positively influence their loyalty, moral and motivation (Dowling, 2006; Maignan et al., 1999).

Delineation and research question

Whereas the mission to become more sustainable is highly urged and justified, research on organizational sustainable development also suggests that such change may cause tension on an individual level. For example, Tura and colleagues (2019) conducted a comprehensive study where they explored the experienced tension of leaders and middle managers during shifts towards sustainable business practices. In results, managers reported that increased disclosure requirements took a toll on their workload and individual resources. In other words, they were tasked to report towards authorities, as well as potential partners and customers. This posed a challenge for their ability to magnitude and adjust information in an effective communication system. Relatedly, it has been suggested that middle managers in particular are often those who are entitled to handle communication during change, but which are often given the least resources in comparison to workloads (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017).

Another study took an employee-centric approach to experiences of internal sustainable communication, finding that company environmental messages could at times seem distant (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). Employees did not always find a unification between this communication and their work practice, which caused behaviours that were less in line with company sustainable values. Yet another study concerned the communication of CSR from an employee perspective (Brunton et al., 2017). Here it was implied that there was often a discrepancy between what managers thought they communicated, and the information employees thought they were supposed to receive. On this note, literature on organizational communication have emphasized that research should explore employee perspectives as well as manager perspectives (Ruck et al., 2017). These studies suggest that both managers and employees could experience potential tension as caused by internal communication on sustainable development. They also suggest that there might be important topics to highlight on the interphase experiences of employees and managers.

As to further explore these factors, the current project poses the following research question: “How do members of an organization experience internal communication on sustainable change?”. In order to answer the research question, the thesis is structured as a case project, which approaches a company that works with sustainable development in production strategies. Moreover, to capture rich individual experiences on multiple levels, interviews was conducted with both company managers and employees.

Purpose

In summation, companies need efficient internal communication in order to infer sustainable development. In this project, the research question aims to explore this process through an individual standpoint. One purpose of the research question is to increase the understanding of how company members experience sustainable communication. Another is to better understand the context of sustainable development, and how it operates through internal communication. I also hope to provide practical insight that might aid the case organization during sustainable development, especially in highlighting the human aspect. The final reason as to why I conduct this study, is that I personally see it as important to address environmental challenges.

Empirics

This chapter presents information that has found support or reason in previous scientific disclosures, more commonly known as empirics. Specifically, the chapter takes on empirics from literature on change communication- and sustainable communication. The purpose of this is to further actualize the research question, and present arguments as to why it is important to explore communication during sustainable change.

Change Communication

Change communication has been defined as a representative of changes that an organization want to make (Cheney et al., 2010; Frahm, 2010). This definition inherits change communication as a tool for the organization to pass information on changes in values, structure and systems. At the same time, it incorporates communication as the means to achieve an organizational change. In further explanation, organizational change can be understood as adjustment or restructure of organisational functions, leadership, shape or division of resources (G. P. Huber et al., 1993).

Many researchers agree that change processes are highly difficult to manage in successful ways, and that potential risks are often higher than potential benefits (Saksvik et al., 2007). It has further been suggested that internal communication play an important part in better overall operation of change (Bel et al., 2018; Kitchen & Daly, 2002). Multiple reasons have been suggested to why internal communication play such a crucial role during organizational change. The most common notion is that communication enhance organizational change by reducing uncertainty (Busse & Doganer, 2018). Additionally, it has been noted that communication is a means to create community (Elving, 2005). Researchers suggests that this route of communication also has a positive outlet towards organizational change in that it contributes to trust between employee and management, and that it through community enhance transparency. This may in turn help to reduce uncertainty amongst organizational members (Elving, 2005).

Change situations has shown to prove challenging on individual levels as well. In some cases, managers have reported that changes cause them great strain (Khachian et al., 2012). Also, change situations could lead to uncertainty amongst employees, or in other cases resilience of change (Aalbers & Dolfsma, 2019). Seeing as communication and organizational change are both complicated subjects, there are no definitive way to project effective change communication. Managers thus report that it is challenging to communicate change (Khachian et al., 2012). In this project, change communication is further contextualised to address sustainable development. Specific to this project, it concerns organizational changes in production towards more sustainable practices. This works as the thesis context factor and will further be referred to as a sustainable change.

Sustainable Communication

In definition sustainable communication has been described as the communication regarding the work to preserve rather than dominate nature (McDonagh, 1998). Most research on sustainable communication is concerned with how an organization may advert the work they do with sustainability towards stakeholders and customers, and how they create credibility through this process (Mitra, 2016). Research from this area states that communication plays a paramount role in sustainable development (Genç, 2017). The next sections account for central research regarding sustainable communication, specifically on acknowledged types of such communication and its purpose. Following sections consider the content that may transpire through sustainable communication, as well as the process that characterize it.

Types and Purpose of Sustainable Communication

Newig and colleagues (2013) sub-categorize this concept, according to the aims and characteristics of the communication. More accurately, they distinguish between Communication of Sustainability (CoS) and Communication about Sustainability (CaS). CoS is communication that contains educational or informative messages, where the senders are experts or others with much factual knowledge on sustainable concerns. This type of sustainable communication aims to evoke action and social engagement (Moser, 2010). Hence, a reliance in that knowledge sparks action. CoS is successful when receivers decode the message as intended, and when there is a change in their behaviour, attitudes or values as caused by the message (Genç, 2017). On the other hand, CaS is vertical communication, that open for active discussion on sustainable concerns. All parts do not necessarily come to agreements through CaS. Rather, this communication type aim for debate through a diversity in remedies and understandings of the issue at hand (Newig et al., 2013). Though the aim is the communication and not problem solving, CaS may in turn evoke innovative solutions to sustainable issues (Newig et al., 2013). For the current project, these sub-categories may in turn help to set more standardized and scientific words to the types of sustainable communication that organizational members may experience.

In an organizational context, research on sustainable communication mostly address the way an organisation communicate their sustainable values externally (Nielsen et al., 2013). Much research concerns topics such as sustainable reporting aimed at stakeholders or sustainable advertising aimed at customers. At the same time, research emphasize the importance of working towards a green internal culture (Harris & Crane, 2002). Through social expectations, the green culture encourages organizational members to recognize sustainable values and act according to these (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018). In this sense, one could look at culture as a pusher for green practice. Researchers have connected green culture to organizational performance, innovation and identity (Chen, 2011; Gürlek & Tuna, 2018). Less research has been conducted on initiatives that aspire such culture. However, one study asserts that green culture might be achieved through learning and knowledge sharing (Law et al., 2017). Seeing as both learning and knowledge sharing must occur through communicative processes, sustainable communication could play a role in the creation of such culture. From this, the purpose of sustainable communication could be extended from information sharing, to include the creation of culture.

Process of Communicating Sustainability

The literature on internal communication proclaims that strategic communication will not be effective, when the organisation does not act upon the message that is given (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). This idea is typically referred to as “walking the talk” (Brunton et al., 2017; Charles Jr et al., 2017). This has been a topic of concern, especially when sustainability is considered. The literature holds firm that sustainable messages should be grounded in well-reasoned action in order to achieve credibility (Charles Jr et al., 2017). Otherwise the receiver could easily decode the message as green-washing or facial measures. Furthermore, the credibility is threatened if communication is inconsistent. In order to assure coherence between what the company says and does, all organizational members must recognize its sustainable values (Brunton et al., 2017). By internally communicating sustainability, values like this tend to take hold in the organizational culture (Cramer, 2005), which reflect a consistency throughout the organization.

On another note, researchers have emphasized the importance of considering the audience when communicating corporate social responsibility (Dawkins, 2005). Put another way, the company should pose strategies in order to communicate to different stakeholders and public receivers. It was also suggested that the specific internal audience should not be underestimated, and that specific considerations should adhere to these contexts (Dawkins, 2005). Hence, different messages and approaches should be phrased internally in accordance to who they are meant for, managers contra employees. This argument was based on the notion that such consideration would increase communication effectiveness, company attractiveness and engagement towards responsible initiatives. However, literature does not seem to offer much insight into how these processes differs based on audience. Explicitly on what messages are aimed to those with a different organizational role in a sustainable context. As noted in the introduction, research suggest that alteration of sustainable communication could result in experienced strain amongst managers (Tura et al., 2019). Henceforth, the current research poses an interest in the process of alternating sustainable messages and what emotional responses this leaves by managers.

Messages in Sustainable Communication

Research also explore the content that is portrayed in sustainable communication. A common theme here is that messages are meant to, in some way, persuade the receiver (Nielsen et al., 2013). For organisations that are economically driven, this often concerns how sustainable strategies could be beneficial in the long run (Gruber et al., 2017). Thus, the message will have to be phrased as a win-win argument. Such arguments could be associated with the triple-bottom-line principle. In short, this comes from the assertion that economic, environmental and social measures may work together to create opportunities and positive outcomes for an organization (Jens Newig et al., 2013). For example, a company reduce waste (environmental measure) and achieve a greener company operation (environmental gain). At the same time this could be an effective marketing strategy, which also benefit company profit (economic gain). The triple-bottom line principle has also been criticized (Bush, 2018). Researchers utter that the principle is an oversimplification of how the three aspects relate in an organizational context (Elkington et al., 2006). Specifically, in that economic, social and environmental aspects moves in thematical directions, where one aspect easily oversteps or cross another. In other words, the three measures are more often battling in incompatibility than completing each other cooperatively. On this note, it has been suggested that to measure the three aspects according to compatibility could be challenging, and at times quite meaningless (Ivory & Brooks, 2018). Critiques also argue that a triple-bottom line strategy might cause tension and role confusion on the individual level, because company members will be required to take on multiple roles and tasks that are incompatible with each other (Bush, 2018). From the divided literature, this thesis also takes on an interest in arguments that form in the internal sustainable communication.

Further, researchers have implied that because we recognize that there is something selfless and morally correct with assuring resources for future generations, sustainable communication may also prosper on moral arguments (Täuber et al., 2015). Moral arguments are claims or statements that comes from internalised or institutionalised ideas of how we should act (Reynolds, 2000). Research on the use of moral arguments is typically set in a societal context (e.g. encouragement to think about others in traffic) or commercial contexts (e.g. claim that some product comes from ethical productions) (Täuber et al., 2015). At the same time, research has shown that employees exhibited increased commitment and positive attitudes towards their workplace, when they recognized an ethical aspect by the organization (May, 2016; Trevino et al., 1998). This indicate that moral arguments also could play a role in communication inside an organization, such as the communication between managers and employees.

Theoretical Framework

In order to approach the research question: "How do members of an organization experience internal communication on sustainable change?", this chapter presents a theoretical framework that builds on two communicational models. The first section adheres to define the umbrella concept of this thesis, which is communication. As well as the more specific concept, internal communication. It further presents an interactive model of communication which frames the role of active internal communication. Later, the chapter also describes an involvement model of communication, which frames the communication in relation to corporate social responsibility. The purpose of this chapter is to see the research question through a theoretical framework and to provide a clarification of concepts that will be useful in presentation and discussion of the project results.

Internal Communication

Peter Little defines communication as "a process where information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that an understanding response result." (Little, 1977). This definition was chosen for the current thesis because it incorporates individuals as well as organizations. The object that is concerned in following sections more specifically adhere to internal communication. Internal communication concerns the communication that transpires between actors belonging to a certain organization (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). It has been proposed that internal communication is interdependent on, but still significantly different from external communication, and should therefore be considered an independent research field (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2012). Whereas the organization as a brand communicate its values, it is the direct contact with employees that often work as a source of first impression (Stuart, 1999). In order to maintain credibility for their sustainable approach -both in the eyes of employees and external actors-, there must be a unison between what is communicated between the organization and its members. For this to work there must also be an efficient communication internally between the organization and its members (Stuart, 1999).

This communication could be formal (which are the official communication that is planned for and structured by the company) or informal (which is the unofficial and unexpectable communication that is caused by communicators immediate needs) (Kandlousi et al., 2010). Further, the communication could be sent over a variety of different channels, such as dialogue, written form or through digital objects (Miller, 2008). Literature often speaks of the communicators as managers and internal stakeholders, where the latter refers mostly to employees or other organisational members that do not work strategically with communication processes (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2012). The communication that transpires between managers and employees is further referred to as internal corporate communication. Specifically, internal corporate communication has been defined as “communication between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Empirical findings suggest that managers see internal communication as an independent field, which function is related to interdisciplinary collaboration, human resources management, technical management and communication flow across organizational levels (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2012).

An Interactive Model of Communication

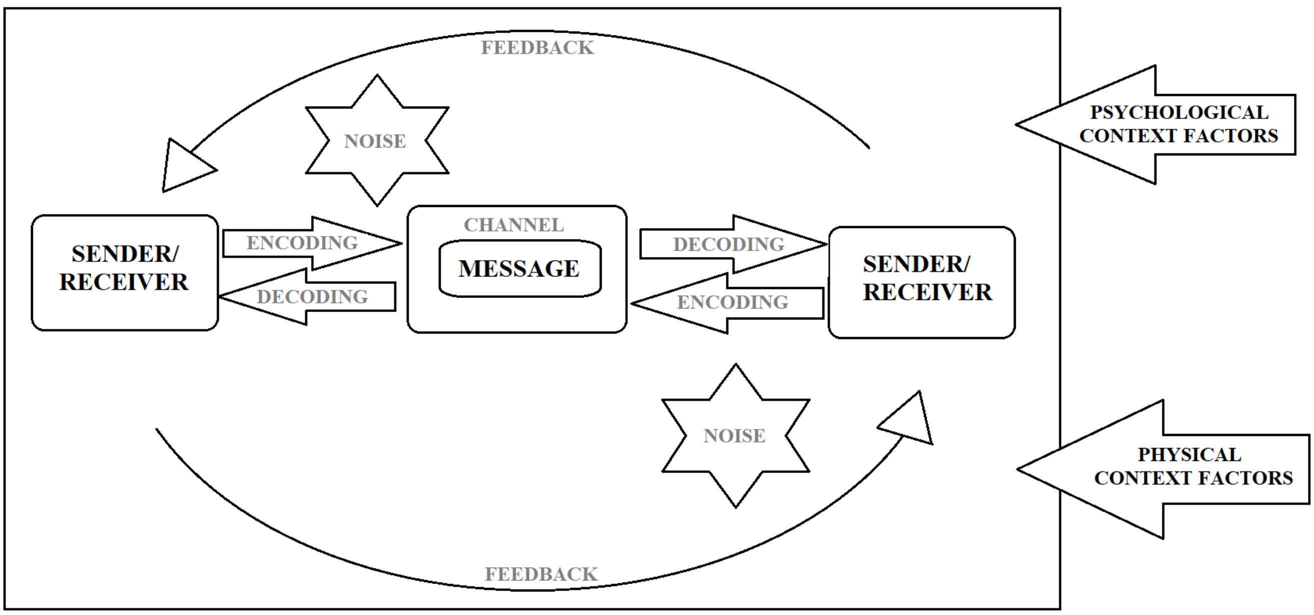
Whereas much literature considers internal communication from a manager point of view, they rarely suggest monologue. The manager interest is related to initiation of communication and communication structure, that is formed in a top-down fashion (Ruck & Welch, 2012). This is not to say that internal communication should only come from management. On the contrary, research emphasize an approach where feedback and active communication between management and employees are incorporated (Ruck & Welch, 2012; Tourish & Robson, 2004). Researchers have noted that the sender can only assure that the receiver correctly understood the message, through feedback and an active communication process (Miller, 2008). Therefore, active communication is encouraged through wide bodies of literature (Mazzei, 2013; Miller, 2008).

In order to describe and visualize such internal communication, this thesis takes on the interaction model of communication. The model starts with the concepts of a sender and a receiver, which transmits information back and forth (Schmitz, 2012). Here, the sender takes on encoding, which is the act of transforming thoughts of meaning into a transferable message. The receiver, on the other end, takes on decoding, which is the act of transforming message back into thought and grasp meaning from it. Notably, the model also propose that the sender and receiver interactively change roles in response to each other’s messages. Because of this, the communication is portrayed in a two-way fashion where feedback and response chase each other circularly (Schramm, 1997). In contrast to top-down focused models, the interactive model is more focused on the communication process rather than the message. Meaning, that the success of a communicational situation is not determined purely based on weather one message was correctly perceived as intended. Rather, it is determined by the characteristics of the communicational process as a whole, where sender, message and receiver play equal roles in making the conversation work.

In addition, the model assumes that there will be noise in the communication process. These noise factors include anything that could affect the success of the communication. A second aspect of the interaction model is that it incorporates context factors that may interfere with, or otherwise affect the communication process. The model divides these into physiological- and psychological context factors. Examples of physical context factors could be distance, which affect how well the sender is able to hear the message. While psychological context factors could be the emotional state of the communicating participants. For example, a message could be perceived differently if the receiver is irritated contra if the receiver feels content. A model is proposed below to visualize all these factors (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Interactive Communication Model



Note. A visualization of the sender/receiver encode and decode messages interactively in a context depended and noise filed environment.

In this thesis the interactional model was chosen as part of a theoretical framework, partly because literature on communication in organizational contexts propose more interactive processes (Mazzei, 2013). This could imply that organizational members may have experiences with an interactive flow of internal communication. The model may in this case further aid the understanding of the aspects that organizational members describe and help see them in relation to each other. In addition, the model could help to see the communicational process in light of context factors, which may further highlight individual thoughts and emotions. Also, the model is rather general in terms of communicational aspects, which renders it easily applicable the context of choice. Lastly, a more open an interactive approach has been emphasized particularly in environmentally oriented contexts (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). As to provide further theoretical insight on this proposed relationship, the next section presents a complimenting model that could be used to refer specifically to the sustainable context.

An Involvement Strategy of Communicating CSR

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concerns the pressure towards companies to take responsibility for their practices and actions (Gruber et al., 2017). Sustainable practice is in turn, are prime example of companies taking such responsibilities. From this, sustainable development could be seen as a form of exercised CSR (Aggerholm et al., 2011). Through this reasoning, it could be that theoretical notions from literature on communication and CSR may promote an understanding of communication and sustainable change. Respectively, Morsing and Schultz (2006) have described three stakeholder strategies that concern how businesses communicate their CSR towards internal and external stakeholders.

The first is the information strategy, which features a top-down approach where managers inform and instruct. This model incorporates an aspect where the company offer sensegiving. Sensegiving refers to the sharing of information (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In this context this information would concern CSR. For the current project the information model would concern managers sensegiving towards employees, the internal stakeholders. The second approach is the response strategy, which opens for feedback. Through this model, the company tries to develop a sense of the organizational environment, which is a process referred to as sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Ergo, the company aspires sensemaking as well as sensegiving (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). For this project, the response model would concern the meaning that employees make of sustainable work. Whereas this is a two-way model, it is also asymmetric in that the company tries to convince receivers, and do not really plan to make changes as according to the feedback (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010).

The information strategy and the response strategy do not facilitate a balanced active communication between the company and its internal stakeholders. The research authors therefore suggest that companies move towards more involving measure, as posed in their third strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The involvement strategy is dialogue focused. This means that it features an approach where sensegiving and sensemaking are expressed by both the company and internal stakeholders (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). Another property of this strategy is that both company and internal stakeholders (i.e. managers and employees) try to convince each other, and decisions may further be influenced by insight from different angles inside the company. In other words, the involvement strategy would open for employees to challenge the company towards increasingly more sustainable practices. The involvement strategy in turn implies that there are properties of sustainable communication, which makes it a distinct form of organizational communication. Specifically, that the sustainable communication demands a more involving approach. As this thesis aim to explore exactly such distinctions, the involvement strategy will work as a context related framework for the current thesis.

Method

The choice of method should depend on the research question and what the study aims to achieve (Svartdal, 2015). Specifically, my research question is "How do members of an organization experience internal communication on sustainable change". Qualitative methods hold multiple opportunities which I saw as good tools to approach this research question. First of all, the research question is open in the sense that it allows for broad insight on a topic that has not received much attention in research. Secondly, the study aims to derive knowledge through the experiences of participants. This is in line with a qualitative approach, because it is mainly concerned with the meanings individuals assign to a certain phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Aiding the focus on experiences, qualitative approaches are well-suited to provide details by individual accounts (Svartdal, 2015). Finally, internal communication and sustainability has previously been described as complex phenomena (Meijer & Hekkert, 2013; Tkalac Verčič et al., 2012). Respectively, I chose a qualitative approach for this project, because they are generally described as suited to provide rich insight into complex themes (Svartdal, 2015).

IPA

In this project I decided to use an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), because of the following reasons. The context of sustainability has been described as a research topic of high complexity (Meijer & Hekkert, 2013). Correspondingly, the IPA approach enables insight on deeper and more detailed levels, which is underlined by the argument: "IPA is especially valuable when examining topics which are complex, ambiguous and emotionally laden." (Smith & Osborn, 2015). On another note, IPA has been described as a suitable approach to capture insight into the way people experience a phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Fittingly, this project aims to capture individual experiences of internal communication. In addition to quest a description of the reality a participant pictures, the IPA method is highly interpretative (Smith, et al., 2009). The interpretative standpoint also makes more sense to me personally. This opinion lingers on the thought that words and text in and off themselves do not inherently convey meaning, the knowledge comes from our understanding of the material.

The IPA approach, is based on the assumption that people are self-interpretative beings, meaning that they participate in sensemaking and understanding of their own lives and surroundings (Taylor, 1985). Ultimately, IPA is a method of analysis which aims to investigate how people make sense of - or *interpret*- their own experiences (Pietkiewicz &

Smith, 2014). IPA is moreover built on three theoretical orientations: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideographics.

Husserl expressed that we must live with the fact that our perceptions will not necessarily be extensive or correct (Husserl, 1935). By this he meant that knowledge also lies beyond trying to find a common perception of the world that is right for everyone, and that much is to gain by studying the individual and particular. From a phenomenological perspective, IPA takes concern with how things appear to people, rather than finding a certain standardized framework in a system (Smith, et al., 2009). In other words, the IPA approach is well suited to highlight people's individual viewpoints in explorative detail, which is the inherent aim of this project.

Further, IPA builds on hermeneutic components because the researcher tries to see themselves in the place of the research object (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In this project I am trying to gain insight into the everyday lives of people, and I see an analysis method aimed to put the researcher in the shoes of other people as a productive means to achieve such insight. The hermeneutic component of IPA is often described as a dual interpretation process (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This means that participants first try to make sense of their own world, they express this, then the researchers try to make sense of participant remarks. In other words, the perception process happens twice; first by the participant then by the researcher, and both are included in the method. As IPA builds on phenomenological as well as hermeneutic orientations, one could say that it is both descriptive (because it focuses on how people portray their own reality) and interpretative (because it recognizes that all phenomena are interpreted) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Personally, I also see the value of IPA in terms of the double perception. I think it is reasonable for researchers to take their own processes of analysis into account when they are already so closely linked to the analytical results.

Lastly, IPA is built on an ideographic theoretical orientation because its focus lies on specific instances rather than the general or universal (Smith et al., 2009). Hence, an IPA analysis focuses on comparing the differences and similarities of information between different individuals, and less on adapting this knowledge on a more general level. This is in order to capture the complex in-depth reality of individuals (Smith, et al., 2009). A normal way for IPA to be used is when the researcher starts by questioning individuals and then produces a case study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), which fits with the case situation of the current project.

Data collection

In the following sections I aim to explain how I proceeded with the data collection and account for the choices I made in this process. The first section accounts for why I chose interviews as a data collection method. Then, there is a description of the company in order to bring the reader closer to the case context. Consecutively, there is an explanation of the choices I made when recruiting participants and how this was carried out in practice. Then there is an explanation of how I formulated the interview questions. Lastly there are descriptions of the informants and the execution of the interviews.

Interview

Like the choice to conduct qualitative research, the means to collect data in a study should also depend on the research question and purpose (Svartdal, 2015). In this project I chose to conduct interviews. The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to understand aspects in the daily life of individuals through their perspective (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009). In turn, it aims to construct knowledge in the interface between the interviewer and the interviewee. These qualities render the research interview as particularly suited to gain nuanced insights into people's experiences, and highlight a possible complexity of those experiences (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009). Correspondingly, this project aims to dive into participants experiences of the internal sustainable communication in a company, which as mentioned has been described as a topic of high complexity.

More specifically, I conducted semi-structured interviews in this project. Semi-structured interviews have been described as interviews that remind of conversations, with a rule of direction for the conversational theme (Longhurts, 2003). The semi-structured interview will open for follow-up questions, which further allow for elaboration on areas of interest or exploration into relevant areas that were not initially hypothesized (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I chose semi-structured interviews for several reasons. One being that it allows for a conversational tone which may help interviewees to elaborate around a question, in turn liberating details of thought and experience (Longhurts, 2003). This is of particular importance when I approach my research topic by explorative means. The semi-structured method also allows me to skip questions from the interview guide if they are already answered and move back and forth on the guide depending on the direction of the conversation. This could help save time, considering that interview objects are approached during hectic work hours. At the same time, I wanted some structure in the process as I have not had any practice as an interviewer prior to this project.

Connecting the data collection method to IPA, semi-structured interviews are amongst the most common methods when using this approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The reason for this is partly that characteristics of this method can give elaborate insight into participant viewpoints. Two characteristics; flexibility and real-time interaction, are of significance here. The method is flexible in the sense that the researcher is loosely attached to the interview guide and is characterized by real-time interaction because the researcher may direct and redirect conversational themes during the actual interview (Smith, et al., 2009). These characteristics allow the researcher to act upon information that may occur during the interview, and follow up on information trails that may lead to a deeper and more detailed image of participants perspectives (Smith, et al., 2009).

Case

The case organization is a large for-profit company which has its main office in Norway, but operates on an international scale. The company employs about 2500 people in multiple sectors, thereby development, sales and production. All these sectors fit in a matrix organizational structure with higher and lower levels of management. The company produces and sells office furniture and prides its brands on a green focus. In addition, sustainability is set to be a core value throughout this company.

My contact with the case company was achieved during my internship period at SINTEF digital. During my intent stay I expressed an interest in doing a project on companies that worked with sustainability. From here, I got insight on a research project that is currently under progress in the case company. Specifically, this is a user-led innovation (ULI) project which aims to introduce and successfully implement a more sustainable production option. Further, SINTEF project members offered to put me in contact with several company gatekeepers.

In primary preparation to contact company gatekeepers, SINTEF project members suggested participants that worked in the environmental department of the case company. This was mainly because these company members were assumed to have the most insight on work with sustainability, while company members outside the department would be less involved. Based on this discussion it became clear that the prominent sustainability focus might not be equally relevant to all member of the case company. I was intrigued by the idea that people in the company may have different experiences on how the sustainability focus is communicated, and decided to aim for a sample that varied in terms of organization level and occupation.

Two sectors were represented in this project, the environmental department and the production. Those employed in the environmental department were office employees who worked closely with sustainable questions and strategies to develop a more sustainable company. This sector was small with two employees, both represented in this project. Participants employed in production were not concerned with environmentally oriented questions to the same extent. This sector was large with 177 employees and multiple levels of management. All participants from this sector were employed at the same factory site but held different occupations. First, there was a factory site manager with responsibilities for daily operations at the production site. Second, there was a manager of production, also referred to as a middle manager with specific responsibility for production development. Lastly, there were two operators on floor level who worked with the practical production, specifically assembling and varnishing.

In addition to the management hierarchy, the factory had a democratic solution called quality groups. Through volunteering and voting, a few floor level employees took part in meetings with managers, where they were more involved in projects and practical decision making. Through this system a handful of operators functioned as representatives for the employees in their respective production sectors. The operators represented in this project each held such a representative role. One represented employees in the assembling sector and one represented employees in the varnishing sector.

Recruitment

SINTEF forwarded my invitation of participation to two gatekeepers in the case company, which were the managers in the environmental department. As I wished to recruit company members with different occupations and on different organizational levels, these gatekeepers passed my invitation to a factory site manager. The factory manager in turn helped to forward my invitation to one middle manager and two operators at the same factory site. As a result, I had participants on three organizational levels, which I describe in a section further down. Besides the job positions, I had no criteria of participation for the interview objects.

Ideally sampling should occur on an independent basis (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009), on the initiative of the researcher. Achieving this in practice proved to be a challenge as I was not in a position to roam the company for recruitment. For this reason, participants in this project were partly recruited through company relations. Recruitment of operators and the middle manager was in addition, initiated via higher management levels. This process challenged the certainty that recruitment occurred on a completely voluntary basis. In order to counteract this, gatekeepers were asked to phrase the request of participation as a voluntary question. All participants were also reassured the research data would only be accessed by my supervisor and me.

Typically, the IPA approach aims for homogeneity amongst informants, because it is more compatible with the philosophical basis and analytical processes (Smith, et al., 2009). Moreover, the homogeneity is unifiable with IPA because it does not aim to generalize findings (Robinson, 2014). In this project the sample is purposely heterogenous in terms of traits that may affect the research. This is not however, in order to achieve generalization, but rather to capture how specific individuals experience a communicational aspect. In this sense the sample characteristics should not in and of themselves restrain the analytical process, however this deviation from typical IPA procedure should be noted.

Interview Questions

Members of the SINTEF project suggested that based on the participants expertise, questions on communication and sustainability could be perfectly understandable to some, while highly unrelatable to others. Here the theme of interest was the same for all participants, but it was important that interview questions were relevant and understandable to them. I therefore decided to form two different interview guides. One for those who were presumably more involved in sustainable work, and one for floor level employees who were thought to be less involved. For the sake of simplicity, I chose to label these as *manager interview guide* (See Attachment 1) and *operator interview guide* (see Attachment 2).

The operator interview guide (see Attachment 2) posed rather general questions of their thoughts and attitudes around internal communication. For example the initial question would be “Could you talk about a time the company decided to make some changes that affected you as an operator?”, followed by a question to appoint this to communication, e.g. “How did the company communicate these changes?”. I also asked about their thoughts around sustainability and the environmental focus in the company, but tried not to narrow these questions to specific projects. Based on the assumption that these individuals were less involved with sustainability projects, I asked “Do you feel like you have the opportunity to contribute to a more sustainable production?”.

The manager interview guide (see Attachment 1) started by focusing on the extent to which the participant was involved with sustainable work. One question was “Can you tell about some projects that are happening now?” and posing their involvement by specifying: “Can you explain your role in these?”. Before continuing to questions on communication, I explicitly urged managers to try to think of these questions in connection to sustainability.

One example of a proceeding question would then be “How do you explain what is going to happen to members of the company?”.

For both groups, the interview guides aimed to capture how communication was perceived in both directions. That is, both in terms of communicating outwards and being communicated to. Operators were asked how they perceived the company communication, but also how they contributed to communication upwards (see Attachment 2), for example by asking “Can you talk about a time when you gave feedback?”. Likewise, managers were asked how they communicated to others, as well as how they received and perceived comments (see Attachment 1) for example by the question “How do you receive feedback from others in the company?”.

Informants

When an IPA analysis is conducted, one generally wants to give a full account of each participants descriptive reality and sample sizes are therefore usually small (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In this case I conducted interviews with six individuals. In line with the theoretical underpinnings of IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), participants were selected purposely. As previously mentioned, I wished to include a varied sample in terms of sector and organizational level. Therefore, I ended up with informants that held a variety of occupations (see Table 1). Beyond this, all participants were male, they had different lengths of affiliation to the company and different levels of education corresponding to their occupation. The six participants also belonged to one of the two company sectors, either the environmental department at main office or production at a factory site (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants coded	Gender	Length of employment	Education and background	Occupation (Management level*)	Section
Informant 1	Male	9 years (3 years in current position)	Master’s Degree in Innovation and Business Development	Business developer (Level 2*)	Environmental department
Informant 2	Male	5 years	Bachelor’s Degree in Mechanical Engineering	Manager of sustainability (Level 2*)	Environmental department

Informant 3	Male	9 years (not all in same position)	Master's Degree in Product Development and Production	Factory manager (Level 2*)	Production
Informant 4	Male	25 years	Vocational Education in Machine and Mechanics	Factory operator	Production
Informant 5	Male	25 years	Vocational Education in Automation Mechanics	Factory operator	Production
Informant 6	Male	2 years	Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering	Middle manager in product development (Level 3*)	Production

Note. Demographic information on participants gender, affiliation to the workplace, education, occupation and sector.

Interview Process

Interviews with participants from the environmental department and the factory manager were held online, by the communication apps: Skype Business and Whereby. The reason for having online interviews was that participants were scattered over different cities. Traveling to meet them all would be both impractical and frankly, seem rather hypocritical for research in the context of sustainability. This posed some challenges, however. I experienced technical issues during multiple interviews, where participants had problems with receiving stable sound from my end. Because of this, there could be misunderstandings in regard to my questions. Nonetheless, my perception is that messages came properly through after some repetition.

The initial plan was to have all the interviews digitally. However, based on advice from the factory site manager, I decided to do face-to-face interviews. According to the factory managers, operators would feel more comfortable if interviews were held like this. I decided to follow up on this suggestion as the manager knew these participants better than I, and because I wanted to facilitate a comfortable interview setting.

I started all the interviews by revising a quick summary of participant rights as well as the theme and purpose of the study. I then asked whether there were any questions regarding these points and clarified at request. Each of the interviews lasted for 30-60 minutes, and were audio taped on a tape recorder so that I was free to focus solely on the conversation. Endwise I opened for any further notions on the theme, in order to make sure that the participant got to say everything they wanted to. I also offered to send my project as a finished product and thanked for participation.

Transcription

Transcription is the translation from spoken to written language, and is often a way to structure interviews so that they are easier to analyse (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009). In this project I transcribed all the interviews myself, which helped me get an overview of the data I had collected. All the data in this project was transcribed within a week after each interview was held. I appreciated doing the transcriptions while the interview was still fresh in mind, as this allowed me to take notes around the interview and better reexperience them as I translated the audio.

The methodological literature does not seem to suggest a *correct* way of transcribing interviews, but rather proposes that it depends on the nature and purpose of the research (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009). I chose to transcribe word-by-word as this is more in line with my phenomenological approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Also, I included wordings and pauses which I believed could help me re-live the mood and state in which I put the interviewee. I chose not to transcribe dialect, for clarity of the text and for anonymity reasons. Lastly, I chose to leave out wordings of recognition from my part as I felt like they would add an unnatural feel to the text, while not adjoining anything particularly valuable.

In addition to a word-for-word transcription I made introductory notes on factors that could have affected accurate collection, and the general mood of the interview. The thought was that this would help me re-live the interviews with more ease and better see the interviewees point of view upon later revisions of the text. The transcription process has been described as the start of the analysis itself (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009), and this became a sort of first entry to the analysis which I will elaborate further in the next section.

Analysis

The following sections describe the analytic choices and the analysis processes of this project. First there is an explanation of how I conducted the IPA, portrayed for the sake of structure, in a step-by-step description. The following section is a consideration of my role as a researcher.

Description of Analysis

In order to begin the IPA analysis I decided to followed the guidelines of Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). Their guidelines can be divided into three steps: 1) read through and take notes, 2) transform notes into emerging themes, and 3) seek relationships in clusters. These helped me to analyse each interview individually. Guidelines to an IPA analysis also suggest analysing themes across data sets (Smith et al., 2009). Whereby I decided to explore themes across interviews, as a fourth and final step to my analysis.

1) Read Through and Take Notes. When conducting an IPA analysis, it is important for the researcher to be thoroughly emerged in the data. I therefore chose to read through each transcription a couple times as a first approach to the process. I then proceeded by taking notes chronologically through the interview. When taking notes, my main focus was on understanding the participant and how the interview was painted by their described reality. I also looked to suggestions on IPA analysis (Smith, et al., 2009) for how this process could be undertaken. Mainly, I marked notes as descriptions, linguistics or concepts. Descriptions entail what is being discussed, linguistics concerns the participants wordings and use of language, while concepts are more interpretative notes which aim to set conceptual questions and dive deeper into textual meanings (Smith, et al., 2009).

In accordance to other IPA recommendations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), I also marked certain context factors that I thought could affect the interview (e.g. internet connection) and marked notes on my overall experience of the mood or other observations from the interview. In addition, I marked sections that described the participants personal reflexivity (e.g. occupation and work context), which potentially could affect their answers. Many of these markings were made from notes I made during the transcription process, when the interviews were still fresh in mind. In practice, I colour coded descriptions, linguistics, concepts, context, experience and personal reflexivity. I then attached comment boxes to transcription sections rather than markings, so that I was free to mark one section in accordance to multiple types of notes. E.g. one quotation would have both descriptive and conceptual properties.

2) Transform Notes into Emerging Themes. Next, guidelines suggest to shift the focus more consequently on the notes derived from the previous step (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The goal here is to create themes on a higher level of abstraction, where the research field is more free to affect the formulations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In that sense the analysis moves a step away from the initial participant account.

In practice I read through notes and formulated themes which captured note sections. Here, some notes seemed to enlighten multiple themes, while others did not capture any. Still, I tried not to rule out participation input at this step, and framed themes in a way that interpretively captured most of the essence from the interviews.

3) Seek Relationships in Clusters. For the third step, guidelines suggest to categorize themes together in clusters which can be attributed to the research question (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In order to formulate representative clusters, I picked out themes which I saw as more relevant to my research question and clustered these together in a table. I then formulated labels which would capture each section of themes (see Table 2). During this process I also pruned the analysis for themes that were of less relevance to the project research question and merged reoccurring themes into one. In result I was left with one table for each interview, which portrayed a categorization of themes.

Table 2

Draft of how Themes were Merged into Clusters

Interview 1

1. Cluster theme	1.1 Theme
	1.2 Theme
2. Cluster theme	2.1 Theme
	2.2 Theme

Note. Exemplification of how clusters were formed for each interview

4) Explore Themes Across Interviews. For the final step, guidelines suggest to broaden the analysis in order to capture the dataset as a whole (Smith et al., 2009). This step builds on the notion that insight from one perceptive standpoint may enlighten a more elaborate understanding of other perspectives. The goal of this step is to use the data as a whole, in order to understand its pieces.

Here I noted topics which reoccurred between participants, with specific focus to the clusters I derived from the previous step. In order to systemize this process, I made yet another table (see Table 3). This table had one column for topics that were found in multiple interviews and one column specifying what interviews addressed it. In this manner I created a table of comparison across interviews where I was able to visualize what themes were similar or contrasting. This visualization also represented my final topics as described in the results.

Table 3

Draft Table for Finding Themes Across Interviews

Occurring in interview	Themes
Interview 1 and 2	Theme explained
Interview 3, 4 and 5	Theme explained

Note. Exemplification of how themes were found and compared across interviews

Reflexive Considerations

The IPA approach urges the researcher to see data through the participants eyes, however, researchers cannot be entirely free from their own biases. It is therefore recommended that we contemplate on our own role as a researchers, in regards to our objectivity (Kvale & Brinkmannm, 2009). Therefore, this section is devoted to recognising my own prejudices and biases that may have affected the analysis process and the results of this project.

In this project, I am exploring the perceptions of people in a setting I am not practically familiar with. We are far apart in the sense that the participants describe a phenomenon in a context of work experience, while I try to understand it through theoretical reasoning. Whereas I believe I can derive much useful insight from an interview approach, it is none the less impossible for me to truly picture myself in the situation of my participants. I might also have biases as a student. My background from studying psychology, could for example paint my perception of what internal communication entails, blurring the interpretation of the participants perceptions. Through the process of analysing, I tried not to let theoretical expectations influence the analysis process. At the same time, theoretical preparation on the topic had the potential to unacknowledgedly affect the tendencies I believed to see in the data material.

Science Ethics

Prior to the research start, this study was approved by the Norwegian Social Data Service – more commonly shortened as NSD. Informants were contacted personally over e-mail but were in turn anonymized in the data collection process. In this project I also choose not to reveal the company name in consideration of participant anonymity.

In advance to the interviews, participants received a document on consent and information (see Attachment 4), as approved by NSD (see Attachment 5) which they signed upon agreement of participation. They also received a document which more elaborately described what the research concerned and what we would be talking about (see Attachment 3). Information from the consent and information documents were shortly revised in the start of each interview and participants were encouraged to share any questions or concerns on these.

Interview recordings were transferred to a code-protected memory stick and deleted from the recorder shortly after the interview. This was done to secure data safety and anonymity. In the transcription of the interviews, names and dialects were censored and participants were coded with numbers. In this thesis participants are in turn referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.

Results

This chapter present findings from the analysis and aims to respond to the research question: “How do members of an organization experience internal communication on sustainable work?”.

One general impression from the analysis was that some participants seemed to find it more challenging to think of communication in terms of sustainability. Still all participants had clear perception of the internal communication process in general. This distinction seemed to be prominent between participants holding different occupations. More specifically, participants from the environmental development sector (Participant 1 and 2) seemed most prone to speak of internal communication in the context of sustainability. Managers from the production sector (Participant 3 and 6) spoke of this context at times while attributing most of their communicative tasks on messages that were not oriented on sustainability. Operators from the production sector (Participant 4 and 5) seemed to speak more freely when addressing internal communication in general, and sustainable work mostly as a separate topic, though not entirely independent. There also seemed to be much similarities in other identified topics between pairing participants which held similar occupational titles. This is exemplified throughout the topics below and addressed further in the discussion chapter.

This chapter further report project results by topics that were identified in the analysis. Specifically, five main topics were identified: Involvement in communication, the language, the message, consistency of the message, and communication balance. Participant citations are used through further presentation of these topics as IPA guidelines express two particular strengths of exemplification by citations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). First, it may allow the reader insight into how the researcher applies their own interpretation. Second, it strengthens participant presence by providing open insight into their exact way of expression. Notedly, citations were translated, as interviews were initially held in Norwegian.

Involvement in Communicating Sustainability

The participants seemed to speak of internal communication, much in terms of how involved they perceived themselves to be with the subject of concern. As a first topic from my analysis, it was therefore taken that people experienced different types and grades of involvement towards the task of communicating sustainability. In addition, they expressed particular attitudes on how they themselves were involved. This nuance in participant experience can be viewed through five more narrow themes which I address in the sections below.

Grades of Involvement

When speaking of internal communication and sustainability, all participants seemed to come back to the degree to which this theme was incorporated in their everyday life. For some participants communicating sustainability seemed to take up much time and effort, for others this was not a central concern. For example, Participant 1 and 2 described work with sustainability as a large part of their work life. Taken from their own descriptions, they perceived themselves as heavily involved on the subject, as in the following examples:

"*So, I am really quite broadly involved in it, from kind of being involved and participate in those things that are more about material, research and- and concrete product design*" (Participant 1)

«*... basically, it is a little like having the top hand on environmental achievements in products. ( ) I also sit with the responsibility for reporting, sustainability reporting and I sit with strategy, and I am kind of thinking forward as well*" (Participant 2)

These participants also described communication on sustainability as a significant part of their work tasks. Including the tasks of communicating changes and progress that the company made concerning sustainability, they were also tasked to develop and communicate sustainable strategies, as well as communicating sustainable knowledge. From their descriptions, they seemed to perceive themselves highly involved in sustainable work. They also expressed much responsibility for the sustainable work that aspired in the company. Participant 1 further described practical processes associated with internal communication, and the responsibility to improve on this:

"… so perhaps we introduce some methods, or now we will do it like this. And then it is important that we have some kind of training, and that we do that more or less structurally. Have- all new sales employees for example, have to go through an 'induction' as we call it. A quick training, and hour where we go through, kind of overall how sustainable work functions. And then we close the barriers for them to contact us if there is anything specific" (Participant 1)

Communication as described in this process depicts the participant as an attributor to spread information on the subject of sustainability, but also to involve other company members into further communication. The key being that the training is a bridge to open for further communication with other company members. In such a sense Participants 1 and 2 portrays not only high self-involvement, but also the action to involve other members in the communicational system.

The other participants spoke of involvement more in terms of recognizing sustainable aspects in their everyday work life. Participant 3 and 6 seemed to attribute their involvement more in terms of recognizing sustainable aspects of work projects. For example, Participant 6 described they had to consider sustainable aspects when making decisions in the production:

"All methods that are used in the production – that which we make- there are a few things that are somewhat controlled by sustainability. Relatively to how things are assembled, if it is easy to separate in order to save plastic, metal and all things like that, so it affects us quite a lot." (Participant 6)

In terms of communicating sustainability, these participants recognized their roles as following directions from the company, in order to follow through and attribute to internal credibility. In other words, participating in creating sustainable values and preserve the culture pride for being a sustainable company.

For Participant 4 and 5 it did not seem very relevant to speak of how involved they were particularly in sustainable communication. They seemed to attribute their involvement in sustainable work more to practical means to achieve a more sustainable production. For example, in the practical task of creating high quality products in order to minimize production waste, as implied in the following citation:

"Yeah, I don't know if the quality goes under that sustainability part, I might think so. The lacquer quality amongst other things which I know- we often haven't agreed on the approval of this out amongst customers. Yeah, so one could risk a consumer complaint and that isn't very environmentally friendly to put it like that." (Participant 4)

These participants did not seem to perceive themselves as highly involved in the internal communication on company sustainability. However, they elaborated on their opportunities to be involved in company decisions in general and attributed much of this involvement to their roles as employee representatives, which I come back to in a later section.

One participant recognised communicative contributions from the environmental sector as means to create values and culture in the company. In this case, values of sustainability and culture for working towards sustainable aims. While they recognized more local or short travelled communication between factory managers and operators, as a means to infuse the practice that being a sustainably focused company entails. In response to a question of whether they participated in communicating sustainable strategies, they expressed:

"Maybe not quite directly, other sectors in the company might be a bit more concerned with raising the focus on that. And we have this environmental department, I was going to say, which is here- and have been here and kind of talked about their role in it and why ( ) This channel is more on a local level, actually, concrete what we are going to do" (Participant 6)

How Involvement is Created

Across interviews, participants suggested many different channels of communication and potential tools for involvement. Two such channels that were frequently mentioned, were a company newsletter and the employee representative system. From participant descriptions it comes that the newsletter is created by central management and sent to different company departments. Participants pose the newsletter as a popular and fun way of communication, which company members reach out for. Further, they describe how the newsletter has been a tool to involve company members.

"… what actually works best for us is a god old fashion newsletter which comes out once a month, where we write four to five pages with a lot of pictures and stuff about things that are happening. That is being read a lot during lunch pauses and things like that" (Participant 3)

"… the only way we can improve ourselves, is kind of, by people telling us off. And we have these newsletters on the factories in Sweden and in Norway, and here I took up this plastic issue, not that there are- there aren't any projects on this or anything. So I took a picture of that plastic ball that lay there after a product or two and then I said: 'we must do something about this', and then I wrote that 'everyone who wants to, should contribute by coming up with good ideas on where we can save plastic. And if you send me an e-mail, we'll give a product in sea plastic for one of the contributions that comes in.' Just to kind of create a gimmick out of it, hadn't gotten any e-mail yet but [laughter] then, suddenly an e-mail came from someone else. And this is like four-five people which have come together and said 'hi, we read in the newsletter that the environmental department might have this as an environmental goal, and what can we do and-' it has kind of created a good effect" (Participant 2)

From the latter example, the participant also describes the newsletter as a communication channel which aspired perceived involvement amongst other company members. Specifically, by posing an issue with the company sustainable work and asking people to participate in finding solutions. In addition, the participant implied that the newsletter was a source of engagement, in that other people took to offer their aid after receiving the message. Further in the interview, Participant 2 goes on to express that it was the communication of how people may help that aspired action. Hence, communication that aimed to involve organizational members. The participant also suggested that the sustainable aspect of the company stood to benefit from handing out recognition to members that came with feedback on the matter, in the sense that this further heightened engagement and motivation to participate.

On a different note, four participants mentioned employee representatives when speaking of the involvement of the company members. Participants described how the system was an effective way to share knowledge between employee levels. In this arena of communication, company members had to consider individual viewpoints and adjust their choices based on feedback from each other. One participant expressed this specifically, by implying that there was systematic dialogue between management and representatives also before the company made choices to participate in projects. In all, the representative system was painted as a tool to keep company members informed, and to create transparency through company sectors. The experiences of how the representative work created involvement, is nicely exemplified by the following citations:

"… and then there are good suggestions that comes from out there, and here I think it is important that the improvement-group dialogue goes in two directions. So we are always concerned with what they think when we want to go through with something, and then they also have requirements that they want us to go through with and which we will- yeah which we will serve or deliver" (Participant 6)

"…we have established communication points with the representative system both on the formal and informal. So that every fourteenth day we have a meeting with all the representatives on, yeah, management level. That is for the board in the club, with the management at the factory. And after that meeting, each of my department managers have meetings with their line representatives. We use those forums firstly in order to, really discuss our role in those projects, so that there is a real involvement, that is we don't- we would not start a kind of SINTEF-project, and join a SINTEF-project without debating and discussing that with the club, and that it is something that is applicable to us. Thereby much of that work is already done when we start" (Participant 3)

Participant 4 and 5 were themselves representatives and described their role in this work as an opportunity to stay more involved with company decisions. Through this activity, they also expressed that they received more information and participated more in conveying information as compared to other company members. As exemplified expressively by Participant 4: *"Yeah, as I mentioned, I am a bit more involved than normal operators. So, I feel that I have a very good communication, both in quality- and, yeah, various people around the place"*

The employee representative roles were further described as voluntary, in the sense that company members with a personal desire to be more involved may do so in this role. Responsively, Participant 4 and 5 attributed much of their participation to personal engagement and interest towards company involvement. From this, it was implied that involvement was created somewhat through initiative, or personal interest. In one participant's own words: *"...I am a bit engaged you know, it is good, you have to be a bit engaged"* (Participant 5)

Involvement and Comprehension

Some participants experienced that the grade of involvement towards sustainable work affected how company members understood the communication on sustainability. Participants seem to describe the work with sustainability as a very particular subject, which might not affect all company members on the same level of detail. They further implied that people who were less involved were also more likely to misunderstand information that was being communicated. In example:

"... and those who do not work with these things on a daily basis could interpret what is written there in quite different ways. ( ) I mean, not everyone knows what circular economy is, right. Maybe they just- not that it is like that, but maybe they think it has something to do with finances or something" (Participant 1)

Another participant expressed that other company members sometimes failed to recognize the extensiveness of sustainable work. As a narrative, the participant explain that company members sometimes expected large masses of information, which took a whole process to achieve. At times, these company members then communicate impatience or were incomprehensive towards the effort and workload. These belittling tones cause the participant to experience negative emotions like frustration and annoyance.

"... so, I get irritated if people do not understand that what we are doing is complex and time consuming. So if it's a little like 'yeah this is the environmental department so you can take on these things then' but then I say 'no we cannot just answer that, because it takes three damn weeks to get those answers. Then, 'why don't you already have those answers in your systems?'. It becomes a little like blaming each other, why one does not have the data available for example, that could be a problem" (Participant 2)

The participant went on to attribute such misconceptions in other company members, to their level of involvement on sustainable work. In other words, they were not as involved in the particular work, and may therefore belittle the extent of such work tasks.

"But it's often so that you do not get it before you sit down to dig into it yourself, right. We have- there are many sales employees who get a kind of a-ha experience when they

really need documentation on an important thing and become involved themselves" (Participant 2)

Attitudes and Involvement

In addition to talking about their own grade of involvement and how company members became involved, participants expressed certain attitudes associated with how the company involved its members.

All participants seemed to express that involvement was something the company should work towards, and that company management would make a bad favour for themselves in ignoring this aspect. Arguments for this were many. Amongst other things, participants expressed that involvement created more positive attitudes towards the sustainable development in the company. They also express that cooperating work was easier when company members did not feel like they were overshadowed or overruled. Specifically, it was expressed that management should always aim to have floor level employees as team players when the company made decisions, as exemplified below:

"That perspective which operators have, it is not worth any less to put it like that, so it is together one find the good solutions. And they- yes, it is very hard, or one quickly forgets it. Often, we almost go into that trap as well. Because when you have been sitting in the office, drawing and working for many, many hours with a technical solution that an engineer has done, then it is kind of this sea of time and energy before those you should involve. So, then it is almost impossible to seal that gap, so you must drag the entire development process together in order to succeed. Otherwise it becomes a sort of sales pitch, to sell it for the user and that is wrong. One needs to feel that one participates in developing the solution, then we succeed, yeah" (Participant 3)

From this citation it also surfaced that communication processes would be more effective when members were involved in company development, rather than being presented a change as a sales pitch. Or rather that the communication would flow better when relevant people were informed from the start of a specific measure, to its end. Another participant expressed similarly, adding that involvement was an effective way to approach company members with change. Specifically, an active communication between those who suggested the change, and those whose work tasks would be affected by these changes. In sum it was implied that such an involvement tended to foster positive attitudes towards company change processes, as exemplified:

"… yes, it is important that people are involved because then you have a much bigger ground of opportunity to have a breakthrough and to complete a change. And that is what I might have felt on both accounts, both successful incidents and those where it was more difficult. ( ) It might be more subjective from me, yet it is something that could be difficult in order to help move things along. That one might think that things are bigger problems than what they really are, and perhaps don't have the will to try out changes that are suggested or want to try them out. If maybe it is more radical changes in their everyday life, then that demands a little effort and will to see if that is the way to head. And I do understand that if one feel that one is held on the outside in those situations, the will won't be the same when we are trying to see if it works. So that might be the thing I felt, for me" (Participant 6)

This participant seemed to share the perception that employees were more positive when they felt involved. From their own experiences, they attributed better opportunities when the people who were affected by a change also felt involved. The participant also seemed to set themselves in the situation of employees in order to explain this relationship, uttering that they could derive negative connotations to the act of change because they felt outside the dialogue. In turn these participant perceptions implied that change attitudes would depend on the level of involvement.

Participant 4 and 5 expressed positive attitudes for the opportunities to be more involved in choices made on the workplace, as exemplified by the following citation: *«So, I am interested in it in a way, that I am. I do think that it is very interesting to get to participate in developing products and look at better ways to assemble things"* (Participant 4). From their descriptions, they seem to attribute the opportunity to be involved more to personal motivation and to the notion that they were more engaged than the typical employee. They seemed to set themselves particularly in this role when talking of how they were involved in company projects and decisions. Further, they implied that people had different levels of excitement towards involving themselves in representative work, and that involvement for more people would be a positive thing.

"Yeah, so you can say there have been some reactions to the fact that a few often have multiple representative positions, but it is all voluntary. And when we then ask who else would like to… ( ) then there are no one else who raises their hand. We could certainly have- not forced of course, but tried to at least get more people into it, and to get more involved. That, I believe, could have been healthy for all parts really" (Participant 4)

One participant expressed the which to increase involvement inside the company, and implied that higher involvement would benefit company production. The participant seemed to differentiate between situations where they had a responsibility to get involved, and situations where this opportunity was given. Seemingly, the participant wanted more room for employees on floor level to contribute with experience that were derived from practical work. From their expression, it also seems that the participant would like to be more personally involved in company projects.

"… what I really have been requesting a little, is more a- if we are starting to produce a new product, then we want those in the production to be involved a little earlier in the process and stuff, because we aren't involved until just before the product is ready. ( ) Yeah, so we- I mean, I miss a little more kind of, yeah that people in the production is a bit more in on projects that are on products and stuff. I think it is important, because we are going to be there and produce, so it is important that we are involved at that part in the process as well" (Participant 5)

Trust and Perception of Communication

Participant 3 expressively implied that trust is an important factor in the process of the internal communication. This seemed to come from an argument that such processes could be demanding, and at times demanding to an unnecessary extent. That is, some information would not be of use or not relevant to some company members. The participant further indicated, that where involvement is unnecessary, parts of the organization should trust each other. A culture of trust was depicted as a way to create satisfaction with the communication flow, without all information having to reach every corner of the company. Further, the participant emphasized that, for this to be effective the trust should include management. Meaning that managers trust those who answer to them, and employees trust their managers, etc. In the participant's own words, the relationship between communication and trust is described as such:

"…I have experienced that some employees are unsure because there are things that happen in the company, which they know nothing about. Then they start to speculate 'Why did I not receive any information on this? Is there a hidden agenda or something like that?'. If you then have good enough trust in all links, in all departments, then you avoid those situations. If there is something that goes on in the company and my boss don't tell me about it, I think it is not something I need to know. I have full trust in that he keeps me informed on that which is necessary to know. If he was going to inform me about everything, and everyone

was supposed to inform me about everything, there would have been an information overload anyways. So, I just need to trust that I am being involved in that which is important to me. If one has complete trust in the entire organization, then one achieves this the whole way, and I won't say we are there, but at least we are on our way there. Or (...) we trust each other, when it comes to that bit. Because everyone cannot know everything, then there would be no point in organizing ourselves, then we could have had a completely flat organization" (Participant 3)

The Language

Another surfacing topic was the use of language in the communication. Not language as one might associate with nationality, here the word "*language*" seemed to refer to how one phrase a message, ways of expression and ways of explanation. In this context, participants reported that communicating sustainability poses certain challenges because of its complex nature. Participants also reported that they altered the communicative language somewhat. The next sections more specifically address these topics.

A Complex Subject

Participant 1 and 2 implied that the sustainable subject posed some communicative challenges, because of the nature of the subject. These participants describe a system where they were responsible for training company members on sustainable knowledge. They also seemed to claim some responsibility for the quality of the internal communication when it came to such topics. The following example is a description of how participants experienced the task of communicating sustainable topics. In the beginning of the citation the participant expressed that it could be frustrating when other company members did not correctly perceive what they were trying to communicate. The participant then addressed why this communication process was perceived as challenging.

"Yeah of course you are, but then you understand that you have a job to do, because it is our responsibility that they know what to say, clearly. But the fact that environment- even though you have trained them, it could be rather complex at times. And it could quickly become wrongly formulated in time, and at the end one might say something a bit wrong, even though you got the training. So, it's clear that one must assure frequent revision of the subject, because we experience that ourselves. That is, we write a sustainability report each year, right. And when we sit down and start next year's report, then those who are working with it- suddenly we are wondering 'shit did we say that last year, that doesn't go'. Or it's like, oh no we've learned more since then, let's hope that no one got caught up in this, right.

The changes are so rapid in definitions, or for what things it is alright to say and what you cannot say anymore unless you have the documentation to show for it. So, it is a little difficult, it changes a lot over time" (Participant 2)

The participant seemed to attribute challenges in the communication, to the properties of the subject. Sustainability was depicted as a complex and rapidly changing subject, which it could be hard for the receiver to comprehend. Properties of the sustainability theme were also perceived as hard to convey. For example, in that facts and measures were in constant change, which made it necessary to have an active communication on the subject. In addition, key facts changed, meaning that the communication always had to be refreshed and re-checked. In sum, it was implied that the language needed to communicate information on sustainability was rather complex, and that one challenge lied in framing this language in a way that would be correctly perceived.

Alter Language to Receiver

Participant 3 and 6 implied that the communication had to be phrased so that the message would be comprehensive to the receiver. As exemplified in the citation below:

"*Yeah, it could be a little like, you have to speak the same language. So, you might change the language a little when you speak with different people, and people who has different roles."* (Participant 6)

This participant specifically expressed that the people who engage in the dialogue had to "*speak the same language*", which here seemed to imply that both parts had the same understanding of the message intended. On a further note, one participant expressed that this could be achieved through people that were suited to adjust between different communicative languages. These were explained as people from different management levels who worked together in groups, were exposed to both languages and were therefore able to communicate with less misunderstandings. In such a sense, well-working communication seemed to be partially attributed to close work between sectors. In this example the middle manager was taken out as a key aspect in the communication process, portrayed as a sort of communicative translator, a person who was expected to communicate effectively both ways.

"*The key to achieve that is to secure that we have, in the- call it the production-leader link, there we have a fine mix of academics and, you can say people who worked their way up from the floor. And that means I have the necessary competence to communicate both ways. And being a middle manager is, that is production manager- that is not one of the toughest* *jobs when you see it like that, but we are very aware that we need to have people who are able to communicate both up and down, and sideways."* (Participant 3)

The alteration between these languages did not seem to be of conscious strain to the managers. More specifically, the task of altering wordings and expression in context of making oneself understood was not seen as a cause of negative experiences. When asked whether this task felt frustrating or challenging in any way, one participant disagreed and described the task more as a habit than an action of conscious strain: *"(...), not really. I might not feel that, but it is natural that it happens. There are a bit different themes and other focus areas I think."* (Participant 6). This participant also seemed to attribute the alteration in use of language, to what is being conveyed. In other words, the language would naturally be adjusted because different messages are aimed towards people in different roles. The matter of message is further addressed in the next section.

The Message

Participants described a variety of different messages, which were used to communicate sustainability. Both, specific messages and approaches of communication surfaced from the analysis. The latter referring to how the content depended on the receiver and how participants expressed their understanding of sustainable messages.

Win-Win Arguments

When speaking of communicating sustainability, participants described what messages they typically conveyed. Two participants expressed that the message should incorporate how sustainable values could benefit the company, or aid company opportunities. In this context, they expressed that sustainability should not be communicated as a trade-off, where the implementation of sustainable values hinders other company options. The one participant implied that this would be unrealistic for a for-profit company. Rather the message should contain win-win arguments, which in the participants words concerned the explanation of how something could be good for "both parts". From this, it was interpreted that the message should convey how economic and environmental aspects could give growth to each other. This interpretation is further inferred as the participant goes on to mention the triple-bottom-line concept as a backdrop for a strategic message, which in short embrace a win-win philosophy.

"… I try to stay to business talk, because I know that with… ( ) It's not a charity organization, that's not why people are here. So, when everything comes down to it, kind of,

you aren't ready to take a choice and say that we are going to be sustainable, and therefore we can't be bothered to sell that offer for five million, [Laughter] that won't happen. So, you must show that it could be good for both parts, and I really don't think that is so hard. So, I try to sell this with the triple-bottom-line concept." (Participant 1)

Moral Messages

When communicating sustainability, participants also described the use of moral arguments. Moral arguments were implied to be more effective or well received in settings where the work aimed to think forwards, be innovative and work close to tasks on sustainability. One participant expressed that such arguments tended to be less effective outside development sectors. They implied that such arguments would generally be perceived as too evasive, in that it would come off a message of drastic change. In addition, it would create a sense of "trade-off", amongst the message receivers which would advocate negative responses. Rather, the participant implied that the messages should convey smaller, or more subtle change. In example, when asked if moral arguments ever surfaced in the communication process, the participant replied:

"It very much depends on who you are talking to. So, that is something we base a lot of choices on, especially in the product development. (...) but substantially if you are going over to a completely circular model, then that is extremely comprehensive. You cannot do it at the intense scale that perhaps traditional top managers are used to think. That you- if you make a strategic choice of circularity, then like, you are going to do everything at once and change the entire business, but of course you don't dare to do that. So, I kind of try to advocate this in terms of small steps, and drive pilots, and try and fail. But once you start to promote interactions against existing distributions for example, then it is chaos. Then it is like, a trade-off that people think is hard." (Participant 1)

Alter Message to Receiver

In the most recent citation example, the participant inherently suggest that the message would depend on the context, and more specifically on who the receiver was. As this was a reoccurring topic through interviews, this section concern how messages of sustainability were altered according to whom the receiver was.

Participant 3 and 6 expressed that messages towards higher management were more grounded in economic arguments and how the company best profit from a suggestion, while communication towards employees revolved more around the ways a suggestion might affect their everyday work life. The following examples portray this in the words of the participant:

"… so, If I am going to argument for a more environmentally smart solution for my boss, I have to use arguments in that is pays off in a five-year perspective, because yeah, there has to be a business perspective behind the decision. While towards our employees we use more emotional arguments. It is probably like that." (Participant 3)

"… yes, you move the focus a little, of what you are talking about, so that one sees the gain of it. So, I know that for operators the biggest focus is on getting a more practical and reasonable workday, and that is- to produce better and more is a part of that, and that gives them a plus as well. As long as it is within that which is okay to implement, but the theme is how much money the company earns…" (Participant 6)

One participant also implied that sustainable values were best conveyed through stories of achievements, when the communication was directed towards floor-level employees. In the form of what the company had achieved in the past, and the impact this had. It was also implied that these messages brough closeness to the theme throughout the company, as well as pride and engagement. As exemplified in the following citation:

"… I believe it is the anecdotes which creates pride, so it is the stories, right. So, we use that actively. We still use the stories from the nineties, right, when we started using recycle- or recycled material in our products. (…) And it is those stories which creates pride and engagement and not less now when there is an executive focus at it." (Participant 3)

How Messages are Perceived

Respectively, participant 4 and 5 portrayed what they saw to be the message in internal communication of sustainability and organizational development. When speaking of changes that occurred in the company, the participants seemed more prone to mention concrete changes in work tasks. Apparently, they were most concerned with information on how things were supposed to be carried out in practice. For the most part, they seemed to recognize messages which concerned everyday work aspects. Specifically, how production tasks were supposed to be executed and optionally how they would change.

"… Just now we have an organizational change here, where we lost one of the conveyer belts. It was transferred to another section. And actually, there will be less rotation

for us because of this, but the other conveyer belt was really quite work intensive, so that is fair enough" (Participant 4)

In addition to the practical information, the participants were also explicit in that they recognized backgrounds for the messages. When these participants received messages on how the company were to change or develop, they attributed these to have an economic basis and they attributed the reason for change mainly as means to create company profit. This suggested that participants recognized economic messages as well as practical information, in the internal communication. In example, Participant 5 expressed: *"…it is much about earning money, it is, that's how it is. Yeah, it will be like that for as long as we are owned by investment companies. They do want to earn money."*

The same participants went on to express that it was important to be accepting to change in order for the company to prosper. They seemed to recognize arguments for change, that lied beyond that which was communicated concretely. One participant attributed the need for change, to the company competitive abilities. Uttering that without company adaption, the work site could be laid down or moved. In other words, the message was received more as an aspect of job security. As an example of this, Participant 5 expressed as follows: "*… and I think that people are aware that if we don't perform well, the factory will be moved [laughter]. So, I believe people think of that a little.*"

Consistency of the Message

Another topic which was identified, concerned the consistency of communicated messages. When mentioning consistency, participants seemed to address this from slightly different angles. Identifiably, consistency was addressed according to how frequent a message was given, but also in terms of how consistent the message was with practical actions made by the company. These two aspects of consistency are addressed and exemplified in the following sections.

Repetition

Four of the six participants mentioned that it was important to repeat messages. Some expressed that repetition of a message was just as important as the message itself. In context, it was implied that the sustainability had to be conveyed repeatedly in order to create certainty that this was something the company would work towards. However, the repetition aspect seemed to engulf more than just sending a message. Participants expressed that if something was communicated enough, it would become true, referring to the company committing to its sustainable values. Interpretatively, repetition seemed to be described as key to incorporate a culture for- and recognition of the company's sustainable identity. These arguments are exemplified nicely by participants, as cited below.

"Besides that, there is really just one thing that counts, and that is to repeat something enough. Because, if something is said enough, it becomes true. There are many good communication people that have understood this, so" (Participant 3)

"I would say that, if I was going to summarize what we have been doing, then I think mostly that we've just stuck to it and communicated it in most contexts and over time. Like, you cannot kind of just say some magic word and then people are convinced, but you have shown over time that this is something we will stick to, we are not going to change that this is the direction we think we should go, it's kind of a commitment" (Participant 1)

Consistency Between Message and Practice

Participants also implied that, the way to which company members responded to the message depended on how compatible practice executions were to the communicated message. In other words, there had to be a consistency between what the company said and what they did. Participants expressed that messages were not as effective when they were not reflected in company actions, attributing this to a drop in the internal credibility. One participant pointed out that a completely sustainable business model was yet to be achieved, and that a challenge of communicating sustainable values arrived from the division in practice and values. This challenge is expressed through the citation below.

"If they are critical, I believe it is because they want more help from us, right. They want- I think many of our sales employees are, I think they are divided. Many sales employees are conscious of sustainability and feel like they lack some material in order to sort of, sell with their hearts. Then they manage to- for example a sales employee said, 'How am I supposed to sell this chair with my hand on my heart, when I know we have other chairs which are made of chromium and PVC and other stuff?' And they are critical in that we don't manage to have- that there isn't sustainability all over, right. That could be a factor" (Participant 2)

Participants also accounted for how inconsistency of message could cause reactions amongst those capturing the message. However, one participant expressed that company members were not resistant or negative to deviations per se, but perhaps felt more entitled to suggest improvements. Identifiably, employees would challenge company to improve upon actions when they sense a deviation from company values. In example:

"... sometimes you arrive at dilemmas; are you going to choose the environmentally correct solutions, or are you going to choose a solution which provides, perhaps a bit more quality; 'are we going to use plastic in order to wrap this piece?'(...) Then, of course, we could have some questions, but then it is often with the opposite syntax. A little something like 'if we are a sustainable company, why do we use plastic here?'. So, I would rather say that we are challenged by our employees on our environmental stance" (Participant 3)

Furthermore, other participant accounted for concrete situations where such reactions occurred, as exemplified in the citation below:

"Yeah, em, we have asked- much of what we receive is wrapped in plastic. Like fabric or upholstery for chairs- or chair upholstery arrive wrapped in plastic, but we have asked if we could drop that for example" (Participant 5)

Communication Balance

Besides from the actual message and its consistency, participants also signed importance to the mass of communication. Concerning the communication balance, three specific topics were identified: the challenge of reaching a balance in communication mass, how participants could choose to derive more information through voluntary involvement and how the mass of communication was limited by time and resources.

Challenge in Balance

Seemingly, participants expressed that it was challenging to achieve a balanced amount of internal communication, in terms of information flow and in terms of how much information needed to be passed. Yet others, expressed that communication was a subject which could always be improved on, or that the mass of information and communication would never reach a satisfying level. Some participants expressed that the wave of information could never be large enough. Other participants were more indefinite in their expression, implying that there was a balance to achieve when concerned with communication mass. Attentively, all participants expressed in more or less the same words that communication could always improve. As an example of this, one participant said:

"... we must be able to say that communication and information is something we'll never be satisfied with. I would guess that when we have work environment surveys, that will

be one of the points which, not matter how good it is, it will be picked on as 'not good enough'. So, we work on that continuously. And then of course it is about finding what is the right level, because we will never achieve a kind of Utopia where everyone is pleased with all information and communication. But I think we've travelled far, and I think the key is to find the right balance between formal and informal communication. And not least have it regularly enough, regular droplets of relevant information" (Participant 3)

This last citation exemplifies how the communication balance was perceived as hard to achieve, while the case company experience a good flow at the same time. Other participants expressed that, through the viewpoint of long-term affiliation to the company, the internal communication had improved considerably. Participant 5 describe this trend, when expressing that staff meetings resulted from employee feedback *"... a few years ago, we called for more information, and that is when we started these meetings"*. On this theme, company surveys were mentioned multiple times, implying that management actively measure perception of the internal communication, in order to facilitate.

The Choice to Involve Oneself

Another aspect that surfaced when participants mentioned the balance of communication, was again the employee representative system. More specifically, they implied that employees had the opportunity to derive larger masses of information by taking on this role. As this task was voluntary, it gave an opportunity to be more involved in the communication process for those who had personal interest to gain more information. Participant 4 express this in regard to occupy a representative role: *"Yeah, as I mentioned, I am a bit more involved than normal operators. So, I feel that I have a very good communication, both in the quality group and, yeah, various people around the place"*. From this, the employee representative role was portrayed as a possible source of involvement and as a source of more communication. The participants who held employee representative roles also seemed to be positively tuned to this opportunity, attributing their content to personal interests of staying more involved and attributing more.

The employee representative role was also described as an attributor to balance the information flow for other company members. This in the sense that the representative would filter the communication, so that employees received information relevant and useful to them. From this, the representative role was identified more as a filter in itself, which would aid the communication balance. One participant exemplified this in the following citation:

"It depends on what it is about. If there is a large change then we gather… ( ) If there is someone else it could be the closest manager who takes it, then everyone gathers. If there are smaller things, they could go through me." (Participant 4)

Time and resources

Another identified topic was that communication was limited by individual time and resources. Multiple participants expressed that they would like to keep higher frequency at their end of the communicated sustainability. Or keep a more frequent internal communication in general, but were limited by an already hectic work life. One participant expresses this in a narrative on the newsletter as a communication tool to share information on the sustainable work in the company. Situationally, the participant expressed a wish to follow up on the active involvement of company members but implied that it was hard to make this a priority. In the participant's own words, they expressed that it was "burning" around them, referring to other work tasks that initially came before communicational responsibilities. The participants experience is exemplified in the following example:

"And often I think that, ah, now we should talk a bit about this. Then it's just, when everything comes down to it, you really don't have time for it. Like, you work and sit through evenings and then it is difficult to prioritize making a cool program to present in the cafeteria, when its burning around you (…) Today, for example there came a letter from the factory, 'now it's time for the next newsletter'. And it was in the last newsletter I wrote about the plastic, and I should have had a nice flow to follow up that one, but they need an answer by Thursday, because it is getting close to Christmas, and it should be sent by Friday. And I know that, if I am going to manage that, I must sit up at night in order to do that, right" (Participant 2)

This exemplifies how a company member expressed a personal wish to improve on involvement around sustainability, but where nevertheless hindered by a matter of resources and time. The participant went on to express a sense of restriction in relation to this, as cited:

"But internal communication could always be better, absolutely. And I see many ways I could have done that, but given the time I have I am not able to" (Participant 2)

Facilitating for an active internal communication was also described to be demanding in general. Interpretatively, this referred to the task of having to receive and give constant feedback. In example, one participant expressed that whereas the gathering of employee feedback was perceived to be very important, it was also a very time-consuming process.

"…opinions must always be sorted and there are a lot of different opinions, but I think that is just one of the things we have to make time for, to let people speak their opinions. Yeah, I think that many of the middle managers feel that, when they are walking around talking with people in the production, on their rounds, it takes- they can spend quite a bit of time on rounds like that because there are a lot of people who has something to utter" (Participant 3)

Discussion

This thesis has aimed to explore how members of an organization experience the internal communication on sustainable change. The following research was framed by an interactive model of communication, as well as an involvement strategy of communication. Interviews were conducted with members of a case company, and five topics surfaced through an IPA analysis. This chapter is dedicated to discussing the project findings according to the theoretical framework and previous empirical findings. The chapter also includes a methodical discussion on the project process, as well as implications of the findings and suggestions for future research.

A central finding posed that participant saw the internal work with sustainability more as processes of trial and error, rather than as one more radical, definite change. In contrast to other company changes, participants interpretatively experienced the sustainable change more as pilots or as several smaller measures. Alternately, they refrained from using the word change, and spoke more of sustainable development as a matter of continuous improvement. From an empirical perspective, literature suggests that organizational change is recognized as small-scale changes or as a more smooth development when the topic has already been integrated in the company (Dawson, 2019). In this project, it was mentioned that the company had worked towards environmental goals and sustainable productions, for decades. This might explain why participants did not seem to recognize change as the right term to describe the sustainable development that was going on in the company.

Another central finding came from the particular experiences of the environmental managers, who expressed that sustainability was a complex topic and therefore challenging to communicate. Respectively, this has been a frequent pointer in literature on sustainable communication (Genç, 2017; Meijer & Hekkert, 2013). This has been reasoned in that sustainable development is complex, which further may be explained in that one solution might affect other sustainable aspects negatively. In the current project, managers further described that environmental facts, as well as guidelines that helped sustainable practice was in constant change. In other words, the work with sustainability was described as a process where new knowledge was continuously introduced. This enhanced the challenge of communicating sustainability, because it had to be updated at a high pace. The environmental managers further experienced that these characteristics made it necessary to have a good flow of communication, and constant flow of training and clearance on the changing information and guidelines. These notions also reflect previous findings which suggest that learning and knowledge plays an important part in an organizational greening process (Law et al., 2017).

Participants who shared the same occupation seemed to take up somewhat similar topics and had similar experiences. Specifically, there was a difference in how internal communication was experienced by each of the three occupational groups: environmental managers, fabric managers and operators. Patently, this makes a lot of sense seeing as each group probably share many similarities in work context and task situations. However, it is worth noticing in regard to further discussion on resulting topics.

In sum, all informants seemed to experience interactive communicative systems towards the internal sustainable communication. Participants also described their experiences of how sustainable messages where phrased, what they contained and why this was practice. Informants also described different levels of involvement towards sustainable work and communication on the subject. Further, all groups emphasized the importance of a balanced and consistent communication. Here they recognized some challenges especially in achieving the right quantity of sustainable communication. In order to further approach these notions, the next sections address each topic in regard to the theoretical framework of this thesis and relevant empirical implications.

Involvement

The first topic answers to the research question by suggesting involvement as an important aspect of how company members experienced the sustainable communication. This topic more specifically implies that involvement is central to make sure that there is a well-working flow of sustainable communication in a company. It also suggests that involvement pose certain challenges for managers, as not all company members can be involved to the same extent. From this, findings suggest that employee involvement should be considered in companies' efforts to create CoS, referring to discussion and problem solving around the topic (Jens Newig et al., 2013). In addition, it suggests that involvement affects efforts to create CaS, referring to sharing knowledge about the topic (Jens Newig et al., 2013). Here, alluding to the challenge associated with communicating a complex topic.

From a general perspective, participants seemed to describe an interactive approach to the internal communication (Schmitz, 2012), where company members continuously changed roles as sender and receiver. Further, they described involving approaches whereby knowledge-sharing, and discussion took place across organizational levels. Company members also seemed to describe their role in the sustainable communication process, as according to how involved they were with sustainable work. From this, involvement also seemed to be experienced somewhat different across levels, while still emphasized as an important aspect in communication processes.

From operators experiences many aspects that characterize an involvement strategy were described (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Specifically, they experienced open dialogue and respective efforts taken to their suggestions. Further, they implied that involvement was driven by their individual engagement. The more involved they were or wanted to be, the more information they would receive. Operators seemed to be positive towards high levels of involvement and described themselves as more engaged in company matters than the average employee. They expressed taking more part in such affairs as well, through their representative roles. This alludes to notions from the involvement strategy, that expects favourable attitudes towards the more involving aspects of sustainable communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Thus, the current findings could suggest an emphasize on the use of involvement, to ensure better reception of sustainable communication amongst employees. Previous research also highlights a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement (Ruck et al., 2017). In this research, there is suggested an affect where better internal communication improves employee engagement. Participants in the current project also refer to a reversed relationship, where employees that were more engaged would also be more concerned with the internal communication flow.

Participants also associated involvement with how people in the company understood the various sustainable messages. Environmental managers implied that sustainability communication could be challenging because of the complexity of the topic, as noted by previous research (Genç, 2017; Meijer & Hekkert, 2013; Jens Newig et al., 2013). They went on to suggest that it could be hard to understand this complexity for company members who were less involved with sustainable work. They also reasoned that to fully understand the topic, an individual would be required to really *get into it*. Or rather, work with it first-hand. The environmental managers seemed to face a challenging task when communicating information about sustainability to company members outside their own sector. Nevertheless, these managers did not attribute any sensation of negative strain connected to this task. Rather, they saw it as a part of the job to take into consideration, and that improved communication on the subject was something to always work towards. This contrasts previous research that imply a personal strain effect amongst people that communicate environmental properties (Tura et al., 2019). This difference could lie in that the previous study focused on external communication, while this thesis inherently focused on the internal communication. To further notice, research might explore this gap, potentially on the difference between tension associated with sustainable communication in internal contra external settings.

In contrast to the setting just described, one of the managers did experience negative emotions associated with expectations towards their job position. This concerned company members tendency to misinterpret or actively belittle the extensiveness of sustainable work, through feedback. For example, occurring when colleagues from other sectors would expect high amounts of workload or unrealistic effectivity on information from the environmental department. They described feeling angered and frustrated in such cases. This strain experience could be seen as a psychological context factor through the interactive model (Schmitz, 2012). More elaboratively, the negative emotions associated with the colleague feedback, would create a necessity for the participant to repeatedly explain the work structure. This caused tension filled experiences with the communication in some situations.

Involvement was also associated with trust. Previous research suggest that internal communication is a way to create trust through higher transparency and sense of inclusion (Willemyns et al., 2003). In the current project, it was also implied that this relationship works the other way around. From one factory manager perspective, trust lay a foundation so that people would not feel like they had to involve themselves in all company processes. It was implied that this would create an ease towards the internal communication flow, in that people trusted that other people would pass on necessary information. From this, project results nuance previous research in suggesting that company trust affect the communication interactions.

The communication

In response to the research question, the topics concerning communication messages and language implied that there were certain types of content that participants experienced from the sustainable communication. For example, one of the environmental managers expressed, that at times, the message was phrased as a win-win argument, taking on the triple bottom line. This could be explained by the persuasion aspect of sustainability communication. That is, that messages typically aim to persuade the receiver to act upon the message (Nielsen et al., 2013).

Moreover, the participants recognized an alteration process where language and message differed according to the role of the receiver. For example, when asked about the use of moral arguments, an environmental manager implied that such communication was used in innovative settings or between those who worked mainly with sustainable development. The manager implied that business might become more mature for such arguments in time. Still, arguments embarked more on what the company had to gain by sustainable initiatives when the communication was directed towards other company members. The choice to use such messages in some situations while avoiding them at other times, could be explained through existing literature notions. Specifically, they sometimes describes the use of moral arguments as a double-ended sword (Täuber et al., 2015). In explanation, moral messages could be experienced as motivating, but at the same time they often incorporate big messages that are complex or hard to tackle, hence sustainability in this case. This may resort in that people avoid acting upon, or positively respond to such messages. Experiences from the current project imply that some content characteristics, such as morality, could be recognized in a sustainable context. At the same time, the choice of method seemed to be heavily influenced by audience.

Factory managers similarly expressed that they altered their communicative language according to whom the receiver was. They reported that this tendency was about speaking a language that the receiver would understand. Previous notions have concerned the need for managers to consider their audience when communicating corporate responsible messages (Dawkins, 2005). In the current projects, factory managers reported that the message was intuitively altered to encode information so that it is of relevance to the receiver. Managers seemed to think that they generally focus more on everyday work life, when communicating to lower levels, and more on economy towards top management. Different messages would be more effective towards different organizational groups. When it came to communicating sustainability, factory managers implied that higher levels in the company would be more concerned with numbers and strategies. While messages towards lower levels would be more about communicating stories of achievements. From this, top managers were described to be concerned mainly with the prestige aspects of sustainability, as in how the company could benefit economically. The aim for communication towards employees seemed to hold more on creating sustainable culture and motivate them towards keeping to sustainable standards. Explicitly, one participant expressed that sustainable communication towards factory employee came more in form of anecdotic stories of achievements. Research suggests corporate story telling as an important instrument to indulge organizations in sustainable decisions and activities (Dowling, 2006). In the case project, these were described as stories of achievement, which could imply that communication towards employee aim to raise pride and belonging towards the company green initiatives.

Operators seemed to decode the same messages when they spoke of information from management. That is, the messages of green culture, identity and achievement. At the same time, they recognized economic arguments behind such decisions. They associated talk of sustainable communication with ethical prospects, as well as company strategy and job security. From this, the operators also seemed to be concerned with the bigger picture, how the factory site competed on the market, etc. These experiences could be explained in that the participating operators held positions as employee representatives, as previously noted. Through their descriptions, they were more concerned with company decisions than the average factory operator. On another note, this effect could come from the disconnect in internal communication that researchers have suggested. More accurately, that what managers think they communicate and what employees perceive to be the message, are not always entirely similar things (Brunton et al., 2017). Here it seemed to be partly so, as participants picked up on intended messages, but also that they picked up on communicational signals that may not have been intended in effort.

Based on notions that middle managers experiences psychological tension from communication towards different sectors (Tura et al., 2019), the current thesis aimed to explore the communicational relationship managers had to people on different levels in the organization. Nevertheless, in contrast to previous research, participants of the current project did not imply such experiences. This could be explained in that participants also suggest good cooperation and involvement. One factory manager described employee groups which focused solely on cross level cooperation, and that middle managers worked closely with employees. Previous research emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary communication in work with sustainability (Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). These case experiences might reflect this effect, where company members approached challenges with different solutions, depending on their expertise. The cross level sustainable communication might not be so much of an issue, because of the established cross level platforms that managers explained.

Consistency

In light of the research question, managers experienced a need to create consistency in the sustainable communication. This was emphasized in regard to pass information in the form of knowledge on sustainability. The finding suggests that consistent and active internal communication is needed regarding sustainability. From this particular case, it was also implied that such a consistency could be achieved by establishing an interactive culture, where employees were free to request information from sustainable managers. Another finding concerned participants experience of proactive feedback on sustainable challenges and issues. Here, it was suggested that transparency could aid proactive suggestions and green motivation. Employee involvement seemed to play a role in this context as well, and similarly aspiring proactive feedback through dialogue and engagement.

For the sustainable communication, participants also experienced that consistency played a role. Consistency was considered through two topics, repetition, and unison between message and action. From a top-down angle, managers reported that it was important to repeat sustainable messages, because it would create identity and culture associated with sustainability. This could be explained through the CoS approach to sustainable communication. As noted earlier, CoS concerns the knowledge information that is passed about sustainability (Jens Newig et al., 2013). Similarly, to the participant suggestion, the CoS approach states that the communication is effective when the information is correct and frequently updated. It also notes effectiveness when it creates pro environmental experiences such as engagement and identity (Genç, 2017). In this sense, participants seemed to experience a consistency tendency that is well in line with previous research. Further, environmental managers emphasized the importance of established communicative relationships in order to secure consistency. They described that they opened for such a relationship with company members in another department through a start-up training. Where sustainable knowledge was shared with new employees. From here, the managers established an open-door relationship, where employees were encouraged to communicate back with further questions or concerns

Environmental managers also described that the company held firm values while still working towards a complete sustainable practice, and how this effected the internal communication. On this notion, they reported that sales personnel pushed for a complete practice that matched the green values of the company. In addition, factory managers reported that this disconnect inspired identification with company values and innovative solutions. For example, the managers and two operators mentioned examples where employees reacted to excessive use of plastic. These experiences mirror the walk-the-talk literature, which note that disconnects between message and practice could cause reactions (Charles Jr et al., 2017). However, managers expressed that employee reactions worked more as drivers, than as obstacles. They implied that such feedback worked as a source, which constantly helped to develop sustainable aspects in the company. One reason for this, could be that the company acknowledged that their business model was not completely sustainable, but that this was something the company worked towards consequently. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, sustainable initiatives were recognized as projects of approvement, rather than as interventions in the case company. At the same time, literature emphasize high transparency when considering sustainable communication (Genç, 2017). Perhaps because of this transparency, the gap between practice and values did not seem to lead to negative reactions such as suspicion of greenwashing.

Another reason could be that the company seemed to be inviting suggestions of improvements. They further implied that the company also used more involving approaches, which emphasize open dialogue and feedback systems (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010). Taken from the example of one environmental manager, who put a newsletter section that encouraged employees to participate in solving a plastic dilemma. Likewise, research has proposed a process approach to align employees with green and sustainable practices, rather than a demanding approach (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In such, the communication should focus more on actions that could be done to improve such practices. From this, it could be that the involving approach caused feedbacks to be more proactive than suspicious.

Balance

This topic answers to the research question, by saying that company members experienced a challenge associated with the balance in communication. In explanation, all participants expressed that they thought the internal communication in the company was working well. At the same time, all of them suggestively experienced that the communication was not optimal, and that the optimal balance was hard to achieve. Here, they seemed to refer to the balance between giving enough information and sharing so much that it became irrelevant or ineffective. This could be reasoned in some of the aspects that characterize sustainability. Specifically, research on environmental communication suggests that sustainable messages are hard to simplify because of their complexities (Moser, 2010).

Participants also experienced that the balance of information on sustainability would depend on how involved the respondent was in sustainable work. In other words, it came down to find a line where the sustainable communication would be of relevance to the receiver. Additionally, it was implied that this line of involvement could be hard to mark. These responses could be seen in light of research on internal communication. On many occasions, research on organizational communication has aimed to find what is the right amount of organizational information (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Frankly, this seems to be a very intricate and situational topic, which depicts from singular opinions. Meaning that the balance might work for some, while not for others on an individual level. Because of this, the perfect balance of internal communication could be close to impossible to achieve (Brønn & Arnulf, 2014).

From results, some participants also reported that the internal communication balance had improved. This could imply that communication need constant supervision and frequent alteration, as has been suggested recurrently in literature (Nielsen et al., 2013). In two different ways, the employee representative roles were described as an aid system for these tasks. Firstly, by ensuring that people who had individual wishes to be more involved and participate more with feedback could do so by volunteering as employee representatives. Secondly, these representatives would filter information towards other operators. Respectively, literature support the notion that interactive systems help to guide the sustainable communication balance towards more ideal levels (Morsing, 2006). This research comes from the notion that open communication systems could be approached by will, and would be based on the need for more information. Moreover, the representatives operated across levels, which could enhance approachableness. Meaning, that they were in contact with employees both on floor and employee level and may act as sources of communication for people in both sectors. These notions are also compatible with an involvement strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006), in that they confirm an the importance of company member involvement in order to secure well-working sustainable communication.

Environmental managers expressed that the time and resources interfered with a wish to keep a high flow of internal communication on sustainability. They further implied that these were not main objectives in their work and were not always prioritized. Here participants seemed to separate information that was practically necessary for company operation, from communication that could otherwise be helpful. The communication that resources did not always reach, aimed more towards creating goods beyond imperative information. For example, messages about where sustainable work was heading, or what sustainability challenges the company faced at the time. These messages were not strictly necessary for all company members to do their jobs, but might have aided green prospects otherwise. For example, in creating engagement towards the topic or to mingle in problem solving and solution suggestions. In light of research, it has been suggested that internal stakeholders should be engaged in company value creation (Andriof et al., 2017; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Hence, the communication that stretch beyond top-down information to embrace involvement aspects. In the current study, this seems to be the aspect where participants see most improvement potential. Additionally, the work with internal communication was described to be very time consuming. These notions could in turn be explained by the same challenges of balancing communication, as previously mentioned. Also, research suggest that internal communication is highly resource dependent (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). Exactly because of the individuality and human factors pressing different needs be involved and participate in different topics.

Methodical discussion

The methodical framework was chosen because the research question aimed to explore rather complex and intricate topics (Jonathan et al., 2015), here, sustainability and communication. Answering to this, the IPA method provide both depth and detail through an individual focus. Thus, the IPA was chosen over other methods, such as Thematical Analysis, which aims at mapping general themes from a topic (Anderson, 2007). However, the IPA approach do explicitly refrain from a focus on group tendencies (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Hence the aim to capture a homogenous sample. Seeing as participants in this study held different occupations, more contextual understanding might therefore have come through a method that embrace a heterogenous sample, such as a Grounded Theory Method (Robinson, 2014). At the same time, the aim of this study was primarily to explore individual experiences, an interest that came from literature and practical insight. Rather than a more purely inductive process to form a theory, which is the aim through a Grounded Theory approach (Robinson, 2014).

The IPA framework was also a more ideal approach for me as a student and as a fresh researcher, because of more extensive literal guidelines on the analytical process. On the other hand, scholars request established and well-practiced interview skills for the methodical approach. This is because the IPA require full and detailed interviews, which might better be acquired by an interviewer that is skilled at capturing these (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In addition, scholars recommend that the IPA researcher should have gained much experience and expertise on the topic, in order see all angles from which emerging themes stand in relation to existing knowledge (Smith et al., 2009). As I am neither a very experienced interviewer, nor an experienced organizational researcher, yet, both interview and analysis quality could be affected by my choice of method.

The following section approach the thesis trustworthiness through five common terms that are often used to address qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This concerns the credibility, dependability, reflexivity, conformability, and transferability of the research process and study findings. The credibility concerns weather the results pose an accurate representation of participants viewpoints (Trochim, 2020). In consideration of the thesis credibility, there were some concerns regarding the sampling process. Here referring to the use of gate keepers who also held managing positions, in order to approach employee participants. As described in the method chapter, this process was considered and counteracted by ensuring the participants of anonymity and data accessibility.

Dependability, in short concerns research transparency. It is the need to account for the process as well as all changing aspects in the research procedure (Trochim, 2020). In this thesis, dependability has already been addressed throughout the method chapter. For a short summary, procedural transparency was ensured through a step-by-step description of the analysis process. A deviation from standard recommendations was the use of a heterogeneous sample despite an IPA approach. As previously discussed, this was not to create case generalization, but rather a means to approach individuality, as was discussed in the description of informants. In a similar fashion, the reflexivity of this thesis was also addressed in the method chapter. This concerned a critical reflection of my role as a researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), where I saw myself in light of being a student and an outsider of the case company.

The research confirmability is the degree to which notions from other researcher can confirm the study findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the current thesis, previous research was compatible with current findings. For example, in that it generally emphasized an interactive communication system, which was also implied by participants. Many of the challenges with sustainable communication was also surfacing by participants experiences, such as the subject complexity dilemma. In other cases, findings seemed to nuance previous research. For example, that internal communication on sustainability was not associated with personal tension in the case context. The conformity aspect was addressed though discussion of all contrasting and confirming tendency in respect of previous theory and research, as posed in previous sections in this chapter. Despite the effort to thoroughly compare and discuss topics in regard to literature, the open research question resulted in a dispersed number of topics, which might be discussed with nuance through a number of research disciplines and theoretical lenses.

Transferability regard weather the study results could be transferred to other people or contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As a case project, surfacing topics might first of all be of help to the case company, to highlight tendencies and individual experiences. In addition, the thesis takes up a variety of topics that could inspire further research. These implications will be described in further detail in the section below.

Implications and future studies

On the encouragement from literature (Ruck & Welch, 2012), this thesis offers insight in experiences of internal communication from the viewpoint of company members on multiple organizational levels. Set in the context of sustainable change, the project approached environmental managers, as well as factory managers and production operators. The thesis findings pose practical value for companies that are working with sustainable development, by highlighting individual experiences. For one, in that such development is seen more as progress initiatives rather than as changes. This suggests that it is more beneficial to approach sustainable change like trial aspects, where there is continuous room for improvement.

Another implication concerns the prominent importance of involvement and interactive communication in a sustainability context. Interactive communication seemed to aid company member contributions and engagement across levels, even when practice and ideals are not identical. Experiences of employee involvement through active platforms was further associated with a better flow and communication balance. Both when it came to sustainable communication, and insofar the general internal communication. On this note, it would be interesting to see more research on the role in which organizational representatives play in organizational greening.

Further, the project findings implied that message and language in the sustainable communication varied based on audience, while the task to do so pose no conscious strain amongst the communicators. As mentioned in previous discussion, this somewhat contradicts previous findings (Tura et al., 2019) and the relationship should be explored in regards to internal and external communication situations. The findings also nuance previous research

(Brunton et al., 2017) by noting that employees not necessarily miscalculate the messages from management but recognise them in a wider context. Here shown when operators recognised cultural and economic aspects of the sustainable communication. Future research should consider how and why employees might pick up on messages that management might not intentionally communicate. They might also consider the level of involvement and engagement amongst employees. Hence the notion that the employee participants in the current study also described themselves as high rating on these factors. Future studies should also continue to be concerned with the messages that are used in sustainable communication. Particularly on the role of win-win arguments and the role they play in internal communication. Also, a participant expressed that the time might be more mature for moral arguments. It would thereby be interesting to see more research on how and why organizations might use such messages, especially in environmental contexts.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate individual experiences with the internal communication during sustainable change. It further pursued answers to this research question by approaching environmental managers, factory managers and production operators in a Norwegian company that was currently taking on a project to find more sustainable production strategies.

Through the current project it was found that company members in similar professions shared many of the same experiences, while some topics were relevant for all participants. It also showed that company members had a somewhat different perception of sustainable change, than initially thought. Where projects were not associated with the word change, but more as improvements. It was also found that managers experienced sustainability to be a challenging task to communicate, because of its complexity. Further, the thesis described the internal operation of sustainable messages, and how they were formulated. Here finding that managers experienced the necessity for use of persuading language and to alter language in consideration of the receiver. From this, research could further investigate these message aspects in sustainable settings. Lastly, interactive approaches seemed to be of particular essence as it created a better internal communication flow, foster proactive responses to the sustainable practices, and contributed to improve the internal communication balance. From discussion, such an approach could be aided through training and company trust, as well as through representative systems. In conclusion, the thesis therefore proposes for companies that work with sustainable development, to use interactive and involving practices in their internal communication.

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Appendix

Attachment 1: Interview guide – Managers

Intervjuguide 1 – mellomledere

Før intervju

- Hilsen, introduksjoner
- Gjennomgang av informasjonsskriv

Introduksjon

1. Hva er din stilling i konsernet?
2. Hvor lenge har du hatt denne stillingen?
3. Hvilken utdanningsbakgrunn har du?
4. Kan du fortelle litt om prosjektet som foregår i samarbeid med SINTEF? * (For mellomledere som jobber nært opp mot prosjektet)
   - Kan du fortelle litt om din rolle til dette prosjektet?
   - Hvordan påvirker prosjektet din arbeidshverdag?
   - Hvordan tenker du det vil påvirke andre ansatte og ledere i konsernet?
5. Kan du fortelle litt om prosjekter som foregår nå?
   - Kan du fortelle litt om din rolle i disse?
   - Hvordan påvirker de din arbeidshverdag?
   - Hvordan tenker du de vil påvirke andre ansatte og ledere i konsernet?

Kommunikasjon

6. Hvordan forklarer du hva som skal skje til konsernets medlemmer (ansatte, ledere, evt. andre)?
   - Hvorfor sier du dette?
   - Hvordan reagerer de ansatte?
   - Hva gjør du som følge av slike reaksjoner?
7. Opplever du at det er utfordrende å snakke med konsernets medlemmer om disse tingene?
   - Kan du utdype? På hvilken måte er det utfordrende/hvorfor er det ikke utfordrende? *
   - Hva gjør du med dette?
8. Forklarer du slike ting forskjellig når du snakker med leder, versus når du snakker med ansatte?
   - Hva sies til hvem? *
   - Hvorfor? *
   - Er det utfordrende å tilpasse samtalen etter hvem den er med? *
9. Hvordan får du tilbakemeldinger fra andre i konsernet?
   - Hva sier ledelsen til deg?
   - Hva sier ansatte til deg?
   - Hvordan reagerer du på dette?

Etter intervju

- «Er det andre ting du ønsker å ta opp som angår dette tema? Noe du syntes jeg burde spurt om?»
- Takke for deltakelse

Attachment 2: Interview guide – Operators

Intervjuguide 2 – operatører

Før intervju

- Hilsen, introduksjoner
- Gjennomgang av informasjonsskriv

Introduksjon

1. Hva er din stilling i konsernet?
2. Hvor lenge har du hatt denne stillingen?
3. Hvilken utdanningsbakgrunn har du?
4. Kan du fortelle litt om din rolle i konsernet?
   - Hvordan er en vanlig arbeidsdag for deg?
5. Kan du fortelle litt om ting som foregår på din arbeidsplass?
   - Opplever du at det har det vært noen endringer i det siste?
   - Hva synes du om disse endringene? *

Miljø

6. Føler du at du har mulighet til å bidra til en mer miljøvennlig produksjon?
   - Er dette noe du generelt ønsker å gjøre?

Kommunikasjon

7. Kan du fortelle om en gang konsernet bestemte seg for å gjøre noen endringer som påvirket deg som operatør?
   - Hvordan kommuniserte konsernet denne endringen?
   - Hva ble sakt?
   - Hvordan kom kommunikasjonen praktisk frem?
   - Hva syntes du om måten dette ble gjort på?
   - Hvordan reagerte du?
8. Kan du fortelle om en gang du var med på å gi tilbakemeldinger?
   - Hva sa du?
   - Hvorfor sa du dette?
   - Hvordan reagerte ledere, eller andre som fikk tilbakemeldingen?

Etter intervju

- «Er det andre ting du ønsker å ta opp som angår dette tema? Noe du syntes jeg burde spurt om?»
- Takke for deltakelse

Attachment 3: Information document

Invitasjon til å delta på masterprosjekt

Mitt navn er Sol-Andrea Ness, jeg er en student ved NTNU som nå tar en master i arbeid- og organisasjonspsykologi. Jeg har tidligere vært i praksis ved SINTEF og fått kjennskap til BIA-prosjektet Circular Seating. Jeg synes dette med mennesker i arbeid og deres holdninger til bærekraftige endringer er veldig spennende. I forbindelse med min masteroppgave, ønsker jeg å bruke [redacted] som case. Jeg sender dere derfor en forespørsel og håper at dere har anledning til å stille til intervju.

Hva skal jeg forske på:
I dette forskningsarbeidet ønsker jeg å utforske hvordan [redacted] håndterer miljøfokusert- eller såkalt bærekraftige utvikling. Det som menes med bærekraftig utvikling er at en skal møte nåværende mål uten å forhindre fremtidige generasjoner i å møte deres mål. Da dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave i arbeid- og organisasjonspsykologi er jeg særlig interessert i hvordan ansatte, mellomleder og prosjektledere opplever en slik endring, og spesielt da i forhold til hvordan kommunikasjonen foregår innad i bedriften. Forskningen er altså ikke ute etter å fastslå faktakunnskaper, men kun hvilke holdninger, tanker og følelser personer har til denne endringsprosessen.

Hvorfor:
Nye lover og regler vil etter hvert presse norske bedrifter mot innovative ordninger som ikke er like belastende på naturlige ressurser. Bedriften du arbeider ved er tidlig ute med å planlegge en grønn endring og kan dermed bidra med mye viktig informasjon. Innsikt i slike endringer kan blant annet gi oss kunnskap om hvordan organisasjoner burde gå frem for å klare å bli mer bærekraftige.

Hvordan jeg går frem:
For å finne ut av disse tingene ønsker jeg å gjennomføre til sammen rundt 6 intervju, en-til-en med ansatte, mellomledere og prosjektledere i [redacted]. Intervjuet vil foregå over Skype på et tidspunkt som måtte passe for deg og vil vare i ca. 60 minutter.

Attachment 4: Declaration of consent

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet
” Kommunikasjon under en bærekraftig implementering”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut hvordan kommunikasjon foregår i en organisasjon og hvordan denne prosessen oppleves for konsernets ansatte og ledere. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål
Dette er en masteroppgave i arbeid- og organisasjonspsykologi. Spesifikt ønsker vi med dette prosjektet å utforske hvordan kommunikasjon foregår under endring mot en mer bærekraftig bedriftsmodell. Studien vil undersøke kommunikasjon mellom ledere og ansatte, med fokus både på hva som formidles, hvordan det formidles og hvordan denne prosessen påvirker personene det angår. Stadig flere bedrifter i Norge forsøker å bli mer bærekraftige og benytte mer miljøvennlige løsninger. Samtidig som disse finner flere måter å kommunisere bærekraftige tiltak utover/mot kunder, så vet vi lite om hvordan kommunikasjonsprosessen mot en slik endring foregår internt i bedriften, og hvordan den påvirker arbeidsplassens ansatte. Denne problemstillingen er dermed veldig relevant i dag, og tanken bak denne forskningen er at den skal kunne hjelpe fremtidige bedrifter med bærekraftige endringer.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Instituttet for Psykologi under fakultetet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap ved NTNU, står som ansvarlig for dette prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du kontaktes fordi det foregår en produktutvikling i konsernet du jobber for, og jeg er interessert i å belyse hvordan kommunikasjon foregår under en slik endring. Jeg fikk din kontaktinformasjon fra SINTEF, som for tiden har et BIA innovasjonsprosjekt med din arbeidsplass. Utvalget til denne studien vil bestå av mellomledere som jobber tett opp mot prosjektet og operatører som jobber nærmere produksjon.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer dette at du gjennomfører et semi-strukturert intervju. Intervjuet er anslått å vare imellom 30-60minutter, og vil bli tatt opp på båndopptak. Senere vil intervjuet bli transkribert.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Dersom du velger å delta kan du når som helst trekke deg fra studiet, uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Opplysningene vil utelukkende bli behandlet av meg, Sol-Andrea Ness masterstudent ved dette prosjektet og min veileder Fay Giæver som er ansatt vet Instituttet for Psykologi. For å verne godt om din data vil intervjuene bli transkribert kort tid etter at de er gjennomførte, all transkribering anonymiseres, og lydopptak vil bli slettet med en gang de er transkriberte. Transkriberingene vil bli lagret på NTNU sine servere, mens all person- og organisasjonsidentifiserende informasjon vil bli fjernet. Du som intervjuobjekt, samt konsernet du er ansatt ved vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i masteroppgaven som sluttresultat.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Prosjektets slutt et satt til 02.05.2020. All personidentifiserende informasjon samt informasjon som kan knytte deg til konsernet vil slettes før den tid (under transkriberingen).

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke. På oppdrag fra Instituttet for Psykologi ved NTNU har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- Sol-Andrea Ness ved NTNU – Instituttet for Psykologi, sol_ness@hotmail.com
- Fay Giæver ved NTNU – Instituttet for Psykologi, fay.giaver@ntnu.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig Fay Giæver	Student Sol-Andrea Ness

Her skriver du under på at du ønsker å delta i prosjektet.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Attachment 5: Approvement from NSD

NSD sin vurdering

Skriv ut

Prosjekttittel
Kommunikasjon under en bærekraftig implementering

Referansenummer
519557

Registrert
23.09.2019 av Sol-Andrea Ness - solandrn@stud.ntnu.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet NTNU / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for psykologi

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)
Fay Giæver, fay.giaver@ntnu.no, tlf: 73412022

Type prosjekt
Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student
Sol-Andrea Ness, sol_ness@hotmail.com, tlf: 91575668

Prosjektperiode
15.08.2019 - 02.05.2020

Status
02.10.2019 - Vurdert med vilkår

Vurdering (2)

02.10.2019 - Vurdert med vilkår
NSD bekrefter å ha mottatt et revidert informasjonsskriv/endret dokument. Vi gjør oppmerksom på at vi ikke foretar en vurdering av skrivet/dokumentet, og vi forutsetter at du har foretatt de endringene vi ba om. Dokumentasjonen legges ut i Meldingsarkivet og er tilgjengelig for din institusjon sammen med øvrig prosjektdokumentasjon. Vurderingen med vilkår gjelder fortsatt.

24.09.2019 - Vurdert med vilkår
NSD har vurdert at personvernulempen i denne studien er lav. Du har derfor fått en forenklet vurdering med vilkår.

HVA MÅ DU GJØRE VIDERE? Vi har satt noen vilkår før du kan begynne gjennomføringen. Du har et selvstendig ansvar for å følge vilkårene under og sette deg inn i veiledningen i denne vurderingen. Når du har gjort dette kan du gå i gang med datainnsamlingen din.

HVORFOR LAV PERSONVERNULEMPE? NSD vurderer at studien har lav personvernulempe fordi det ikke behandles særlige (sensitive) kategorier eller personopplysninger om straffedommer og lovovertredelser, eller inkluderer sårbare grupper. Prosjektet har rimelig varighet og er basert på samtykke. Dette har vi vurdert basert på de opplysningene du har gitt i meldeskjemaet og i dokumentene vedlagt meldeskjemaet.

VILKÅR Vår vurdering forutsetter: 1. At du gjennomfører datainnsamlingen i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet 2. At du følger kravene til informert samtykke (se mer om dette under) 3. At du laster opp oppdatert(e) informasjonsskriv i meldeskjemaet og sender inn meldeskjemaet på nytt. Se punktene under «informert samtykke» om hva dette må inneholde. 4. At du ikke innhenter særlige kategorier eller personopplysninger om straffedommer og lovovertredelser 5. At du følger retningslinjene for informasjonssikkerhet ved den institusjonen du studerer/forsker ved (behandlingsansvarlig institusjon)

KRAV TIL INFORMERT SAMTYKKE De registrerte (utvalget ditt) skal få informasjon om behandlingen og samtykke til deltakelse. Informasjonen du gir må minst inneholde:
- Studiens formål (din problemstilling) og hva opplysningene skal brukes til - Hvilken institusjon som er behandlingsansvarlig
- Hvilke opplysninger som innhentes og hvordan opplysningene innhentes - At det er frivillig å delta og at man kan trekke seg så lenge studien pågår uten at man må oppgi grunn
- Når behandlingen av personopplysninger skal avsluttes (ca tidspunkt for prosjektslutt) og hva som skal skje med personopplysningene da sletting, anonymisering eller videre lagring (sluttidspunkt for lagring må i så fall oppgis)
- At du behandler opplysninger om den registrerte (utvalget ditt) basert på deres samtykke / At du behandler opplysningene om dine deltagere basert på deres samtykke
- At utvalget ditt har rett til innsyn, retting, sletting, begrensning og dataportabilitet (kopi)
- At utvalget ditt har rett til å klage til Datatilsynet - Kontaktopplysninger til prosjektleder (evt. student og veileder)
- Kontaktopplysninger til institusjonens personvernombud Ta gjerne en titt på våre nettsider og vår mal for informasjonsskriv for hjelp til formuleringer: http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvernombud/hjelp/informasjon_samtykke/informere_om.html

Når du har oppdatert informasjonsskrivet med alle punktene over laster du det opp i meldeskjemaet og trykker på «Bekreft innsending» på siden «Send inn» i meldeskjemaet.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 02.05.2020.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32). Dersom du benytter en databehandler i prosjektet, må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

NSD SIN VURDERING NSDs vurdering av lovlig grunnlag, personvernprinsipper og de registrertes rettigheter følger under, men forutsetter at vilkårene nevnt over følges.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Forutsatt at vilkårene følges, er det NSD sin vurdering at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER Forutsatt at vilkårene følges, vurderer NSD at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om: - lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet DE

REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19) og dataportabilitet (art. 20). Forutsatt at informasjonen oppfyller kravene i vilkårene nevnt over, vurderer NSD at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet! Kontaktperson hos NSD: Karin Lillevold Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)