

Sustainable leadership

**Research on the development of a guideline for sustainable
leadership**



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Summary

Today, we face the challenge of providing 7 billion people a decent life within the limitations of our planet. This requires many changes in the attitudes of companies, governments and consumers. Therefore, sustainability is one of the most important core values in profit organizations. In the last decade sustainability has become a buzzword, however, its full impact remains complex. Since the corporate world has a large impact on the instrumental function of our economy; professionals and organizations have a responsibility to operate in ways that are repairing to environment and community. For leaders, these complex strategic challenges about sustainability and social innovation are at the order of the day. How can they contribute to the solution of global problems such as climate change, global inequality and water scarcity? How can they deepen the complex policies in relation to the many stakeholders? For these challenges, solutions still need to be found.

This thesis has been an attempt to give information about the complexity related to sustainable leadership in profit-organizations, by presenting a guideline for sustainable leadership. Although the indicators of the guideline primarily serve as a framework to explore and support the role of leadership inside organizations, they contain a vision about leader capacities to support and promote sustainability within their organization.

Acknowledgments

After a process of weeks, I finally plucked up courage: My thesis was going to be in the English language. This has been a challenging, but I finally reached my last sentences, which ironically will be the first ones to be read by others like you.

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Preface

When I first started my studies at the University of Humanistic Studies, I was, above all, very curious what this study would bring to me. This curiosity was especially focused on the way I could develop myself. During my bachelor, I have developed a clear vision on my view on people and on the world. The main aspect of this vision contains a form of responsibility to other people and to future generations. It became more and more clear to me that this responsibility depends on a more careful way of dealing with our planet. We have to be more aware of the uniqueness of the world we are living in, and we have to treat it with more care.

Sustainability is the keyword in this whole story. One can draw a parallel between our responsibility to future generations and the preservation of our planet. Being an idealist but also quite realistic, I knew that I wanted to explore this vision more substantively had to do something with this vision.

During my internship at Koninklijke KPN NV., I experienced what the influence of good leadership could be. Leaders are in the position to initiate real and valuable change processes, both development processes and sustainability processes. To reach the goal of creating more awareness and care for our unique planet, in our society, good leadership is required.

In view of what has been said above, I decided that I needed to make a practical contribution to change the way we are dealing with our planet. I am convinced this has to start with good leadership. The aim of my research is to provide a guideline that can support the learning and development practices of leaders who want to become sustainable leaders.

I hope this thesis will constitute a valuable contribution to the awareness of the importance of sustainable leadership and that it will inspire future research.

Nora Kanters

Zutphen, 30th of November 2013

Introduction

Today, we face the challenge of providing 7 billion people a decent life within the limitations of our planet. This requires many changes in the attitudes of companies, governments and consumers towards sustainability. Sustainability is therefore, one of the most important core values in profit organizations. In the last decade sustainability has become a buzzword, however, its full impact remains complex (Edwards, 2009). Moreover, this umbrella term is emerging from a range of different sectors. This research will focus on leadership which is one of the many aspects of sustainability. Moreover leadership is a very broad term and there is a wide range of theories on the concept (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 2004, p. 11).

Louise Fresco argues that sustainability may be one of the most polluted labels of our time; a projection for all aspirations. Nobody is against sustainability, but there is no consensus on the specific implementation (Fresco, 2012). The Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future* (1987), states that it is impossible to deny that we are in a transition process, where major changes in the organization of economy are irrevocable. This is supported by the statements of Herman Wijffels, who stresses that our current way of life is ending and that we should find a different way of living (Wijffels, 2010).

Profit corporations committed to sustainability are particularly concerned to meet the imperatives of CSR organizations and its stakeholders. I acknowledge that these sustainable incentives are important, but Louke van Wensveen rightfully points out the possibility that these projects are aimed at external adjustments and therefore lack an intrinsic commitment, which can result in projects that surpass their original goal, and therefore they may lose their value (2009, p. 128). Van Wensveen illustrates this statement with an example: How does the board of a chemical company expect to score on sustainability by switching from fossil fuels to cane sugar, if as a result the erosion of the surrounding ecosystems, due to the unwanted leakage of pesticides and herbicides, actually increases?

Despite the complexity of the concept 'sustainability', many companies become more ecologically attentive, due to the pressure of environmental movements. However, Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink indicate that a great deal of corporate leaders behave differently, because they do 'not only put profit before purpose but make profit their only purpose' (2006, p. 7). The authors endorse the urgency of rethinking our commitment to sustainability, especially in the areas of leadership and education: 'We cannot consume with impunity, without giving thoughts to the world we are leaving our children' (Ibid., p. 3). The United Nations stress that 'a new level of performance is needed in order to address key global challenges and deliver on the sustainability promise' (2010, p. 1). They come to this statement because it proves that businesses which have a high performance on sustainable leadership are able to inspire those organizations that find themselves in the starting phase of their sustainable development (Ibid.). The United Nations are pressing for sustainable leadership in order to withstand a world of uncertainty and complexity (Ibid.). Ad van Dommelen argues that an inquisitive attitude is required as well as an educational setting in which this can be developed (2013, p. 81).

This research will focus on leadership as one of the many aspects of sustainability. Henk Manschot, Jan Willem Kirpestein and Vanno Jobse, believe that if we want to make steps towards a sustainable future, our world will need leaders who possess the ability to create the physical conditions in which a sustainable future can flourish (2009, p. 133).

The aim of this research is to provide a first formulation of a guideline for sustainable leadership. With this guideline the research would like to make a contribution to the already existing scientific literature on sustainable leadership. Hargreaves and Fink, as respected thinkers on the field of educational leadership, provide already a compelling and original framework of seven principles for sustainable leadership. They focus on long term issues and not just on immediate issues of leadership in educational settings. Despite the fact that these authors have a focus on an educational setting, their principles are expected to be transferable and useful in the profit organizational domain.

To reach customers in the most efficient way and to convince them of their services, organizations have to pay careful attention to the balance of price, place, product and promotion. In order to meet current sustainability requirements, organizations try to the capital gain of people, and the interests of society and environment. This balance requires a different approach towards the future. Possibly, this can be found in a shift of our existing paradigms of development , growth and profit maximization, towards ‘an alternative that supports economic viability and healthy ecosystems by modifying consumption patterns and implementing a more equitable social framework’ (Edwards, 2009, p. 3).

To explore this prevailing paradigm of profit maximization within businesses, this research will refer to the theory of Harry Kunneman (2012) and Edgar Morin (1991). Based on their theory, this research will illustrate that profit organizations are no longer able to organize their businesses in terms of development and progression with the aim to increase their profits. On this basis, this research will create a theoretical framework, from which leaders might be able to formulate an adequate responses to address the sustainability issues. This gives leaders within the corporate world the opportunity to restore the balance between social, environmental, financial and economic values (Klomp, 2001, p. 39).

By formulating a guideline for leaders of profit based organizations, this research would like to clarify the fundamental elements that can be considered essential for sustainable leadership. The information in this guideline is aimed at those who are participating in sustainable leadership. Furthermore, the guideline will provide important insights in the differences and similarities of the major fields of: ‘people’, ‘planet’ and ‘profit’, on leadership (Elkington, 1997). The formulation of the guideline is only a first attempt based on literature research and in addition illustrated with views and opinions of important sustainable leaders.

During my internship at KPN, I have experienced that sustainability is a rapidly emerging trend. Therefore the research is illustrated with quotations derived from three different interviews with sustainable leaders who are considered to be innovative in the field of sustainability within their organization. The purpose of these interviews is to

illustrate and support the vision of what sustainable leadership might be. They are by no means intended to be an empirical survey supporting the guideline. With regard to the interviews, a questionnaire is formulated based on existing literature on sustainable development and leadership. The questions were focused on the formulation of the essence of what sustainable leadership would be. The respondents are coming from three different branches. The selection of these branches is based on the matrix of Multiple Levels of Corporate Sustainability by Marcel Marrewijk and Marco Werre (2003), which shall be explained in chapter four of this research.

In addition to the formulation of the guideline, this research shall create theoretical framework supporting learning tracks of sustainable leadership within profit organizations. With this research project this research would like to contribute to the quality of professional practices for the following reasons: First, the guideline for sustainable leadership applies to the normative content of professional practices. Therefore the guideline contributes to the critical and reflective attitude of professionals. The complexity and tensions related to sustainability issues are, from that perspective, a fertile incentive for new experiences. Furthermore, these experiences need be integrated into the decision making processes of the organization, rather than being excluded. Considering the daily reality of organizations and their professionals, where values, norms and interests collide, a normative professional can play a significant role. By bringing these various elements together. Secondly, by reflecting on the concept of sustainable leadership companies can be equipped with a practical guideline helping them to develop their (future) leadership.

Considering all what has been said before, the research question is as follows:

Which indicators are essential for a guideline for sustainable leadership, and how can they contribute to develop a learning track focused on sustainable leadership of profit organizations?

Based on the main research question, this research shall address the following sub-questions:

- What do the concepts of sustainability and sustainable leadership mean?
- How can we understand the relationship between sustainability and leadership?

- What is the importance of a guideline for sustainable leadership?
- What does it mean to translate the indicators into a learning path?

To make clear how to develop the guideline and a possible learning tracks for sustainable leadership this research will use the following structure: For answering the first part of sub-question one, the first chapter will be dedicated to the clarification of a central concept of this study: sustainability (in relation to the purpose of businesses).

With reference to Paul Hawken, the first chapter illustrated that sustainability issues within profit-organizations is challenging. To provide more inside in the relationship between sustainability and leadership, the second chapter will discuss the fact that profit-organizations must reframe their vision on sustainability and learning and development opportunities for their professionals. The implications of such a transition can possibly be found in a shift of our existing paradigms of development and growth, present in the current organization culture.

The third chapter will focus on another central concept of this study: sustainable leadership (the second part of sub question one). As already explained, this research will primarily focus on the work of Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2006). Since Hargreaves and Fink relate their ideas to an educational setting, it will be necessary to add literature on organization theory. Their view on sustainable leadership, together with the information derived from the first two chapters, will serve as a basis for the development of a guideline for sustainable leadership. The formulation of the guideline, consisting of ten essential elements of sustainable leadership, addresses the importance of the guideline for profit organizations.

The fourth chapter will address the fourth sub question and describes three possible learning tracks to support sustainable leadership. The organizations (of the respondents) approached for this research met the ambition levels of Corporate Sustainability (CS) developed by Van Marrewijk and Werre in their matrix.

The learning tracks are based on a theoretical framework, constructed with reference to theory of Aloni, Kessels and Jacobs. Building on the moral concept of sustainability developed by Hargreaves and Fink, moral practices are conceived to be able to ensure moral learning within business companies. Therefore, the theoretical

framework will be focused on the development of a branch of normative professionalism.

Using the matrix of Van Marrewijk and Werre, the learning tracks are aligned to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) ambition level of the organizations, to support leaders to integrate the guideline indicators within their practices. Therefore they contribute to the sustainability challenges that profit-organizations face nowadays.

After the clarification of sustainable leadership, the formulation of the guideline and the description of possible learning tracks to support sustainable leadership within profit-organizations, in the last chapter will address the results of my research, adding some suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1

Sustainability

“Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does Nature, because in her inventions, nothing is lacking and nothing is superfluous.”

-Henry David Thoreau

This chapter describes the theory and practice of sustainability and will, thereby, point at the main characteristics of the concept of sustainability. The purpose of my research is to formulate a guideline for sustainable leadership and my aim now is to clarify the concept of sustainability as a basis for further research. In the ensuing chapters the concept will be further discussed in relation to leadership and the importance of a guideline for sustainable leadership for businesses.

The first paragraph, will therefore discuss sustainability as a concept and will refer to The Triple Bottom Line and Corporate Social Responsibility, as concrete practices of sustainability.

Since the Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as a ‘development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations’, organizations and their leaders are struggling with the concept of sustainability. Due to their on-going search for the correct description and for who should be responsible for the implementation of this development, organizations lost focus on the full and deep meaning of sustainability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). That is why the second paragraph will elaborate the purpose of business in relation to sustainability.

1.1. Sustainability

Robert Scofield Earhart (2011) stated that sustainability cannot be seen as a new concept. Sustainability has several different concrete practices in different existing forms, like Triple Bottom Line Investments (TBLI) and Corporate Social Responsibility

(CSR). By relating social responsibility to business, Earhart illustrates that early capitalism was already involved in sustainability issues, because the “founder” of capitalism, Adam Smith, discussed the value of social responsibility. The first factories developed cities around them for families of workers, with clinics, parks etc....

Earlier forms of sustainability can be recognized in the discussions that came up in reaction towards the ‘laissez-faire’ theory of Adam Smith, as well as models which included communal living, credit unions and cooperatives (Earhart, 2011, p. 17). Based on these already emerged initiatives, Earhart illustrates his statement that sustainability, with the related practices, cannot be seen as new, but rather as a ‘re-emergence of old practices in a new form’ (Ibid.).

In his research Earhart gives a short overview of the different aspects of sustainability in relation to businesses.

1.1.1. Development of sustainability

After the Second World War, the modern concept of sustainability took shape. From this moment on, people became more aware of the development of the environmental and economic quality (Earhart, 2011, p. 18). Building on this awareness of the environment, two different movements derived. The first movement formed The Club of Rome in 1968. This club, founded by economists and scientists, published *The Limits to Growth* in 1971. In the report, The Club of Rome discussed the expected effect of our consumption of resources and advocated against our current economic development and demographic growth. Other groups were built with the aim to tackle the environmental issues, such as the Environmental Defense Fund and Friends of the Earth (Ibid.).

The publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, where the term of sustainability was used for the first time by Gro Brundtland herself; sustainability became the center of attention, by uniting the ‘social, economic, cultural and environmental issues, and global solutions’ (Ibid). The report ‘provided a common language to be used in reference to a wide variety of social and environmental issues and practices’ (Ibid.). Earhart states that Triple Bottom Line Investments and Corporate Social Responsibility can be considered as highly normative fields. By working in this field, people are able to claim that they

are normative professionals because this requires an awareness of the morality around business and its related disciplines. In order to deal with the various aspects of sustainability, Hargreaves and Fink state that the idea of sustainability is inherently moral since it is focused on the value of the mutual dependence of all forms of life (2006, p. 17). By evaluating the commitment towards sustainability, a promotion of sustainability is required in ‘other areas of our lives’ (Ibid., p. 2).

1.1.2. The triple bottom line

Since the Brundtland Commission published their report on sustainability (1987); many other definitions have been developed to define the notion of sustainability (Shaharir, 2012, p. 91). Most of the formulated definitions are based on sustainability development as described by the Brundtland Commission: “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission, 1987). The term sustainability addresses three different dimensions of responsibility: social, environmental and economic, and is difficult to integrate into the operationalization of business. Since it is unclear how businesses can identify present needs in relation to future ones, which technologies can contribute to meet these needs and ‘how to effectively balance organizational responsibilities between multiple stakeholders’ (Gimenez, Sierra & Rodon, 2012, p. 150)? In the organizational world, sustainability is operationalized by means of the triple bottom line, a concept that has been constructed by John Elkington (1997).

Cristina Gimenez, Vicenta Sierra and Juan Rodon point out that this concept simultaneously considers and balances the ‘people, planet and profit’, also called social, environmental and economic issues (2012, p. 150). Despite the fact that the ‘people, planet and profit’, operationalized as social responsibility, environmental and economic sustainability, are core elements in the corporate world, the different forms of sustainability are not always that clear. At first sight, economic sustainability seems to be understood well: at the plant level, businesses operationalize economic sustainability as ‘production and manufacturing costs’ (Ibid.). However, environmental sustainability is more difficult to define. Gimenez refers to the plant level, where environmental sustainability is related to the way businesses manage their energy consumption and to the footprint that is left behind by production processes.

He stresses that environmental sustainability is frequently seen in relation to the reduction of waste, pollution, emission etc. (Ibid.). The third and last responsibility dimension of sustainability from a microeconomic point of view is the social sustainability. Building on the definition of Elkington (1997), social sustainability implies that businesses provide “equitable opportunities, encourage diversity, promote connectedness within and outside the community, ensure the quality of life and provide democratic processes and accountable, governance structures” (Ibid., p. 150). The concept of the triple-bottom-line of Elkington, illustrates the implications for businesses in terms of being socially and environmentally engaged as well behaving responsibly, and, even more, creating financial profit (Ibid.). Marije Klomp illustrates the implications of businesses as follows: Profit-organizations are, besides making profit, for example by producing products and services; creating employment and sources of income generation (profit), also responsible for ecological quality; the care of the environment, the planet (planet) and social justice, internal as well as external. This implies supporting employment of minorities, as well as respecting human rights (people) (2011, p. 38). Klomp shows that organizations and their activities only exist by external factors and the effects and the costs are passed on to society. Making profit is also possible, by paying attention to the other P’s (Ibid.).

1.1.3. Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility, in the early years referred to as Social Business and Business Ethics, is founded on the generally accepted definition from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development: ‘The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of the life of the work force and their families as well as the of the local community and society at large’ (WBCSD, 1993, p. 3). Based on this definition, the organizational world has a large share in our society and therefore has a significant impact on our (human) economy (Azapagic & Perdan, 2003, p. 244). The current trend is that people associate profit-organizations with social negative impact and environmental damage. However, Adisa Azapagic points out that profit-organizations are an essential component for development and therefore positively influence wealth growth worldwide (Ibid.). Even though this thesis started with the statement that sustainability has become a buzzword, other sounds are arising from the organizational

world. Azapagic illustrates that sustainability is not just a hype; it has become ‘an invaluable tool for exploring the ways to reduce costs, manage risk, create new products and drive fundamental internal changes in culture and structure’ (Ibid.). Building on this assumption, the author states that organizations must play a key role in the creation process of a sustainable future (Ibid.). It is quite a challenge to address the sustainable development within organizations, since organizations have to improve their performances on the triple bottom line: social, environmental and economic ‘within new and evolving governance systems’ (Ibid.). This concept is known as corporate sustainability (CS), or corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Ibid.).

1.2. Purpose of business

The organizational world has a large share in our society and therefore has a significant impact on our (human) economy (Azapagic & Perdan, 2000, p. 244). Azapagic points out that profit-organizations are an essential component for development and wealth accumulation, which implies a considerable responsibility (Ibid.). One way of responding to this call of responsibility is the implementation of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility: CSR (Ibid.). Due to their managerial position leaders have the possibility and responsibility to implement the three different dimensions of CSR: people, planet and profit; the Triple P or Triple bottom line approach, introduced by John Elkington (1987).

Corporate sustainability addresses the field where profit organizations go beyond their traditional goal of making profit (Metcalf & Benn, 2013, p. 369). CSR refers to the activities of organizations that demonstrate the interconnectedness between the environmental and social concerns in business operability (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p.107). Fiona Wilson and James E. Post favor this emerging option of a new form of organizing businesses (2011, p. 715). This new model of organization joins the social purpose of the non-profit sector and the market-based approaches that are associated with the for-profit businesses (Ibid.). In *Creating a World Without Poverty* (2007), Muhammed Yunus calls for action: “To make the structure of capitalism complete, we need to introduce another kind of business (...). If we describe our existing companies as profit maximizing businesses, this new kind of business might be called social business. Entrepreneurs will set up social businesses not to achieve limited personal

gain but to pursue specific goals” (2007, p. 21). From this call of action we may conclude that only adding the words ‘green’ or ‘social responsibility’ is not enough. Van Marrewijk and Werre emphasize that sustainability must be integrated and embedded into every aspect of the organization. However, as a response to Jacques Schraven, the chairman of VNONCW, the Dutch Employers Association, Van Marrewijk and Werre stress that the corporate sustainability is not a standard recipe (2003, p. 107). This implies that businesses may choose their own approach, depending on their ambitions and corresponding to the organization’s mission, vision and strategy. Based on this assumption, the organizations are able to have an appropriate response to the actual circumstances in which they operate (Ibid.). Despite the fact that the definition of corporate sustainability could be considered to be broad and ‘vague’, a ‘differentiated set of definitions and approaches can actually assist an organization in finding the most suitable path giving the context and the dominant values within the organization’ (Ibid.).

However, Paul Hawken believes that America and the industrialized West do not have a clear idea on what business really is (2010, p. 1). The author stresses that the purpose of business is not, or should not be, simply to make money, nor is it merely a system of making and selling things (Ibid.). He states: ‘The promise of business is to increase the well-being of humankind through service, creative inventions, and ethical action. Money making is, on its own terms, meaningless, a craven goal in the complex and trouble world we inhabit’ (Ibid., p. 2). From this perspective, constructive changes between businesses and environment is countered due to the fact that businesses are not designed to face the current sustainability challenge. As Hawken says: ‘Business is the practice of the possible: highly developed and intelligent in many respects, it is, however, not a science’ (Ibid., p. 6). The author stresses that business is designed to break through the existing limits and therefore lacks guiding principles in relation to concepts like sustainability (Ibid.). The past hundred years has showed that businesses all over the world have enriched our capital cities and corporate elites and produced a dominant commercial culture who thinks that inequalities can be solved with new and other developments, interventions and investments (Ibid., p. 6-7). The organizational world condone their behavior based on the argument that “unlocking the hidden wealth of

creation for distribution of the masses” (Ibid., p. 7). Hawken argues that this by large has been true. However, the exploitation of our natural resources brought a period of materialistic freedom for only a small group of the world. That is why Hawken stresses that companies have the responsibility ‘to restore the resources and accept the limits and discipline inherent in that relationship’, otherwise ‘it will continue to be maladaptive and predatory’ (Ibid.). The author concludes in *The Ecology of Commerce* that ‘businesspeople must either dedicate themselves to transforming their commerce to a restorative undertaking or march society to the undertaker’ (Ibid., p. 2).

One of the outcomes of the interviews with sustainable leaders underlined the responsibility of leaders as described by Hawken: *‘With every decision you make, you must learn to ask yourself what its impact is on the three P’s.’ In an ideal situation, the focus on the three different domains of the Triple P must be in balance. If profit is the focus of the organization, without taking the other domains into account, organizations will make profit in the short term, but in the longer this focus will probably result in a loss. ‘People and environment are essential for making profit, what many people forget’* (Interview with respondent working in the food/non-food sector, 12th of April 2013). But another respondent also shed light on another side of the story. There are people and groups which only focus on people and planet and thereby lose sight of the profit dimension. One respondent, responsible for the rights of the employees at a multinational company, stated that this vision does not work, since the essence of business is serving the customer. That means that businesses are built on the existence of delivering products that consumers are willing to buy. *‘It is not always possible to create a win-win-win situation, concerning people, planet and profit. It requires ‘outside the box’ thinking. This implies that we have to reconsider profit. Is it worthwhile to make the same profit, even if the planet is suffering from it? Businesses have to be more sustainably innovative to keep profit, without losing their consideration for the planet and the future. ‘Sustainable leadership starts with the question: How to make a contribution to the sustainability issue and from there we have to make choices towards the future. Sustainable leadership starts with ourselves’* (Interview, 5th of April 2013).

1.3. Towards sustainable development

The above paragraphs described sustainability as a concrete practice and as a moral concept. However, Hawken illustrated that sustainability issues within businesses are facing several barriers.

There are more than hundred definitions of ‘sustainable development’ (Van Dommelen, 2013, p. 80). Ad van Dommelen argues that the multiple definitions are partly caused by the complexity of the definition: the many aspects of sustainable development can be described in many ways (Ibid). From a positive perspective, the multiple visions on the issue can contribute to an accurate and precise communication about sustainable development. Nevertheless, Van Dommelen illustrates that addressing the complexity of sustainability is perhaps caused by deeper lying issues that obstruct a sustainable development, like the difficulties that we have with being flexible and open-minded (Ibid.). Yet it seems possible to develop changes in this apparent unmanageable gap between limited resources and the desired purpose for our future (Ibid.). Van Dommelen illustrated this statement by referring to the various perspectives of sustainability, as a multiform resource, which can contribute to a better understanding of the complexity. The author is suggesting that this multi-formity can be seen as a possible path towards sustainable development (Ibid.).

In order to initiate sustainable development it is necessary to outline the obstacles that complicate our view of the future. A good understanding of the nature of these obstacles could potentially help to successfully avoid or even overcome them. The upcoming chapter shall explore the combined challenge of our ‘attachment to insights’ and the ‘complexity of sustainable development’ (Ibid., p. 81). Moreover examine the recalibration that seems necessary to cope with the sustainability challenges.

Chapter 2

Complexity of sustainability (within organizations)

“We cannot solve the problems that we have created with the same thinking that created them”.

-Albert Einstein

As said in the first chapter, CSR is recognized as a complex problem. Louise Metcalf and Sue Benn indicate that addressing sustainability is a difficult problem for all persons involved in the system (2013, p. 370). In response to the complexity, as described by Metcalf and Benn, the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America published a paper concluding the following: ‘...the task is huge and will take a concerted and sustained effort if we hope to make the transition a relatively smooth one. It will require a whole systems approach at multiple scales in space and time. It will require integrated, systems-level redesign of our entire socio-ecological regime, focused explicitly and directly on the goal of sustainable quality of life rather than the proxy of unlimited material growth. It must acknowledge physical limits, the nature of complex systems, a realistic view of human behavior and well-being, the critical role of natural and social capital, and the irreducible uncertainty surrounding these issues’ (Beddoe et al., 2009, p. 2488). This means that sustainability, as well as human interaction with natural environment, are very complex issues to address (Metcalf & Benn, 2013, p. 371).

Before this chapter shall explore the current CSR policies that strives to balance the needs of companies, people and planet, the first paragraph shall refer to the work of Tonja van den Ende. The author stresses that organizations are facing an increased complexity for organizing *good* work (2011, p. 137). This can be considered as another complicating element for sustainable development.

The challenge that organizations face is to restore the balance between ‘people, planet and profit’. At this moment these three dimensions are brought out of balance, since the

business world is attached to their excessive focus on the economic dimension. Based on Edgar Morin's vision on the prevailing views that arise from that current paradigm, the research will explore in the second paragraph the possibilities to shift the prevailing paradigm. Making it possible to engage with sustainable leadership.

One of the respondents, working in a technical company, illustrated the fact that: *'it is not the people and the social dimension that must be equalized towards the profit dimension, but the profit dimension should be aligned into balance with the people and planet dimension. This requires that organizations have to be prepared to initiate changes towards their prevailing organizational culture of growth and development in terms of maximizing their profits'* (Interview, 29th of March, 2013). Therefore, the third paragraph shall discuss the dominance of the organizational culture associated to the economic principled paradigm.

2.1. Complexity of daily life

Dealing with the complexity of sustainability issues within profit-organizations is a challenge owing to the fact that profit-organizations must reframe their vision on sustainability as well as their vision on learning and development opportunities for their professionals. Next to these complexities within businesses themselves, professionals are confronted with the complexity of daily life in organizations. Tonja van den Ende outlines that organizations are facing an increase in complexity for organizing good work (2011, p. 137). In which *good* work refers to the quality of the professional actions. Implying for this research that leaders themselves have to formulate their thoughts (and actions) on sustainability in dialogue with others.

The author states that the increased complexity is caused by several aspects: decrease of authority of the professional, increase of stakeholders and the diversity among them, technological acceleration, competition and scale expansion (Ibid., p. 138-142). The author points out that the decrease of authority is caused by three aspects. The first aspect concerns the decline of social control. Where previously the social control has led to conformity to social behavior, currently the consistency in norms and values has (after the sixties and the seventies) mostly disappeared (Ibid., p. 138). The second aspect is connected with the loss of respect for authority in addition to the

empowerment of the citizens. Van den Ende describes how the relationship between professionals and clients, or citizens, has become more equal (Ibid.). The last aspect that affects the decrease of the authority of professionals is the attitude of citizens, who have become more critical and demanding (Ibid., p. 138).

The next aspect is the increase of stakeholders and the diversity among them (Ibid.). In the last decennia, the discretionary space is reduced by the aforementioned aspect. Furthermore, during the relationship between the professional and his/her target group, the professional will have to deal with the extended network of his/her target group. This means that they have to manoeuvre within the network of their target group. In addition, professionals have to deal with an extensive and diverse set of stakeholders (Ibid., p. 140).

The third aspect regards the technological acceleration (Ibid.). Technological development emerges rapidly and results in organizations pushing their professionals to work more efficiently and at lower costs. The ongoing technological development in relation to the more specific understanding of the complexity of coordinating and fine-tuning towards the target group, demands an increase in specific knowledge of the professionals. This means that, nowadays, professionals are schooled as experts instead of generalists (Ibid.).

The fourth aspect concerns the competition within service provision (Ibid.). The competition, or as Van den Ende defines it demand-driven work, should have to contribute to a more appropriate response towards the demand of the target group. Furthermore, it should contribute to the quality of the service and lead to even more cost reduction (Ibid., p. 141). However, the author states that the disadvantages of this competition are large, and may result in a division among potential recipients of service and products (Ibid.). The disadvantage regards two different kind of people; the well-articulated ones and the ones who are less articulate. The first group of people is, in contrast to the second, able to stand up for their rights and have the ability to enforce better conditions (Ibid.). The well-articulated group aims for proper advice or help and does not have the time to compare the services of the organizations (Ibid.). Moreover, if one is highly dependent on the organizations and their professionals, a critical attitude is

not always an option, especially when you are depending on their services (Ibid.). The next aspect of the competition within service provision involves a distinction between two different services that professionals can deliver. Namely, consuming in social services is something different than commercial consuming (Ibid.). The difference lies within the relational interpretation of good work and the great moral value which relates to the work (Ibid.). An additional disadvantage of the relational interpretation concerns the language. The language to define moral values within work, differ from and cannot be translated into the language of competition and demand-driven work. This requires a different language (Ibid.). The following disadvantage of the competition refers to limited sharing of knowledge within a certain sector, which implies a decrease of innovation in organizations. The last defined disadvantage refers to the rise of efficiency. Although the board may experience some success, professionals on the other hand feel an absence of time and space for good practices as they get increasingly less space to do their work (Ibid., p. 142).

The last aspect that affects the complexity of the practices of the professional refers to the scale expansion, partly caused by the merging of organizations (Ibid.). Van den Ende indicates that the consequence of these merging processes concern the increasing distance from the core business of the professional's work (Ibid.). Professionals encounter difficulties when they want to retain influence on the primary process, since they are confronted with protocols, evaluation tools and reports, which have little more to do with the primary business of the professional (Ibid.).

All of these social developments affect the process of normative-decision-making, which is inherent to sustainability. They imply, with regard to sustainability, a lack of uniformity and standards among citizens (where an excessive urge for consumption is considered normal). With the increase of stakeholders and the diversity among them, organizations are confronted with an increasingly new group, as stakeholders become more aware of the dimensions of sustainability which have to be addressed. Given that citizens expect organizations to provide welfare to society, the latter have to respond to society's needs. This is not a negative development, however, the incentive comes externally and could, therefore, lack an intrinsic motivation. To prevent this from happening, businesses strive for a broad-based commitment. This means that

organizations have to operate in domains very closely to their core competences. Otherwise the sustainable initiatives can result in adding green incentives, but fail to integrate sustainable practices within the business itself.

According to Van Dommelen we are facing a major challenge when it comes to sustainable development (2013, p. 81). Thinking about sustainability is thinking about our future (Ibid.). If we are confronted with our own future, we have the tendency to rely on our already existing frames (Ibid.). The upcoming paragraph shall explore our constructed frames and illustrate to what extent they can bring us a sustainable future.

2.2. Complexity according to Morin

The complexity theory of Edgar Morin could be useful to examine the complexity of sustainability from a different angle. Morin is a French philosopher who relates complexity to sustainability. This research assumes that his theory, mainly based on an ecological awareness and planetary thinking, could enlighten the complex context of sustainable development.

According to Morin, complexity means that all knowledge requires an owner, who is involved in a continuous process of knowledge creation, criticizing, discussing what may lead to the rejection of knowledge (Morin & Kern, 1999, ix). Morin states that his recognition of disorder, uncertainty and ambiguity, is vital for complexity thinking (Ibid., x). He illustrates this assumption by stating that scientific research has added a significant value to our awareness of opportunities. However, the accumulated knowledge that is derived from all of the various kind of research has made people more aware of the existing uncertainties (Ibid., p. 45). For example, knowledge can tell us where we came from and where our roots are as people. However, at the same time we have no understanding of the reason we live (Ibid.).

Despite the complexity of sustainability, companies cannot hide behind the complexity of sustainability and use it as an excuse to ignore the concept. The respondent working for a food/nonfood organization declared that *'in (too) complicated situations, the organizations hide behind complexity. It becomes too complicated if the economic interests of the business are too much at stake. At that moment organizations consider*

themselves as just a small party, which has no significant influence on the prevailing paradigm of making profit at the expense of people and environment. What organizations do with the information, service or products they provide, is not their business. 'Organizations have the knowledge, but they act as if it is not their circle of concern, which implies that the organization thinks it is in a position that is beyond the influence of responsibility. Organizations stress that they only have a responsibility towards their own employees. By that, organizations use the complexity of the various levels of business as an excuse to handle more carefully regarding a sustainable future' (Interview, 12th of April 2013).

2.2.1. Paradigm of development and progression

In addition to the uncertainty that is inherent to our existence, Morin highlights another important idea for further illustration of sustainable development. This idea relates to the notions of 'progress' and 'development'. Morin addresses the concepts from the context of "the crisis of development" (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 52). He illustrates that our present day society attributes a great importance to development and therefore has a deep faith and belief regarding the future. Morin adds that these ideas form the essence of our democratic-capitalist ideology. This ideology finds its basis in the assumption that development offers the possibility of prosperity and well-being in our lives (Ibid., p. 56). In this paradigm of progression, development contributes to progress and vice versa. Morin does not share this ideology and demonstrates that development should not be necessarily linked to progress. The author bases this statement on the argument that development can be seen as a reductionist concept. With regard to social, psychological and moral needs, people are shortchanged on their basic needs. For example, living in connection and in community with one another. Therewith, the paradigm of progression determines our actions by its bureaucratic, technological and industrial influences. Those influences force people to relate to them, without a possibility to engage in dialogue (Ibid., p. 64). The belief that we have in this paradigm ensures that we, as people, go through life individually and become detached from an awareness of connection and belonging (Ibid.). This implies that the values of solidarity fade into the background and results in an emphasis on excessive consumption, beauty, status and

successful careers. As Morin illustrates: “People live from day to day, without any orientation” (Ibid., p. 65). This individual way of living causes a confrontation with even more insecurity. People are, increasingly, less able to cope with insecurity as they lose the connection with the people around them. It is actually the connection that people need, to cope with uncertainty (Ibid.).

Morin states that we live our lives based on a logic that is derived from technology and science. This means that our life is organized and founded on the ideas of efficiency and predictability (Ibid., p. 68). By distinguishing machinery and living beings, the author shows that people follow the rules of the technological paradigm within their own lives. This mechanical way of living provides security within life. This implies that we, in contrast to our nature, are no longer capable of coping with disturbances in a dynamically and flexible way (Ibid.). By this, Morin is illustrating that the human race must learn to accept that there is an interconnection with others as well as with our environment (Ibid., p. 81). This demands that we should re-define our humanity. Development should no longer be linked to the growth and progression of economy and must, therefore, be separated from economic impact (Ibid., p. 82). The development advocated by Morin, involves a commitment to each other and to our planet. Development should be seen in terms of decline. This means that we should loosen our aspirations to achieve the ultimate and therefore instead learn to accept that our life is characterized by disappointments and imperfections (Ibid., p. 89). Morin illustrates that we should loosen our fixed way of thinking, to create adequate answers for the sustainability issues.

The respondents share the idea for changing our prevailing paradigm as exposed by Morin. Illustrating this by quoting an executive working in the service sector: *‘To initiate a real change towards sustainability issues requires fresh and new visions. This begins when we stop our usual way of thinking and perceiving. If we are able to distance ourselves from the beaten tracks, without destroying them, it is possible to examine them from different angles. If this succeeds, we can recognize that our thoughts are products of our own created mental models. And as we become more aware of our prevailing thoughts, they have less influence on our thoughts and practices’* (Interview, 5th of April, 2013).

2.2.2. Prevailing paradigm of the free market

Criticizing the prevailing paradigm of the free market economy, Harry Kunneman illustrates that the illustrious “invisible hand” of Adam Smith is accompanied by another hand, that is invisible as well (2012, p. 15). Kunneman argues that we have to admit that the “invisible hand” by Adam Smith indeed has ensured that the unlimited pursuit of private interest, ‘behind the back of the concerned’, has led to a steady growth in consumer wealth for more people (Ibid., p. 16). Both at macro and micro level, we have an uncontrolled urge for greed and all the malpractices that have emerged can no longer be dismissed as incidents and accidental excesses of a system that is essentially healthy (Ibid., p. 15). As with all practices on sustainable development, increased surveillance on processes provides no solution for the moral essence of the problem. Enhanced surveillance and more control increase the risk of being caught; while instead, the underlying moral problem is not addressed (Ibid.).

Kunneman argues that progressively it became clear that the “invisible hand” of Smith – Kunneman defines this hand the “impulse hand” – is accompanied by a second hand. This hand, defined by “fence hand”, is responsible for completely different notions (Ibid., p. 17). The “fence hand” refers to the tendency of all stakeholders to close their eyes to the undermining effects of the flourishing free market economy with respect to the social and ecological context in which the economy is embedded (Ibid.). As long as individuals and organizations remain within the boundaries of our laws, they can ‘externalize’ the adverse consequences and costs of their actions. By making use of ‘tax havens’ like Ireland and The Netherlands, organizations show that they are not willing to bear the real costs of their business. Multinationals rely on the following law: ‘We do that, because it is possible...’. The companies are therefore not accused of illegal behavior, but of immoral actions (Ibid., p. 18). An important issue, caused by the consumptive market, is the ecological issue.

Meanwhile, we become more aware of the fact that we, in the name of profit, throw our ecological problems over the fence of future generations. It becomes more difficult therefore to deny the ambivalence of the free market and to sell unconcerned, limitless consumptive growth for all (Ibid.). Kunneman states that it becomes clear that the “fence-hand” has thrown that much rubbish over the fence that it has become so high

that the mess, in some places, is falling back into the domain of the free market. As a consequence, directors, managers and professionals are increasingly confronted with the moral challenges of compliance, trust and CSR (Ibid., p. 19.). To solve these moral issues, technical innovations and SMART-proof projects (simple and clear arranged objectives, to force managers to give direct commands) are no longer sufficient. Instead, moral challenges ask for a real and genuine involvement and moral inspiration. This moral impasse is no longer just a political problem as well as a cultural problem that has become an organizational question for directors and managers (Ibid., p. 19-20).

In line with the statement of Kunneman to solve moral issues present in sustainability challenges, one of the respondents, working as an executive in the service sector, underlined the ability to examine the prevailing frameworks. This implies that leaders must have patience and willingness to withstand the pre-conceived frameworks to use them as a blueprint. *'If we are able to simply observe processes without pulling conclusions and try to embrace the complexity of sustainability issues, it might be possible to understand the situation in a new way and find appropriate responses towards the future'* (Interview, 5th of April, 2013).

Sustainable development is confronted with a complexity of plurality of choices that organizations have towards their sustainability issues. These choices are consciously and unconsciously based on a “frame” of underlying experiences, expectations, information and emotions, all of which are influenced by the organizational culture the professionals is working in (Van Dommelen, 2013, p. 81). Every organization has its own hidden dynamics, besides the main and open prevailing culture. The upcoming paragraph examines the importance of an organizational culture when it comes to sustainable development.

2.3. Organizational culture

Culture within an organization is a pattern of shared basic assumption, constructed by the employees within the organization. The basis for this assumption is founded in the successful experiences people have during their daily practices (Senge et al., 2000, p. 301). Thereby, the cultural assumptions give meaning to the lives of the professionals within the organization (Ibid., p. 302). The tensions, when it comes to cultural changes,

are caused by the fact that cultural changes create a predictability and security within the organization, which reduces employees' concerns (Ibid.). This set of basic assumptions will be transferred as a prevailing and appropriate set of actions, for new professionals who enter the organization. Building on this framework, people develop a certain worldview. Changing a culture faces resistance initially, as a natural reaction to the (aggressive) attack, which is made by the organization on the existing values of employees (Ibid.). The attachment of professionals towards familiar insights is one of the arguments given by Van Dommelen, which influence the sustainable development within profit-organizations.

Martina Linnenluecke and Andrew Griffiths state that a sustainability-oriented organizational culture can contribute to the adoption of sustainability principles (2010, p. 358). Thereby they relied on scholars suggesting that CSR requires change in the internal culture of organizations (Ibid.). By clarifying different factors as 'top management, human resource management, environmental training, employee empowerment, teamwork and reward systems', organizations are able to accomplish CSR (Ibid.). However, other authors argue that these changes can only be initiated by employee values and underlying assumptions, which are far more radical transitions for organizations (Ibid.).

Initiating changes, by challenging the prevailing culture within an organization, requires that employees show courage to make moral choices. By referring to the interviews, the respondents made clear that people have to be aware of the choices they have. A sustainable leader, or any other kind of professional, has to be aware of the fact that he finds himself within a tensional space, and that the choices he has to make, are moral choices. It is important to create a space for justice and solidarity within the professional practices. One respondent working as executive in a technical company, argued: *'I am responsible for the dimension between people within my organization and I have to take care that they perform in balance with their capabilities. With regard to my own position, I have to formulate my aims for every upcoming season, which implies that if I fail my objectives I need to find another job. However, sometimes I find myself in a position between my own interest and my people where I have to make choices that not only influence their lives but also those of their families. Here, as a starting point, I*

always consider the context for the complicated situation. When I am asked to sacrifice a team of a hundred people, I need to know why? If it is to force a technical breakthrough which may help millions of people, then maybe yes, if it is because of the figures, then no' (Interview, 29th of March, 2013). With this in mind, the respondent states that sustainable leaders have to possess the courage to say 'no' to the dominant (cultural) structures within their organization. To keep a good balance between the goals of the organization, their aligned interests of efficiency, their personal position and how they serve their people and the people beyond their business, is quite a challenge.

Linnenluecke and Griffiths stress that CSR is a 'multifaceted concept that requires organizational change and adaption on different levels' (Ibid.). The following levels can be distinguished: the surface-, the value- and the underlying level. Firstly, the surface level is focused on the visibility of the CSR principles, like CSR reports and technical solutions. This level creates a context from where organizations can adapt their CSR practices (Ibid.). Secondly, the value level addresses the values of the employees, where changes in their existing values and beliefs towards a more responsible attentiveness, based on ethical values, can initiate the 'adaption of the corporate sustainability principles' (Ibid.). The last, underlying level, addresses the changes in core assumptions, concerning the mutual dependence of ecological systems and human systems (Ibid.). The authors address similarities between the different levels and dimensions of CSR and organizational culture, namely the 'observable culture'. The observable culture refers to the visible structure of the organization, with the associated processes and behaviors. Next to the observable culture, the authors refer to 'espoused values' and 'underlying assumptions'. The 'espoused values' concern the organizations' strategies, goals and philosophies. The 'underlying assumptions' refer to the unconsciously present beliefs and perceptions, which form the foundation of values and practices within the organization. The organizational culture determines the identity of organizations. Despite the individual character of every staff member, their actions are subject to the organizational culture (Ibid.).

When it comes to the ideal culture within businesses for sustainable development, the three interviewed sustainable leaders all agreed that the organization needs to be a safe and secure environment in which one can take risks while being creative and innovative.

'This is a ground rule for sustainability creations, though safety and security are the base on which everything stands upon. If you take risks promoting new developments it is possible to make mistakes by making the wrong choices. It takes courage to admit your mistakes, and to learn from them requires a proactive approach from the professional.' Stephan Covey argues that success is in line with errors, because if you do not see your mistakes and learn from them, you will make mistakes of a different order, namely self-deception and self-justification (2002, p. 75). Creating an awareness of not repeating the wrong behavior will make it possible to correct the mistakes that are made (Oser, 2013).

2.3.1. Culture of mistakes and room for errors

Developing sustainable initiatives, which can contribute to a sustainable future, asks for new, creative and innovative thinking and practices. This will require a culture within an organization, where there is space to develop such thinking and practices. This implies that on the one hand, leaders have to show courage to withstand the general prevailing culture as described in section 2.3., and on the other hand, organizations need to create a culture that tolerates mistakes. Both can contribute to new developments in visions and strategies.

Each organization uses its own assumptions regarding the most adequate way to achieve a common understanding of reality. The belief organizations have in human capacities determines the actions of their professionals. Peter Senge illustrates this statement by referring to the division within organizational cultures. In some organizations reigns the "spirit of Prometheus", where human willpower is used to the maximum, with the aim to overcome obstacles (inclusive nature) (2000, p. 305). This is in contrast to most Asian organizations, where there is less faith in human willpower. They believe that their people will evolve if they operate in harmony with the forces surrounding them.

In 1960, Michael McGregor formulated two movements, regarding the existing belief organizations have in the human nature of their professionals, which are still widely accepted (Ibid.). According to Theory X, people are lazy, not committed and not capable of dealing with responsibilities. To leaders (or managers) rests the task to set rules, rewards and punishments to avoid the inherent limits of their professionals, which

can possibly ruin their business. This vision of the human nature of professionals is a self-fulfilling prophecy, since the leaders have a lack of confidence towards their professionals and therefore the professionals become too afraid of being creative and innovative, which results in 'lazy' employees (Ibid.). The other theory, Theory Y, assumes that people are more complex. If professionals fail, it could be their fault, but it is at least partly due to the structure of the organization. Giving them the benefit of the doubt increases their creativity and commitment towards the organization (Ibid). Besides these theories of McGregor, a third vision is generally accepted within learning organizations. This vision relies on the idea that people are basically competent and trust worthy. Problems are always ascribed to the system, instead of to individuals (Ibid.).

Within an organizational culture there must be room for making mistakes. In many organizations, professionals do not get the opportunity to learn from negative moral behavior. Therefore, this research would argue in line with Fritz Oser (2013) that organizations should develop "a culture of mistakes", in which moral transgressions are used to change thinking structures and behavioral tendencies. This gives leaders, and their associates, the opportunity to develop new knowledge and insights that can sharpen the vision of a leader. Sustainable leaders should not try to inhibit their associate's mistakes, since it an essential part of their learning process.

Mid conclusion

Complexity of sustainability is caused by numerous elements which are interrelated. These elements consist out of social developments as described by Tonja van den Ende, as well as out of our detachment to our frames (prevailing paradigms) shown by Van Dommelen. In this context we have to emphasize that people and organizations' view sustainability from different frames. Influenced by the prevailing organizational culture which is built on free-market capitalism. These frames provide different perspectives on sustainability issues, which, in turn, imply that every stakeholder is viewing sustainability issues from another frame. This can result in different expectations and preferences. In line with the theory of Morin, the research would also like to argue that we are confronted with our dependence on development in terms of growth.

Dependency on the prevailing paradigms makes it difficult to review and reconsider the relevance of other (scientific) perspectives/possibilities, whereas new perspectives (innovation) are needed to address the sustainability issues within businesses.

In the meantime, these frames also provide a variety of perspectives and possible solutions to undertake various actions to the sustainability issues.

Chapter 3

Sustainable Leadership

“The future belongs to those who understand that doing more with less is compassionate, prosperous and enduring and thus more intelligent, even competitive.”

-Paul Hawken

Metcalf and Benn describe the gaps in literature on CSR in organizations and industries and emphasize the ignorance of most corporate leaders when it comes to implementing the CRS initiatives (2013, p. 369). They show and emphasize that achieving sustainability in organizations is a complex multilayered problem in and on itself (Ibid., p. 372). The result of the complexity involves: ‘the complexity of sustainability, the complexity of complex problem solving and the complexity of leadership itself. With this in mind, leadership for sustainability requires leaders of extraordinary abilities’ (Ibid., p. 381). In line with Metcalf and Benn, this research points out that leaders in organizations could be seen as the key interpreters of the interconnection of CSR (Ibid.).

This chapter attempts to explain the need for sustainable leadership in relation to the emerging nature of sustainability. The first paragraph will describe the concept of leadership. The second paragraph will focus on sustainable leadership, as an alternative for the traditional hierarchical leadership, which is no longer suitable for the sustainability challenges that businesses face.

The third paragraph will refer to the theory of Stephen R. Covey. The theory illustrates that sustainable leadership requires deep understanding of the paradigms and how they affect others within the organization as well as the society beyond the organization. The paradigms refer to the existing frames within the individual practices of professionals and the organizational structure (like the current prevailing idea of maximizing profit, see chapter 2) from which the organizations work and operate when it comes to sustainable development.

Finally, this chapter will present a guideline for sustainable leadership.

3.1 Leadership

Leadership or management is a broad concept and exists in many different ways (Veenbaas, 2004, p. 11). Also Spector confirms that there are many different definitions of leadership and not one definition has been universally accepted (Spector, 2003, p. 313). Despite the different perspectives on leadership, a common idea can be found: leadership involves ‘influencing the attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and feelings of other people’ (Spector, 2003, 313). But even non leaders have their influence on other people, the only difference being that ‘leaders exert a disproportionate influence and have therefore more influence than non-leaders’ (Ibid). Influence can come from stakeholders inside or outside the organization.

In the business industry leaders are always linked to top managers (Senge et al., 2000, p. 14). According to Senge this may imply that people are no leaders as long as they do not have a top management position. Meaning that if organizations want to train their leaders, this actually means that they focus on the development of their top managers and subsequently exclude a large group of leaders. Senge argues that this narrow definition of leadership has two problems. The first problem implies that you can only be a leader if you actually already have a top management position. Aspiration towards leadership can only be accomplished if you have a top position within an organization (Ibid., p. 14). Secondly, if leadership is only a hierarchical position, it lacks an independent definition of leadership because it is only determined by a top management function (like a board function), high in the organizational hierarchy (Ibid.). Senge states that leadership can be defined as the ability of human society to create their future, and more specifically: to continue such processes towards a substantial change (Ibid). With this definition Senge wishes to illustrate another idea about the way people experience leadership: he believes the ability of leadership is to maintain ‘structural tension’. This is the energy, generated when people develop a vision and tell the truth concerning the current reality (Ibid.). As an example Senge refers to the ‘dream’ of Martin Luther King jr. Although Dr. King was famous because of his ‘dream’, his leadership was concentrated around the ‘dramatization of the current situation’, so people were able to see the current reality of racism (Ibid.).

One of the respondents argued that the bottleneck within the current organizational structures is that employees are all used to be controlled by a few leaders high within the hierarchical structure of their organization (Interview respondent working as HRM executive, 29th of March 2013). However, Senge states that in world of global institutional networks we are facing issues where a hierarchical leadership is no longer suitable (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004, p. 205). This hierarchical form of leadership is generally built on the power to destroy, rather than the power to build and create (Ibid., p. 205). Therefore, a new kind of leadership must be developed. One that does not depend on extraordinary individuals like a ‘hero’ or a ‘traditional’ leader but rather a form of leadership applied by groups, institutions, communities and networks (Ibid., p. 204).

3.2. Sustainable leadership

Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink discuss leadership within the context of the natural and human development by connecting theory and practice in education. They present seven principles of sustainable leadership and can move us beyond the all-consuming obsession with higher performance standards at any cost (2006, p. 20). Hargreaves and Fink stress that a sustainable leader acts urgently, learns from the past and from diversity, is resilient under pressure, waits patiently for results, and does not burn people out (Ibid.). This formulation of sustainable leadership is focused on justice and morality and seeks to benefit every person on this planet, both now and in the future (Ibid.). Based on this view of what sustainable leadership is, Hargreaves and Fink underline the following principles: Depth, Length, Breadth, Justice, Diversity, Resourcefulness and Conservation.

The first principle, ‘depth’, involves preserving, protecting and promoting deep and broad learning. Sustainable leaders make this learning to care for others in all the relationships they have, possible (Ibid., p.18). The authors state that, similar to sustainable improvement, sustainable leadership starts with a strong ‘sense for moral purpose’ (Ibid., p. 23). Within the corporate world, a strong and shared sense of purpose makes it possible to face complexities of sustainability issues. Hargreaves and Fink stress that instead of being driven by quarterly based profits, sustainable organizations become successful businesses because of their ‘enduring purpose and timeless values’

(Ibid., p. 24). Ira Jackson's and Jane Nelson's (2004) research, *Profits with Principles*, confirms this statement by "explicitly linking profits with principles is a prerequisite for helping to restore trust and confidence while delivering long-term values to shareholders" (Ibid.). During the last decades we have seen a development of product integrity. Where an internally based motivation in the former years proved sufficient for success, nowadays, moral purposes need to be embedded in the chain of production/services influencing the community and society in general (Ibid., p. 25). By addressing the human value of their products, it becomes possible for organizations to develop a deeper purpose of sustainable corporate development (Ibid.).

The second principle, 'length', refers to a leadership that lasts over years. Sustainable leadership is an ongoing process and therefore advances the most valuable aspects of life over time, 'year upon year, from one leader to the next' (Ibid., p. 18). Hargreaves and Fink underscore that it is quite a challenge for leaders to accept the fact of leadership succession (Ibid., p. 55). To ensure that efforts will last over time requires that leaders take responsibility when it comes to leadership succession. As has been made clear by the World Commission on Environment and Development we should not compromise "the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Ibid., p. 56). This implies that the essence of sustainable leadership can be found in a leadership perspective adopting a long term view. The second principle of sustainable leadership is founded on the idea that effective succession can be initiated by the creation of a positive leadership flow that secures improvements towards the future (Ibid., p. 91). This implies that leaders are not irreplaceable. Instead we have to loosen the heroic and everlasting ideas we have of leadership, and realize that leadership stretches beyond professionalism and the physical lifetime of individuals (Ibid., p. 93).

The next principle of sustainable leadership is 'breadth'. Leadership cannot be the responsibility of the few (Ibid., 95). In our complex world, no single leader is able to control everything (Ibid. p.19). Therefore, Hargreaves and Fink state that sustainable leadership can be seen as a distributed form of leadership. Distributed leadership will not only be shaped on a design, since it can emerge from groups and individuals as well. Leaders can influence and inspire their colleagues in order to create new ideas and open new directions, without needing the approval of their boss (Ibid., 122). This form of

leadership extends beyond employees and can influence the relation of a company to clients, benefiting from a better service (Ibid., p. 110). Therefore, leadership should not be restricted to one person or the board of the company, but should be distributed over many layers within the organization (associates, communities and networks), taking different kinds of forms (Ibid., p. 136-137). 'Leadership exists everywhere' (Ibid., p. 136), across time and space- at lunchtime, between meetings, after a workday and on weekends.

In the interviews one of the respondents illustrated this point when she was talking about her deep involvement in daily business, by facilitating a cooperation process and creating collective responsibility. This implies that the respondent assigned responsibilities based on the desires and capabilities of her associates. This way of leadership established a process in which people felt they were being seen and heard, by motivating and encouraging them to give a personal interpretation of sustainability. *'At this point of the process, people consider themselves as part of the question that is at stake and notice that they are collectively creating new responses. Making people responsible stimulates and encourages the own ingenuity to become innovative and this will promote the creativity of people, which both are essential qualities of sustainable leadership.'*

The fourth principle is 'justice'. This implies that sustainable leaders try to reduce harm to their surrounding environment and actively improve the different ways of sharing knowledge and resources with local communities. Hargreaves and Fink stress that leaders should actively find ways of sharing knowledge and resources with their colleagues and neighboring organizations (Ibid. p. 9). It seems quite a challenge for leaders to think beyond themselves and their own organizations. The implication is that a sustainable leader should be concerned with all people who are directly or indirectly affected by his/her actions (Ibid., p. 158). Especially with 'those whom, we cannot immediately see as well as those whom we can' (Ibid.). Hargreaves and Fink illustrate that managers of organizations should not only aim for good results, but should also perform 'as community members, citizens and human beings who lead to serve and promote the good of all' (Ibid.).

The following principle is 'diversity'. Hargreaves and Fink explain that the term biodiversity made its appearance in the English vocabulary in 1988. In 1992, the term was subject of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit. Edward O. Wilson, the originator of the summit, defined diversity as 'The variety of organisms considered at all levels, from genetic variants belonging to the same species through arrays of species to arrays of genera, families, and still higher taxonomic levels; includes the variety of ecosystems, which comprise both the communities of organisms within particular habitats and the physical conditions under which they live' (Wilson, 1992, p. 393). Hargreaves and Fink show that there are two different threats to biodiversity in our modern world: The first contains the 'urban and industrial elimination of the natural environment' (Ibid., p. 161). The second threat concerns the 'large scale, standardization practices of "mono-cultural", single-crop cultivation in forests and farms' (Ibid.). These threats destroy around six percent of all species per decade. As a result, local knowledge and biological communities will be lost. Hargreaves and Fink recognize similarities between the 'principles of diversity' within the natural world and organizations within the business world (2006, p. 162). According to them, Fritjof Capra has shown that we need to understand that organizations are as complex as living systems: "The principles of organization of ecosystems, which are the basis of their sustainability, are identical to the principles of organization of all living systems". And they add: "To build a sustainable society for our children and future generations, we need to fundamentally redesign many of our technologies and social institutions so as to bridge the gap between human design and to ecologically sustainable systems of nature" (Ibid.). Hargreaves and Fink state that sustainable leaders should be able to capitalize on the collective intelligence of their employees by valuing cultural diversity as richness (Ibid., p. 163). This is why diversity can be seen as a vital element for sustainability. With professional dedication, 'diversity can and should lead to cohesion, not confusion. Otherwise, standardization systems will offer the false dawn of short-term results as a misleadingly, optimistic prelude to an unsustainable future' (Ibid., p. 190).

The sixth principle of sustainable leadership is called 'resourcefulness'. "Sustainable leadership should develop and not deplete material and human resources. It renews people's energy. Sustainable leadership is prudent and resourceful leadership that

wastes neither its money nor its people” (2006, p. 191). Hargreaves and Fink also state that: ‘Improvement needs energy’ (Ibid.). The energy for sustainable improvement is founded in human and material resources. This implies that we have to concentrate on the finiteness of our planetary resources by protecting nature which makes it possible for us to survive. Hargreaves and Fink claim that we are able to live without damaging our surroundings, making it possible to develop human potential and meet basic needs (Ibid.). The implication for leaders within businesses is that they have to develop a resourceful attitude towards nature and humans. By promoting development and growth in relation to finite aspects of our planet and people. (Ibid., p. 224). They also state that resourcefulness “entails being willing to recognize and respond to both visions of our relationship with the planet, its people and their development” (Ibid., p. 192).

The last principle of sustainable leadership refers to the ‘conservation’ of both our history and legacy (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 225). The authors argue that change is always approached from the future without any respect to the past, and has only an arrow that points in a forward direction; it is change without a past or a memory (Ibid.). Sometimes the past can be marked by honor and pride. However, in the case of a sustainable way of leading, leaders have to face the past; otherwise the same mistakes will be made over and over again (Ibid., p. 249). Hargreaves and Fink underscore that leadership is based on the interconnection of all the described principles, you cannot leave one out (Ibid., p. 265). Leaders have to live by all the principles which define the essence of their sustainability or unsustainability.

In summary, leaders can develop sustainability by how they sustain themselves and others around them, arising from their commitment to deep and broad learning. However, sustainable leadership is not the only element that can influence the required changes, the system in which the leaders operate can as well. Sustainable leadership also requires a new paradigm for leadership. Following Stephen R. Covey, this research would like to illustrate the seven principles of sustainable leadership developed by Hargreaves and Fink in relation to a principled and centered way of leading. One who wants to understand the principles of sustainable leadership, should have insights in one’s own paradigms. In his book, *The Seven Habits of Effective Leadership*, Covey makes a distinction between a principled attitude in life and a pragmatic one. A

principled attitude is about integrity, humility and loyalty, courage, justice, patience and simplicity (2002, p. 16). The pragmatic attitude is focused on personal performance and prestige (Ibid.). Therefore, the upcoming paragraph shall elaborate the ideas of Covey.

3.3. Way of leading according to Stephen Covey

A principled way of living shows that there are basic rules for a meaningful life and that real success and sustainable happiness requires that we are living by those rules and make them an integral part of our personality. Covey describes that after World War One, the focus from a principled life moved towards a pragmatic way of living. This way of living is characterized by personal performances, prestige, skills for better interactions with other people. During the years, the pragmatic way of living was divided into two different movements. The first one focused more on the relationship techniques and the second advocated for a positive mental attitude. These developments can be seen as positive, however some were meant for manipulation and even deceit (Covey, 2002, p. 16). All the different facets of the pragmatic way of living are indispensable for a successful life, in contrary to the principled way (Ibid., p. 18).

The principled and pragmatic ways of leading are examples of social paradigms. Your paradigm is your frame of reference and provides an explanation of your environment. We use our frame as a map, to seek our way through life. These maps are divided into two categories: maps of how things should be (our values) and maps of the perceived reality (Ibid., p. 19). Based on these maps, we interpret our experiences.

Subconsciously, we use these maps and we automatically assume that the things we see are real, or at least should be real (Ibid., p. 29). Covey illustrates how strongly conditioned we are by our perceptions and paradigms; which, in turn, demonstrates how the paradigms determine our behavior. Our actions can only be adjusted towards each other in one and the same framework. Covey states that, in time, our behavior will be ineffective if we do not have a deep understanding of our basic paradigms. Finally, Covey illustrates how much our paradigms affect our relationships with others (Ibid., p. 22-23). Everybody has a unique view, but because we are conditioned in a certain way as 'group', we all see (behave) the same. However, this conclusion does not indicate that there are no objective facts. If you are more aware of your fundamental paradigms, you can compare your paradigm with that of others, which makes it possible to broaden

your framework. The power of a paradigm shift determines the way we interact with each other. A new paradigm can be achieved by developing a principle centered attitude, which determines who you are. You cannot change your vision without fundamentally changing yourself and you cannot change yourself without changing your vision (Ibid., p. 25).

Concluding, since sustainability, in its essence, addresses the value and interdependence of all life, Hargreaves and Fink state that the idea of sustainability is inherently moral and requires moral practices. They emphasize that progress in the domain of sustainability can only be made by committed leaders. The formulation of sustainable leadership given by Hargreaves and Fink is focused on justice and morality, and benefits every person on this planet, both now and in the future. Covey argues that when we try to influence others, without departing from a principled intention, we will reach no long term successes. He compares relational techniques with preparing adequately for an exam. You might get a good grade but you will not master the course (Ibid.). Without integrity based principles, leaders will not be capable of sustainable human relations and will only experience short term successes (Ibid.).

3.4. Guideline for sustainable leadership

Building on the information derived from the previous chapters, this research composes a guideline for sustainable leadership. The guideline will contain various indicators which, all together, can contribute to the response of businesses to sustainability issues. The formulation of this guideline is based on the literature study, as described in the previous chapters. However, a scientific guideline should be based on extended empirical research, complemented with a discussion among specialists and with subsequent consensus statements among researchers. Therefore this guideline can only be seen as a first attempt, needing further research.

First will be described the process of development of the guideline. The guideline provides information that is derived from a minor literature study and can therefore be seen as the most essential elements of sustainable leadership.

Second, the research shall discuss the potential of the guideline by referring to possible learning opportunities, which can support (sustainable) leaders to integrate the indicators of the guideline in their practices.

3.4.1. Development of the guideline

With this guideline, this research would like to grasp the essence of sustainable leadership. Integrating sustainability within businesses implies that leaders, as first line implementers of vision and mission, have the capacity to behave in a way that organizations can make the transition towards a sustainable future.

Aim for sustainable development

Sustainability is not a new concept. It started, as we have seen, at the beginning of the previous century with social responsibility. Brundtland introduced the concept sustainable development in 1987; since then the concept sustainability has gained importance. Sustainable development is an ongoing process that strives to balance social, environmental and financial-economic norms and values. Hence, the first indicator of the guideline focuses on the care leaders must give to their associates, the environment and the community beyond their own organization (and their personal interest).

Examine your perspectives

The second chapter illustrated that the sustainability process is challenging. Caused by our dependence on the prevailing frames of technical knowledge, on following protocols and on the binding effect of economic dominant values. According to Morin paragraph 2.2.1., Kunneman paragraph 2.2.2. and Covey, paragraph 3.3., we need to be willing to examine and change our prevailing paradigms. Therefore the second indicator of the guideline for sustainable leadership focuses on a reflective attitude of leaders, which enables the professional to formulate and create a personal value frame. The articulation of personal values in relation to instrumental values and prevailing normative frameworks within the organization, makes it possible to address the moral dilemmas which are inherently connected to sustainability, as stressed by Hargreaves and Fink in paragraph 3.2..

Be present and aware

Sustainable leaders have to be open towards the world around them. Thereby, they should be aware of feelings and needs of other people and the environment in which they operate. Moreover, they must be aware of how they affect these people and their environment. It concerns an equitable distribution of burdens and benefits, which are associated with the cooperation of all the stakeholders. Sustainable leaders have to be aware of the choices that they have. More specifically to the fact that they find themselves within a tensional space, and the choices they have to make, are moral choices. It is important to create space for justice and solidarity within the professional practices of leaders.

Initiate dialogue

The complexities that affect the business and the practices of the professional, as described in chapter 2 are taken into consideration when people are in dialogue with each other. The described complexities could hinder a free dialogue from capturing the essence of sustainable development. Likewise, external conditions, such as political policies, limited time and resources, can interfere with the dialogue or so called learning process among stakeholders. These external factors that affect the dialogue cannot be disabled, but can be used in a reflexive manner (Jacobs, 2010, p.30). The critical potential of the dialogue is affecting the dialogue itself and the conditions of the dialogue. This implies that reflection, being the first indicator of guideline, takes place within the dialogue concerning the conditions and assumptions of the dialogue itself (Ibid.).

Create the future together

Sustainability is not the responsibility of individual leaders. Hargreaves and Fink emphasize that no leaders can initiate the changes by controlling everything without support (2003, p. 6). People who are joining the sustainability dialogue, as described as the third indicator of the guideline for sustainable leadership, are prepared to meet their associates in their otherness and allowing their position to be reconsidered. What matters is that the professional is not afraid of the judgment of others, and together with others explore the differences and the connecting elements for sustainable development. Jacobs notes in her inaugural speech *Professionele waarden in dialoog* (2010) that it is

precisely entering that complexity – discussing all the different perspectives illustrated by Van Dommelen in chapter 2 – that generates new knowledge. This is also known as co-creation (Wierdsma, 2004, p.1).

Be courageous

Paragraph 3.2. illustrated that making people responsible stimulates and encourages the own ingenuity to become part of the process. This stimulates associates to consider themselves as part of the question that is at stake, so that they notice how they collectively create new responses. As Hargreaves and Fink stressed: sustainable leadership is a shared responsibility. Sustainable leadership requires courage to balance the interests of the organization, the associates, the people beyond the business. Moreover, the prevailing free-market economy and their associated organizational culture ask from sustainable leaders that they can express, as role models, their values. Therefore they have to withstand the norms that give expression to the obligations related to the professional practices, by indicating boundaries for acceptable behavior in addition to naming and encouraging socially desired behavior. Values must refer to the aspirations of professionals and profession (Jacobs, 2010, p. 27). According to Van den Ende in paragraph 2.1., the increased *instrumentalization* of professions with values such as efficiency and effectiveness has gained ground. These instrumental values do not refer to a higher purpose, but to the effectiveness of professional practices based on technical and economic standards (Ibid., p. 27-28). This is contrary to moral values like for example justice, freedom and equity. Following the assumption of Jacobs we discovered that it is important to understand the way in which the moral dimension of professional actions is created and expressed in the interaction with the stakeholders. Sustainable leaders have to develop an attitude that withstands the prevailing systems of admission standards and quality norms that are often imposed by government and their management.

Promote the good

Sustainability is not free of obligation or vain and pompous ‘green’ chatter. Instead, it means to meticulously search, formulate and legitimate your vision. It is a careful account of what you want, how you handle and how you prioritize. As illustrated by Covey in paragraph 3.3, it requires critical testing, sharing and fine-tuning on different

views and perspectives that influences the professional position of the leaders. This ability is essential for organizations, since sustainable leadership starts with a strong sense of moral purpose. For that reason it is crucial to determine what is of value, as already described in the previous indicator of the guideline. Articulating values is crucial for creating them. There is no vision without strategy, no efficiency without clarity and no joint focus without joint direction (Kessels et al., 2008, p. 10).

Regrettably, organizations assume that the usual training given in courses offer precisely what they should be offering. They stress that their learning and development opportunities address CSR, which is built upon a reflective attitude, the ability of bringing people together, innovation and so on. Leaders are expected by their organizations to be fully aware of norms, values and interests of all the stakeholders. By analyzing and questioning them, organizations simply lack a learning track for introspection towards these norms, values and interests of the stakeholders.

Organizations engage in sustainability but there is still no time, space and interest to develop a (reflective) attitude for sustainable leaders in order to find appropriate solutions for the sustainability issues. Consequently, sustainable leaders have to secure the good and the integrity of their professional practices, by focusing on the learning processes that develop the good within themselves, others and society (as stressed in paragraph 3.2 by Hargreaves and Fink and illustrated by the interview with a respondent working as executive in a food/non-food company).

Be creative and innovative

The objective to develop sustainable initiatives, which can contribute to a sustainable future, asks for new, creative and innovative thinking and practice of leaders. This will require a culture within an organization, where there is space to develop such thinking and practice. This implies that, on the one hand, leaders have to show courage to withstand the general prevailing culture, as described in the sixth indicator. On the other hand, organizations need to create a culture that tolerates mistakes. Both can contribute to new developments in visions and strategies. This requires that leaders themselves should not take their practices for granted. By questioning their existing professional frameworks, leaders are in the position to sustain themselves. By addressing the needs of people, planet and profit, leaders are able to create an appropriate response for a good and fair world. This means that sustainable leaders must encourage themselves and their

associates to work with the already existing knowledge, based on the current and prevailing paradigms within businesses, but even more to generate new knowledge by creativity and innovation.

Be patient

Like Hargreaves and Fink illustrated, imposed short term achievement targets within businesses, along with the demands of yearly progresses, are responsible for unsustainable policies. Sustainable leadership on the other hand ‘is driven by an urgent need for immediate actions but also by the ability to defer results in order to fulfill the moral purpose of authentic, lasting and wide spread success’ (2006, p. 260). In accordance with Morin, this research argues that experiencing uncertainty around difficult decisions and dilemmas (as described in paragraph 2.3.), does not *only* affect negative experiences of fear and insecurity. It also opens new possibilities for actions and a possible farewell to the restrictive and prevailing frameworks and paradigms.

Walk the talk

The tenth indicator of the guideline combines all the other indicators together and is therefore the most challenging one. ‘Leadership isn’t and shouldn’t be easy. The sooner we all have a chance to practice it, the better. It is hard to be a successful leader. It is harder still to be a sustainable one’ (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 272). Sustainable leaders have to act in line with their core values. Therefore they have a deep understanding of why a change or improvement is required. ‘If change is to matter, spread, and last, sustainable leadership that stretches across many leaders must now also be a fundamental priority of the system in which leaders do their work’ (Ibid., p. 272-273). Hargreaves and Fink state that there is now an opportunity to ‘leave behind the overconfident mechanical age of endless waste and enter a more sustainable era of hopeful renewal. It is an opportunity that must be seized. The lives of our children and the legacy we leave them depend on it’ (Ibid., p. 273). Like Vaclav Havel wrote: “We must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become reality” (Vaclav Havel; cited by Edwards, 2009, p. 1).

Despite the complexity of sustainable development, the optimistic side is that sustainability issues are an optimal instrument to provide a context for dialogue,

Edwards argues that ‘sustainability reflects the fundamental relationships that underlie ecological, economic and social concerns. It offers the possibility of bringing social change values into the mainstream and pushing the mainstream toward sustainable practices. Some encouraging change are beginning to shape our new path’ for the future (Edwards, 2009, p. 133).

Guideline for sustainable leadership

1. Aim for sustainable development

Care about your product/service. Care about how you treat your people. Care about what impact your organization has on the community and the environment.

2. Examine your perspectives

Be open-minded, reflective, self-reflective and examine the issues from various points of views and embrace complexity as a fact.

3. Be present and aware

Continual personal presence for your employees, work processes and the community beyond your own organization.

4. Initiate dialogue

Initiate dialogue with the world within and outside your organization to stimulate concerns for social and ecological responsibility and to enrich and assist meaningful academic and professional learning in the organization.

5. Create the future together

Every person influences and contributes to the business practices. Involve people in the preparation of decision making process, by using the potential that your associates offer your organization.

6. Be courageous

Give space to your associates to develop

themselves. Ask (them) for help if the situation requires it. Be a role model and exemplify your values.

7. Promote the good

Be focused on promoting the good of the professional practices of sustainability. The good is to protect and nurture the integrity of sustainable leadership and of their learning processes, both intellectual and moral.

8. Be creative and innovative

Have an open vision towards the greater intentions and towards emerging opportunities. Translate them creatively, and in an innovative way, into concrete actions and visions. Encourage your associates to embrace change and to take initiative when needed.

9. Be patient

Invest urgently in improvement but do not expect, or insist on, instant success and trust the uncertainty which is part of the process of sustainable development.

10. Walk the talk

The biggest challenge of all; just do it. Make clear decisions and demonstrate determination in implementing them, by sustaining yourself and others and pursue this cause together.

3.4.2. Potential of the guideline

The guideline provides indicators that can assist sustainable leaders in their practices. However, the guideline should not be used as a standard norm. On the contrary, sustainable leaders have to use the guideline on the basis of a deliberate mix of variety, defined by their own personal context. Organizations can support their leaders by organizing learning opportunities which can contribute to their leadership development. However, if organizations offer learning opportunities, based on standard norms, professionals will probably only learn from the opportunities and obstacles that are related to one particular learning path (Horstman & Houtepen, 2008, p. 117). With regard to sustainable development, many organizations have a repertoire of learning and development opportunities that seems to focus on prevailing models of maximizing profit and efficiency. They prefer efficiently produced services and products for the lowest price possible. If organizations, based on the idea of Horstman and Houtepen, wish to support their sustainable leaders to internalize the indicators of the guideline; they should offer a learning track with the aim to support their leaders to make their own choices from the indicators of the guideline.

By supporting the moral learning processes within organizations, it becomes possible for leaders to specify the moral perspectives on sustainability and become normative professionals, which is characterized by the interpersonal, subjective and moral features of professional behavior (Van den Ende, 2007, p. 15-16). With the development of the concept of normative professionalism an attempt is made to counterbalance the dominating technical-instrumental conceptions of professionalism, and its “legitimate” de-moralizing of professional behavior (Klomp, 2011, p. 26).

Chapter 4

Learning tracks to support sustainable leadership

“We need a new pedagogy, based on interactivity, personalization and development of autonomous capacity of learning and thinking. While at the same time, strengthening the character and securing the personality.”

-Manuel Castells

“...from the time humans are capable of thinking, they are aware of their own reality and life in the world next to other creatures: but how to live their lives, what content and meaning to give it, and what character or ethos they will adapt in their relationship with their natural and human environment – these are no longer facts, but weighty and challenging questions what compel the individual, day in, day out, to choose and decide.”

-Nimrod Aloni

In the previous chapter, this research examined various aspects of sustainable development related to sustainable leadership. Having in mind the complexity of sustainability, a broader and more diverse repertoire for learning experiences is desirable. In order to improve and develop the learning experiences and subsequently contribute to the normative practices of leaders. Therefore, the upcoming chapter shall construct possible learning tracks to support sustainable leadership within organizations.

In order to get some insight on evidence based practices three interviews are held with sustainable leaders. Started with the question of how they translate their personal vision and commitment to management into daily practices. In the first paragraph the sustainability matrix of Van Marrewijk and Werre is used to explain the choice of respondents. The approached sustainable leaders are working for three different profit-organizations which meet different levels of this sustainability matrix. The matrix

shows a set of different CSR ambition levels present in organizations. The reason for using the matrix is that it clearly illustrates the various contexts in which leaders and their organizations operate. But more important, the guideline (as presented in paragraph 3.4.) is still general from character and must be confectioned to the specific CSR situation- and the different CSR ambition levels of organizations. In this way the guideline can meet the complex reality in which companies are situated when it comes to corporate sustainability.

The second paragraph shall develop a theoretical framework. The framework provides a foundation for possible learning tracks to support sustainable leadership and are differentiated to meet the complexity of real life. The framework focuses on the different aspects which are essential for implementing the indicators of the guideline. Moreover is the framework connected to the systematic construction of the guideline. The systematic construction of the guideline refers to the structure of the guideline. Implying that the guideline is constructed from the most basic capacities of sustainable leadership to the most developed and challenging ones. The theoretical framework is built on the theory of Nimrod Aloni (2002). Aloni describes four philosophical traditions which provide a basic foundation for moral learning. Therefore, the theory of Aloni, could be useful to underlie learning tracks for moral learning processes within organizations. In addition, this research will describe two different elements, (self)reflection and dialogue, that may contribute to a normative attitude of sustainable leaders.

In the third paragraph this research will develop the learning tracks, based on the theoretical framework and meet the ambition levels of the sustainability matrix applied to the organizations the respondents are working for. The proposed learning tracks are focused on the development of moral learning processes and is aimed at facilitating leaders to develop their leadership and become sustainable leaders, so that they are able to 'increase their positive impact on themselves (personal), others (people), their environment (planet), and our net gain (prosperity)' (Kellerman, 2009). This research will examine the most important elements supporting sustainable leadership and can therefore contribute to the CSR ambition level of the organization.

4.1. Multiple levels of corporate sustainability

As explained in the first chapter, CSR refers to the activities of organizations to meet the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability within their business operability and their interactions with stakeholders. By choosing an appropriate track for sustainable development, organizations have to consider their ambitions regarding CSR. In addition to an appropriate response to their specific circumstances, organizations must match their sustainability aims and intentions with their strategy: 'A different set of definitions and approaches to CSR can assist an organization in finding an appropriate path given its context and the dominant values within the organizations' (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p. 107). With the development of the sustainability matrix, Van Marrewijk and Werre tried to structure the various levels of ambition of organizations corresponding to the different 'type of contexts in which organizations operate' (Ibid., p. 108).

4.1.1. Value systems

Van Marrewijk en Werre base their research on *The Graves value systems model* (2003, p. 108). Van Marrewijk and Werre define a value system 'as a way of conceptualizing reality and encompasses a consistent set of values, beliefs and corresponding behaviour and can be found in individual persons, as well as in companies and societies' (Ibid.). The authors stress that the value system refers to a distinction in the different types people think, not to the different types of people (Ibid., p. 109). This implies that when the coping possibilities of a value system are no longer sufficient to give an appropriate respond to the circumstances, an incentive can effectuate a step to the following value system (Ibid.). Van Marrewijk and Werre emphasize that if people and organizations are challenged by an increased complexity they need a more complex value systems which makes it possible to cope with the situation (Ibid.). 'More complex value systems allow more degree of freedom to act in accordance with the environment' (Ibid.).

The authors describe six ambition levels of CSR that reflect different motivations for incorporating CSR in business practices (Ibid., p. 112). In short, the definitions of these six ambitions levels can be defined as follows: At the first level there is no ambition for CSR within the organization itself (Ibid.). The second level works within the limitations of regulations by providing welfare to society. Organizations at this level might be

motivated for CSR by charity, but this will often be perceived as an obligation (Ibid.). The third level concerns organizations where CSR contributes to the financial bottom line, which implies that they integrate social, ethical and ecological aspects into their business operations and decision-making processes (Ibid.). The fourth level refers to organizations which are motivated by their social responsibility and care for the planet. As a result, CSR consists of balancing the social, ecological and economic aspects of sustainability (Ibid.). The fifth level is called the synergistic CSR: organizations search for a well-balanced solution for the social, ecological and economic aspects (Ibid.). The last level refers to organizations that fully integrate all the aspects of CSR and would like to contribute to the quality of life of people and planet. These organizations consider CSR as the only alternative, since they believe that all beings are mutually interdependent (Ibid.).

4.1.2. Adequate response

For the development of sustainable leadership, it is important to obtain insights in the expression of values, implying their attitude, style and “tact”. Tactful behavior stands for ‘knowing how to handle’ complex and unexpected situations (Jacobs, 2010, p. 28). Building on this idea, three different persons are interviewed. All three are considered sustainable leaders. The approached sustainable leaders are working for three different profit-organizations and meet different levels of the sustainability matrix. The first leader works for an organization that meets the second level of the matrix. This implies that based on the restrictions, set by the rightful authorities, companies consist of providing welfare to society (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p. 112). The second leader works for an organization that is profit driven when it comes to CSR. This type of organizations intend to integrate social, ethical and ecological concerns. All three aspects are taken into account in the operations and decision making processes when they contribute to the financial bottom line (Ibid.). The last leader works for an organization that is caring for CSR and consists on balancing between the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainability. They move beyond their profit considerations and legal compliance (Ibid.).

Based on the literature research in the previous three chapters, a theoretical framework is developed. This framework could be considered relevant for bridging the complex relation between the different dimensions of people, planet and profit.

4.2. Theoretical framework for a learning track to support sustainable leadership

CSR is an on-going process that strives to balance the Triple P of social, environmental and financial-economic norms and values. CSR is deliberately pointing to the business activities on long-term value creation on these three dimensions, which implies that organizations have to be engaged in improvement measures over many years. If organizations prioritize the direct and easily measured achievements, the possibility arises that they will narrow the learning opportunities within their organization.

Hargreaves and Fink stress that if organizations prioritize in this way, they will sacrifice a deep development of learning and replace it for superficial training (2006, p. 253).

When this situation arises, there is little chance that learning opportunities will occur, that cover the three dimensions of Triple P. In the eyes of Hargreaves and Fink, the target-driven form of competitive accountability creates disincentives towards leaders which discourage learning and sharing expertise.

The ability to oversee and identify the internal and external environment of the organization (concerning sustainability), requires that leaders have responsibilities towards people inside and outside the organization. These responsibilities include safe, fair and healthy conditions; providing and supporting opportunities to address issues where moral norms, values and interests are harmed. In addition, acceptance and agreement between the stakeholders must be reached, which implies that leaders must connect various perspectives on any (sustainability) matter. Besides maintaining norms, values and interests, leaders themselves have to act in line with the social and ethical norms and values. Therefore leaders should be able to recognize their own values and the value of others and they must reflect on these norms and values as a basis for their own actions and practices. Sustainable leaders must develop a sincere empathy in relation to the entire humanity and his environment. They have to be open towards the

world around them. Moreover, they should be aware of the feelings and needs of other people and the environment in which they operate and, moreover, they have to be aware of how they affect these people and their environment. This means an equitable distribution of the burdens and the benefits, which are associated with the cooperation of all the stakeholders by which Harry Kunneman defines, an equitable distribution of material and immaterial needs, which are necessary to create a good life (Kunneman, 2012, p. 37).

This research considers normative professionalism as a solution to examine the current leadership practices related to CSR. If organizations and their leaders want to handle in accordance to CSR principles namely, value creation on people, planet and profit, their actions cannot be led by economic and political interests or the consumers demand. Professional practices in our modern organizational contexts are situated in a tension between private interests, solidarity and justice, which makes the choices of leaders always normative and moral by nature. Therewith, the theoretical framework is at the service of supporting leaders to become normative professional, who articulate and question the diverse set of conflicting values and can deal with the complex business of sustainability.

The construction of a theoretical framework for developing moral learning processes is based on the theory of Nimrod Aloni (2011). The first part of the paragraph shall focus on the four philosophical traditions of Aloni. The author illustrates that, in the field of humanistic education, important insights can be obtained in the way people learn (in moral learning). Aloni's traditions create a framework to support the ability of leaders to create new and alternative viewpoints and at the same time withstand the prevailing and generally accepted ideas of the current way of dealing with sustainability (Edwards, 2009). Moreover, this part of the paragraph shall focus on the implications of the traditions for moral learning processes that support sustainable leaders.

In the second part of the paragraph this research will describe two elements of the learning tracks that support and foster moral learning. The first element is (self) reflection. In order to present reflection as a competence for sustainable leaders, the theory of Gaby Jacobs (2010) shall be discussed. Jacobs expresses the need for

reflection in a very clear way and could therefore be useful for the quality-development of the professional practices leaders. In the following part of the paragraph, the second element of the moral learning, which is dialogue, shall be introduced. The 'dialogue' is based on the practice based theory of Jos Kessels (2009). The choice for Kessels' definition of dialogue is related to his description of dialogue as an exercise. This makes it accessible and applicable to different uses.

4.2.1. Theoretical framework for developing moral learning processes

A learning track should facilitate moral learning inside organizations, making it possible to examine practices from a moral perspective. The theory of Aloni illustrates different aspects and the importance of moral learning.

4.2.1.1. Traditions according to Aloni

Building on this assumption, in *Enhancing Humanity* (2002) Aloni makes a distinction between four different philosophical approaches in humanistic education which concern the moral learning processes of people. The insights given by different approaches can be useful in shaping moral learning in organizations. However, Aloni stresses that, besides the fact that the approaches have a different emphasis on their objectives; the combination of the approaches must be made at any time.

Firstly, the cultural-classical tradition focuses on the development of higher forms of humanity or, as Aloni calls it, 'Being a perfectionist in life' (Ibid., p. 12). This implies working very hard to achieve excellence (Aloni, 2013). When it comes to educating people within your organization, Aloni used the following metaphor: 'People have to be nourished instead of getting junk food; they have to develop an intellectual framework, because without context it is meaningless to judge things. Knowledge about classical humanistic traditions can make a person aware of 'the meaning of a full and moral human life' (Ibid., p. 37).

Secondly, the naturalistic-romantic tradition describes learning as an effective and creative process (Ibid., p. 37). By focusing on the development of authenticity and personal interests, learning could become more meaningful. The aim of education is to allow people to find and realize their potential and be one with themselves.

Thirdly, the existential tradition starts from authenticity and self-creation (Ibid., p. 42). This approach indicates that, according to this perception, people have to create and develop their own value system and philosophy in life because they have the moral obligation to pursue a decent life for themselves and for others. By referring to Nietzsche, Aloni argues that educators must first create an authentic life themselves, as exemplary images, and should then call their students to do the same (2002, p. 44).

The fourth approach described by Aloni is called the critical-radical tradition. This tradition serves two purposes: emancipation and the empowerment of individuals (Ibid., p. 47-48). The latter makes us aware of the fact that we have the opportunities to live a decent life despite the unfair distribution of wealth in this world (Ibid., p. 48).

Despite the fact that Aloni's theory is referring to the educational domain, the traditions together form a distinctive frame to support sustainable leaders. Sustainable leadership within profit-organizations begins with the moral purpose of sustainability. It requires leaders who are able to create and develop an individual value system that determine a sustainable development for themselves, their associates, their company and the world outside 'their' business. Building on the traditions of Aloni, the four basic structural elements for a moral learning to support sustainable leadership are: firstly, the ability to develop their own intellectual framework. Secondly, the ability to realize their full potential. Thirdly, the ability to build their own value system and philosophy in life and finally, the ability to create an awareness that they, as sustainable leaders, always have the opportunities to live a decent life. This implies a twofold implementation of the learning path: on one hand, sustainable leaders must create their own vision on sustainability (as one of the aspects of their (working) human life), and on the other hand, they must have the ability to motivate and inspire their associates and to encourage their involvement towards sustainable developments. The importance of this twofold implementation is based on the fact that leaders within organizations are in the position to make progress in the sustainability domain.

This twofold implementation implies that organizations should create possible learning opportunities for leaders to develop themselves. In addition, a learning path must support leaders to initiate sustainable practices, which they create together with others.

Based on these implications, reflection and dialogue are possible exercises which together may deepen the already present way of thinking of leaders and can shape the reflections of professionals (to the next level). Therefore, the two exercises should be integrated in the system/culture of the organizations so that they become part of the daily practice of leaders.

4.2.2. Elements which support and foster of moral learning processes

Jos Kessels, Eric Boers and Pieter Mostert state that there should be a place in the organization, where we can address deep questions, ‘slow questions’, about meaning, cohesion, aims, premises, sense- making and about the good, beauty and pleasantness of life (2008, p. 9). This is not just important for one’s own functioning, but also for the quality of our environment, the organization we work in, the environment we live in, and the society (Ibid.). A possible path for moral learning on different moral issues, dilemma’s and ethical considerations can be fostered and supported through organizational practices of reflection and dialogue.

Element one: (self) reflection

Gaby Jacobs states that our practices are determined by our perspective on the world. This implies that the perspective of the world must be taken into account during the reflection, which may occur before, during or after the practices (2008, p. 12).

Questioning your own assumptions, may lead to a double loop learning (Ibid.). The author makes a distinction between first and second loop learning. The first form contains the reflection on the achievement of goals. This reflection is governed by the technical and methodological question: How can I achieve goals? In this form of learning, the goals and their (implicit) practices are not questioned (Ibid.) The second loop of learning is characterized by a reflection on the practices, the aims the professional wants to pursue and the underlying theories, all in the light of their impact on others and their social environment (Ibid.). In addition to these two forms of learning, the author introduces a third form, known as “meta-learning” (Ibid., p. 13). This form is characterized by the reflection on the learning process itself. This implies that a meta-position is taken in order to create a constructive normative learning environment for normative professionalization (Ibid.).

Element two: Dialogue

A possibility to elaborate about these questions can be found in a good conversation. Kessels states that good conversations are not naturally achieved, and the assumption that we already are able to initiate a good dialogue, turns out to be a misunderstanding (Kessels, Boers & Mostert, 2008, p. 9). Slow thinking is too easily exchanged for instrumental impatience (Ibid.). Being able to think together requires a research form, manners and ways to examine issues both playful and strict. Standing still is actually an art by itself; detaching yourself from your actions and examine whether your actions are focused on something that has value and meaning (Ibid., p. 10).

Kessels, Boers and Mostert describe several exercises. However, this research shall describe one exercise that appears to be most relevant to my research; the dialogue. It is a short version of a Socratic conversation. This exercise could be appropriate to explore complex situations like sustainability issues. The dialogue starts with collecting difficult specific practices and, based on a selected practice the dialogue then elaborates this specific issue. The authors stress that such an organized dialogue setting is not aiming at solutions, but is focused on sharing, sharpening, and making visions more explicit. After the exploration of the specific issue, the dialogue is then focused on coming to the essence of the issue. Lastly, the dialogue focuses on the most appropriate attitude towards a sensible way of coping with the situation (Ibid.).

4.2.3. Supporting leaders to become normative professionals

The concept of normative professionalism emphasizes that the personal side of the professional is of great importance, as well as their communicative skills, their sensitivity towards existential questions and their normative-reflexive competence. In accordance with Kunneman (1996), Jacobs emphasizes the need for professionals to develop a reflexive attitude towards their employment, their personal, social, and cultural context. 'Normative professionalism' is about the awareness of one's own actions as being 'value-laden' and includes an effort to relate the moral values to one's own work (Wierdsma, 2004, p. 4).

This implies that profit-organizations should give broad attention to their leaders and to their normative strength, by supporting and nourishing their learning and development

opportunities. If profit-organizations have the ambition to address sustainability issues, they have to ensure that their professionals are able to deal with complex normative considerations. Following Jacobs (2010), the path for moral learning should emphasize the moral values within the specific professional practices of sustainable leaders and should include a critical dialogue between professionals on these values.

Concluding, the following learning tracks, aiming at developing sustainable leadership are framed on Aloni's theory of humanistic education. The traditions that Aloni distinguishes, create a distinctive structure, which provides a basic foundation for moral learning within organizations. These processes can be fostered and supported, as we have seen, through reflection and dialogue – two exercises that can address the daily complexity of sustainable leaders. It is imperative that leaders should not be afraid of the judgment of others and that they explore, with their associates, the differences and the connecting factors of the dilemmas related to a specific issue.

4.3. Learning track to support sustainable leadership

The guideline presents ten different indicators for sustainable leadership and is chronologically constructed, building on the maintaining improvement of sustainable leadership. Based on the differentiation between the ambition levels of the organizations this paragraph shall develop three possible learning tracks to support organizations to develop sustainable leadership to the next level. The upcoming paragraph will explore the different elements which are required and suitable to develop sustainable leadership.

4.3.1. Aim of the learning tracks

The learning tracks could be considered as being part of the sustainability development strategy of businesses. The program is aimed at leaders to work and think in terms of sustainability. Leaders who follow the learning track are developing skills at the level of their sustainability ambition embedded in their daily practices and environment. The similarities and differences within the challenges and ambition levels of the leaders are processed in three different learning designs. The aims and intentions for CSR are aligned with the organizations strategy and the specific context in which it operates. Therefore, the learning track can be seen as an adequate response to the specific CSR situation of the organization and their ambitions for corporate sustainability and is

consequently confectioned in line with the context and specific ambition level of CSR (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p. 107-108).

Having clear goals is one of the key factors for success (Kaufman & Ploegmakers, 2005, p. 9). There are several ways to formulate and structure the objectives of a learning track. For the formulation of the objectives of the learning tracks, will be referred to the work format of Kaufman and Ploegmakers (2005). They argue that, in formulating the objectives of a learning track, working from more global to more specific objectives is preferred. The three steps that they differentiate are: global learning, specific learning and concrete learning objectives. The global learning objectives reflect on the overall purpose of the learning track. The specific learning objectives provide the learning objectives for the different parts of the learning track. The concrete objectives refer to specific work form and method of the proposed learning tracks (due to the size of this research open for completion by the organizations itself). Returning to the specific learning objectives, Kaufman and Ploegmakers indicate that there are different types of specific learning objectives. These types can be grouped into four different categories: knowledge, understanding, skills and behavior. Kaufman and Ploegmakers stress that if you would like to accomplish the objectives into the field of behavior, learning development in the other categories must also be achieved. Building on this work format, the following learning tracks specify the different learning objectives and illustrate the consistency between categories in order to enable organizations and leaders to develop their CSR ambition, within their organization, to the next level.

Prior to the formulation of the learning tracks, the CSR ambitions of the organizations shall be described with reference to the sustainability matrix of van Marrewijk and Werre.

4.3.2. Compliance-driven organizations

The first organization type is compliance-driven. The organization aims at providing welfare to society, as long as this stays within the limits of the regulations imposed by the rightful authorities. Additionally, the organization responds to the call of stewardship considerations and charity (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p. 113).

4.3.2.1. Developing possibilities

Based on the current ambition of this type of organizations, the company has a vision of the outside world. The first step for integrating the principles of the guideline requires that leaders

have to develop an inward vision. The necessity for an inward vision arises from the challenge to withstand the prevailing norms, imposed by regulations, which are indicating acceptable behavior within the boundaries of the rules compiled by the 'above' authorities. For that reason, the learning track is focused on (self) reflection, as described in the previous paragraph of this chapter. This research emphasizes the importance of the traditions developed by Aloni. Building on the idea of developing a personal intellectual framework, this research underlines the necessity that sustainable leaders are able to build their own intellectual framework as a fundamental state of leadership. This implies a readiness to develop these intellectual capacities in order to realize their own value system and life philosophy, which is an ongoing process.

The global objective of the learning track, aligned to the compliance driven organizations, is primarily to raise a reflective attitude, towards oneself, the organization and the community beyond. Therewith, the learning track provides the leaders handles to shape and refine this specific leadership quality. The learning track if focused on the first three indicators of the guideline:

- a) *aim for sustainable development,*
- b) *examine your perspectives,*
- c) *be present and aware.*

The global learning goal can be formulated as follows:

“This learning track is focusing on the awareness of the different elements of reflection in and around the function of the leadership executive.”

The specific objectives of the learning track are:

Knowledge: The leaders have knowledge about the guideline principles for sustainable leadership, as described in paragraph 3.4. The learning track focuses on achieving the first three indicators of

the guideline for sustainable leadership.

- Understanding: The leader recognizes and acknowledges the importance of reflection for integrating the guideline principles. By exploring his/her own values in relation to CSR objectives it becomes possible to develop a personal vision on CSR strategies that aims for bringing the company to the next level of CSR.
- Skills: The leader is able to recognize his/her own values and the values of others. The next step considers reflection on these norms and values as a basis for own actions and practices.
- Behavior: The leader integrates these reflection skills into his/her professional practices and develops a sincere empathy in relation to humanity and its environment, through examination of his/her own perspectives, which is fundamental for further development of someone's ambitions to CSR.

4.3.3. Profit-driven organizations

The second organization type is profit-driven when it comes to CSR. The ambitions of the organization can be defined as follows: When it comes to CSR, the organization aims at the integration of the social, ethical and ecological aspects of CSR within business operations and decision making processes. All this together must however contribute to the financial bottom line (Ibid.). The organization is internally driven by its awareness of the CSR issues, in such a way that it is thought that CSR can contribute both to personal success *and* the financial bottom line of the organization (Ibid.).

4.3.3.1 Development possibilities

This learning track is not only focused on reflection, as described in the previous learning track, but is focused on developing dialogical capabilities of leaders. Reflection on norms and values has already ensured that leaders can articulate their aspirations for CSR. Therefore, the learning track should try to integrate the first five indicators of the guideline into the practices of leadership. Where the first three indicators of the guideline aim at (self) reflection, the subsequent two indicators are focused on (initiating) dialogue, both in an internal as external sense:

- a) *initiate dialogue,*
- b) *create the future together.*

The global learning objective for this second learning track can be formulated as follows:

“By focusing on the ability of conducting a (Socratic) dialogue, leaders have at their disposal an important tool to handle moral complexity within organizations.”

In fact, dialogue ensures people to work with associates. By working together leaders are able to handle more complexity. If organizations create time and space to address the moral issues, the moral dialogue enables an organization to enlarge its moral competences. By processing the complex moral issues of sustainability the organizations become more capable of adequate dealing with CSR (Jeurissen, 2005, p. 51).

The specific objectives of a learning track aligned with the ambition of the profit- driven organizations are:

- Knowledge: The leaders have (in particular) knowledge about the first five indicators of the guideline for sustainable leadership, as described in paragraph 3.4. Since the learning track is focused on conducting a (moral) dialogue, leaders have knowledge about the conditions on how to conduct such a dialogue.
- Understanding: The leader recognizes and acknowledges the importance of dialogue for integrating the guideline principles. Leaders are aware of the norms and values that are at stake and the importance to process them into a dialogue with the internal and external world of the leader/company.
- Skills: The leaders are able to use the obtained knowledge about conducting a moral dialogue, which they can initiate with their associates to involve them in the process of decision making concerning CSR.
- Behavior: The leaders engage in social responsibility within and outside the business of the organization.

4.3.4. Caring for CSR organizations

The third organization type is the caring-for-CSR type. This consists of balancing the social, ecologic and economic dimension of sustainability, but now all three dimensions are equally important (Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003, p. 113). The CSR initiatives within the organization move beyond their profit considerations and legal compliance (Ibid.).

4.3.4.1 Development possibilities

The global objective of this learning track can therefore focus both on reflection *and* dialogue. To develop sustainable leadership the track can moreover focus on the integration of reflection and dialogue into the professional practices of the leader as well as the integration in the structure of the organization. The next step to respond in an adequate way to the specific CSR ambition of the organizations considers (self)reflection on norms and values and dialogical competences, as a basis for integrating the following indicators of the guideline in daily practice:

- a) *be courageous*
- b) *promote the good*
- c) *be creative and innovative*
- d) *be patient*
- e) *walk the talk*

The specific objectives the following:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge: | The leaders have knowledge about the 10 indicators of the guideline for sustainable leadership, as described in paragraph 3.4. The learning track is focused on the elements of dialogue and (self) reflection to deal with the daily complexity of the professional practices of leaders. |
| Understanding: | The leader recognizes and acknowledges the importance of self-reflection and dialogue in order to integrate the guideline principles into their business. |
| Skills: | The leaders are able to use the gained knowledge about (self) reflection and conducting a dialogue with others inside and |

outside the organization, *and* can integrate these exercises (and their outcomes/results) within their daily practices.

Behavior: The leaders can balance the social, ecological and economic principles of sustainability and are aware of their value creation and position to inspire their associates. 'They practice what they preach' (interview, 5th of April 2013).

However, this research would like to note that the incorporation of one's own vision and belief might be challenging. Thus, it is crucial to first concentrate on making these values one's own through awareness, attitude and behavior. However, the bridge towards behavior is the hardest one and needs to be analyzed and acted upon by trial and error. If that is set, the rest can flow by itself and subsequently these values will be incorporated into business by itself.

Conclusion and recommendations for further research

This thesis has been an attempt to give some meaningful information about the complexity related to sustainable leadership in profit-organizations, by presenting a guideline for sustainable leadership. The indicators the guideline for sustainable leadership primarily serve as a framework to explore the role of leadership inside organizations. Moreover, they conclude a vision about the capacities of leaders to support and promote sustainability within their organization.

This research started with the following research question: Which indicators are essential for a guideline for sustainable leadership, and how can they contribute to develop a learning path, focused on sustainable leadership of profit organizations?

The first paragraph of this conclusion shall sum up the results of this thesis's research. In accordance with a clarification of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable leadership the research illustrates the relationship between these two concepts. Furthermore, the importance of the guideline shall be underlined.

The second paragraph looks back at the proposed learning tracks to support sustainable leadership and in the following paragraph the research will make recommendations for further research, which should result in a more detailed and substantive elaboration of the ideas, in particular in a more detailed elaboration of the guideline and the learning tracks exposed in this work.

5.1. Conclusion: The importance of sustainable leadership

The corporate world has a large impact on the instrumental function of our economy. They have a responsibility to handle in ways that are repairing to environment and community. For leaders, these complex strategic challenges about sustainability and social innovation are at the order of the day: How can they contribute to the solution of global problems such as climate change, global inequality and water scarcity? How can

they deepen the complex policies in relation to the many stakeholders? For these challenges, solutions still need to be found.

This research showed that sustainability is a moving target and is changing within time, place and personal interpretation. This complexity of the changing concept of sustainable development is an easy and continuing excuse for organizations to hide behind. However, sustainability asks us to work with an ever-changing dynamic concept and requires a change in our prevailing economic mind-set, in the way we live and in the way we do business. Given our dominant belief in market forces, we do not have another choice than to value our eco- (and social) system differently. Otherwise we continue our reinforcement of natural resources without the awareness of their finitude, consuming without any idea of the consequences and producing without accountability on all the externalized costs to people and planet. This dominant mind-set (or also called frame or paradigm) is the lens through which we look at the world and therefore it has a significant impact on the way we organize and experience life. The main force behind a radical change in the organizational world, to initiate sustainable development, is a paradigm shift, which can be accomplished by changing the prevailing culture of organizations and the behavior of their leaders.

Today's and tomorrow's challenges can be addressed by top-down and bottom-up leadership. Profit organizations and their professionals can both be seen as role models, who lead by example. Sustainable leadership therefore is a reaction against the one-dimensional way of leadership, which is still prevalent in many organizations today. This form of leadership acknowledges the adverse effects of the complexity of sustainability and examines alternative visions of the world, with respect to others and our planet.

Despite the fact that sustainability is increasingly more integrated within the core activities of organizations, it becomes more difficult when good intentions have to be applied to practice. To coordinate and initiate such changes requires active leadership of professionals and organizations. Leaders involved in sustainability are professionals with strong ideals, who fight for justice and the quality of life; however, this is hard and challenging work. To see this and to articulate and question the diverse set of

conflicting values of ‘people, planet and profit’, requires a professional attitude that can deal with the complex business of the professional.

This research has shown that sustainable leaders aim for sustainable development. They examine their own perspectives, show courage, are present to their associates, initiate dialogues, are patient and preserving, promote the good, are creative and innovative, walk the talk and shape the future together with others. These points (the indicators of the guideline) are derived from a minor literature study, which made use of a cross literature study which was necessary because there are several theories about sustainability and leadership. Together these various sources served as a framework to distillate the core values of sustainable leadership. Therefore, the indicators illustrate the very essence of sustainable leadership and could contribute to the development of a sustainable future. However, the indicators of the guideline are not a blueprint for how to move forward; they only describe a possible way for leaders how to do so. As long as organizations and their leaders think that they benefit the least by making different choices with respect to the triple bottom line, the prevailing paradigm remains intact. Thus, sustainable leaders are challenged to redefine our humanity in relation to others and our planet.

5.2. The importance of developing moral learning processes within profit-organizations

Practices of professional sustainability of leaders within organizations are complex, since they have to address the question of the wellbeing of all forms of life and our planet. This broad question contains a diverse set of norms, values and interests of the involved actors.

In line with Klomp (2011), this research would like to conclude that education can promote reflective and dialogic processes, aimed at the development of personal and social values. Sustainable leaders must learn to think about values and moral development in the context of broader value systems. Moreover, they have to learn about how to develop critical thinking, moral sensitivity (to recognize and communicate values) and to develop common frameworks.

For organizations that are involved or that would like to get involved in CSR, it is important to provide, guide and promote moral learning processes. For that reason, it would be advisable to make an optimal use of the insights, which already have been developed in this area, within the educational domain.

The insights given by Aloni (2011) are valuable for the development of moral learning processes within organizations. Integrating exercises of (self) reflection and dialogue in an organizational domain may facilitate the reflective and dialogical processes for the development of personal and social norms and values. Reflection enables leaders to formulate and create a personal value frame. Through the articulation of their personal values, in relation to the prevailing normative frameworks of their organization, leaders have the opportunity to address the moral dilemmas which are connected with choices towards a balance between people, planet and profit. But it makes it even more possible to develop moral sensitivity, to eventually develop common standard value frames, to recognize moral values and to have the ability to communicate about values.

The proposed learning tracks aligned to the CSR ambition levels of the organizations (as shown with reference to the sustainability matrix of van Marrewijk and Werre), address the moral values of leaders and their organizations. The learning tracks serve to make specific what sustainable leadership essentially entails and how it can be developed. Furthermore, the learning tracks are aiming at integrating the principles of the guideline, in line with the intentions, aims and ambitions companies have concerning CSR. Nevertheless, the learning tracks should contribute to the decision making process of each type of organization, to the benefit of the organization itself, but also to the benefit of their leaders, their associate professionals and the community and society beyond the organization.

The learning tracks enable professionals to postpone their usual judgment. This implies that their attention is redirected from the observed and already existing processes toward collectively created insights in norms, values and interests. This will make it possible to change the quality of the existing attitudes of leaders by redefining the identities and intentions and to release new visions on their (professional) identity and on the purpose of their own organization.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

Based on the interviews can be suggested that further research could explore which frames and values can help to solve the current sustainability issues. The interviews illustrate that the sustainable leaders find it challenging to combine business considerations and personal involvement. Therefore, further research should focus on the possibility to combine these two elements, so that deep personal involvement can be integrated in the daily practices of companies.

The guideline for sustainable leadership is built on the information that has been derived from a profit context; to that extent the validity is limited. The indicators should be examined more closely to explore to what extent the guideline, underlined in this research, covers sustainable leadership. Should the guideline be modified? How useful, practicable and workable is the guideline for sustainable leaders? Further research can determine whether the indicators are appropriate for all types of businesses.

This thesis has illustrated the need for moral learning processes within organizations, which helps to develop sustainable leadership. However, the theoretical framework and the suggested learning tracks would gain from an empirical study, focused on developing sustainable leadership within profit-organizations. Further empirical research should also focus on the applicability of the learning tracks within profit-organizations. By taking into account all relevant stakeholders, moral learning, (self) reflection and dialogue can be developed to create specific organizational cultures that are reflexive. The results of such empirical research considering sustainable leadership and possible learning tracks might be interesting in the context of developing new learning and development opportunities within organizations and normative professionalism.

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Attachment 1

Methodological justification

This research is a literature study on sustainable leadership, in addition to interviews, for clarification of the indicators of the guideline for sustainable leadership. During my internship at KPN, I have experienced that sustainability is a rapidly emerging trend. Therefore I would like to stress the importance of doing interviews with respondents who could be considered as innovative leaders in the field of sustainability at this moment. The purpose of these interviews is to illustrate the vision of what sustainable leadership might be, but is by no means intended to be an empirical survey. For these interviews I formulated a questionnaire based on existing literature on sustainable development and leadership (See page 2). The questions were focused on the formulation of the essence of what sustainable leadership would be.

Choice for respondents

The data used in chapter two of this research is obtained from three interviews (all three one hour). The respondents are working in different disciplines. The first leader is working for an high tech organization. The second leader is working for a food/non-food organization. The third leader is working in a service sector. All three respondents are caring for CSR and consist of balancing between the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainability.

Limitations

The aim of the interviews was that the results could serve as an illustration of sustainable leadership practices. Despite the illustrative nature of the interviews, it should be pointed out that the data show some limitations. Firstly it concerns the number of interviews. Additional interviews are needed for a better understanding of the personal feeling and opinions of the respondents, to deepen the subjects. Besides the additional interviews, the interviews should be followed up to provide a more reliable picture of the data. Furthermore, not only more respondents are required, as well as other people than sustainable leaders within organizations for an accurate assessment of the data. Finally the choice for the above leaders was obvious because of the purpose of

my thesis research. However, for mapping the sustainable leadership practices, respondents from nonprofit organizations and businesses from other sectors should be considered, because I expect that other norms and values influence the practices of sustainable leaders and are therefore interesting to examine.

Interview questions:

-Sustainable development is not just about practical problems and their technological, economic and political solutions. Every time we will arrive at deeper layered questions that are related to the interconnectedness of human existence with other life forms and the responsibility we have towards our future generations. To solve the current sustainability issues requires more than only new knowledge on the economic and technologic domain. Which frames, visions and values can help us?

-The following question concerns the personal motivation. In the discussion on sustainability, business considerations and personal visions, based on personal development, experiences and philosophy/belief/ideology, are entangled with each other. These two seem to reinforce each other, when it comes to sustainable development. However, in daily life these two are separated. How is it possible for these two to be combined, so that deep personal involvement can get integrated in the daily practices within the businesses/corporate world?

- The reality of the environmental crisis requires innovative leadership. Is it possible to describe a sustainable leader and what would be the required capabilities to initiate sustainable development?

- What is the importance of an organizational culture when it comes to sustainable development?

- Do you feel free to implement sustainable issues in your organization? Which limits do you have and how do these limits feel?

- What contribution(s) would you still like to make towards the current sustainability issues?