Translating Sustainability on a Microlevel
– illustrated by the case of Nordic Choice Hotels

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Jenny Carlbaum & Lovisa Nyman
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Abstract

Sustainability has been identified as a fluffy idea containing conflicting logics that may make it problematic for individual employees to work with in practice. The aim of this thesis was to contribute to the literature of translating ideas by looking at the microlevel perspective of how the idea of sustainability has been translated within Nordic Choice Hotels. This was done by conducting an in-depth case study and collecting data primarily from qualitative interviews with individual employees at different hotels and the Manager of Sustainable Operations at the headquarters. The results show that sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotels has been translated into (1) the own label ‘WeCare’ containing different initiatives that has enabled the organization to concretize the fluffy idea of sustainability; (2) a culture built around sustainability which is based on a community logic; and (3) individual employees becoming sustainability ambassadors that can be seen as bilingual in using different arguments and reasonings in different situations. Our main contribution in relation to previous research is the fact that a third logic, namely a community logic, was used to bridge the conflicting logics of sustainability.

Key Words: Translating ideas, Microlevel perspective, Sustainability, Conflicting Institutional Logics, Rhetorical Strategies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 A global movement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Translating sustainability within an organization</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Purpose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Translating ideas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 How ideas become taken-for-granted</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 How ideas travel</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Influencing what ideas become taken-for-granted</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 How individuals interpret their environment and act within it</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Conflicting logics of CSR</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The translation of sustainability</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodological considerations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Exploratory qualitative case study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Collecting data</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Reviewing documents and Secondary data</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Qualitative interviews</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Thematic analysis</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotel</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Own label of sustainability</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 New Penguin</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 VAKET</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Culture built around sustainability</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Sustainability ambassadors</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Influencing guests’ consumption without giving them a choice</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Giving guests sustainable options</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Influencing suppliers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Analysis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Concretizing a fluffy idea</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Culture based on a community logic</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Balancing between conflicting logics when spreading the idea outside the hotel walls</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Concluding remarks</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reflections after conducting the thesis</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. References</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview guide 1 ........................................................................................................... 49
Interview guide 2 ........................................................................................................... 50
Appendix B ...................................................................................................................... 51
Questions’ connection to purpose and theory ............................................................. 51
Appendix C ...................................................................................................................... 53
Details of the interviews ............................................................................................. 53

List of Tables

Table 1 - Typology of institutional logics ................................................................. 14
Table 2 - Overview of a market and civic logic ........................................................ 16
Table 3 - Descriptions of interviews ....................................................................... 22
1. Introduction

1.1 A global movement

In May 2018, a Google search for 'sustainability' produced 430,000,000 results. The first time sustainability was brought to attention in a global context was with the Brundtland Commission in 1987 (United Nations, 1987). Since then, it has grown in popularity and has become a widely discussed idea. The idea has further been connected to organizations with the term ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) since the 1990’s and has more recently entailed a more holistic perspective with the term ‘sustainability’, including all actors in society. Research has shown both various and changing definitions of sustainability/CSR (Carroll, 1999). Thus, there is no set definition, but both terms have been argued to entail responsibility concerning social, environmental and economic aspects (United Nations, 1987; Jutterström & Norberg, 2011). These terms are commonly used by different actors with no clear distinction between them. In this thesis, sustainability and CSR are therefore used interchangeably. In 2015, the UN introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals entailing more clearly defined goals and targets of how the world together can solve global challenges (United Nations, 2018). These goals represent a common vision for a better world that a majority of countries stand behind and has been a way to update and renew the trust for the sustainable agenda. Sustainability has further gained a more significant focus in e.g. the EU (European Commission, 2018) and has been brought to attention with large UN agencies such as WHO and international non-governmental organizations such as WWF.

The popularity of Sustainability/CSR has also been influenced by an expansion of discussion in e.g. business media, academia, and by the mobilization through conferences (Windell, 2006). Moreover, it is seen to be influenced by a multiplicity of actors such as business networks, trade associations, certification and standardization organizations, investment banks and law firms. All these kinds of actors are seen to have fostered the development of sustainability and have together contributed to an overall understanding of the idea (Windell, 2006). Due to the global focus on sustainability and it being widely discussed in many different contexts, it has become important for corporations to show their responsibility or otherwise risk losing legitimacy (Marais, 2012). New occupations such as sustainability managers and CSR/sustainability consultants have further emerged, turning CSR into sellable services. Moreover, the adjustment
of CSR is expected to be similar in the Nordics because of similar views on the role that businesses should have in society. This has formed a kind of ‘Nordic capitalism’ where businesses are expected to contribute to society (Gjølberg, 2010).

1.2 Translating sustainability within an organization

From an organizational viewpoint, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has often been viewed as a zero-sum trade off with economic interests, even by advocates of CSR (Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Porter and Kramer, 2011). Nevertheless, CSR has also been argued to entail a win-win situation where CSR initiatives are seen as a vehicle for efficiency and business success, rather than being in conflict with this (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Furusten et al., 2012). This is because it is seen as a short-term cost that results in long-term value (Burke and Logsdon, 1996). Some question the work of CSR, meaning that differences between talk and action are often seen and this hypocrisy is viewed as a way for firms to exploit the concept of CSR in order to maximize profit. Yet, some argue that hypocrisy is inevitable and even needed, insisting that firms face conflicting interests on a daily basis (c.f. March, 1994; Brunsson, 2003; Christensen et al., 2013) and that aspirational talk may allow them to find new solutions and even push for higher CSR standards (Christensen et al., 2013). Another issue concerning CSR is that it is a rather fluffy concept that may be interpreted in many different ways (Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Windell, 2007). Although this makes it possible to adapt CSR to an organization’s context, the concept also becomes vague and it might be difficult to concretize within an organization.

Organizations can be seen as complex and dynamic places not passive to the outside environment. Indeed, organizations can be viewed as places where a set of guiding principles of how the social reality should be interpreted, that of institutional logics, combine with the meanings, interests and professional commitment of groups and people to produce variation of local action (Binder, 2007). Ideas do not remain unchanged as they flow throughout the organization but collide with already embedded practices and impact other ideas, therefore being translated and adapted into specific contexts (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2008). As the idea of CSR enters corporate life, it is translated to the organization’s context and when communicating about and performing CSR activities, the idea is adapted and the notion of CSR is changed (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). Within CSR literature, scholars describe two conflicting institutional logics concerning CSR (Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Windell, 2007; Furusten et al.,
2012), identified as a market and a civic logic. Indeed, when the ideas of social and environmental responsibility meet corporations, issues may arise as a civic logic which entails contributing to the greater good meets a market logic, entailing profit maximization and business value (Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Windell, 2007; Furusten et al., 2012). Previous research has shown that the microlevel translation of CSR is the most problematic, since conflicting logics make it difficult to work with CSR in practice (Høvring, 2017). Setting a sustainability strategy for a whole organization thus seems to entail problems of how this will spread within the organization. Important to mention is that organizations consist of different levels in itself that influence the translation of ideas. Therefore, the microlevel perspective cannot be fully understood without viewing how individual employees are influenced by central decisions and initiatives taken. Nordic Choice Hotels (NCH) is an example of a profit-driven organization in the Nordics that has a significant focus on sustainability, as e.g. seen in its many different sustainable initiatives (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018a) and its vision:

“[...] Nordic Choice Hotels will take responsibility and corporate social responsibility is an integral part of our business [...] Based on the company's vision, we have set ambition levels high when it comes to being a responsible player in the business community. Our social responsibility involves a social and environmental focus. Nordic Choice Hotels should be sustainable and build on three equally important pillars: profitability, people and the environment. WeCare is also the company’s value and communication platform and represents a large part of Nordic Choice’s unique identity”.

1 (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018b)

With its sustainable initiatives, vision and also having won several prizes for sustainable conducts (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018b), it seems like NCH has been able to integrate sustainability into the organization. However, this is a conclusion drawn from external communication of the organization. Since conflicting logics are argued to make the translation of sustainability problematic on a microlevel, it is interesting to investigate how this particular idea has been translated on a microlevel within a profit-driven organization with a sustainability

1 Own translation of: [...] Nordic Choice Hotels ska ta ansvar och samhällsansvar är en integrerad del av vår verksamhet [...] Med utgångspunkt i företagets vision har vi satt ambitionsnivån högt när det gäller att vara en ansvarstagande aktör inom näringslivet. Vårt samhällsansvar innebär ett socialt och miljömässigt fokus. Nordic Choice Hotels ska vara hållbart och bygga på tre lika tunga grundpelare: lönsamhet, människor och miljö. WeCare är också företagets värde- och kommunikationsplattform och representerar en stor del av Nordic Choice Hotels unika identitet.
focus, which will be illustrated by the case of Nordic Choice Hotels. The question this thesis attempts to answer is thereof:

*How has the idea of sustainability with conflicting institutional logics been translated within Nordic Choice Hotels?*

Previous research has mainly focuses on the macro political-economic level perspective of how ideas become taken-for-granted, when the roots of the problems can be found in the microlevel, such as in processes, practices and between individuals. Indeed, it is in the micro-processes that what is taken-for-granted can be changed and it is thereof in these processes that things become institutionalized (Suddaby et al., 2013). Therefore, in order to understand how ideas become taken-for-granted within organizations, there is a need for a shift in focus to the individual perspective. The micro-perspective is further demanded in institutional theory in general (Barley, 2008; Powell and Colvyas, 2008; Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010), but also more specifically in relation to institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012; Zilber, 2013; Lindberg, 2014).

1.3 Purpose

With this thesis, we aim to contribute to the literature of translating ideas by looking at the microlevel perspective of how an idea with conflicting logics has been translated within an organization, illustrated with the idea of sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotels. The study is relevant from a theoretical perspective since previous research has identified a lack of studies focusing on the microlevel interpretations of ideas. It is relevant from a practical perspective, since organizations need to show their responsibility in order to gain and maintain legitimacy, but it is difficult to assess to what extent companies actually succeed in making it integrated within the organization. Investigating the microlevel is important since it is individual employees that work practically with sustainability.
2. Translating ideas

The literature review presents how an idea can be seen to be translated in an organization. We have chosen to view this translation process within a Nordic environment through the idea of sustainability with conflicting institutional logics. Furthermore, we view how rhetorical strategies can influence the translation.

2.1 How ideas become taken-for-granted

Regardless of where we are in the world, we tend to do things similarly, even when we try to be different. The process of institutionalization refers to when an idea, behavior or action become so established that it is taken-for-granted. What becomes institutionalized is not a given, but is a result of actors continuously producing, spreading and safeguarding certain elements of the institutional environment (Furusten, 2013). One stream of research within institutionalism focuses on legitimacy and the organizational context (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). It has been argued that beliefs, norms and cultural rules influence organizational behavior and that organizational behavior in turn is influenced by interactions between individuals, norms and ideas (Gjølberg, 2010). Due to different interactions, it can be argued that several institutional norms coexist within an organization's environment which makes it difficult for an organization to make rational decisions. This is because institutional norms may be conflicting and therefore not easy to combine (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). Even though stakeholders’ interests are ambiguous and the organizational environment is uncertain, it is crucial for organizations to incorporate institutional pressures into their practices in order to gain legitimacy (Binder, 2007). In the Nordics, governments are expected to have some official CSR policy due to the popularity of the concept in general and a generally high commitment to promote policies regarding social and environmental issues (Gjølberg, 2010). The adjustment of CSR is also expected to be similar in the Nordics because of similar views on the role that businesses should have in society. In this, a form of ‘Nordic capitalism’, with an ability to combine the economic aspects of business with a responsibility to contribute to society has been identified. Even though this altered view of a traditional capitalism has strong support, the Nordic countries are ranked among the world’s most competitive economies (Gjølberg, 2010).

Research focusing on how ideas become taken-for-granted has recently received criticism for attending to address problems on a macrolevel when the roots of the problems can be found in
the microlevel, such as in processes, practices and between individuals (Suddaby et al, 2013). Indeed, it is in the micro-processes that what is taken-for-granted can be changed and it is thereof in these processes that things become institutionalized. Therefore, in order to understand how ideas become taken-for-granted within organizations, there has to be a shift in focus to the individual perspective (Suddaby et al, 2013).

2.2 How ideas travel

One may wonder how ideas become institutionalized. The institutionalization of CSR is a process with an uncertain outcome. Indeed, ideas circulate and are further negotiated between actors that modify what is institutionalized in the end (Schulz and Wehmeier, 2010). The translation of ideas is also influenced by the attention it is given by various actors in various settings. It is therefore important to view how a multitude of actors and settings impact translation processes, that in this contest and engage in an interplay where they reinforce and influence each other (Windell, 2006). Central in the translation process is the context and the actors involved, which will shape the translation according to their own interpretation, meaning and personal values and beliefs (Pallas et al., 2016).

As an idea travels through an organization it collides with already embedded practices and impact other ideas, being translated and adapted to specific contexts (Wedlin and Sahlin, 2008). Indeed, when the idea of CSR enters corporate life, it translates to the organization’s context and when communicating about and performing CSR activities, the idea is adapted and the notion of CSR is changed (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). Organizations provide interesting cases of how ideas are initiated and translated at a microlevel since they can be seen as complex and dynamic places not passive to the outside environment (Binder, 2007). Moreover, since individuals within organizations will interpret an idea according to their own values and beliefs, it is necessary to view the micro perspective in order to understand how ideas are translated within organizations. Important to mention is that organizations consist of different levels in itself, with e.g. a headquarters where central decisions and initiatives are taken, and individuals employees that perform the daily work. Therefore, the micro individual perspective within an organization cannot be fully understood without viewing how individual employees are influenced by central decisions and initiatives taken.
The translation process is never finalized, but what is being translated constantly changes as it travels through different fields, contexts and already embedded practices by the local actors. It can therefore be argued that it is not possible to control how an idea is being translated by the actors involved, as it will always depend on the actors’ own interpretation (Pallas et al., 2016). However, one can influence what is being translated to a certain extent. Lindberg (2014) argues that translation is not possible without an object, such as text, a picture, or a prototype, as it is this object that is carried by actors which travels in time and space. Through this process, objects are being translated and embedded into a new local practice. Therefore, it is not only the context and actor that matters in the translation process but the characteristics of the objects that become translated (Pallas et al., 2016). This appears to be something that can be influenced by organizations since powerful actors, so called ‘institutional entrepreneurs, have been argued to be able to influence certain aspects of objects (cf. Abrahamsson, 1996; Windell, 2007; Furusten, 2013; Hatch, 2013).

2.3 Influencing what ideas become taken-for-granted

One may wonder then who initiates ideas that become institutionalized. In the construction of management ideas, some scholars talk of the interplay between powerful actors such as business schools, business media and consultants in influencing new practices that are in line with their own interests (cf. Abrahamsson, 1996; Windell, 2006; Windell, 2007; Furusten, 2013). With their important leadership role, top management has also been identified as important actors in driving organizational change and influence future strategic choices (Marais, 2012). These kinds of actors called ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ can be seen as ‘fashion-setters’ of management ideas and can hence help shape institutionalized practices. However, at the same time these actors are constrained by the institutional environment in which they operate and need to conform to prevailing norms in order to promote their ideas effectively (Furusten, 2013).

Rhetorical strategies can be seen as central parts in how things become institutionalized (Windell, 2007; Schulz and Wehmeier, 2010). Indeed, it involves constructing a compelling argument connected to prevailing norms in order to either stop or facilitate new ideas to become established (Windell, 2007). Within CSR, three main rhetorical styles have been identified in order for top management to develop different kinds of legitimacy for CSR initiatives (Marais, 2012). Normative rhetorics entail a focus on creating attention, trust and sympathy from the
audience and can be used to develop corporate cognitive legitimacy. This type of legitimacy entails giving stakeholders sufficient information to value and/or understand corporate positioning and activities. Instrumental rhetorics entail clarity and integrity of an argument and appeals to reason and the appearance of rationality. It is used to argue for the benefits of the commitment and business-case of CSR and is grounded in the self-interest of stakeholders in which they aim to gain tangible returns or influence in the organization in exchange for granting legitimacy. This is seen to help management develop pragmatic legitimacy. Value rhetorics refers to feelings and how to trigger the audience’s emotions, which is seen to help develop moral legitimacy. This aims at creating shared values by developing a strong corporate culture around ideas such as CSR. In this way, top management can use different rhetorical strategies to persuade stakeholders of the importance of the organization’s CSR activities and in that way gain and maintain legitimacy (Marais, 2012).

Moreover, Patriotta et al. (2011) has studied the rhetorical aspects’ importance in creating, maintaining and repairing legitimacy in external communication. They talk of ‘orders of worth’ that emphasize the discursive aspect in this process and consider institutional norms to be stable and segmented with one dominant logic within each institutional field. Even if one world is dominant within each institutional field, actors are not cognitively bound to one order of worth, rather they are able to combine several orders of worth to support their justification within a context to gain legitimacy. However, the study shows that even though actors can use several orders of worth, all actors are not equally legit in every world (Patriotta et al, 2011). In connection to CSR, Windell (2007) present three stages in the commercialization of the idea by CSR consultants. Stage one entailed labeling fluffy ideas, where coexisting labels were reduced to one common label in order to help raise awareness of the social responsibility of business. However, also having the label fluffy helped consultants selling it as a concept to corporations, as it could be adapted to different settings. Stage two entailed packaging a fluffy label, where consultants packaged CSR content into saleable services, keeping a fluffy label to be able to adapt CSR to the consultant’s area of expertise. Stage three, mobilizing a label entailed convincing the corporate world of the value of CSR. In this, CSR consultants explicitly used economic arguments and downplayed moral arguments when selling their services to corporations since they more likely would listen to arguments connected to increased profitability. Hence, it seems that when entering corporations, consultants needed to connect their arguments regarding CSR to the dominant logic within this world.
Both Patriotta et al. (2011) and Windell (2007) focus on external communication, the former in using different logics in different contexts to maintain and repair legitimacy and the latter with consultant selling CSR services to corporations. However, we will argue that these strategies can also be used in a profit-driven organization’s internal communication, that also entails convincing individuals of the importance of an idea by connecting it to the dominant logic.

2.4 How individuals interpret their environment and act within it

In order to understand how different kinds of arguments play a role in the legitimization of CSR, it is necessary to review the concept of institutional logics. Institutional logics have been defined as:

“[...] the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space” (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999: 804).

An individual can face several institutional logics that they have to take into consideration when performing activities on a daily basis. Thornton (2004) has identified six different institutional logics and Thornton et al. (2012) completed this with a seventh logic, shown in Table 1. These are important to consider when studying the microlevel, since individuals are a part of several different institutions, each containing a dominant logic.
Table 1 - Typology of institutional logics, first six logics summarized by Thornton (2004) and ‘community logic’ by Thornton et al. (2012).

According to Lindberg (2014) institutional logics can co-exists within an institution and both be conflicting and be combined with each other. Kvarnström (2016) further adds that in settings where there is more than one institutional logic at the same time, there will be conflicting demands. Actors within these settings need to cope with the conflicting demands, balance between them and negotiate requirements of institutional logics in their daily work. For this reason, rather than being seen as hybrids where actors are able to mix logics, they can be seen as bilingual (Kvarnström, 2016).
Organizations that consist of different subunits, multiple departments and with different professionalized staff can be expected to have varying interpretations of the organization's purpose among different organizational members (Binder, 2007). There might be conflicting institutional logics between departments and even within departments between different professionalized individuals. Actors may thereof interpret the purpose of the activities they are expected to perform differently to make them fit their needs (Binder, 2007). Hinings (2012) discusses the link between institutional logics and organizational cultures. He means that there is a dominant logic within the organizational level culture that clashes with a dominant logic within subcultures of an organization. However, he argues that even if there might be conflicting institutional logics within an organization, this does not necessarily entail problems since collaborations over specific tasks can allow organizations to manage conflicting logics. The micro-perspective is demanded in institutional theory in general (Barley, 2008; Powell & Colvyas, 2008), but also more specifically in relationship to institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012; Zilber, 2013). Lindberg (2014) also stresses the need for more studies regarding the microlevel perspective, especially how logics are constructed and reconstructed in practice on a daily basis within organizations.

2.4.1 Conflicting logics of CSR

In connection to CSR, we have interpreted scholars to discuss two main logics that we see are similar to two of the logics presented in Table 1, namely the state and market logics. However, these are adapted to the idea of CSR and have further been identified as conflicting. Patriotta et al. (2011) talk of civic and market orders of worth among others. The former refers to collective welfare focus as well as equality and solidarity, whereas the latter refers to price/cost focus, market competitiveness and a short-term perspective. Windell (2007) further discusses CSR consultants as representing two fundamentally different groups, that of world saviors and money-makers. World saviors saw CSR as a means to change the world and contributing to a better society, while money-makers argued for the business opportunity of CSR. Lastly, Furusten et al. (2012) talk about two perspectives consultants have when addressing the concept of CSR. The idealistic specialist prioritized social values and the idea of goodness, while the business-oriented specialist emphasized the prioritization of business and efficiency. However, many consultants with a business-oriented perspective use the win-win discourse of combining the values and goals from both perspectives (Furusten et al., 2012). All these scholars focus on arguments used in external communication, however, we will argue that these can also be used
in internal communication where top management tries to convince individual employees of the importance of sustainability.

We have summarized and connected the civic order of worth, world saviors and idealistic specialists to entail a civic logic, and market order of worth, money-makers and business-oriented specialists to entail a market logic. The market logic we present here is similar to the market logic described by Thornton (2004), however here it is adapted to the literature of CSR. We view the civic logic as similar to the state logic presented previously, since it can be connected to a welfare capitalism and increasing community good but is here adapted to CSR literature. Table 2 shows a combination of aspects of a market and civic logic that previous research has focused upon in order to best illustrate what our understanding of these are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of evaluation</th>
<th>Market Logic</th>
<th>Civic logic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Business value</td>
<td>Social values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Profit maximization</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time perspective</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of CSR</td>
<td>Business opportunity</td>
<td>Contributing to the greater good</td>
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*Table 2 - Overview of a market and civic logic as identified by previous research. Authors’ construction with a combination of the framework by Thévenot et al. (2000: 241) used in Patriotta et al. (2011); and definitions of Windell (2007); and Furusten et al. (2012).*

Previous research has identified the process of how logics can move from one field to another and how they are translated when entering other spheres filled with other logics (Lindberg, 2014). We identify the conflicting logics of CSR to be an example of this, where the components of social and environmental responsibility connected to a civic logic has entered the business world, dominated by a market-logic. Within an organization that consist of multiple departments and professionalized staff (Binder, 2007) one might imagine that the conflicting logics of CSR can create differences in the interpretations of the organizations purpose among different organizational members. It is therefore interesting to view the microlevel perspective of the translation of sustainability within an organization.
2.5 The translation of sustainability

With the literature presented, we wish to illustrate how we perceive the idea of sustainability to be translated and interpreted by individuals within an organization. Organizations provide interesting cases for how an idea is initiated and translated at a microlevel, since they can be seen as complex and dynamic places not passive to the outside environment. Within a Nordic environment, the idea of sustainability can be argued to have strong support, since organizations are expected to be able to combine the economic aspects of business with the responsibility to contribute to society. The idea is also negotiated between actors that modify and adapt it to their own interpretations, meanings and personal values and beliefs. Because of this, it is not possible to control the translation process, however, what is being translated can be influenced to a certain extent through objects. Moreover, rhetorical strategies can be used to persuade stakeholders of the importance of an organization’s activities regarding sustainability. Nevertheless, arguments need to be adapted to the dominant logic within the world that one acts within in order to gain and maintain legitimacy.

When one logic moves from one field to another, it meets the dominant logic within that field, which then creates a conflict. The idea of sustainability provides an example of this, where the civic logic has entered the business world dominated by the market logic. We view this as problematic especially for individual employees working practically with sustainability, since they need to tackle these conflicting logics on a daily basis. Therefore, it is interesting to view the micro perspective of how the idea of sustainability has been translated within an organization. Important to mention is that we do not see this translation as top-down process, but as a back-and-forth process where also external actors and events have an impact. Moreover, we view an organization to consist of different levels in itself and the micro individual perspective within an organization cannot be fully understood without viewing how individual employees are influenced by central decisions and initiatives taken.
3. Methodological considerations

In order to gain insights into the microlevel perspective of the translation of sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotels, an exploratory in-depth qualitative case study was conducted. The thesis takes a constructivist perspective, meaning that reality cannot be seen to be external to social actors, but rather as constructed by social actors’ perceptions (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Indeed, the idea of sustainability is seen to be constructed by the way that the employees make sense of it and this influences what the idea entails for each employee. Moreover, as mentioned, organizations consist of different levels where e.g. the headquarters can be seen to influence the microlevel interpretation. Therefore, central decisions and initiatives as well as the interpretations of these will be viewed in order to understand the microlevel perspective. The meaning of the data is further to be understood through an interpretive procedure, where we have interpreted the respondents’ subject of meaning (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

3.1 Exploratory qualitative case study

An exploratory design was selected since it allows for an investigation about a phenomenon in order to develop insight about its underlying nature (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Furthermore, as the focus of the study is on exploring how employees within a profit-driven organization interpret sustainability and have translated it into their daily work, a case study design is appropriate (Yin, 2014). A case study allows us to focus on understanding dynamics that are present within specific settings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Thus, this provides the opportunity to gain deeper insights into individual employees’ interpretations in a specific setting (Robson, 2011), which is what we are aiming to do with this thesis. With a qualitative approach, the study further takes into account that we interpret the respondents’ subjective reality which was considered when the empirical data was analyzed. Indeed, the data collected from interviews and documents are not useful per se, but becomes useful when we interpret it (Robson, 2011).

What one can achieve with a case study has been debated. A conventional view is that it cannot provide reliable information in a broader sense, but that it can be useful in preliminary stages of a study because it may provide hypotheses that can be tested in a systematic manner to a larger number of cases (Abercrombie et al., 1989). This view can be connected to the argument of case studies not being generalizable, since each study is unique and the empirical material is not statistically determined (Alvehus, 2013). Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that this view of case
studies is extremely oversimplified and misleading. He means that it is through inter alia case studies that it is possible to develop expert knowledge about a phenomenon and that it is possible to generalize on the basis of one case. It is argued that this depends on the case and how it is chosen (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Moreover, he argues that case studies can be central to scientific development and that they do not entail greater bias towards verification than other types of methods (Flyvbjerg, 2006). With these two views presented, it will though be stated that the aim of this study is not to provide generalizable results, but rather to contribute to a more general understanding of the translation of sustainability at different levels.

3.2 Collecting data

3.2.1 Reviewing documents and Secondary data

In order to understand the headquarters’ influence of the translation of sustainability, we inter alia chose to review the 2016 Annual Sustainability Report and information connected to sustainability on Nordic Choice Hotel’s website. This was further complemented by an analysis of a secondary interview with the founder and owner of NCH, Petter Stordalen, retrieved from a podcast. Collecting data from the annual sustainability report and NCH’s website is a rather straightforward process, as we can easily gain access to the data online. This allowed for information directly from the intended source and not from secondary sources. We recognize that corporate communication is well thought out and not a spontaneous translation. However, this may show the rhetorical strategies the organization uses in order to convince individual employees of the importance of sustainability. Collecting secondary data from a podcast interview with the owner was relevant because it gave us additional insight behind the fundamental values of the organization. However, since we did not conduct the interview ourselves, we could not make sure that the questions and answers were in accordance with the aim of the thesis. Furthermore, as we were not present at the interview, we could not pick up on underlying meanings and visual cues that could otherwise have been interpreted. Nevertheless, it was a time efficient way of gaining data that was useful for additional analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

3.2.2 Qualitative interviews

A part from reviewing documents and secondary sources, nine qualitative interviews were conducted. Eight of these were with employees at their hotels and one was with the Manager
of Sustainable Operations through a video-chat program. The interview method is appropriate for this study as one can access the opinions, thoughts, experiences and feelings of the respondents (Alvehus, 2013). Moreover, having an interview guide allowed us to focus on certain topics connected to the research question. That being said, the interview guides were not set in stone, but we could change the order and framing of the questions depending on the situation. This allowed us to explore topics that we might not have initially thought of with the help of set or spontaneous follow-ups and probing, allowing for a more relaxed interview environment (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Two interview guides were created, one for the respondent from the headquarters and one for the respondents from the hotels, this in order to be able to view how the individual employees’ interpretations are influenced by the headquarters. The interview guides are shown in Appendix A and are based on questions connected to the purpose as well as theoretical aspects of the literature review, which in turn is shown in Appendix B.

3.2.2.1 Retrieving interviews

Eight interviews were conducted with individual employees at the hotels. We will argue that these were enough since we found similar patterns from the respondents’ experiences working with sustainability already after conducting five interviews. Thus, after conducting eight interviews, we believed that the material was approaching saturation for our specific topic (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010: 99-100). We further chose to conduct an additional interview with the Manager of Sustainability Operations at the headquarters because we wanted to gain insight in the sustainability work from the headquarters’ perspective, beyond what we could find in corporate communication. We interviewed employees at six different hotels in Sweden with a sustainability role in combination with their main position. These also happened to represent different departments, namely: Housekeeping, Maintenance, Reception, Group Booking, Management and Kitchen/Restaurant, which was not specifically intended but interesting as it gave us different perspectives on their work with sustainability. Two respondents represent the same hotel but work in different departments, which was valuable since it gave us different perspectives from this hotel. The chosen respondents at the hotels are interesting since they work with sustainability on a daily basis but have to balance this with their main tasks. Furthermore, these employees did not apply for a sustainability role, but were asked to take this responsibility based on their interest in this topic. Unlike interviewing only employees working at a sustainability department of which views can be one-sided, these employees always need to consider practical implications and actually do the work themselves.
Therefore, we argue that we are able to gain a microlevel perspective from these individuals. Nevertheless, a limitation of this study is that we only interview employees with some kind of sustainability role and further research could develop this by focusing on how the idea of sustainability has been translated by those not having this kind of role.

Due to the time they have been part of the organization and the size of the hotel they work for, the respondents had different experiences working with sustainability within the organization. As also mentioned, what tasks they perform on a daily basis differed due to their different positions. However, even with these conditions the answers did not differ to the extent we expected but was somewhat similar, only adjusted to the work they performed due to their positions. Nevertheless, the work was experienced more or less challenging depending on the amount of people they had in the sustainability groups to share ideas and responsibility with. This shows that the size of the hotels provided different conditions for their sustainability work.

The question where the answers differed the most was the respondent’s experiences of how the sustainability work had changed over time, where the respondents who have worked in the organization for a longer time could more thoroughly describe the change.

The first contact with the organizations was made by calling the reception of hotels in the Uppland and Södermanland region due to the convenience of the locations. Through that, we received the respondents’ email and when contacting them we clarified the purpose of the thesis. All interviews were conducted at the respondents’ workplaces and were conducted in Swedish in order to make them feel comfortable, with the intention of creating an informal atmosphere which hopefully resulted in more detailed responses. The interview conducted with the headquarters was done through a video-chat due to the convenience of not having to travel to Norway. Although we may have lost some of the personal interaction, this interview was important for understanding the headquarters’ influence of the translation of sustainability on a microlevel and gave us valuable insights. In the introduction of the interviews, we reassured the respondents that they and/or the hotel would be anonymous but asked for their permission to include the organization’s name and their position in the study. We did this in order to make them feel even more comfortable and willing to further develop their answers without having to worry about consequences their responses could have. The fact that the individuals are anonymous does not affect the purpose of the study, since it is the translation process of sustainability that is of interest and not the particular individuals per se. Important to mention here is that the anonymity of the Manager of Sustainable Operations is not as easily preserved.
when including the position. However, this respondent was informed of this circumstance and we had the permission to show the position. The interviews have been conducted separately to make sure the respondents describe their own interpretations without being affected by each other. Details about the interviews are shown in Table 3 below and are also complemented by a more detailed description in Appendix C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Maintenance Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-07</td>
<td>01:18:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Reception Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-07</td>
<td>00:40:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Maintenance Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-08</td>
<td>00:54:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Housekeeping Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-15</td>
<td>00:46:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Manager Group Booking and Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-15</td>
<td>00:42:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Banquet Supervisor &amp; member of the hotel’s sustainability group</td>
<td>2018-03-21</td>
<td>00:44:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Hotel Manager with overall responsibility of sustainability at the hotel</td>
<td>2018-03-22</td>
<td>01:13:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Housekeeping Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>2018-03-23</td>
<td>01:00:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>Manager Sustainable Operations (Headquarters)</td>
<td>2018-03-22</td>
<td>01:05:42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 - Descriptions of interviews*

The interviews have been recorded with the approval from the respondents and thereafter transcribed. The benefits of recording are that both the author and the respondent know that the interview will be interpreted word by word and that the respondent receive the authors full attention. This further allowed for a more trustworthy relationship between us as interviewers and the respondents (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010). However, it may have limited how open and honest the respondent dared to be (Alvehus, 2013). We offered to send the transcriptions to each respondent and asked if they wished to view and approve it, these were sent to four of the respondents and were all approved. Overall findings were sent to all respondents. Both authors have been present at all interviews and have not had any previous relationship with NCH or the respondents that could have affected the answers.
3.3 Thematic analysis

The data was first analyzed by the authors separately to minimize influencing each other in the process of thematizing. Both authors have read the transcriptions thoroughly and thereafter started coding the data based on patterns of meaning found in the material, capturing the important elements connected to the research purpose (Braun and Clarke, 2006). We made sure to indicate which respondent said what and tried to quote them directly as much as possible, with translating the quotes from Swedish to English, in line with how to construct a framework in a thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this process, we are aware of that our interpretation may affect the respondents original meaning, but together tried to understand their intention. The thematic analysis provides way of how to think when developing themes, however it does not provide guidance how to identify themes (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The coded data was first sorted into several themes connected to e.g. talk about the owner, different initiatives, their underlying motivation for working with sustainability, how they try to influence guests and their sustainability role. These were later sorted into three central themes. However, what should be noted is that this process has not been linear but the authors have constantly been reviewing the entire data set, changing which quotes should be connected to which themes depending on the underlying meaning of the quotes. In order to make an accurate thematic analysis, the themes should not overlap but should focus on one central idea (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which was slightly challenging but also helped us find our focus in each theme.

After the first separate analysis of the data, we reviewed themes and connected them to the literature together. We did this by viewing our summarized interpretation of the translation of sustainability within an organization and what we could connect our findings to in relation to this and to the research purpose, which resulted in a detailed analysis of some aspects, but a less description of the data overall (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This theoretical approach has resulted in that some interesting findings from the interviews have been excluded as it has not been relevant to the research question. The three themes identified in the data were the organization’s work with ‘WeCare’, the indication of a culture and how the respondents tried to influence external stakeholders. WeCare was the easiest theme to identify as all respondents mentioned this and as it is also used in their external communication. However, the way they work with WeCare within the organization and what initiatives was the most influential for their work became clear in the way they talked about their initiatives. In line with a thematic analysis at
the latent level, rather than just describing data, we tried to identify the underlying ideas and assumptions of sustainability connected to the literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this way, we could also identify the importance of the culture within the organization. However, we did not expect the culture to be built around sustainability to the extent we found in the data. Furthermore, in the way all respondents either mentioned the initiatives taken or/and how they try to influence external stakeholders connected to their view of sustainability, we identified them as sustainability ambassadors. The process of thematization involves interpretative work and an active role by the authors when deciding what is and what is not of interest and the accuracy in this work affects the validity of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4. Sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotel

In the following chapter, the empirical data will be presented focusing on three main themes based on interesting findings on what sustainability has become within Nordic Choice Hotels. The themes identified are: (1) their own label that defines what sustainability is within NCH; (2) an indication of a culture that is built around sustainability; and (3) that employees take the role of sustainability ambassadors. Before the themes will be presented, we begin with a brief introduction of NCH’s structure and where individuals get their sustainability ideas from to give an insight into the basic conditions for sustainability work within the organization.

Nordic Choice Hotels has almost 200 hotels and 16 000 employees (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018c). Within the chain, there are four different brands of hotels, that of Clarion Hotel, Comfort Hotel, Quality Hotel and Independent Hotels. These brands have different target customers, with the goal of NCH to reach all customer segments, from basic needs to luxury resorts (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018d). All hotel brands have the same basic values but some target areas that they work more with. One example is that the Clarion brand has a collaboration with the organization Hope for Children (Nordic Choice Hotels, 2018a). There are three sustainability managers at the headquarters and each hotel has a Sustainability Coordinator that also has another main position at the hotel. These did not apply for the position but were asked to take this extra responsibility based on their shown interest in sustainability and should work with it at least four hours per month. The Sustainability Coordinator is seen to take the role of making sure that the responsibility is shared throughout the hotel. To facilitate this, all hotels

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2 In the empirical presentation and analysis, we view culture as an everyday concept rather than as a theoretical concept.
have sustainability groups with individuals from different departments that meet to discuss ideas and problems that may occur. Besides sharing ideas in the sustainability group, individual employees share ideas with each other and all are encouraged to contribute to the work with own ideas. Internally, ideas also come from the owner, the headquarters, educational seminars held and a Facebook site, where individuals from different hotels meet and discuss ideas. Respondents also mentioned that they get ideas externally from e.g. suppliers and sustainability coaches, who are students studying sustainability of some sort that act as consultants mainly helping NCH with sustainability reporting. In the following sections, the main findings are presented.

4.1 Own label of sustainability

Our first finding is that NCH has created its own label for sustainability defining what it is for the organization, named ‘WeCare’. This is stated to be an umbrella term for their social and environmental responsibility on the organization’s website and is connected to the cornerstones of people, planet and profit, mentioned on the website, the sustainability report and by all respondents. These cornerstones are seen as the values that NCH stands for and that individual employees should base their work on and are said to be interrelated and equally important. What is conveyed here is essentially that the organization, including all employees have a responsibility greater than simply making money. Within WeCare, there are six different focus areas with different initiatives, set by the headquarters. The main initiatives mentioned were (1) the software programs ‘New Penguin’: a web-portal for structuring the work throughout the year, ‘Mestro’: a resource usage reporting system, and By Choice: a purchasing portal; (2) a collected term to remember how to manage resources ‘VAKET’; and (3) a collaboration with UNICEF for fighting human trafficking called ‘Sweet Dreams Stay’. Sweet Dreams stay will be presented later in chapter 5.3 as we view this to be connected to another key finding and in this chapter. We have decided to focus on New Penguin in order to illustrate one of the software systems and VAKET in order to show its importance in one of the focus area of resource management within WeCare.

3 ‘Awake’ in English
4.1.1 New Penguin

New Penguin is a software program initiated by the headquarters for structuring NCH’s sustainability work throughout the year. It is a web-portal where all hotels have their own site and a 12-month plan with different focus areas to work with and report on each month. For example, in January the hotels should do an evaluation of the previous year and in February they should review their goals. Before New Penguin, there was ‘Old Penguin’. Old Penguin was an established system within heavy industry that was brought in to create some structure around NCH’s sustainability work, but was not designed for hotels, as mentioned by the Manager of Sustainable Operations:

Old Penguin was a terrible program, it was not really meant for hotels [...] it is meant for companies that has one environment manager [...] but in 190 hotels and 190 Sustainability Coordinators that can be everything from housekeeping to breakfast personnel [...] all kinds of different positions, the program became overkill for us. If we are to have good sustainability work, then we just have to replace it and there was still no good system because it was, well, about 4 years ago. But then we said: ok, then we’ll do our own. (Respondent 9)

Three of the respondents specifically experienced working with the older version of Penguin as too complex and as something they would rather avoid. New Penguin was design by NCH together with an IT company, where the main criteria was that it should be easy, intuitive and pedagogically structured following the ISO 14001 standard of which they are certified by. The ISO 14001 standard has the goal of continuous improvements within environmental management. New Penguin defines aspects, sets goals, actions and routines of how to reach goals, where everything follows a common thread based on ISO 14001. According to the Manager of Sustainable Operations, tying New Penguin to ISO 14001 makes it easy to work with sustainability in an orderly way. When talking about the sustainability work, individual employees at the microlevel often connected this specifically to New Penguin and ISO 14001. All respondents except for one mentioned that it is indeed easier to work with New Penguin now compared to before, where one specifically mentioned that there therefore is more time for fun projects now. The respondent who did not mention the improvement with New Penguin was not a Sustainability Coordinator but was part of the sustainability group. Therefore, the respondent does not work in New Penguin, however, even if not specifically mentioning the software program, the respondent mentioned the foundations of it in an indirect way and therefore captured the essence of continuous improvement that it entails:
I always go around thinking about improvements. I go to bed and think: if I buy those kinds of bowls, it would improve this… And not just for the environment, but for all aspects of the sustainability work for the employees, the workload, for the ergonomics, for efficiency. The holistic perspective is something I think much about.
(Respondent 6)

All respondents further continuously talked about never being satisfied in their sustainability efforts, but always finding new ways to improve the work. Overall, the purpose with New Penguin intendent by the headquarters was to create structured work methods for continuous improvements, which is done by working with and reporting to this system. Hence, creating structure becomes important in order to realize the work with sustainability and thereof the label of WeCare.

4.1.2 VAKET

In New Penguin, one aspect is to report on different parameters for managing resources each month. To remember the parameters and how to work with them, the headquarters has developed the term ‘VAKET’, which stands for water, waste, chemicals, energy and transport. It is expected that all employees know about VAKET and it is also used to create commitment to managing resources in a sustainable way. All respondents brought up the term VAKET without us specifically asking about it, but just being asked about resource management. Two respondents talked about individual responsibility in this and having VAKET in the back of their head all the time to be reminded of this, where one elaborates:

VAKET is an expression we have talked about for a long time [...] it is imprinted in peoples’ heads [...] if someone asks what VAKET is, you should know, you might not remember exactly but you should know what it’s about. (Respondent 8)

One hotel also tried to create commitment for the work with VAKET by having fun activities such as ‘quiz walks’ about it. The questions are based on the routines in VAKET, making it more appealing than simply putting it on a poster, as mentioned by one of the respondents.

The headquarters have set overall goals in connection to the five aspects of VAKET. Within energy, the headquarters have set the goals to reduce energy per cubic meter and that all hotels should use renewable energy if possible, as mentioned in the sustainability report. The Manager of Sustainable Operations further mentioned that NCH as a chain has the goal of a total energy reduction per quest night with ten percent by 2021. It is not stated clearly in what way these
goals should be reached, but it is up to each hotel. One example of initiatives taken by two hotels is to control the use of energy in different areas, e.g. by not have the lights on where there are no guests. Another example is switching all bulbs to LED, as was mentioned by four of the respondents. One respondent reasoned about this further by questioning what it is efficient and what is really sustainable:

Now we have found a good alternative, but is it sustainable to get rid of functional halogen light bulbs and throw them out? Or is it more sustainable to buy LED bulbs in bulk and wait until the old bulbs have burnt out? [...] I’ve had some discussions with the headquarters about it, what’s more economic and environmentally friendly. (Respondent 1)

These examples show how hotels have taken responsibility to reach the overall goals set by the headquarters, where one respondent stood out from the rest by taking what is really sustainable a step further in the way of reasoning.

Two of the respondents further mention the balance between sustainability and economic factors when deciding whether to invest in more sustainable options and not wasting resources, in line with the goals set by the headquarters. One thing mentioned was that a hotel have had problems with ventilation, which has increased the heat, resulting in higher costs and inefficient use of resources. This is something they wished to fix as it would reduce costs in the long-term and be better in a sustainable sense, but which is also associated with high fixed costs and is too costly at the moment. One respondent specifically talked about the balance between customer satisfaction and sustainability:

We don’t want to waste resources but we don’t want the guests to come to a 15-degree room, then they won’t be satisfied and if they are not satisfied they will not return and then we don’t have a business to change the world with. (Respondent 1)

To summarize, we can see that VAKET is another example of how the headquarters has created a structured working method, while individuals are still responsible for the way that the organization’s goals are realized. Furthermore, we saw that individuals try to balance between sustainability and economic factors in their work connected to the cornerstones of people, planet and profit. These cornerstones are stated to be interrelated and equally important by the headquarters, but we could see that it is not so easy to balance these in practice. Nevertheless,
individual employees try to do this, which shows individual commitment to NCH’s work with sustainability and thus to the label WeCare.

4.2 Culture built around sustainability

Our second finding is that there are indications of a culture that is built around sustainability. Seven of the respondents mentioned the owner of the hotel chain, Petter Stordalen, as an influential and inspiring leader in the way that he has made sustainability the core values of the organization. When Stordalen met his wife and she woke up one day and said that she wanted to change the world, this has been noticeable in the whole chain. Indeed, it has been identified as “what they eat and breath” (Respondent 6) and with “energy, courage and enthusiasm they will change the world” (Respondent 1). Stordalen frequently talk about how to change the world to the better, as is e.g. shown in the quote below:

There is no profit on a dead planet, to care for the environment is a prerequisite for a modern capitalism [...] To understand that legacy is not about money, but about values and a mindset and I’m going to use the next 10, 20 years of my life for that, because we need to change the capitalism we see today, that is one of the most important projects I have now. (Stordalen, 2017)

There are several reasonings connected to this commitment in the organization. Stordalen himself mentions that when having so much money as he and the organization have, they are obliged to take responsibility. One respondent talked about a need to compensating for the hotel chains existence since their services are not vital. Another respondent mentions the importance in being ambassadors and leaders in this work and that it would be terrible if the hotel industry did not lead by example. Both emphasized the fact that they can reach a great amount of people and therefore really make an impact. From this, we have identified the reasons for the commitment to sustainability.

The core values of the organization have further been highlighted in nearly all corporate communication and events. One example is shown in the quote below, where Stordalen talks about the Winter Conference held once a year:

[...] We have one goal and the goal is that when they go home they should be exhausted, little sleep from a crazy experience, and when they are sitting on the bus or train home, they should be filled with energy, courage and enthusiasm. You should feel great
enthusiasm and pride for the company you work in and think: I’m fortunate to be part of a great culture which is about so much more than making money. (Stordalen, 2017)

At these kinds of events, Stordalen mentions that the goal is to do inspirational speeches focusing only on NCH’s values, not even mentioning numbers or profits. The events are described as crazy but inspiring by two of the respondents. Furthermore, hotels with best sustainable conducts in different categories are rewarded prices, which is mentioned as desirable among many respondents. Even though hotels desire to be best, a previous highly competitive environment were hotel employees were reluctant to share ideas with other hotels, has now been replaced with a more collaborative spirit in helping each other to improve. One respondent stated:

We have started to work more like that, between the hotels, we haven’t done that before, then we were more competitive, but now it’s more sharing ideas. (Respondent 4)

We can also see that individual employees capture the essence of Stordalen’s message of taking responsibility and that they also seem to view him almost as a prophet, as e.g. show in the quote below:

[...] It’s a bit of a Jesus culture sometimes [...] what he means with people, planet, profit is that people come first, he means that everything starts with people and then comes the planet, because if without the planet, there is no money. It’s always that, he talks about it all the time in everything he does, at the same time as we also waste resources while trying to do this. He often says that: when you have as much money as I have, you’re obliged to do things. (Respondent 8)

All respondents mentioned the cornerstones of people, planet and profit as something they need to base their work on. These are seen as interrelated and equally important, however, individuals prioritize them differently. Two of the respondents meant that people are the priority and then comes planet and profit, similar to Stordalen’s argumentation. In contrast to this, the Manager of Sustainable Operations prioritized profit as can be seen in the quote below:

We talk of people, planet and profit, that is sustainability for us [...] yeah but profit [...] actually is the most important, because if you remove that profit you don’t have money to work with people and planet, because you need money to invest in people and planet. (Respondent 9)
Although the Manager of Sustainable Operations argues for prioritizing profit in order to invest in people and planet, the manager has the same basic message as Stordalen, namely that business is about more than making money. We identify that the values have created commitment for sustainability and essentially an identity connected to their label of sustainability, WeCare. This is shown through the pride four of the respondent felt in being part of an organization that cares and takes action, something that cannot be measured in money. One respondent specifically mentioned that when joining the chain, the respondent became more dedicated. Another respondent talked about the confidence the headquarters has in individual employees:

I think they’ve been good at saying: don’t focus too much on what we want centrally but take it with you and use it as a tool and then go your own way with these tools as a foundation. (Respondent 1)

An overall perception was that when working within NCH that has certain values connected to sustainability, employees have no choice but to work with it or otherwise it is not the right organization to work for. Three of the respondents elaborated on this and said that NCH is an attractive employer due to the focus on sustainability. In the hiring process, they also always mention Stordalen and the cornerstones people, planet and profit and expect the applicants to know a bit about this before the interview.

To summarize, the respondents emphasized Stordalen as an important and inspiring leader that have initiated, spread and created commitment to the core values of the organization. Essentially, we can see that there are indications of a culture built around sustainability. We further identify a cultural identity in respondents talking about the pride and confidence to take own initiatives and about inspiring coworkers to take responsibility and work together to help each other to improve.

4.3 Sustainability ambassadors

Our third finding is that individual employees have become sustainability ambassadors in spreading NCH’s idea of sustainability, namely WeCare. We identified 3 main ways in which they try to influence different actors, which are; (1) influencing guests’ consumption without giving them a choice (2) giving guests sustainable options; and (3) influencing suppliers.
4.3.1 Influencing guests’ consumption without giving them a choice

When trying to influence guests’ consumption to be more sustainable, all respondents have e.g. mentioned either of the two directives centrally to replace the pork sausage in the breakfast buffet to chicken sausage and/or having a certain number of organic products. Two respondents mentioned that they could do this without guests really noticing, as the taste would be the same. Another interesting example mentioned by one respondent was that they changed from white to black napkins to reduce the number of napkins used:

> We changed from white to black napkins and then it decreased significantly [...] because you know when you’re at McDonald’s [...] you take a bundle of napkins, but at home you might not use napkins with all meals but suddenly when you are here and eat the buffet, you take a whole mountain of napkins and we have to through them out. It was interesting to see the change. (Respondent 6)

An initiative taken by the housekeeping manager in one of the hotels was to only make the bed for one when a double room is booked for one person. This was seen as something new and smart that had not been done before which both saved the hotel money and resources due to less laundry and therefore was an improvement in a sustainable sense (Respondent 3).

There were also times when respondents tried to influence guests and were met with criticism, but where they stood their ground. An example mentioned by all respondents is when all hotels were given a directive from headquarters of having smaller plates at the breakfast buffet. This was an initiative to reduce food waste and got some guests annoyed since they now had to go take food at least twice, but is an example of where they stood their ground:

> Many might think that the standard is lower, but then you just have to be proud of it and stand there and say... like with these smaller plates that: this is what we do in this hotel chain and there are other chains if you think this is inappropriate. (Respondent 6)

Another example mentioned by four of the respondent and also the Manager of Sustainable Operations was when all hotels were given the directive to exclude all products containing palm oil. This was met with some dissatisfaction, especially from some international guests because this meant that the hotels no longer served Nutella, however they did not give in to the criticism and products containing palm oil are still banned. However, in some situations, hotels had to withdraw certain initiatives that for some guests were too sensitive. The Manager of Sustainable Operations e.g. mentioned something known within the chain as ‘Bacon-gate’:
It was 12 or 16 Comfort hotels that stopped having bacon at the breakfast which turned out to be a catastrophe, it goes under the name ‘bacon-gate’ within Nordic Choice and was on the front page of many newspapers in Norway where it said: Petter Stordalen takes the bacon from the guests [...] Then we had to say that: you will get as much bacon as you wish. So sometimes it doesn’t work. (Respondent 9)

The reason for this initiative was said to be purely from a sustainable perspective, reducing meat consumption and being more inclusive, while the debate focused on other reasons. Two respondents also mentioned that this created an outrage among some guests. One of these respondents further discussed whether one option is less sustainable than another. The respondent meant that currently many view the meat industry to be bad and have locked themselves in a reasoning that this is the way to go, but why would organically produced bacon be a bad option? The respondent also says that the hotel chain learnt a lot from this and further elaborate on what is really important in this:

> It is not about getting them to stop eating bacon, it is about teaching them to choose another way, then bacon becomes superfluous and then you’ll naturally stop eating it, and that’s where you want to be rather than the other way around. (Respondent 1)

Overall, from this we can see that all respondents thought it was important to influence guests’ consumption by replacing or removing a less sustainable option. Depending on how sensitive this was in relation to the guests, they had different success rates in how they managed to influence them. Two respondents stood out in the way they reasoned about the initiatives and the extent they stood behind directives from the headquarters with pride.

### 4.3.2 Giving guests sustainable options

In giving guests sustainable options, one example is the chain’s work with fighting human trafficking, called ‘Sweet Dreams Stay’. All respondents mentioned this work which entails saying no to cleaning when staying more than one night, where NCH donate money to UNICEF for each night a guest says no to cleaning. This is a central initiative that all hotel brands have included in their hotel operations. In this case, they give guests the chance to choose a more sustainable option, without taking away the opportunity to have the room cleaned. The Manager of Sustainable Operation mention that it important to not push these kinds of messages on the guests, but those that seek them should find them. This was also elaborated by another respondent:
I don’t think you should enter a hotel room and be overwhelmed with messages [...] of what one should do, because that will not be good either, since you often come here to relax or for a holiday. But communicating the right thing at the right time, I would say is very important for us. (Respondent 7)

Many respondents mentioned that the goal is that guests should feel that they made a small difference when checking out, which is possible by giving them the opportunity to choose more sustainable options. A saying within NCH is that when staying at hotels, guests often leave their brain outside the entrance and that NCH’s role is to make guests bring their brain with them, take in the massages and also bring the messages with them outside the hotel walls.

When giving guests a sustainable option, as e.g. in the central initiative of Sweet Dreams Stay, we can see that the purpose behind this is to make guests think about their consumption. It is also a way for NCH to give guests an easy way to make a difference. They try to do this by thinking of how to communicate it in the most appropriate way without overwhelming the guests.

4.3.3 Influencing suppliers

Finally, when trying to influence suppliers to be more sustainable, many respondents mentioned the purchasing portal, where suppliers need to meet certain requirement set in the code of conduct. The Manager of Sustainable Operations mention that when having the ISO 14001 certification entailing continuous improvement, this also concerns their suppliers that have the chance to improve if they do not meet the constantly updated requirements. One respondent further said:

You evaluate the suppliers that are given a low score and see if we can help them to increase their score, or see, is there some other supplier that performs better which also is a equivalent alternative. (Respondent 2)

Two respondents also emphasized that the organization to an extent have the power to decide what the market should look like and with that comes great responsibility, where one said:

We set standards and demand that others engage in the sustainability work and we have a lot of responsibility by being a large organization. We see that we’re on the way but still have a long way to go. (Respondent 4)
Furthermore, the palm oil example is also mentioned in connection to the suppliers. The Manager of Sustainable Operations and two other respondents talked about when they banned palm oil products and suppliers had to think about if they were willing to change products or end the collaboration. Some suppliers did not change to meet the requirements and were phased out, however, they mention that there is always an opportunity to return as a supplier:

We removed [Company X] as a supplier since their candy contained palm oil, but just a while ago we brought them back since they had removed palm oil from their products. (Respondent 8)

This shows that they can indeed pressure suppliers into being more sustainable and thereof to some extent decide what the market looks like.

5. Analysis

Based on the three main themes, we can see how the idea has been translated within Nordic Choice Hotels with three main theoretical findings, that contributes to the literature of translating ideas. First, we can see how the organization has been able to concretize the fluffy idea of sustainability. Second, we identified that even if individuals balance between a market and civic logic in reasoning about their work, a culture based on a third logic, namely a community logic was used to bridge the conflicting logics. Third, when individual employees at the hotels tried to spread the idea of sustainability outside the hotel walls, they used arguments based on different logics towards different actors. They also tried to balance between a civic and market logic when reasoning about initiatives but prioritized the logics differently depending on the situation.

5.1 Concretizing a fluffy idea

From the empirical findings, we can see that NCH has been able to concretize the ‘fluffy idea’ of sustainability through packaging it into the label ‘WeCare’ containing set focus areas. In line with the second stage of the commercialization of CSR (Windell 2007), the idea of sustainability is kept fluffy enough to be able to adapt it to the focus areas. However, how to work with it is more clearly defined within the areas, with initiatives such as the software program New Penguin and the term VAKET. Windell (2007) writes about this from an historical perspective of how CSR consultants have packaged the idea into sellable services.
However, in the case of NCH we see that also within an organization it is important to concretize sustainability in order to create an understanding for it and also realize the work with it. For example, with New Penguin we could see that the headquarters tried to create an easy and structured way of working for continuous improvement in the sustainability work, which was done by working with and reporting to this system. In this example, we can also see that, even if it might not be possible to control the translation of sustainability, NCH has been able to influence it with the object of a software program. This is in line with Lindberg (2014) who means that translation is not possible without objects and that it can therefore be influenced to some extent. With this example, we can show how NCH in one way have used an object to concretize the work with sustainability which has facilitated the understanding and hence influenced the translation of it within the organization.

VAKET is another example of an object used by NCH to concretize sustainability. However, while goals set under VAKET are concrete, the ways to realize these are not and is up to each hotel to decide. One respondent stood out by questioning if simply switching all bulbs into LED would be the most sustainable way to reach the overall goal of reducing the use of energy. With VAKET, we can hence also show that it is not only objects that are important in the translation of ideas, but also how individuals interpret them and what they make of them. Indeed, actors are central in this process even if they can be influenced by objects (Pallas et al., 2016). Moreover, we could see that when reasoning about how to reach goals connected to energy within VAKET, individuals balanced between a sustainable and economic reasoning and hence a civic and market logic as can be connected to the findings of Windell (2007), Patriotta et al. (2011), Furusten et al. (2012). This is e.g. shown in the example of one respondent not wanting to waste resources, but prioritizing customer satisfaction over using less resources, but also stating that without profit, they would not have a business to change the world with. We connect customers’ satisfaction to a market logic, since this in the end entails profit maximization with having returning and more guests. We connect using less resources to a civic logic since it reduces environmental impact. What was especially interesting in this example was how the respondent legitimized the priority of profit by using a civic logic, as is apparent in the respondent stating that NCH is seen to be able to change the world.

What could be identified in both New Penguin and VAKET was how NCH uses normative rhetorics and has developed cognitive legitimacy by giving employees sufficient information to value and understand the idea of sustainability. In line with Marais (2012), NCH has given
stakeholders (employees) tangible proof of their true CSR commitment by creating concrete initiatives that are prerequisites for implementing actions. By using ‘we’ in WeCare the organization also creates attention to work and the fact that all should contribute to it. However, in contrast to Marais’s (2012) top-down perspective with CEO’s giving tangible proof in their rhetorics, in this case the individual employees give each other and themselves tangible proof of the commitment to sustainability. This is in line with Windell (2006) that argues that the translation of ideas concerns actors that engage in an interplay where they reinforce and influence each other.

5.2 Culture based on a community logic

From the empirical findings, we also found that even if individuals balance between a market and civic logic in reasoning about their work, a culture based on a community logic was mainly used to create commitment for sustainability and to bridge the conflicting logics. From the data we can see that Stordalen is perceived as an influential and inspiring leader who always emphasizes the interrelation of people, planet and profit. He is a visionary that through crazy ways of expressing his vision has the goal to create an emotional commitment to his values, as e.g. seen in the way the respondents describe NCH’s crazy events. His ways of being almost makes him a prophet, as seen by the way one respondent mentions that he has created a bit of a Jesus culture, where he views himself to be obligated to give back to society due to his and the organization’s wealth. We can see that Stordalen uses value rhetorics in the way he tries to trigger the audience’s emotions which creates moral legitimacy for the organizational values.

In the way respondents describe this, Stordalen seems to have created a strong corporate culture around sustainability, in line with how Marais (2012) discusses the development of moral legitimacy in connection to CSR. The importance here is not to be completely realistic, but to create a feeling that is spread to each individual employee. Then it is up to individual employees to make the vision reality, where priorities can differ, as e.g. seen in the Manager of Sustainable Operations prioritizing profit in order to invest in people and planet. Furthermore, by having prices that are desired by employees to win in order to gain acknowledgement from Stordalen and NCH, we view Stordalen as an authority with almost a priesthood charisma, in line with a religious logic, as seen in one of the logics described by Thornton (2004). However, what he tries to convey is the commitment to the values he stands for and not to himself as a leader, which is rather connected to a community logic described by Thornton et al. (2012).
Stordalen also advocates a modern capitalism, which he describes as understanding that legacy is not about money but about values and a mindset. We connect this to the Nordic capitalism discussed by Gjølberg (2010), which is based on common norms in the Nordic countries that businesses should contribute to society. Stordalen can be seen to be affected by the Nordic environment in his focus on what the role businesses should have in society, at the same time as he can use arguments connected to such norms. In this way we can see that he is constrained by the institutional environment in which he operates and therefore need to conform to prevailing norms in order to promote his ideas effectively (Furusten, 2013). Due to the fact that he seems to be able to connect his arguments to prevailing norms, he can be seen as an institutional entrepreneur in the way that he can drive organizational change and influence future strategic choices as discussed by Marais (2012).

Moreover, as seen in the data an overall impression is that the organization has developed a collaborative spirit in the sense that hotels help each other to improve in order to reach a common goal and by that make an impact together. Many respondents also mentioned pride in being part of an organization that cares and takes action and how NCH has an impact in shaping the commitment and values of employees. As mentioned, one respondent felt more dedicated to sustainability after joining the organization. Furthermore, respondents talked about the importance of working in accordance to the values, or otherwise it is not the right organization to work for. In the way they talk of an organizational identity, we could see that it also excludes those who do not work accordingly. Rather than simply trying to create commitment to sustainability by emphasizing either arguments from a civic or market logic, we saw that NCH has created something greater than this. The organization has created a community, where the commitment goes deeper and NCH’s values become personal values for the employees. In line with a community logic described by Thornton et al. (2012), we saw that the common boundary of all individuals within the organization is the values one should have when being part of NCH, that have become the norms within the community. To follow these norms have then become the prerequisites for group membership. As individual identity is also centered around an emotional connection to the values and placing attention on this, it also becomes important to ‘prove’ personal investment, as can be seen in initiatives that should be and are taken by individuals. The collaborative spirit further shows that individual employees share ideas for mutual benefits to strengthen the community. In spite of this, it is still desirable to win different prizes in order to increase the honor of the hotel within the community.
From this, we can see that rather than simply trying to balance the conflicting logics of CSR (Windell, 2007; Furusten et al., 2012) or managing them through collaborations over different tasks (Hinings, 2012), NCH has used a third logic, namely a community logic in order to bridge the conflict. This was not what we expected to find, since previous research has focused on the conflicting logics of CSR (Windell, 2007; Furusten et al., 2012) and the use of economic arguments when mobilizing the label of and convincing of the importance of sustainability (Windell, 2007). We recognize that previous research presented in this thesis focuses externally on CSR consultants selling their services to organizations. However, NCH is a profit-driven organization that could easily use economic arguments to try to convince employees of why they should work with sustainability. Even if we identified individuals to use arguments from both a market and civic logic e.g. in how they reasoned about and prioritized people, planet and profit, what was important in the individual commitment to sustainability was being part of and accepted by the community.

5.3 Balancing between conflicting logics when spreading the idea outside the hotel walls

When trying to spread the idea outside the hotel walls, we found that individual employees emphasized arguments from either a civic or market logic depending on which stakeholder they encountered. When reasoning about the initiatives taken within the organization, they also tried to balance between a civic and market logic, where these were prioritized differently in different situations. In connection to previous research, Windell (2007) discusses the third stage of the commercialization of CSR, where she found that economic arguments were used in convincing the corporate world of the value of CSR. In our case, we have rather viewed how NCH’s employees have tried to spread the values of NCH to both guests and suppliers. When spreading the idea to suppliers, they urged them to change certain products or otherwise risk losing NCH as a customer. We identify this strategy to be similar to that used by CSR consultants since it entails an economic argument and hence a market logic in line with our interpretation of Patriotta et al. (2011), Windell (2007) and Furusten et al.’s (2012) definitions. However, in this case, rather than ‘selling the idea’ to suppliers by arguing for increasing business value, individual employees argue for how suppliers will not lose NCH’s business if they adapt.

When spreading the idea to guests we found individual employees argue from a civic logic, in line with our understanding of Patriotta et al. (2011), Windell (2007) and Furusten et al.’s
(2012) definitions. As seen when NCH reduced the size of plates to reduce food waste, employees stood up for the values of NCH and said that if guests did not agree, they could choose another hotel. Moreover, in the case of Sweet Dreams Stay, one respondent mentioned that the goal is for guests to feel that they made a small difference by choosing a more sustainable option. We also identified a situation where NCH removed an option and received criticism, where individual employees argued for this from a civic logic but where they failed to convince guests, as seen in ‘Bacon Gate’. Using one strategy towards suppliers and another towards guests when arguing for sustainable initiatives, can be connected to Patriotta et al. (2011) findings in using the dominant logic within a world in order to gain legitimacy for arguments. Indeed, when arguing for reasons of sustainable initiatives towards suppliers, employees are arguing within a corporate world where a market logic is dominant. When arguing for sustainable initiatives towards guests, employees are arguing within a societal world where a civic logic is dominant. There was one example brought up by many respondents where they tried to influence guests’ consumption without them noticing. In this case, they did not try to spread the message of sustainability, but rather influence guests’ consumption without them noticing, which contributed to NCH being a more sustainable actor.

In the examples mentioned above respondents themselves also reasoned from different logics in different situations. In the cases of Sweet Dreams Stay and ‘Bacon Gate’ we found that the reasoning in the end came down to a market logic, since the focus was on customer satisfaction and not losing customers. In Sweet Dreams Stay, one respondent e.g. talked about not overwhelming guests with messages since they come to NCH to relax. In ‘Bacon Gate’ NCH had to withdraw the initiative to remove bacon from the breakfast buffet since it created an outrage among some guests. In the cases of influencing suppliers and standing their ground, we found that the reasoning was based on a civic logic since the focus was to contribute to a better society. In influencing suppliers, NCH made a supplier more sustainable by making them change one of their products. In standing their ground when being criticized for an initiative, they chose the more sustainable option despite the fact that this could have cost them customers, as seen in the example with reducing the plate size. In line with Kvarnström (2016), we can see that individual employees balance between logics and can be seen as bilingual in the sense that they prioritize different logics in different situations, both in their arguments towards other actors and their own reasoning.
To summarize, NCH’s employees has mobilized the label of sustainability by using different arguments to different actors. Similar to what Windell (2007) found, economic arguments were used towards suppliers when acting within a corporate world where a market logic is dominant. What we could also see in mobilizing the label to guests, when individual employees acted within a societal world, they used arguments based on a civic logic. This is in line with Patriotta et al. (2011) findings in the sense that employees used the dominant logic within the worlds they acted in order to gain legitimacy for their sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, when reasoning about initiatives taken within the organization, respondents can be seen as bilingual in line with Kvarnström (2016) since they balanced between a civic and market logic where they prioritized differently in different situations. From viewing how individuals have become sustainability ambassadors, we can see that they try to spread their community outside the hotel walls and by that their translation of sustainability further on to society at large.

6. Concluding remarks

This study aimed to contribute to the literature of translating ideas by looking at the microlevel perspective of how an idea with conflicting logics has been translated within an organization. This was done by using a qualitative approach and interviewing individuals working practically with sustainability within Nordic Choice Hotels. Firstly, the findings showed that NCH has concretized the fluffy idea of sustainability to its own label ‘WeCare’ by using objects such as ‘New Penguin’ and ‘VAKET’. Secondly, we could see that rather than simply trying to balance the conflicting logics of CSR, NCH has used a third logic, namely a community logic in order to bridge the conflict. Thirdly, we identified that individual employees have become sustainability ambassadors that try to spread the idea of sustainability outside the hotel walls. They did this by balancing between a civic and market logic both when arguing for and reasoning about the logics differently in different situations and can therefore be seen as bilingual. This shows how individual employees as well as the organization have tackled the conflicting logics of sustainability. What this thesis contributes with in relation to previous research is the fact that a third logic was used to bridge the conflict between the civic and market logics. With this finding it would be interesting to further investigate how the idea of sustainability has been translated on a microlevel within a different context and by individuals not having a sustainability role. Moreover, future research could investigate the translation of another idea with conflicting logics on a microlevel in order to gain more perspectives of the translation of ideas on a microlevel.
7. Reflections after conducting the thesis

Now when we have finished writing the thesis, we wish to discuss some reflections that occurred to us during this process. Sustainability is a debated idea, where some question who benefits most from these kinds of initiatives, the businesses or society at large. For example, in the case of Nordic Choice Hotels and the initiative Sweet Dreams Stay, the organization donates money to a good cause and do not waste as many resources as they would if it did not have the initiative. However, one may question if this initiative entails a larger gain for the organization as it can both keep costs down and strengthen its brand. Moreover, one respondent mentioned the fact that their business is not vital and contributes to a negative environmental impact, but still argued to be the best alternative among worse alternatives within their industry. This is a way to legitimize their existence. Nevertheless, to change the capitalism we see today, having this kind of sustainable profile and gaining business value out of it can increase corporations’ motivation to include sustainability into their business strategy. Indeed, finding business value in this and having organizations strive towards it might be the best way to achieve actual change and contribute to a more sustainable society.
8. References


Appendix A

Interview guide 1
- Employees involved in sustainability work at the hotels

General Questions
1. How long have you been working within Nordic Choice Hotels?
2. What is your position and what are your main work tasks?
3. Have you had any other positions within the organization?
4. What motivates you regarding sustainability?

Sustainability work in general
5. How do you view sustainability connected to the hotel industry?
6. Where do you get your sustainability ideas from?
7. In what way can you best influence the hotel’s sustainability work?
8. What does the distribution of responsibility look like regarding sustainability at the hotel?

Sourcing and managing resources (Practical work)
9. Do you have own goals concerning sustainability for sourcing at your hotel?
10. Do you have own goals concerning sustainability for managing resources at your hotel?
11. What advantages can you see in the work of sustainable purchases and efficient managing of resources?
12. What challenges do you see in the work of sustainable purchases and efficient managing of resources?

Expectations
13. In your view, can your hotel live up to expectations that exist concerning sustainability?
14. How do you handle potential disagreements, e.g. if employees have different opinions?

Impact on Consumption
15. Do you make any active choices at your hotel to influence customers’ consumption at large?
16. Do you think that it is important to influence customers’ consumption? Why?
17. How do you think that the sustainability work within the organization has changed over time?
Interview guide 2
- Manager Sustainable Operations at Headquarters

General Questions
1. How long have you been working within Nordic Choice Hotels?
2. What is your position and what are your main work tasks?
3. Have you had any other positions within the organization?
4. What motivates you regarding sustainability?

Sustainability work in general
5. How do you view sustainability connected to the hotel industry?
6. Where do you get your sustainability ideas from?
7. In what way can you best influence Nordic Choice Hotels sustainability work?
8. What does the distribution of responsibility look like regarding sustainability at the headquarters?

Sourcing and managing resources (Practical work)
9b. How do you become a supplier to Nordic Choice Hotels?
10b. In what way do you influence the purchases of the hotels?
11b. How do you set routines for managing resources?
12b. What advantages can you see in the work of sustainable purchases and efficient managing of resources?
13b. What challenges do you see in the work of sustainable purchases and efficient managing of resources?

Expectations
14b. In your view, can Nordic Choice Hotels live up to expectations that exist concerning sustainability?
15b. What are the difficulties with creating motivation for sustainability throughout the organization?

Impact on Consumption
16b. Do you make any active choices in Nordic Choice Hotels to influence customers’ consumption at large?
17b. Do you think that it is important to influence customers’ consumption? Why?
18b. How do you think that the sustainability work within the organization has changed over time?
Appendix B

Questions’ connection to purpose and theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Aim with question</th>
<th>Theoretical Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>We thought this could show individual’s own interpretation of sustainability and whether individual employees connect their motivation to the work or values put forward by the headquarters</td>
<td>The context and the actors involved in the translation process will shape the translation according to their own interpretation, meaning and personal values and beliefs (Pallas et al, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is not only the context and actor that matters in the translation process but the characteristics of the objects that becomes translated (Pallas et al., 2016). This appears to be something that can be influenced by organizations, since it seems like powerful actors can influence certain aspects of objects (cf. Abrahamsson, 1996; Windell, 2007; Furusten, 2013; Hatch, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>Here we wished to see how they have adapted the idea of sustainability into the industry in which they operate, where they might also connect it to their specific position or hotel, showing what sustainability is for them</td>
<td>Individuals may interpret the purpose of the activities they are expected to perform differently from each other, to make them fit their needs (Binder, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>With this question we want to see what and who influences their interpretation of sustainability</td>
<td>Institutional entrepreneurs can be seen as ‘fashion-setters’ of management ideas that help shape institutionalized practices (Furusten, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is not only the context and actor that matters in the translation process but the characteristics of the objects that becomes translated (Pallas et al., 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>This question points more specifically to how individuals view their own position/role/power to impact the sustainability work for the hotel/hotel chain</td>
<td>It can be argued that it is not possible to control how an idea is being translated by the actors involved, as it will always depend on the actors’ own interpretation. However, one can influence what is being translated to a certain extent (Lindberg, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Through this process, objects are being translated and embedded into a new local practice (Pallas et al., 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>This might show how widespread the idea and work with sustainability is at each hotel as well as the headquarters</td>
<td>Institutionalization is the process of an idea, behavior or action becoming so established that it is taken-for-granted. What becomes institutionalized is not a given, but is a result of actors continuously producing, spreading and safeguarding certain elements of the institutional environment. (Furusten, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 9, 9b, 10, 10b &amp; 11b</td>
<td>These might show how individuals have adapted the idea of sustainability in terms of specific goals for each hotel / headquarters. Focusing on sourcing and managing resources, we wished to gain practical examples connected to each individual in their position/role.</td>
<td>It can be argued that it is not possible to control how an idea is being translated by the actors involved, as it will always depend on the actors’ own interpretation. However, one can influence what is being translated to a certain extent (Lindberg, 2016). Through this process, objects are being translated and embedded into a new local practice (Pallas et al., 2016). Rhetorical strategies involve constructing a compelling argument connected to prevailing norms in order to either stop or facilitate new ideas to become established and thereof legitimized (Windell, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 11, 12, 12b &amp; 13b</td>
<td>By asking of advantages and challenges in this work further shows how the respondents reasoned about sustainability, which logics are used and if they viewed these as conflicting or not.</td>
<td>There might be conflicting institutional logics between departments and even within departments between different professionalized individuals and thereof may interpret the purpose of the activities they are expected to perform differently to make them fit their needs (Binder, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 13, 14, 14b &amp; 15b</td>
<td>With these questions we aimed to possibly find signs of hypocrisy or aspirational talk when individuals got to talk about expectations and disagreements. After conducting the analysis, we chose to remove the focus on hypocrisy from the literature review, however these questions still provided interesting findings in relation to what sustainability has become within NCH.</td>
<td>Organizations frequently face contradictory demands while conducting their business, responding to an increasing number of institutional demands in order to secure legitimacy. Under these conditions, it is difficult to satisfy interests or demands by some without disregarding that of others and therefore organizations can appear to be hypocritical, from not ‘walking the talk’ (Brunsson, 2003). Some scholar mean that hypocrisy is needed, insisting that firms face conflicting interests on a daily basis and that aspirational talk may allow them to find new solutions and even push for higher CSR standards (Christensen et al., 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 15, 16, 16b &amp; 17b</td>
<td>By asking these questions we wanted to be able to identify the commitment of the respondents and the connection to the headquarters’ initiatives and how they viewed these.</td>
<td>There might be conflicting institutional logics between departments and even within departments between different professionalized individuals and thereof may interpret the purpose of the activities they are expected to perform differently to make them fit their needs (Binder, 2007). Rhetorical strategies involve constructing a compelling argument connected to prevailing norms in order to either stop or facilitate new ideas to become established and thereof legitimized (Windell, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 17, 18b</td>
<td>With this final question we wished to again identify how individuals viewed.</td>
<td>Rhetorical strategies involve constructing a compelling argument connected to prevailing norms in order to either stop or facilitate new ideas to become established and thereof legitimized (Windell, 2007).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
how the work and collaboration with the headquarters had evolved during the past few years as well as how the headquarters viewed this norms in order to either stop or facilitate new ideas to become established and thereof legitimized (Windell, 2007)

Appendix C

Details of the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Time in org. &amp; current position</th>
<th>Size of hotel</th>
<th>Date &amp; Duration of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Maintenance Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>Some years before current positions during 2 years</td>
<td>Large (500+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-07 01:18:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Reception Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>3 years reception manager and 1 year as sustainability coordinator</td>
<td>Large (400+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-07 00:40:03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Maintenance Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>9 years in maintenance and 8 years as sustainability coordinator</td>
<td>Small (150+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-08 00:54:26</td>
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<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Housekeeping Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>14 years in org, 6 months in current positions</td>
<td>Large (500+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-15 00:46:39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Manager Group Booking and Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Small (150+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-15 00:42:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Banquet Supervisor &amp; member of the hotel’s sustainability group</td>
<td>11 years in org, Banquet Supervisor 3 years, part of sustainability group 9 years</td>
<td>Large (500+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-21 00:44:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>Hotel Manager with overall responsibility of sustainability at the hotel</td>
<td>10 years in org, 2 years in current position</td>
<td>Small (120+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-22 01:13:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>Housekeeping Manager &amp; Sustainability Coordinator</td>
<td>5.5 years in org, 1 year in current position</td>
<td>Small (150+ rooms)</td>
<td>2018-03-23 01:00:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>Manager Sustainable Operations (Headquarters)</td>
<td>10 years, Similar work tasks for 10 years, but with 4 different titles</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2018-03-22 01:05:42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>