Leaders’ Perception of the Connection between Sustainability and Employee Engagement

Insights from multinational Organizations within the Öresund Region

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Abstract

Today’s organizations are facing low levels of employee engagement, with a tendency to decrease even further. Sustainability has been found to positively affect employee engagement as it provides employees with a higher purpose in their work. Therefore, this research study reveals leaders’ perception on the contribution of sustainability towards employee engagement, with a focus on multinational organizations in the Öresund region. This qualitative study combines Herzberg’s “Two-Factor Theory” and transformational leadership to analyze the research findings with a theoretical framework. The results display that sustainability has a significant influence on the level of employee engagement and various activities of organizations and leaders contribute towards this. The research also underlines that there is a potential for organizations to implement further strategies in this regard and thereby not only strengthen the satisfaction and loyalty of their current workforce, but also gain a competitive advantage in the future for attracting new talents.

Keywords: Employee engagement, sustainability, purpose at work, multinational organizations, Öresund Region, Herzberg’s two-factor theory, hygiene factors, motivators, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, employee demands, employee expectations, employee satisfaction, employee motivation, leadership perception, corporate social responsibility.
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1 Introduction

Our world, as we know it today, is under constant change. Countless factors are threatening the environment, and through this, jeopardize human society and its future (Falola et al., 2018). The need to act and to take countermeasures should, therefore, be at the core of every decision, to ensure a future in which both, human and nature, can thrive. For this reason, the United Nations (2015) established the Sustainable Development Goals [SDG], which set concrete targets to tackle the root of the problem and thereby ensure a more sustainable future.

Since organizations can be considered as primary drivers of today's society and that they have significant influences on people's everyday life, their role for change processes and contribution to sustainable development is clear (Taylor et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for companies to develop more sustainable social and environmentally ways of conducting business. Moreover, companies have been seen as the primary cause of environmental problems in recent times (Baumgartner & Winter, 2014), which is why it can be considered as their duty to counterbalance their negative impacts. Indeed, more and more companies extend their sustainability commitment by incorporating stronger Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR] strategies (Newell, 2014). According to scholars, this concept describes the organizations' role to meet societal expectations, which exceeds their pursuit of profit maximization (Beal, 2013; Werther & Chandler, 2011). Current CSR definitions note that it is the company's responsibility to respect people's life and the planet while making a profit, which represents the Triple Bottom-Line (Elkington, 1998; Newell, 2014).

In this context, scholars also suggest other influencing factors for organizations to incorporate a strong CSR approach. Lacey and Groves (2014) have noted that the employment sector worldwide is encountering a radical change, as employees are increasingly demanding a meaningful aspect in their work. This development requires organizations to implement business approaches that illustrate a clear purpose and exceed the realization of profit (Glavas, 2012). Consequently, companies that manage to incorporate CSR and through this, meet employee expectations and are likely to have a competitive advantage (Glavas, 2012). On the other hand, those particular companies that show incompetence in finding appropriate solutions, experience highly disengaged workforces (Moore, 2014). This suggests that employee expectations and the extent to which they are fulfilled have a significant impact on their level of engagement.

Drawing connections between these current developments, it can be argued that sustainability and employee expectations are two major factors that influence today's business activities. The findings, as mentioned above, indicate that sustainability and the engagement level of employees are closely intertwined. To shed light on these factors, this study will examine the connection between employee engagement and the sustainability efforts of companies. This research will elaborate on this by examining how leaders from multinational organizations, within the Öresund region, perceive this connection. Therefore, the following chapter will provide background information on employee engagement from organizational, leadership and employee perspectives, while linking it to sustainability.

1.1 Employee engagement

The topic of Employee Engagement [EE] receives growing recognition by organizations as it is proven to be strongly linked to generating financial profits and increased efficiency within organizations (Schneider, 2017; Young et al., 2018). Furthermore, engaged employees positively influence their
organizations by showing lower absence rates, lower turnover, less incidents at work and higher productivity (Parent & Lovelace, 2018; Van Allen, 2013). Consequently, disengaged employees can, for example, affect an organization's financial status negatively and impact organizational growth and its culture. Recent studies from the US demonstrate the magnitude of this issue, by concluding that only 29% of the employees are actively engaged in their work, therefore disengaged employees cause an average annual loss of $300 billion potential profits (Accord Management Systems, 2004; Glavas, 2012).

Due to the extensive influence EE has on organizations and their success, this study will elaborate on this phenomenon to clarify the underlying structures, relations and influencing factors. Before defining this construct, it needs to be noted that EE is founded on the former concepts of *Job Satisfaction*, *Employee Commitment* and *Organizational Citizenship Behavior* (Markos & Sridevi, 2010), which will briefly be introduced in the following paragraph to create a common knowledge base. According to Christian et al. (2011) job satisfaction refers to the positive attitude of employees towards their job situation. The main aspect of employee commitment is the employee’s positive attitude towards the organization and the identification with its goals, which is strongly connected with a feeling of pride (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Organizational citizenship behavior is referred to as a work-related function to improve internal operations within companies (Turnipseed, 1996).

To this date, there is no single definition of employee engagement, that has been widely acknowledged in research. This is due to the fact that EE has only been mentioned in academic literature for the last two decades and therefore is considered as fairly new (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Therefore, the following section will introduce the most commonly used definitions for EE, which throughout the whole study serve as scientific knowledge basis.

Three often cited definitions of EE were formulated by the former consulting firm *Towers Perrin*, the research organization *Gallup* and the researcher *Robinson* (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Towers Perrin’s, now called *Willis Towers Watson*, definition of EE is the level of “employees’ willingness and ability” to work towards the organizations’ success and to do so on a “sustainable basis” (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Towers Perrin, 2003). Gallup defines EE as the “involvement with and enthusiasm for work” which adds the factors of emotional attachment and personal commitment to EE (Accord Management Systems, 2004; Coffman, 2000; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Robinson et al. (2004) refer to EE as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value.” This definition refers to the *Organizational Culture Model* by Schein, which will be introduced in chapter 1.1.1. They also state that an organization needs to actively create and support engagement through a “two-way relationship between employer and employees” which adds the organizational perspective to EE (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Robinson et al., 2004).

To further clarify the concept of EE, the following part will provide insights of the construct from organizational, leadership and employee perspectives and introduces the first correlations of EE and sustainability.

### 1.1.1 Organizational Factors

As stated before, engaged employees have a strong impact on the company they work for and create a level of commitment towards their organization (Shuck et al., 2017). Markos and Sridevi (2010) mention that engaged employees will not only invest more efforts in achieving organizational goals, but also have an emotional connection with their employer. Although research shows that some companies aim to create EE simply by assessing the engagement level through annual employee surveys, it is to say that it requires far more effort of the organizations to achieve a high level of EE (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Schneider et al. (2017) state that organizational practices have the strongest impact on EE and therefore, it is elementary for them to reflect on their culture and actions.
In order to understand EE from a more holistic perspective, it is indispensable to elaborate on the organizational culture, which is one of the main aspects that determines interorganizational relationships and behaviors (Schein & Schein, 2016). According to Schein (2010) organizational culture is an abstract conceptualization that can be defined based on the three levels: Artefacts, Espoused Beliefs and Values and Basic underlying Assumptions. The first value refers to language and observed behaviors, that are easily recognizable and therefore allow to distinguish one organizational culture from another. Secondly, espoused beliefs and values refer to rules and values that are lived and accepted within a specific organization which are aligned with its philosophy or ideology. The final level relates to values and beliefs that are closely intertwined with the organization and are therefore often taken for granted. Unconsciously, these assumptions shape specific behavioral patterns within the everyday working life (Schein, 2004; Schein, 2010).

It appears that more and more companies realize the importance and advantages of fostering EE and therefore started to change their engagement strategies, which is supported by the integration of certain values within their culture (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employees are showing higher engagement when they perceive their organization as honest, predictable and sensible (Kahn, 2010). This demonstrates the importance for organizations of being seen positively by their employees, as there is a strong influence towards EE (Barrick et al, 2015).

Sustainability that is integrated within an organization can also help for employees to perceive their employer in a more optimistic way. This differentiates on the individual preferences of the employees, but there is a trend of people wanting to work for an organization that invests in their own sustainable development and reduces their environmental impact externally, as this creates meaningful work for certain employees (Glavas, 2012). Glavas (2012) also indicates that sustainable practices of the organizations can not only improve EE, but also contributes to productivity and the general well-being of their staff. The degree to which employees are engaged within an organization influence the performance and success of the company and can foster innovative ideas that increase their growth (Kahn, 1990; Parent & Lovelace, 2018; Schneider et al., 2017). While EE can result in various organizational benefits, it also influences external aspects as engaged employees will be more effective at achieving customer loyalty and satisfaction and thereby create a level of competitive advantage (Ellis & Sorensen, 2007; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Schneider et al., 2017). Organizations that are transforming towards sustainability can especially benefit from engaged employees. Because if they are directly involved in the change process, engaged employees tend to be more receptive and accepting towards realizing organizational goals (Schneider et al., 2017).

To gain a holistic overview on EE and its impact on organizations, it is also important to elaborate on the disadvantages of having disengaged employees. Markos and Sridevi (2010) mention that disengaged employees are less productive, show higher absence rates and reduce the financial success of organizations. A study from the US presented that disengaged employees result in additional costs and financial losses for the American economy of around $292 - $355 billion per year (Accord Management Systems, 2004; Glavas, 2012). This demonstrates the impact that the level of engagement has on organizations and the economy. And while organizational profits can increase rapidly with an engaged workforce, they can also decrease as soon as there is a reduced EE (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). In regard to sustainability, this means that disengaged employees will negatively impact the business success not only in financial terms, but also through being reluctant towards change, because they tend to not believe and support the organizational mission (Avey et al., 2008). Furthermore, affected companies can expect increased turnover rates as disengaged employees are more likely to look for other employers (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). This consequently slows down the process towards sustainability and increases the overall costs for the organization.

Workplaces that actively invest in creating high EE will simultaneously achieve an improved organizational culture in which employees can grow and feel comfortable. A harmonious working environment increases EE and improves organizational citizenship behavior (Houlfort & Vallerand, 2013; Schneider et al., 2017). This can also benefit the organization when it comes to the recruitment process, as job seekers will receive a first impression of the organizational culture within the interviews.
Current research demonstrates that more employees want to work for organizations that have a higher purpose other than generating solely profits (Glavas, 2012). Sustainability represents this purpose for some individuals and therefore organizations, that pursue sustainable goals and achieved a high level of engagement amongst their employees, will have better chances at attracting new recruits that have the same priorities (Glavas, 2012).

Benn et al. (2015) state that organizations are presented with a pressing number of disengaged employees with declining motivation. As a result, it can be assumed that there is increased awareness of the urgency within organizations to incorporate sustainability as well as social responsibility aspects into their standard business performances. Such an action is often motivated through several external pressures related to social concerns, regulatory services or competitive benefits, which tend to demand highly sustainable business routines and strategies (Benn et al., 2015).

Overall one can say that organizations would benefit from acknowledging the increased importance of EE and sustainability, because if combined, it can support organizations on reaching their goals and improve the working conditions for their staff.

1.1.2 Leadership Factors

Employee Engagement is a manifold subject, which is influenced by different factors. Besides the foregoing organizational perspective, insights on the correlation between leadership and EE will be provided in the following section. This helps to understand the leaders facilitating role and presents to which extent they are capable and responsible of influencing the engagement level of their employees. Accordingly, the leaders’ function to sustain a positive working environment that in turn benefits the organizational success through an engaged workforce, will be presented. Besides that, this chapter will evaluate on the way leaders perceive the value of sustainability in EE by shedding light on factors which they think are essential and how sustainability can contribute to it.

To approach the connection between EE and leadership, it is crucial to understand the leader’s role in general. Ducheyene (2017) for instance argues, that leadership always needs to be viewed from a contextual perspective, as both are fundamentally interconnected. Therefore, it must be elaborated on what exactly the main drivers within today’s business world are that influence the context in which leaders operate. Galpin et al. (2012) states that sustainability has an increasing importance likewise for organizations and leaders and that there are several motivational factors for incorporating a more sustainable conduct of business. In this context, they mention that leaders have a facilitating role and accordingly are obliged to take several measures to integrate the employees in this change process, as especially sustainable transformation processes need an engaged workforce to fully implement it (Galpin et al., 2012). Therefore, EE in particular is important for present transformation processes and it requires a detailed examination of the leader’s function in this connection (Galpin et al., 2012). According to Noe et al. (2017), encouragement and support by leaders to integrate social or environmental initiatives are identified as effective ways to increase EE. Falola et al. (2018) have noted that leaders tend to be in a position to fill the role of the change agent who facilitates the integration of sustainability and CSR activities into organizational strategy, traditions, culture, structure, conduct and behavior.

Tucker (2017) supportingly states that leaders need to be aware of their engaging role and that especially in change processes, employees need support in order to be engaged. He outlines that employees are engaged when they are emotionally attached to a common goal and if they can also fulfil their personal interests. According to him, leaders need to respect these prerequisites and therefore should inherit three main roles to establish a high EE level. Primarily, managers have to act as change agents, who are transparently making all major steps of a transformation process clear to the staff and preferably should include employees in the processes. He states that this involvement does not only refer to change processes, but also decisions of everyday situations, which overall gives employees a strong feeling of respect and recognition (Tucker, 2017). Secondly Tucker (2017) states that leaders are responsible for
development processes. To foster that, they need to identify potentials that enable their employees to learn and grow. One way to support this would be to connect experts with employees in order to foster an organic knowledge exchange between the different parties and promote a constant willingness to learn. Lastly, leaders have to assume the role as a director for communication. As such they are obliged to plan the internal communication, listen to needs and concerns of employees and create a working atmosphere in which employees are willing to share and talk openly (Tucker, 2017).

Markos et al. (2010) for instance affirms that it is crucial for leaders to recognize their employees and to value them individual. They outline that this interplays with the necessity to maintain a bilateral way of communication, which combined sets the foundation for EE. Further prerequisites refer to the leader’s duties, such as providing employees with all necessary equipment that is needed for their job, offering professional development and ensure a functioning reward process to support good performances (Markos et al., 2010).

The previous paragraphs offer an overview of scholars’ perspectives on how leaders influence EE and what measures can be taken by them in order to increase engagement. There is a general consent of the main tasks that leaders have to comply with to actively foster engagement of their workforce. As numerous as articles about leaders’ duties are, so are those that elaborate on which leadership styles are best-suited to achieve these goals. Galpin et al. (2012) argues that it is necessary to incorporate a so-called Full Range Leadership Model, which suggests that different aspects of leadership behaviors need to be combined in order to achieve the best results. This model was introduced by Avolio and Bass (2002) and refers to the combination of leadership approaches associated with transactional, transformational and “laissez-faire” behavior. In this context it is important to note that they introduce “laissez-faire” not as a favorable leadership style, but rather as the necessity for leaders to acknowledge that they have to give employees the freedom to work autonomously in some situations (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Galpin et al., 2012). Despite this, scholars state that the combination of both transactional and transformational leadership achieves the highest degree of effectiveness in terms of EE (Chaimongkonrojna, 2015; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Regardless, Galpin et al. (2012) note that transactional leadership should rather be seen as a factor that sets the foundation for transformational leadership behavior, which in turn, enables a high degree of EE. Vila-Vazquez et al. (2018) additionally states that transactional leadership is less inspirational and engaging, which is why they argue that it alone is not sufficient to foster a high degree of EE.

Transactional leadership is concerned with a clear communication of desired performances and rewards that are directly connected with compliance to the expectations. According to Breevaart et al. (2014) one way to promote compliance could be through incentives that should help to reward if tasks were achieved. To communicate these expected outcomes clearly, they state that management-by-exception is necessary, as it describes the activity to anticipate failures and reinforce regulations that should help to avoid mistakes (Breevaart et al., 2014). Thus, the integration of a transactional approach supports the definition and communication of goals, which on the other hand give direction and sense to employees’ tasks. This in turn, helps to create the basis for strong leader and follower relationships. On this foundation, transformational leadership is suggested by scholars to establish an enduring EE (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Shuck & Herd, 2012). The underlying theory of this leadership approach will be examined in-depth in chapter 2.1.1. the following section provides insights on the correlation between transformational leadership and EE.

Besieux et al. (2015) for instance argue that EE and transformational leadership can be considered as the main forces to improve organizational performances. Transformational leaders are capable to identify necessary changes, translate them into visions which inspire followers to commit to the transformation process and motivate them to perform beyond their self-interest for the benefit of the corporation (Avolio et al., 2009). Jena et al. (2018) support this view on the leader’s role and additionally state that employees are more engaged if they perceive that their leaders initiate such transformational processes for truthful and ethical reasons. They argue, that this form of engagement helps to establish a positive attitude towards the corporation and through this, contributes to the employee’s health (Jena et al., 2018). Besides this transformational approach, some scholars state that the leader’s emotional
intelligence plays into the success of the desired engagement process (Shuck & Herd, 2012). For example, Milhelm et al. (2019) conclude that leaders’ emotional intelligence strengthens the correlation between transformational leadership and EE. Thus, they suggest if a leader demonstrates a transformational approach, combined with motivational and inspirational behavior patterns, they are likely to achieve higher degrees of EE.

Concluding, it can be said that leaders have one of the major roles in the context of EE. Different leadership approaches achieve different outcomes regarding the engagement level of their workforce. Furthermore, leaders need to consider taking various measures in order to engage their teams. Thus, this section explains the construct of EE from a leader’s perspective. Despite the acceptance of the presented theories among scholars, it is necessary for leaders to respect that every human being is different and that this diversity needs to be embraced in order to be successful.

1.1.3 Employee Factors

Reports of Kamoche et al. (2015) have revealed that only 14% of employees across 140 nations over the world are engaged, as only a few employees tend to feel a strong emotional attachment with their workplace.

Studies have shown the importance of the relationship and support from co-employees (Andrew & Sofian, 2012: Anitha, 2014). They revealed that this individual factor greatly influences both organizational and work engagement of particular employees. Other factors that contribute to EE are adequate development opportunities and clear communication, since every employee needs to know what is expected of them (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). According to Falola et al. (2018), if the expectations are clarified through transparency, chances for improved performance and engagement increase. This clarification can be achieved through communicating current organizational goals. Meanwhile, Kamoche et al. (2015) have shed light on the fact that encouragement is essential for every employee. It is vital for leaders or managers to encourage and inspire employees for the work they perform to augment their performance in the future. Furthermore, underachievers must not be dispirited or dejected. An underachieved employee must be encouraged as such support will serve as a boost for their future development.

Another aspect that needs to be considered from an employees’ perspective, is that they are influenced by the workplace associates or leaders (Benn et al., 2015). Thus, employees seek for a workplace environment that will support them to develop new skills and competences. Additionally, receiving regular feedback supports employees to be aware of their own performance and understand the goals and strategies of the organization, while simultaneously give feedback to their leaders (Vigoda-Gadot & Angert, 2007). This also provides managers with information about employees’ concerns and demands. Recent studies suggest that employees increasingly demand a purpose in their work, which according to scholars can be found in sustainability (Glavas, 2012).

According to Benn et al. (2015), employees should not be expected to provide equal contributions to an organization’s sustainable practices. As a result, Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016) state that whenever leaders provide sufficient resources for sustainable initiatives in harmony with a collective purpose, employees feel connected and engaged. The importance of supervision is supported by the fact that employees are likely to become more engaged by their direct leaders, rather than the top management (Saratun, 2016). Studies of Baumgartner and Winter (2014) have thrown light on factors related to rewards, recognition and appraisal, which are regarded as vital determinants to motivate employee behavior, engagement and strengthen their job attitudes. Structured rewards and appraisals reflect the connection between certain actions and unbiased justifiable rewards for employees (Kamoche et al., 2015). Kamoche et al. (2015) further states that well-structured reward systems, that are aligned with the organization’s values, motivate employees to be more engaged.
Drawing relevance to these factors, it can be stated that if the connection between employee performance and reward displays a clear connection to sustainability and CSR issues, this has the tendency to engage employees for seeking innovative solutions towards environmental, ecological, financial and social problems (Le Blanc et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Saratun (2016) has mentioned that employee motivation factors related to employee staffing, retention and engagement can be effectively developed by organizational policies as well as practices which further enhance employee engagement in environmental behavioral patterns. For example, the most significant advantages of EE rely on elevated employee motivation along with a higher level of job satisfaction and pleasure. Drawing relevance to these evidences, several theoretical concepts can be used to explain motivation resulting from strong EE.

Overall, it can be said that there are many factors that contribute towards employee engagement. Employees however need to be regarded as individuals by leaders and organizations, in order to achieve high levels of EE.

1.2 Sustainability as an engagement tool

As stated in the previous section, there are various studies addressing the importance of employee engagement and its positive contribution towards organizations. New approaches to this topic however indicate that sustainability can also be a tool to get employees more engaged and committed to organizational goals (Glavas, 2012).

According to Glavas (2012), employees are increasingly seeking for meaning in their workplace and therefore demand a higher sense of purpose. Scholars indicate that this could be achieved through the engagement in environmental and social responsible activities, which in turn can be implemented in organizations (Glavas, 2012). Galpin et al. (2015) additionally stated, that this implementation poses challenges to the management and the companies. Therefore, organizations need to find a strategy of how to integrate sustainability as an EE tool within their organization. Researchers state that the combination of these two constructs could contribute to organizational success and the employees’ health in long-term (Galpin et al., 2015).

Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016) mention that the major association between EE and sustainability strategies is the fundamental purpose of every organization. Employees are likely to show greater engagement and satisfaction if they are engaged in expressing social, environmental and economic responsibility within organizational standards and values. This takes place especially when options are provided for employees to become actively involved and thus fostering a feeling of purpose and connectedness (Al Mehrzi & Sing, 2016). However, as per the view of Dyllick (2015), employee approval of sustainability actions is regarded as the difference between success and failure of any organizational initiative. Moreover, from a management perspective, effectively engaging employees in sustainability efforts is fundamental to successfully become a more sustainable organization. Thus, current leaders should focus on providing the right education and training in order to facilitate employees to perceive daily operations through a sustainability lens.

Applying long-term sustainability training to increase employee involvement successfully serves as a significant part of the employee experience. Breevaart et al. (2014) states that through sustainable knowledge and competence, leaders can efficiently create systems as well as processes which aid them to attain ideas and implement the strategies in their own work. Reports of Saratun (2016) have revealed that around 96% of leaders or CEOs agree that sustainability must be embedded into an organization’s strategy and operations, but only 35% account employee commitment and involvement to be a significant driver of their overall sustainability initiatives. On the other hand, studies of Benn et al. (2015) have shown that elevated employee involvement and engagement with positive emotional attachment lead to improved retention rates along with superior internal knowledge transfer. Thus, leaders have focused on proficiently designing employee training and educational programs (Baumgartner & Winter, 2014). Saratun (2016) has cited examples of strategies of offering knowledge
to employees regarding personal sustainability opportunities which they can implement as per their convenience. Such a strategy can facilitate them to attain knowledge of social, environmental as well as economic impact of their personal actions and help them distinguish areas which need improvements (Kolk & Perego, 2014). In addition to this, Benn et al. (2015) have identified the importance of linking incentives to sustainability efforts. Such an association serves a decisive role in enhancing and increasing employee satisfaction, involvement, participation and engagement, mainly in organizations which show discrepancies in views, standards and motivation on sustainability matters (Breevaart et al., 2014). Certain incentives can motivate employees to change their behavior and contribute towards the organizations’ sustainability targets. As an example, paying 100% of an employee’s public transportation expenses, providing monetary incentives for personal benefit or sharing savings generated through reduced energy consumption tends to rapidly drive changes (Moore, 2014).

When organizations unite both the factors and engage their workforce in sustainability programs and initiatives, the symbiosis and synergies significantly improve the organizational values and standards. Thus, aligning sustainability values and practices into business strategy aids organizations to create a visionary base where employees will receive great satisfaction and show willingness to be engaged to the organization. When capable, competent and passionate professionals are employed in an organization, they show a tendency to engage in mutual collaboration and recognize organization’s vision for the benefit of all stakeholders.

1.3 Problem Statement

Based on previous sections, it can be said that EE plays a major role for leaders and organizations, as a high degree of engagement can positively affect the organizational success. Disengagement in turn poses several risks to corporations, as it for example lowers the productivity of the workforce, increases the employee turnover and has a dissatisfactory influence on other employees. Consequently, companies should pursue a high engaged workforce and should therefore put a main focus on engaging activities. However, researchers indicate that the level of engagement among organizations is constantly declining.

Another recent development that influences corporate activities is sustainability. Throughout all layers of today’s society, it is attracting more and more attention, as it affects everyday life. This trend is also supported by the UN’s SDGs, which aim is to create a more sustainable future (UN, 2015). Due to this increasing awareness, stakeholders are demanding corporations to become more sustainable and to act responsibly. Because of this development, companies are constantly striving to integrate more sustainable business approaches, which demonstrate a strong commitment towards CSR (Newell, 2014; Werther & Chandler, 2014).

Drawing connections from these two major influence factors, scholars proofed that sustainability has a positive contribution toward the level of EE within organizations (Glavas, 2012). Therefore, one could assume that the increased integration of sustainability in the core values of organizations should contribute to a highly engaged workforce. Regardless, recent studies showed that only 10% of employees in western Europe are being actively engaged and data showed that EE in general is constantly declining (Gallup, 2017; Molraudee, 2016; Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

For that reason, this research study strives to identify leaders’ perception on the connection between sustainability and EE and through this set the foundation for further investigations. To refine the scope of this research, the main focus is set on leaders in multinational corporations within the Öresund region. As there is no current academic literature that addresses the mentioned problem from this thematic focus, it can be defined as a research gap. Therefore, this study strives to fill this gap by providing new insights on this subject, which in turn will form a basis for further research on this debate.
1.4 Research Purpose

With only a small fraction of workforce being actively engaged in their work (Molraudee, 2016; Gallup, 2017), EE declining even further (Amabile & Kramer, 2011) and many employees looking for a purposeful meaning in their work (Glavas, 2012), organizations need to rethink their strategies on how to motivate, engage and satisfy their employees. Simultaneously, more and more stakeholders demand organizations to be more sustainable, which results in further pressure on organizations to implement change. Glavas (2012) describes that sustainability can serve as an EE tool and therewith has a positive impact on the organizations. However, using sustainability as an engagement tool is not yet considered a common practice.

Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory research study is to discover the leaders’ perception of the existing discourse on the contribution of sustainability towards EE, within the Öresund Region. Accordingly, this research study focuses on three main focal points: Firstly, this research strives to uncover leaders’ perceptions on the contribution of sustainability to EE within the Öresund region. This approach intends to identify the awareness level of leaders to determine, how they connect these two factors. The second research focus investigates sustainability-related actions leaders initiate to increase organizational EE. Through this, it can be analyzed to which extent leaders actively apply sustainability in their organizations and how this contributes to improve EE. The third aim of this study is to obtain insights on what leaders expect to be future demands of employees towards organizations.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the research problem and the purpose of this study, following research questions were developed in order to fill the identified gap:

RQ1: How do leaders perceive the contribution of sustainability towards employee engagement?

RQ2: What sustainability-related actions do leaders take to support employee engagement?

RQ3: What do leaders perceive to be future employee expectations?
2 Theoretical Framework

The following part gives an introduction to the theoretical framework, which was used to analyze and understand the impact of sustainability on EE within the aforementioned scope. Primarily, Herzberg's two-factor theory and transformational leadership were applied in this study, as they support the research purpose. Concluding of this chapter, the interconnection of both theories in regard to the research aim, demonstrate their relevancy for this research and help answering the research questions.

2.1 Herzberg Two-Factor theory

The first part of the theoretical framework is based on employees within organizations and their motivations and levels of engagement. As research indicates that EE is rapidly declining (Gallup, 2017) and motivational factors changed with the time, it is necessary to determine theories that can contribute towards increasing employee engagement through sustainability. For this research, the two-factor theory of Herzberg forms the foundation to support the findings on EE through sustainability and therefore serves as one of the theoretical frameworks for this study.

A widely acknowledged theory that displays basic requirements for employees to feel motivated and satisfied at work was developed by Herzberg and is mostly referred to as “Herzberg’s two-factor theory” or “motivation-hygiene theory” (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1968; Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014, Sanjeev & Surya, 2016). The theory of Herzberg states that employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction is dependent on different elements and can be divided in motivators and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The motivators in this theory are indicated as causes that actively contribute to job satisfaction amongst the employees, whenever they are present (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1968; Hur, 2017). Herzberg (1959) stated that the motivators are work-related aspects such as responsibility, recognition, achievement and personal growth-opportunities.

Contrary, Herzberg’s’ hygiene factors are not necessary elements that engage or motivate employees, instead, they dissatisfy them if they are not given. Generally, the main hygiene categories are working conditions, job security, income, interpersonal relationships with peers and managers, organizational policies, and employee benefits (Herzberg, 1968; Sanjeev & Surya, 2016; Hur, 2017,).

In comparison of the two factors table 1, the motivators of Herzberg’s’ theory are more connected to higher needs of the individuals and the hygiene factors can be seen as rather fundamental requirements for their working place (Hur, 2017). As employees have a certain level of expectations towards their organizations, a disbalance in how their needs are actually met can result in reduced willingness of the employees to do their job properly. Therefore, this can then result in disengagement, reduced loyalty and fewer invested efforts amongst the staff (Hur, 2017).

Employee engagement is often referred to as the employee's enthusiasm, motivation and willingness to contribute towards the organizational success (Accord Management Systems, 2004; Towers Perrin, 2003). This understanding can be connected to the previous mentioned factors, as EE is dependent on the employees’ level of motivation and the general work environment. Similar to the absence of hygiene factors, low levels of engagement at work can also result in increased turnover rates and lower productivity (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). Therefore, a strong connection between Herzberg’s theory and the concept of EE can be drawn (Mayo, 2016).
Table 1: Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herzberg’s’ Two-Factor Theory</th>
<th>Motivator Factors</th>
<th>Hygiene Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Income &amp; benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth-opportunities</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ Enhance job satisfaction when present → Create dissatisfaction when absent

2.2 Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Leadership styles that are centered around respect, values, support and conscientious treatment of employees advances well-being and sustainable development within organizations (Vazquez, 2018). Therefore, transactional and transformational leadership are relevant for organizations that want to achieve EE through sustainability.

Research from Galpin and Whittington (2012) argues that to be an effective leader, the full range of leadership is needed, which also encompasses Transactional Leadership. As argued by Avolio (1999), transactional leadership forms the basis, while Transformational Leadership can build upon this. Transactional leadership involves the leader’s responsibility to clarify expectations and rewards and when done properly, this contributes to a strong relationship with the employee (Galpin & Whittington, 2012). However, transactional leadership is not sufficient to fully develop the potential of employees but is considered a crucial step in creating trust between the employee and leader a requisite for high EE (Galpin & Whittington, 2012).

Downton (1973) was the first to formulate transformational leadership and was further developed by political sociologist Burns (1978) who connected leadership and followership roles. He argued that leadership is connected with the needs of the followers and therefore, leaders influence the motives of employees to achieve better results. This was an advancement of the more traditional model of transactional leadership, which focusses on supplying employees with clearly stated tasks, while transformational leadership has its main purpose in motivating the employees to a wider degree (Shuck & Herd, 2012). This increases motivation and morality which leads to stronger relations between leaders and followers and also assists employees in reaching their full potential (Avolio, 1999).

To strive towards this goal of strong relationships and to increase the level of engagement, leaders need to present behavior that is typical for transformational leadership and to which scholars refer to as the “4 I’s” (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2016). As a first attribute they mention Idealized Vision, which mainly describes leader’s duty to act as a role model to their follower to show direction and give a vision of what is expected. Further to this, inspirational motivation is another behavior pattern of the transformational leadership approach. It is created through the open communication of future goals, that
give employees a clear sense why their contribution is needed and why it matters. Thirdly, *Intellectual Stimulation* is provided by the leader through constantly providing new inputs to the team, in order to gain new insights and create novel approaches to existing problems. Leaders that follow that approach need to have a willingness to continuously questioning the status quo to embrace development (Galpin et al., 2012). The last aspect of transformational behavior is *Individualized Consideration*, which demonstrates the leader’s role to be a mentor. Despite that, it shows the necessity to treat each employee as an individual with specific needs, abilities and interest, which need to be considered in order to organize the team efficiently (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2016).

Transformational leadership therefore motivates followers to surpass what is expected by raising consciousness about the importance of goals, go beyond follower’s self-interest for sake of the company and inspiring followers to focus on higher level needs (Bass, 1985). Leaders that show transformational leadership usually possess strong internal values and ideals and are able to adequately motivate followers to support organizational success instead of only regarding their self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994).

In literature, there has been a discussion about leaders using transformational leadership for their own benefits, being called pseudo transformational leaders by Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) arguing that these leaders are self-concerned, self-aggrandizing, exploitative and power oriented. Bass and Riggio (2006) expand on this topic of pseudo transformational leadership to differentiate authentic and inauthentic transformational leaders. In contrast with pseudo and inauthentic transformational leadership they argue that authentic transformational leaders transcend their self-interests for either utilitarian or moral reasons.

Vazquez et al. (2018) study shows that transformational leadership strongly influences EE by leaders supporting the employees to discover purpose and meaning in their jobs. Therefore, if employees feel that their work has a considerable impact on their life or the work of others, it creates a sense of meaning which in turn increases their eagerness to fully devote them self to the job (Vazquez et al., 2018). Because transformational leadership inspires leaders and followers to achieve better results, surpassing expectations and go beyond a follower’s self-interest, sustainability could be used as tool by these leaders to amplify their engagement efforts, setting a goal for the greater good of not only the team and company

### 2.3 Engagement through Herzberg's Theory & Transformational Leadership

In conclusion to the theoretical framework, the two-factor theory and transformational leadership both support valuable insights towards this research study. The theories proof to be relevant in regard to the level of EE as they indicate individual aspects that, if applied correctly, can result in greater engagement and satisfaction of the workforce (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Chaimongkonrojna, 2015; Mayo, 2016; Vazquez et al., 2018).

Transactional leadership implies the need for leaders to direct their employees towards reaching certain goals by ensuring that their tasks, job roles and rewards are communicated and understood clearly by the individuals (Robbins & Judge, 2009; Shuck & Herd, 2012). The combination of Herzberg’s theory and transactional leadership creates a foundation for the actualization of transformational leadership. Therefore, the basic employees’ needs such as motivators, hygiene factors and clear job expectations have to be implemented before leaders can achieve higher EE through transformational leadership (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Vazquez et al. (2018) stated that transformational leadership is focused on supporting their followers to find meaning in their work, which simultaneously can lead to stronger job satisfaction. While the two-factor theory of Herzberg emphasizes on different aspects that can either create higher satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1959), both theories greatly impact EE. Although Herzberg's theory is primary based on the basic requirements of employees needs in order to be satisfied at work,
transformational leadership steers towards the same mission but instead, provides the employees with superior and inspiring guidance that result in a transformatative mindset (Burns, 1978). In order for a leader to be able to develop the most effective leadership style, emotional intelligence is of importance (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Emotional intelligence means that a leader is capable to understand their own and their employees’ emotions and needs, while also being able to act upon those accordingly (Mayer et al., 2000).

Combining all mentioned theories, the “conceptual model of leadership and employee engagement” shows the interactions of previous aspects (Figure 1) in order to achieve EE and to benefit from improved performance outcomes (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

![Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Leadership and Employee Engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012)](image)

This model shows that leaders first need to understand their followers needs and motivations, also with the support of emotional intelligence, in order to achieve the maximum outcome of employee engagement through transactional and transformational leadership. Shuck and Herd (2012) indicate that this construct is often overlooked and therefore, leaders are unable to move their employees above the basic motivational level.

Due to the previously presented concept, this research study integrates the theoretical approaches of Herzberg’s two-factor theory, transactional and transformational leadership to analyze the impact of sustainability towards EE.
3 Methodology

This chapter will elaborate on the procedure of this study, concerning data collection, creation, coding and analyses. It further clarifies the reliability and validity of the study process and acknowledges limitations.

3.1 Research design

In line with the essence and purpose of this research paper and considering the methods for the creation, collection and analysis of the data (6 & Bellamy, 2012), a qualitative method has been selected. A reason for this is that the research is based on an inductive approach, which is frequently used for qualitative research when the researchers are not aware of the outcomes of the study before its conduction (6 & Bellamy, 2012; Thomas, 2006). In social sciences, qualitative methods contribute to the construction of data through words which creates the possibility to draw connections close to reality by averting imprecise transcriptions from words to numbers (Blaikie, 2003). However, researchers generally believe that data in the form of words could be less reliable and precise and that only numerical data can result in accurate and objective results (Blaikie, 2003).

This study followed a relativist approach which asserts that in line with 6 and Bellamy (2012), there is no reason to accept that scientific explanations are true or false on the basis of facts as scientific methods of research and inference do not alone yield a compelling reason. It was anticipated that different leaders will have divergent perceptions on the connection between EE and sustainability. Hence, by acquiring insights on these diverse perspectives, the various “truths” (6 & Bellamy, 2012) were uncovered. Due to this, this research has a social constructionist epistemology, because reality is not existent by itself but composed through thoughts and ideas (6 & Bellamy, 2012; Silverman, 2015). In the context of this study, this is represented by the leaders’ insights. Moreover, when examining individual perceptions, there is not one single truth (Silverman, 2015). In the semi-structured interviews, the feelings, ideas and beliefs were explored, which are part of the social constructionist approach (Silverman, 2015).

According to Saunders et. al (2009), an exploratory study aims at finding new insights and applying research in a new way. In recent years, researchers already addressed the subject of connecting sustainability and employee engagement. However, this research study applied the existing knowledge on the Öresund region and thereby created new insights which are relevant to the topic. Suggested methods to conduct an exploratory research are literature reviews, interviews and focus groups (Saunders et. al, 2009). In order to uncover the perceptions of leaders in the Öresund region, 13 interviews have been conducted. This gathered data was analyzed through thematic analysis (Silverman, 2015) by classifying codes, themes and categories in order to cluster the obtained content (May, 2011).

3.2 Data collection

The initial step for data collection within this research was to conduct an extensive research on secondary data, which displayed the general findings of sustainability and its connection to EE by various researchers. Secondary data is data that has not been collected by the authors of this study but by other researchers (Brown, 2006). This is often seen as an essential part of a research assignment and consists of analyzing previously written articles, books and papers (Brancati, 2018). For this research, a literature review was conducted to obtain secondary data. The focus of this research was on the following main keywords: employee engagement, sustainability, Öresund region. The sub-keywords, which were used in this context to further refine the findings are: employee motivation, employee retention, employer attractiveness, organizational leadership and organizational strategies.
In order to answer the research questions, qualitative data collection methods have been used to explore main concepts (Silverman, 2013) regarding the contribution of sustainability to EE. Therefore, primary research data was collected through conducting in depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Silverman, 2013) within multinational organizations based in the Öresund region. Saunders et al. (2009) states that primary data is data that researchers collect at first hand through methods like interviews, experiments or surveys. In the context of this study, leaders, who are employed by companies with a clear sustainability approach, were interviewed, to gain insights on their perceptions, values, opinions, feelings and emotions (May, 2011). The open-ended questions offered several opportunities to adapt the course of the interviews to the individual leaders. This in turn helped to get more in-depth insights by refining and elaborating on answers through follow-up questions.

3.3 Data Analysis

The conducted semi-structured interviews were analyzed with a thematic analysis, which is one of the most frequently used methods to analyze qualitative research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). According to Guest et al. (2012) this is an approach to qualitative data, which includes the interpretations of researchers and their personal involvement in the analyzing process. This integration is required as the main focus of this method is on the identification and description of themes within the data, which are implicitly and explicitly expressed (Guest et al., 2012).

The following paragraph is based on Braun and Clarke’s (2012) six phases for the execution of a thematic analysis. Firstly, researchers should familiarize themselves with the data, which is done through repeated reading of the interview transcripts. Throughout this step, the identification of patterns is also initiated. The second phase is about generating initial codes, which are based on the identified patterns. In this phase, the data will be reduced and labelled to facilitate a more efficient analysis. Thirdly, previously defined codes are clustered according to suitable themes, which need to be as clear as possible, even though it might not seem to be suitable. Throughout the fourth step, these themes are compared to both the data and the theoretical framework. If any inconsistencies are identified in this step, researchers might adapt to form a coherent overall picture. The fifth phase is about finalizing the aforementioned themes, according to the adaption that might have been made previously. In the last step the analysis is being carried out. In this step, the identified themes are analyzed and presented in close connection with the data.

By following Braun and Clarke’s (2012) six phases of thematic analysis, various ideas were clustered and formulated into codes, which allowed a coherent approach of this study. After applying the codes to the interviews, subthemes and main themes were collectively discussed. They in turn were arranged and the frequency was added, as illustrated in table 2. This table helped to form a consistent structure that was used throughout the analysis.
Table 2: Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecting sustainability &amp; employee engagement</td>
<td>Basic requirement of EE</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of sustainability</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability creating purpose &amp; EE</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ RQ1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability actions for employee engagement</td>
<td>Organizational culture</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership role</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable activities</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ RQ2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future employee expectations</td>
<td>Shift in mindset</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ RQ3</td>
<td>Leadership expectations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attracting talent</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Reliability and Validity

To safeguard the quality of this study, while collecting data and performing the analysis, the aspects of reliability and validity were constantly considered. In line with 6 and Bellamy (2012), researchers need to be aware of limitations, strengths, and measures to increase validity and reliability to be able to better present the value of the findings and results (6 & Bellamy, 2012; Silverman, 2015).

To enhance the credibility of this research, the relation of the content was placed in context of its source, which supports the validity (6 & Bellamy, 2012). Accordingly, literature was selected through the databases of Google Scholar and Malmö University’s Library, which contributed to the validation of the analysis and collection process (6 & Bellamy, 2012). Furthermore, while probing for secondary data, credibility, relevance, accuracy and sufficiency were considered. Moreover, to increase the reliability the research-process should be documented detailed and extensively (Flick, 2006).

The reliability of primary data in this research has been increased by constantly focusing on the interview guide appendix 1, likewise this improved the comparability between conducted interviews (Flick, 2006). By being consistent with the interview guide, brief definitions of EE and sustainability were given to every participant in order to create a common understanding and respect the aspects of validity and reliability. Another contributor to increase those factors were the clear and interconnected interview questions, which maintained a main focus on what the researchers wanted to discover (Flick, 2006). To increase the validity of the data, the researchers clearly stated that the interviews would be presented completely anonymous without stating either the name of the interviewee or the company they work for. This measure was taken to create trust as well as giving the interviewees the freedom to express their opinions freely. However, even though the concepts of reliability and validity were consistently respected throughout the study, Guest et al. (2012) stated, that the thematic analysis poses risks to the reliability of a research, as it is based on interpretations. In order to minimize this risks the researchers had a clear focus on these risk factors and strived to maintain an objective approach to the analysis.
3.5 Limitations

Considering the time frame of this research paper and the scope of the topic EE, this study entails some limitations. Because the authors of this study have a limited network in the Öresund region and they aimed to interview leaders from international companies, LinkedIn was their primary resource for contacting potential interviewees. In order to motivate them to participate and explain why they could contribute to our study, insights on the topic of the study were given beforehand. This could have possibly biased leaders who were already interested in the topic of sustainability and engagement to reply while leaders that were not interested or drawn to the topic could have considered this an argument not to respond. Besides that, there was a disbalance in the distribution of interviewees considering gender. In total, ten men and three women participated in this study and therefore, the female participation rate is 23%. However, no studies have been done specifically analyzing the distribution of managers and their gender in the Öresund region and therefore no direct conclusions about validity can be drawn. On the other hand, when taking the following into consideration, 31% of managers in Sweden (Sweden Statistics, 2018) and 29% of managers in Denmark (OECD, 2017) are female. This in turn suggests that this study is relatively close to the actual representation of woman in managerial positions.
4 Object of Study

The following chapter will present leaders as the main object of this study. Additionally, important elements that further define the main object will be presented to clarify the direction of this research. Beginning with a brief introduction to leaders in general, this section will show how participants of this study were chosen. The criteria that further refined the choice of leaders are discussed in the subchapters about organizations and the Öresund region.

4.1 Leaders

This study is mainly focused on how leaders perceive the connection between EE and sustainability. Because of this, the following section will provide insight on what criteria were used in order to define the selection of suitable interviewees. Prior to this, it needs to be clarified what perception in the context of this research is.

According to scholars, perception can be defined as how individuals regard, understand or interpret external stimulations, which in turn through information processing create personal awareness (Gellatly & Braisby, 2012; Troscianko & Smith, 2010;). In the context of this study, perception is therefore used to describe how the interviewees comprehend or recognize certain topics. Due to this, perception is considered as a useful term, which should help to extract individual beliefs and opinions. By communicating this clearly to the interviewees, the collected information should reflect the leaders unbiased insights.

Leaders that were interviewed in the context of the study are situated in the Öresund region. Additionally, they are employed by large multinational companies and have a minimum of five years of leadership experience. In terms of leader role, it was decided that every participant needs to have a managerial responsibility of at least 4 employees. The participants of this study were responsible for 7 to 1.300 employees, which accordingly respected the minimum requirement. Besides this the researchers of this study determined that the interviewed leaders should not have a direct connection to sustainability, either indicated through the department they are assigned to or their position. By doing so, this research study intended to get insights from participants that are as neutral as possible and should represent the general awareness level of leaders within the Öresund region. Another side-effect of this approach was that the interviewees represented different specialization like for instance human resources, marketing, IT or supply chain. To give an overview of the conducted interviews, table 3, introduces the codes of the interviewees, its duration, the date on which the interviews were conducted and how they were conducted. As anonymity was one of the major agreements, these codes should help to respect the interviewees privacy. For the same reason, it was avoided to connect the leaders to specific job positions or organizations.
Table 3: Overview – Interviewed Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Interview length</th>
<th>Interview mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i1</td>
<td>10/05/2019</td>
<td>41 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i2</td>
<td>22/05/2019</td>
<td>34 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i3</td>
<td>08/05/2019</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i4</td>
<td>23/05/2019</td>
<td>31 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i5</td>
<td>20/05/2019</td>
<td>61 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i6</td>
<td>20/05/2019</td>
<td>33 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i7</td>
<td>08/05/2019</td>
<td>40 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i8</td>
<td>23/05/2019</td>
<td>37 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i9</td>
<td>08/05/2019</td>
<td>38 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i10</td>
<td>13/05/2019</td>
<td>60 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i11</td>
<td>14/05/2019</td>
<td>37 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i12</td>
<td>23/05/2019</td>
<td>48 min</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i13</td>
<td>15/05/2019</td>
<td>49 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Organizations

Large multinational companies are expanding their businesses along extensive networks that are crossing borders of countries (Kinley, 2009). Due to this, they are impacting societies and accordingly people around the globe (Luo & Zhao, 2013). It is because of this far-reaching impact, that this study sets its focus on multinationals that have subsidiaries or their headquarters within the Öresund region. Due to this choice, this research aims to reflect insights of leaders that are used to work internationally and have a general awareness of international affairs. Further limitations of organizations were made according to their focus on sustainability. Therefore, only companies with an explicit sustainability agenda and a clear transformation process towards a more sustainable conduct of business, were included. With these limitations, this study intends to integrate developments of the recent business world by respecting only companies with a clear commitment to CSR (Elkington, 1998; Newell, 2014). Companies, that were represented by leaders, covered different business focuses like for example consumer goods, pharmacy, consulting, services, chemical industry and logistics. To respect the anonymity of both the interviewees and organizations, only generalized information can be given at this point.
4.3 Öresund Region

In order to set a framework that is feasible in the context of this thesis, it is indispensable to have a more concrete geographical targeting. Due to this, this study primarily focuses on the Öresund's region, comprised of the metropolitan area of Copenhagen and Malmö (Falkheimer, 2016). This area was selected for this research, as it is considered to be one of the most sustainable regions in Europe (Vojnovic, 2013). Not only from a business point of view, but also from the citizens’ perspective does this region present a high degree of awareness about sustainability (Anderberg & Clark, 2013). Therefore, this area serves as a role model when it comes to sustainable business and living. Due to these prerequisites, there is a presumption that organizations and leaders in particular are aware of sustainability in general and its impacts on internal processes like EE. Accordingly, the examination of leaders from organizations, that are based in the Öresund region, serves the purpose of both limiting the focus of this study and representing insights from interviewees with a certain degree of sustainable awareness.
5 Analysis of empirical data

Throughout this chapter, insights from the interviewed leaders will be given and analyzed in alignment with the introduced theoretical framework. This approach will follow the structure as introduced in chapter 3.3 within table 3. The following sections will provide insights in how leaders draw the connection between sustainability and EE, which actions they take in order to improve internal engagement through sustainability and how they perceive future developments of employee expectations.

5.1 Connecting sustainability & EE

This part of the analysis introduces the findings from the conducted interviews on the leaders general understanding of EE and sustainability. In addition, it shows the importance of purposeful work and demonstrates the connection of both factors.

5.1.1 Basic Requirements of EE

In the beginning of this research paper, the definitions of EE and basic elements that foster engagement were introduced and the connection to relevant theories was established. Throughout the interviews, the leaders were questioned on their perceptions on the basic requirements that need to be present in order to achieve a positive engagement levels of their employees. Many of the mentioned aspects can be referred to the “Two-Factor Theory” by Herzberg, which presents basic motivation and hygiene factors that serve as a foundation for employee motivation and engagement (Herzberg, 1968). This part also features aspects of transformational and transactional leadership and the autonomy aspect of laissez-fair, which were presented by many of the interviewees.

One of the basic requirements to have engaged employees and prevent dissatisfaction of the workforce is linked to Herzberg’s hygiene factor “working conditions” (Herzberg, 1968). This factor refers to the general working conditions surrounding the employees and also the resources available to them to do their job as efficient as possible. In the interviews, this rudimentary factor was mentioned directly by several interviewees (i1; i2; i3; i5; i8; i9), while others indirectly referred to the importance of the right working conditions. The interviewed leaders signified that having a pleasant work environment, sufficient space in the office for each individual employee and functioning IT equipment are inevitable to establish engagement and should be available to everyone in the organization.

Some interviewees also argued that to encourage engagement of the employees, there should be a certain level of safety at work (i1; i3; i5; i7; i9; i12). This includes an environment in which the staff feels confident to be themselves and to share their own opinions and needs, without fear of making mistakes or being bullied. Interviewee i7 said that the most basic element is to “create a psychological safety net” for the employees, as they also want to feel that the organization actively invest efforts in creating engagement through security. The element of safety can also be referred to from a different angle, as employees can feel dissatisfied if they fear losing their jobs in the near future. Interviewee i12 stated that it is advisable for employees to not be afraid of failures, but rather to embrace the process and learn from the mistake. In order to respect that approach, a positive failure culture would need to be facilitated by the organization and its leaders.

Amongst the basic requirements to create EE, another hygiene factor of Herzberg was mentioned by the majority of interviewees: the relationships with peers and managers (i1; i2; i3; i4; i9; i11; i12; i13). Interviewee i2 highlighted that employees are much more engaged if they have respectful relationships or even friendships at their organizations. These engaging relationships can be with either the managers or the co-workers. It was noticed by the interviewees that strong relationships and close friendships
amongst peers contribute positively towards EE. This mutual understanding of the same values and respect between colleagues, can take this hygiene factor even to the level of a motivational one.

In contrast to the hygiene factors, certain elements can create satisfaction for employees if present. Herzberg stated that the main motivators are job satisfaction creators like responsibilities, recognition, achievements, and personal growth opportunities (Herzberg, 1968; Hur, 2017). The importance of each motivator is dependent on the types of personalities, as each employee might value different incentives more than others (Hur, 2017). Furnham et al. (1999) explained that extroverts gain their motivation most through recognition and achievements.

Some interviewees mentioned also general aspects of job satisfaction as a healthy work-life balance and having fun at work quite frequently (i1; i3; i5). However, the focus appears to be in regard to giving responsibility to the employees, appreciate their work and offer possibilities to further develop themselves.

Many of the interviewees stated that employees need to have their own responsibilities in their jobs, as this gives them the ability to feel impactful towards the organization and at the same time creates engagement (i1; i2; i3; i8; i9; i10; i12). Interviewee i2 highlighted that responsibilities are not only task-related but that employees are also responsible to ensure that they can be as engaged as possible and to improve the situation if something is hindering them from achieving this.

Once employees have certain responsibilities, they also want to be recognized for their achievements at work (i4; i12). Herzberg stated that these two factors of recognition and achievement can contribute towards the motivation and engagement of employees and they were mentioned numerous times throughout the interviews. Employees can experience these aspects either by being acknowledged as a valuable part of the organization (i1; i4; i5; i11; i12; i13) or through achieving specific accomplishments (i1; i3; i4; i10; i11; i13).

As indicated by leaders, some employees would already be motivated sufficiently through the previously mentioned items, other employees might be looking for challenges that create growth opportunities for them (i5; i1). Growth can be achieved through regular feedback and having the opportunity to learn and work on new skills in your job. Several interviewees supported this and mentioned that they give their employees chances to develop further (i1; i3; i4; i5).

Overall, it can be said that the basic hygiene and motivator factors by Herzberg are mostly seen as a strong basis to create EE in the interviewed organizations. The interviewees also referred to leadership styles such as transactional, transformational laissez-fair leadership as an important foundation for engaged employees.

Transactional leadership’s importance towards EE is mainly rooted in the aspect of providing clear tasks for the employees and to ensure that they are aware of their roles in the organization (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Interviewee i2 stated that “first of all, you need to have some clarity around the roles and responsibilities” in order to have a chance at being an engaged employee. This awareness was shared by most interviewees as employees need to know what exactly is expected from them in their job and what that the objectives of the organization are (i1; i2; i3; i4; i7; i8; i9; i11; i12). Whenever this is not given, interviewee i1 emphasized that this can lead into frustration of the employees and result in overall dissatisfaction.

Employee engagement can also be influenced by transformational leadership, as this proactive approach includes further leadership methods. Transformational leaders focus on individually considering each employee to ensure that their needs are met in the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2016). Throughout the interviews, several leaders stated that they actively engage with their workforce individually as this appears unavoidable when aiming for EE (i1; i5; i7; i8; i9; i11; i12; i13). Interviewee i7 mentioned that
“you can't use just one uniform their management style” for the entire team, as the individual approach is mandatory to create EE.

During the interviews, the leaders often talked about providing a vision to their employees to increase engagement, which is linked to idealized vision of transformational leadership (i5; i7; i8; i10; i12). Next to providing a vision, some of the interviewed leaders also stated that they need to inspire and motivate their team members to achieve EE (i2; i3; i4; i9; i11).

Frequently, the interviewees indicated that another major factor to boost EE is to provide autonomy to the employees, which gives them space to act and allows them to make their own decisions according to their understanding (i7; i8; i9; i10; i12; i13). This theory is based in the leadership style of laissez fair and is also linked to Herzberg’s motivators.

5.1.2 Perception of Sustainability

Sustainability can be prioritized from various directions, which is why this section will mention the general understanding of the interviewed leaders on sustainability and their perception of how their organizations relate to this subject. Furthermore, the stakeholder demands that organizations face from their industries and consumers in regard to sustainability will be elaborated. The triple bottom line argues that sustainability is based on three aspects: people, profit and planet (Elkington, 1997). This refers to social, environmental and economic factors that play a role in current conversations and organizational strategies towards sustainable development (Werther & Chandler, 2011).

The leader i11 stated that sustainability now has become “the entry ticket to do business” and the majority of the interviewees agreed that sustainability is increasingly relevant in the Scandinavia region (i2; i3; i4; i5; i7; i8; i11). Particularly the area of research, the Öresund region, was emphasized by these interviewees as an advanced role model for sustainability. Interviewee i3 said that the infrastructure in this region allows people to live a more sustainable lifestyle in general. Worldwide awareness of sustainability was amplified in recent years, also by the media, as discussions and protests on global warming, international environmental protests and corporate social responsibility gained more recognition (i7). It was mentioned that especially the environmental factor on how individuals and organizations treat the planet became a dominant importance (i3; i4; i7; i8).

During the interviews, several leaders noted that sustainability is often used to improve the brand or image of the organizations (i1; i2; i7; i11). This also shows the power of the various stakeholder groups, as their increased demand for sustainability created a change in organizational behavior. Different interviewees supported this by mentioning that companies that do not develop in the direction of sustainability will face negative effects on their profits, as business partners and consumers will rather support organizations that act more sustainable (i1; i2; i7; i11). Another leader manifested this by saying that the entire world wants to be part of the “right story”, referring to a less harmful lifestyle (i4).

But also, internal stakeholders like the managers themselves and their employees increasingly demand for more sustainability in the organizations and the offices (i4; i11). During the interviews, several leaders talked about how important CSR is for its employees, as they tend to identify themselves with the image of their organizations and therefore pay special attention on their employers’ reputation (i4; i7; i8; i11). It is not surprising that all interviewees named sustainability goals that their companies are working on at the moment. This is due to the fact that goals and also accomplished transformations towards sustainability are now increasingly communicated internally and externally by the organizations (i1; i4).
5.1.3 Sustainability creating Purpose & EE

Throughout every interview, the importance of creating a strong purpose for the organization and its employees was emphasized as of great importance. Generally, the concept of purpose was described as the understanding of “why” employees decide to go to their offices every day and fulfill their tasks in accordance to the organizational mission and vision. As interviewee i7 said, “the purpose is what gives you the energy”. Some interviewees argued that a strong organizational purpose is a basic requirement to create EE and therefore needs to be clearly communicated through the leaders (i3; i4; i7; i8; i9). One interviewee mentioned that every individual has a personal purpose of why they do their job. To achieve the maximum amount of EE, this individual purpose needs to resonate with the organizational purpose (i7).

The interviewees i7 and i8 also noted that it is the leader’s responsibility to encourage meaningful work and to communicate the purpose as this would resonate in increased engagement and simultaneously also increase the internal retention rate and other benefits for the organization. And while the purpose does not necessarily have to be found in the field of sustainability, all interviewees agreed that their employees react strongly to sustainable goals of the organizations and take pride in those. Interviewee i9 suggested that no matter what the purpose is, as long as it unites the employees, it creates greater engagement amongst the staff. One participant of the interviews also mentioned that especially global corporations need to provide a significant purpose as internal and external stakeholders need to be able to identify themselves with the core vision of organizations (i4).

During the interviews, all leaders highlighted the increasing importance of sustainability in today’s society. Interviewee i2 underlined that especially in Scandinavia, sustainability is becoming increasingly relevant to motivate individuals and generate engagement. A sustainable purpose within organizations helps the employees to feel that their daily contribution matters on a bigger scale and that they can be part of a positive mission, which together increase EE (i1; i2; i3; i5; i7; i8; i10). And although some organizations provide social and environmental support in less developed areas in the world, like charity activities, interviewee i2 argues that the geographical distance to these initiatives will create less engagement in employees than local activities. Sustainable purposes of organizations have the chance to create pride amongst their employees, which refers to the motivators of Herzberg and therefore positively affect the levels of satisfaction internally. Many interviewees confirmed that employees want to feel that their organizations are contributing towards a greater good and that they feel more positive about their own work (i1; i2; i4; i7; i11; i12).

Some of the interviewees mentioned that in situations when their organizations initiated sustainability actions, the engagement level and overall interest was surprisingly huge (i1; i4; i5; i7). In regard to a sustainability activity like this, one interviewee said:

“The response to those things was overwhelming [...] I think we've underestimated, how important some of those things are and how we can actually do more”

(i1)

Another important remark during the interviews was that sustainability as a core purpose of the organization engages the employees far more than a general financial related goal (i9; i13). Interviewee i9 continued that employees want to take part in a powerful journey of the organization, like working towards a sustainability goal, and achieve something “good” in their day to day life. This change of impact at work can create huge levels of excitement in the organizations and positively influence the overall satisfaction (i1). In contrast, one interviewee argued that sustainability as a purpose alone is insufficient to motivate employees as individuals have different priorities.

Overall, the interviews highlighted the strong connection of sustainability as a useful purpose for organizations and the positive effect of this towards EE.
5.2 Sustainability actions for EE

The following section will be founded on insights from previously conducted interviews, that will introduce leaders’ actions to engage employees. Accordingly, this chapter will represent the leaders’ perceptions on the implementation of sustainability as an EE tool. To maintain a wholistic view, statements about fundamental organizational prerequisites, which need to be present to initiate sustainable actions, will be elaborated. Further to this, the leaders’ opinions of their specific role in that process will be analyzed. To conclude this section, tangible actions are presented, which for the sake of clarity are differentiated according to their educational and practical nature.

5.2.1 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, in the context of large multinational companies often referred to as “corporate culture” (Schein, 2010, p.1), is a system of different structures which influence behaviors of both leaders and employees and vice versa. As presented in chapter 1.1.1 a widely recognized approach to define organizational culture was introduced by Schein. He defined artefacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions as the three levels that further clarify this phenomenon (Schein, 2004; Schein, 2010). According to Schein (2010), these aspects affect general behavior patterns and through this determine a general mindset that is at place. i4 argued that the culture is the foundation of an organization, which represents its current position also towards sustainability. This in turn also defines to which extent sustainable related EE activities are considered in order to foster a higher degree of EE.

i4 additionally mentioned that there is a gap between a company’s culture and the vision it has for the future, especially in terms of a social and environmental conduct of business. However, in order to set such ambitious visions, organizations need to have a certain willingness to anticipate change processes.

Despite internal culture that stimulate a more sustainable business approach, several leaders stated that they perceived an increased external stakeholder pressure, which in turn influenced the organization to take environmental and socially responsible actions (i3; i4; i6). One leader argued that especially large, multinational companies need to embrace this demand, as they vastly influence the society and are therefore responsible to act (i6). This perception shows that some organizations managed to integrate a culture in which a clear sense of CSR is embedded. i3 contributed to this discourse by stating that the organization noticed a shift in sustainability demands and complied to it, which represented a reactive approach. However, another leader opposed to this and argued that this awareness is equally spread throughout the whole society and is not only induced through stakeholder pressure.

Regardless of these motivational factors, a sustainable business approach can not only be viewed from an ethical perspective, but it also requires a more holistic consideration. For instance, several leaders said that sustainability can also support a more cost-effective conduct of business, which among other factors can serve as a competitive advantage (i3; i7; i10; i11). In turn, others argued that in order to have sustainability-related engagement activities, the financial foundation must be ensured to sustain the business (i7; i10). Despite the financial issues, i2 raised concerns about the difficulty to successfully integrate sustainability as an EE tool in everyday life. In this context, a few drew the connection to communication as a major part for a successful establishment (i2; i4; i8). They stated that it is crucial to openly share sustainable activities, as this increased awareness created pride and therewith a higher engagement level (i4; i8). i8 took it beyond that point and argued that this clear communication demonstrated a shifted organizational purpose towards a sustainable conduct of business, which also increased external recognition.

Besides the aforementioned organizational prerequisites, leaders were also asked how their success in engaging employees is measured. These findings were used to analyze the awareness level of organizations about the construct of EE. In this context, i1 referred to the organization’s approach to directly link EE together with organizational success and to measure engagement with performance, which shows a deep understanding of the influence the construct can have. Very commonly mentioned
measurements to define the EE level were engagement-surveys (i2; i4; i6; i8; i11). Another method is the employee turnover rate, which gives insights of how long employees stayed within the corporation (i3). Some leaders stated, that organizations became more aware about the contribution of sustainability towards EE, because of these measurements (i1; i8; i12). All in all, it can be said that these procedures are important as they can help to visualize organizations’ EE level, which in turn is a crucial foundation for further activities. i2 and i9 introduced feedback as a possible reaction to maintain a high degree of engagement, by giving the employee a sense of recognition. Leaders agreed that this approach needs to be anchored in organizations’ cultures in order to establish a safe environment in which everyone feels safe to speak freely and have the opportunity to grow (i2; i4; i9). Both of these foregoing factors refer to Herzberg’s motivational factors (Herzberg, 1968). i4 recommended that the impact of these motivators could be increased, by extending this feedback culture on a peer basis. This draws a direct connection to relationships at work, which is another aspect that needs to be incorporated to the organizational culture, according to several leaders (i1; i2; i5; i8; i9). i1 and i2 mentioned that one possible solution for that was to integrate activities outside work in their organizational culture. Both claimed that this created a strong engagement, that cannot be achieved by the leader alone (i1; i2). i5 and i8 translated this willingness to create personal connections at work to the level of professional relationships and claimed that organizations also need to be open for close interactions with other businesses. They state that close-knitted networks with professionals helped to share ideas about sustainable approaches, to find best practices.

All of the aforementioned aspects influence organizations’ cultures, which on the other hand determine what sustainable actions are taken in order to create EE. One of the major contributions to this culture is perceived by leaders in having strong core values (i1; i3; i6; i13). Several leaders mentioned that diversity, equality and creating a culture where the human-being is at the center, were some of the most recognized values besides being a transparent and authentic organization (i1; i3; i6; i8; i13). i6 claimed that a sustainable culture based on those parameters, helps to establish a strong employer brand, which in turn attracts new talents. i11 supported this perception by stating that “sustainability is part of our strategy [...] it's part of what we do. And by doing good we attract people with the mind of a sustainable world.” (i11).

5.2.2 Leadership Role

Besides elaborating on organizational prerequisites for a successful integration of sustainability related EE activities, it is also necessary to view how leaders perceived their particular roles in this context. i7 mentioned that a leader’s main duty is to raise awareness about what their organization is doing and to communicate that to the team. Therefore, for i7 leadership symbolized the bridge between the company and its employees. Others confirmed this approach and additionally stated that leaders need to clarify in which direction the organization is heading and what goals are to be achieved because of this (i2; i6; i9; i11). To clarify goals is part of the introduced concept of transactional leadership, which sets the basis for further actions (Shuck & Herd, 2012). i11 and i9 explicitly stated that this procedure is directly linked to communicating the organization’s purpose, which in their view sets the foundation for creating EE. In this connection i3 remarked, that organizations assign leaders to different tasks according to their abilities and strengths to be engaging in that specific field. This needs to be ensured, because engagement is perceived as one of the major tasks (i3; i5). i8 confirmed this assumption and defined the main leadership role as followed:

“My role as a leader in the organization is to focus on employee engagement, I'm actually measured on it in terms of performance. And so, we take it very seriously. Not just in words, but in actions.”

(i8)
In terms of actions, i2 announced that every employee needs to be considered individually, as variables like personal abilities, needs and experiences vary amongst different team members. Through this assumption, i2 drew a connection to individualized consideration, which is one of the four main characteristics of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2016). i4 followed this approach and refers to transformational leadership by defining leaders’ main duty to inspire and stimulate their employees by communicating organizational values. This also refers back to the bridging function between the organization and the its members. Many leaders clarified that their role is to ensure that this connection is bilateral and thereby allows exchange processes from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives (i4; i5; i6; i10; i12). i10 exemplified that in decision-making the integration of employees is crucial, especially when it comes to sustainability related activities, as a high degree of involvement can serve as a source of knowledge and increased engagement level. According to i6, getting employees involved also helped to decide which EE activities will be of interest, which will enhance the general engagement. Furthermore, this approach simplifies to raise awareness amongst the team about sustainable activities, as they were included throughout the whole process (i6).

Other leaders confirmed the importance of involvement but refined it by stating that another important aspect that needs to be in place is autonomy (i1; i2; i5; i11; i12). Despite having an organizational culture that embraces autonomy, it is a crucial task for the leader, to enable employees to be creative and proactively involved in several activities (i12). This perception shows that some leaders drew connections to laissez-faire, the final aspect of the full-range model. It represents the necessity for leaders to step back and to give employees the space to act and think freely (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Galpin et al., 2012). In order to execute successful sustainable activities, leaders have to be able to practice this approach, as it provides followers with a strong feeling of trust and recognition (i1; i2; i5; i6). One leader mentioned that sometimes employees “don’t need to be managed to create something amazing.”

However, even though providing autonomy is an important aspect of leaders’ duties, the majority of interviewees noted that the most important aspect is their function as a role model (i2; i3; i4; i5; i7; i8; i12; i13). These statements correlate to the transformational leader’s function to provide idealized influence, by being a role model and demonstrate to followers what is expected of them (Galpin et al., 2012). i2 stated that in order to be such a leader, it is essential to be authentic by showing the true personality. This statement was also given by others who confirmed that authenticity is a key factor, but they also stated that in order to be authentic imperfections and failure need to be embraced (i2; i3; i13). i13 claims that this approach helps to create a safe environment in which employees feel free to participate and learn by trial and error, which needs to be in place to have successful execution of sustainable activities. Further to this, the participation in activities will increase if leaders are leading by example and demonstrate how sustainability can be integrated in every day working life (i4; i5; i7; i8; i13). Through this, leaders make it more tangible for employees to perceive what is expected, which makes people feel more comfortable to participate and accordingly to be more engaged (i7).

### 5.2.3 Sustainability Actions

The previous sections reflected the interviewees’ perceptions of organizational culture and their distinct leadership role. Insights extracted from the interviews showed that these two factors need to be aligned with each other and fulfil specific criteria, in order to enable EE through sustainable activities. Besides elaborating on these important prerequisites, the majority of leaders also gave tangible sustainability-related activities that were used in working life to create EE. For the sake of clarity, the presented actions are differentiated according to their educational or practical approach.

Some leaders mentioned, that successful educational activities require a proactive approach of communication (i1; i9; i11). This should help to distribute information throughout the organization, which according to interviewees contributed to raise awareness about existing activities (i9; i11). i1 states that this should be aligned with the aforementioned communication of core values, which
simultaneously increases the level of authenticity and individual purpose. Multiple leaders referred to project-based activities, which are characterized by being temporary (i1; i2; i5; i7; i9). i1 and i5 introduced information days that were organized in order to inform a broader internal audience about general sustainability-related activity. Both argued that it was important to educate employees about this topic to ensure an equal level of awareness, which on the other hand is fundamental for each individual to be able to contribute (i1; i5). i9 described a similar approach of educating the broader workforce through information events. They extended this concept by collaborating with other corporations and inviting external lecturers, who shared success stories that should help to inspire people (i9). Other leaders used the idea of educational activities to inform their employees about sustainable activities that are initiated by the organization for the purpose of making these actions more tangible (i2; i7). i2 additionally claimed that this helped to establish a strong feeling of pride, which increased EE and their willingness to contribute to similar projects.

Several leaders described practices that exceed temporary projects and rather demonstrate an implementation of sustainable education within the business strategy (i2; i3; i5; i7; i8). One way to do that is by including the element of education in continuous leadership programs, which should ensure that leaders are constantly aware of recent sustainable activities (i2). This especially refers to new members, as the organization’s sustainability approach needs be communicated from the beginning (i2 & i3). i7 mentioned that this could also be done via educational online courses. As introduced by i5, focus groups are another possibility to integrate education in the work routine. They stated that they educated eight people about sustainability, who in turn had to spread that knowledge to another eight people, whereby the organization achieved to establish awareness, whilst strengthening internal relationships (i5). Compared to online courses, it might be argued that this also has the advantage of promoting personal connections, which can be perceived as motivational factors. However, i2 and i6 remarked that despite the necessity to assume this educational function, sometimes leaders cannot contribute as much as they want, due to other duties.

Further to this, i3 and i8 illustrated that besides the general education functions, leaders should also communicate about practical sustainability activities to increase EE. In contrast to education, practical activities are more tangible and through this create a higher degree of loyalty and engagement (i1; i2; i6; i8; i11; i12). i1 and i2 both mentioned that employees are becoming more aware and prouder, if the sustainability efforts of organizations are closely related to their core business. They stated that organizations’ large, internationally known sustainability activities have the potential to create a sharp rise in EE (i1; i2). In order to ensure the positive contribution of sustainable activities on the engagement level, i9 suggested that platforms need to be introduced on which sustainability-related success stories can be shared and promoted. i7 and i12 also additionally stated, that a feedback culture needs to be integrated to raise awareness about those activities.

Many leaders proposed, that in terms of practical activities, the internal sustainability is also very important, as it usually has a direct effect on employees (i3; i5; i8; i9; i11; i12). i5 gave the example of a new concept of maternity leave, which should help to foster a fair working environment, in which everyone is equally considered. Through activities like this, employees can directly perceive changes, as they are positively affected by them (i5). Besides incorporating practices of social sustainability, leaders also referred to environmentally friendly approaches. Some leaders stated that their organizations improved recycling methods and restricted travelling (i3; i5; i8; i9; i11). i2 introduced that their team invented an app, which allowed to keep track of the individual resource consumption. This enabled the whole organization to compare and even compete against each other like in a game, which fostered a high-degree of awareness, while boosting the engagement in terms of sustainability (i12). Moreover, that approach created a strong sense of pride within the team, as their sustainable activity is now well-established in the organizational culture (i12). i3 and i8 stated, that besides the engaging effects of pro-environmental behaviors they also create a financial benefit, as less resource
consumption equals less costs. However, i8 additionally argued that “a tangible benefit of that [approach] is people actually believe it and they stay in your organization.”

Another way to approach sustainability was identified, and relates to activities, that are not related to the core business. i6 and i8 for instance highlighted that their organizations incorporated an approach, which enables their employees to have a paid leave to join a sustainable project around the globe. Through this approach both state that participants are highly engaged, as they are able to gain experiences, having a positive impact, while being supported through their employer. This in turn creates a strong connection to the organization (i6; i8). Other leaders introduced a similar approach, but it relates to the company as a whole instead of individuals (i3; i4). i3 and i4 explained that it is an annual event on which all organizational members have the possibility to get paid, but participate in several social and environmental activities, such as cleaning beaches or working in a refugee home. Others noted that they participate in gay prides, supporting NGOs or donate for social causes (i1; i6, i8; i11; i12). All of them agreed that these activities helped to create a strong sense of unity, while participating for a good cause, which was a successful tool to strengthen the EE (i1; i6, i8; i11; i12). In the context of practical activities, interviewee i1 expressed how surprised they were about the interest and enthusiasm of employees to be part of a core sustainable initiative from the company. This actually displayed that the perception of the contribution of sustainability was to a certain extent underestimated by some leaders, and therefore did not acknowledge its full potential for EE.

This chapter helped to analyze how diverse sustainability can be used as an EE tool. There was a general consent that a wide spectrum of sustainable activities can be used successfully, in order to get employees engaged and connected to their organizations. Leaders acknowledged that it has a strong effect on the majority of the employees. However, i8 criticized this approach and argued that the engaging effect of sustainability is primarily a positive side-effect and it should not only be integrated for the sake of EE, because:

“We are not doing it to keep people happy. We are doing it to save the planet.”

(i8)

5.3 Future employee expectations

Throughout the interviews it became clear that all interviewed leaders have a focus on new talents and their needs. They argued that these talents have been perceived to be high performers that majorly contribute to the company and eventually will be leaders themselves (i3; i9; i11). Therefore, leaders within companies are continuously looking to attract talent to enforce their team but have to adapt to the changing demands within society in order to draw and retain them. This poses challenges for all leaders in the Öresund region, which can only be overcome if they understand the shifting mindset and development in expectations of the local workforce. Therefore, this chapter will elaborate on how leaders perceive the shift in mindset, leadership expectations and how they may attract and retain high performing individuals by fulfilling their developing expectations.

5.3.1 Shift in mindset

Interviewees expressed that they expect a transformation of employee demands and needs in the coming years (i3; i5; i6; i7; i13). They argued that there will be a shift from traditional demands valued by older generations like high salary, job security and driving a big car, towards more modern requirements such as work-life balance and connecting with the purpose of a company. As i6 expressed “It’s not only a matter of going to work and getting your pay check every month, but more and more people really want to see a purpose with what we’re doing”. This insight portrayed how leaders perceive future shifts of
priorities and that they need to acknowledge this shift and adjust their behavior accordingly, to establish and maintain EE with the organization.

As stated by some leaders, company pride is a primary factor in EE (1; i2; i3; i4, i5, i7; i8; i10; i12; i13). They argued that more and more people want to be proud of what they are contributing to society through their work, which in turn shows there is a direct link between company pride and having a meaningful sustainable purpose within the company. This is supported by i1’s statement that there is a direct link between the transformation towards a more sustainable conduct of business and an increase of pride and EE within the company. Interviewee i2 stated that if sustainability is in the core of doing business it creates pride. However, interviewee i1 and i2 also argued that sustainability actions can contribute to pride without necessarily being related to the core business.

Furthermore, autonomy was a recurring topic within the interviews and some leaders developed their perception of this factor even further. Interviewee i1 and i2 perceived that there will be a shift of responsibility for EE, moving from the leader to the employee, which acknowledged that employees also have to contribute. They claimed that employees will also be responsible to create their own engagement by searching for possibilities to participate. But to achieve this i1 and i2 noted that there need to be a development in employees’ mindsets, as this behavior requires a certain level of self-awareness. Additionally, it will continuously be the leader’s duty to create a culture that sustains a safe environment, as mentioned in 5.1.1, where the employee feels they can speak out to their leader and express their needs. Interviewee i5 suggested that this can be fostered by integrating a culture of bilateral feedback.

Throughout the interviews it became clear that almost all leaders anticipated the increasing role of sustainability for current and future employees. They either experienced this in their job as a leader over the last 10 years or encountered it when conducting job interviews with post-graduate talent (i4; i5; i9; i13). Interviewee i4 acknowledged that compared to 20 years ago a lot more employees are engaged with the value of the environment making sustainability a general topic discussed in daily life either with colleagues, friends or neighbors. i11 stated that this development mainly accelerated in the last 10 years advancing the theme to be a serious topic, partially explaining the increased awareness of the workforce, as argued by i4. Drawing the connections to future developments, i4 and i11 suggested that this transformation process will continue over the next years and thereby increases the need for incorporating sustainability. Furthermore, they noted that the new generation of the workforce has been educated in school about this issue, creating a bigger sense of awareness within the younger generation (i8). This could explain the change of employee’s value set, argued by i4 and i6 that it will become a part of their lifestyle. Because of this general increase in awareness and knowledge on the topic, companies will have to go to greater lengths to fulfil those demands since their workforce has higher expectations. Interviewee i4 additionally stated that this development needs to be authentic, as employees cannot be satisfied with greenwashing initiatives. Moreover, i8 argued that the workforce in the Öresund region is a frontrunner in terms of having a sustainable mindset. Adding to that, interviewee i3 argued that especially in this region sustainability will be a key differentiator they also claimed that it is only a matter of time before it will be adapted by emerging markets.

5.3.2 Leadership Expectations

Interviewed leaders expressed not only in which way they foresee changes in employees and their needs, but also what will be expected of them as a leader (i1; ;2; i5; i7; i8; i11). One of the challenges they foresaw is that the number of parameters for creating this engagement will increase, since every individual has particular requirements, which needs to be aligned with maintaining a focus on doing business (i11). This correlates to the arguments of other interviewees (i5, i7, i8, i11) which showed a general perception of employees’ demands to be considered as individuals and it will be the leader’s duty to incorporate the core aspect of transformational leadership; individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2016). This in turn corresponds with the employees’ desire
to be supported by their leaders and get possibilities for individual development both in terms of career and personal advancement (i2, i6; i8). Giving an outlook on this demand, leaders stated that younger generations will increasingly look for less hierarchical leadership (i2) giving them more autonomy in their job (i1; i9). Corresponding with paragraph 5.3.1 and argued by i1, a safe environment needs to be actively created by leaders. Interviewee i7 stated that if leaders will not be able to comply to these expectations there will be other employers that will fill this gap. Therefore, some interviewees claimed that it will be expected to provide purposeful leadership which gives a strong purpose to the employee (i7; i9; i13). Moreover, according to i7 and i10 leaders will have to implement sustainability, as it will play a major role for attracting future talent. This issue will be further clarified and discussed in the next paragraph.

5.3.3 Attracting Talent

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that leaders had the perception that sustainability is a factor of increasing importance. As underlined in previous sections, interviewed leaders perceived that postgraduate talents have higher demands regarding sustainability. Interviewee i7 stated new acquired talents joined the organization, because of its clear sustainability approach. i7 also claimed that this approach of choosing a suitable employer will increasingly be made based on their sustainability efforts. However, some argued that sustainability will be a parameter among many that cannot be seen solely by itself (i4; i5; i6; i8; i11; i13). As interviewee i4 additionally explained, it will play a certain role, but it will neither be the main factor within the hiring process nor the number one priority. There will be other basic factors in place, like how far an employee has to travel (i6), where the company is located (i6), what kind of work-life balance is offered (i5; i11), wellness at work (i8) and transparency (i13). Therefore, sustainability is a component in the mix (i4) but argued by most leaders as a component with increasing importance (i2, i3, i4, i5, i6, i7, i8, i11).

Other leaders in turn underlined that the importance of being able to identify with the company will play a major role, because it relates to the personal brand of the employee and therefore has to match their values (i1, i3, i4; i5). As i1 explained, your work will be increasingly linked to your personal brand which supports the statements from i3 and i5, that it is impossible to attract new talent unless they have a good brand they can identify with. i3 argued that companies that purely focus on profit will eventually find it increasingly challenging to recruit talent in the Öresund region. Moreover, i13 stated that: “in the past, […] the company chose, I want you, you and you. It’s the opposite now, the talents choose me”. And other leaders confirmed that this notion will be perceived of increasing importance in the future (i8; i11; 13). According to i8 younger generations will expect a strong purpose from companies they want to work for. With the increasing necessity to brand a company in order to identify with them, companies have to strengthen their purpose. By doing so they show their values and can attract talent that shares those values. In order to achieve this i8 argued this was the reason to relaunch their purpose and i9 expressed their purpose has to become even more clear and known.

As stated in paragraph 5.2.3, sustainability will be used further as a tool to create EE through leaders’ actions for future employees. i3 supportingly states that “it's becoming more important that you have a strong CSR strategy, and that you can actually be pretty explicit on CSR goals”. It was supported by the majority of leaders that future employees will demand that sustainability is a part of organizations’ core values and it needs to be aligned with employee's personal identity (i1; i4; i5; i6; i7; i8; i9; i10; i11; i12; i13). Therefore, i1 argued that employers are promoting their sustainability efforts externally, supported by i3 stating that this will be one of the key topics. This showed leaders' perceptions of how sustainability is becoming increasingly important to attract employees.
6 Discussion

Recent studies have discovered that sustainability actions of organizations can positively influence the level of engagement amongst employees (Galpin et al., 2015; Glavas, 2012), but no research was conducted in regard to the Öresund region yet. This is the reason why this study intended to analyze the contribution of sustainability towards employee engagement from a managerial perspective, while focusing on multinational organizations located in the Öresund region.

A literature review was conducted to determine the status quo of the EE discourse, which supported previous assumptions about the increasing role of sustainability. Furthermore, it led to the formation of three research questions. Together, these questions demonstrate insights from the leader’s perception of the connection between sustainability and EE, showcase actions that leaders initiate to support EE through sustainability and elaborated on future employee demands towards multinational organizations. The formulation of the research questions and conducting secondary research lead to selected supportive theories, which equally refer to organizational, leadership and employee-oriented perspectives and thereby provided a holistic approach to the topic. The main theories that framed the scope of the primary research and analysis were transformational leadership, transactional leadership and Herzberg’s two-factor theory, including the hygiene and motivational factors. Throughout the research study, the aforementioned theories proofed to be relevant for the aim of this study by contributing insights on individual, organizational and leadership perspectives. Furthermore, the construct of organizational culture and the laissez-fair leadership style were partially used in the process to support the study but were not part of the main theoretical frame.

Overall, the presented findings of this research study managed to provide key insights into the topic of sustainability and its influences on employee engagement within the selected scope. It shed light on the leaders' perceptions of this concept and helped to extract insights from large multinationals across various industries in the Öresund region. To maintain a clear structure, the following section will be divided according to the three research questions, to allow an individual reflection on the main findings.

In regard to the first research question, that studies the leaders’ perception on sustainability and its connection to EE, it was found that while all leaders agreed that sustainability has a positive influence on EE, most leaders have not thought about this relationship actively before. Amongst the interviewees was a common agreement that the main source for EE is connected to having a strong purpose at work. In this context, it was highlighted by most interviewees that sustainability creates a strong purpose in organizations but that the purpose can also be based on different topics to improve the level of engagement in organizations. Although all companies from the interviewees demonstrated extensive sustainability agendas, surprisingly many leaders have not consciously drawn the connection of sustainability and EE previous to the interviews.

However, even those leaders that were not actively aware of that construct, demonstrated aspects that proofed that they indirectly draw a connection between these factors. Especially when asked about the extent to which the EE level was influenced by the organizations’ transformation process, the majority agreed that the engagement positively developed through the more sustainable conduct of business. This proofed that they subconsciously perceived a positive connection, but in turn, helped to expose a certain lack of awareness.

Another unexpected finding was that, although every leader presented a general consensus about sustainability, only a few approached it from every perspective of the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997; Henriques & Richardson, 2004). Interestingly, the interviewees equally focused either on social or environmental aspects of the triple bottom line, due to which this study could still present a holistic picture.
The second research question in this study sought to determine what actions leaders take in order to support EE through sustainability. There was a large variety of sustainable related activities that were implemented by organizations that targeted both, social and environmental issues. Several leaders noted that these measures were not taken initially to create EE, hence they were astonished by the positive effects these actions had on the internal engagement level. What is surprising is that some interviewees did not expect sustainability to have such an engaging power. This revealed that they clearly underestimated its possible contribution to EE and accordingly its positive influence on the organizational success (Kahn, 1990; Parent & Lovelace, 2018; Schneider et al., 2017). Those leaders who took sustainability-related actions to foster EE, noticed that organizational culture needs to be present that embraces a strong willingness to commit to CSR. Additionally, the majority of leaders confirmed that those activities were mainly promoted by the organization or responsible sustainability departments and some even stated that their employees initiated the impetus for it. Contrary, to what was expected, certain leaders, however, did not recognize it as their responsibility to initiate sustainable EE activities and therefore fully-relied on the organization. This consequently exposed that there are wide differences in awareness about the leader’s role in this debate. Despite that, the majority confirmed that their main task is to communicate about the company’s sustainability efforts and through this to raise awareness among their personnel. In this regard, many noted that they personally, as well as the organization itself, have the potential to improve internal and external communication. Even though leaders generally perceived that multinational companies in the Öresund region have a strong commitment to sustainability, they noted the potential to extend it. In this context, one interviewee highlighted that this sustainable development should be embraced to improve the CSR, rather than solely for the sake of increasing EE, as this could be considered to be greenwashing.

While conducting the interviews, it became clear that all leaders perceived that sustainability will increasingly be important for employees in the future. They argued that the new generation of talents and even existing employees are constantly having higher demands and standards regarding this issue. The third research question therefore aimed at analyzing the leaders’ perceptions of future employee expectations. In this connection, all interviewees confirmed the perception that the importance of sustainability for employees and the demand for CSR will increase in the future. Many leaders noted that especially new talents from younger generations will have the desire to identify themselves with sustainable organizations, due to the strong purpose those companies provide. They accordingly state, that especially the phenomenon of providing a sustainable and purposeful workplace will serve as a competitive advantage in terms of attracting new employees. Contrastingly, some interviewees argued that sustainability will only be one of many parameters that will be of relevance for the future of employee expectations. Few agreed on it and critically added that people, in general, are only willing to comply with sustainability, as long as it does not compromise their own behavior and restrict their personal comfort zone. However, all leaders had the same opinion that it will be crucial to consider every employees’ expectations individually, in order to determine what their main drivers for EE are. With these estimates, the interviewees indirectly stated that individualized consideration, and thereby transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Riggio, 2016), will play a major role in the future of attracting and retaining employees. It is somewhat surprising that even though some leaders were critical about the role of sustainability, everyone stated that it will be a central part of their leadership role. In this context, it has to be remarked that this consensus can be biased, as sustainability was the main focus of the interview and leaders are also representing large organizations, which might suggest some kind of positive branding in their statements.

Even though this study provided interesting insights on leaders’ perceptions about the connection between sustainability and employee engagement, there are a few limitations that need to be acknowledged. By reaching out to possible interviewees, the authors of this research study actively contacted the majority of participants via the professional networking platform LinkedIn. Therefore, the findings may be somewhat limited, as it can be assumed that leaders who are using this platform and are willing to invest their time for interviews have a specific mindset, which might not be representative for the average leader. Additionally, it needs to be noted that, some managers of the same company participated in the study, which also might have had an effect on the results, as the organizational culture and activities influenced leaders’ perceptions. Throughout the analysis, this became obvious, because
several leaders referred to the same management course that was introduced by the company, which shaped their view on sustainability and EE. This observation suggested that leaders are biased due to their organization’s approach towards sustainability. Another indicator for this was that, even though the anonymity of the interviews was insured, few leaders seemed to be biased by their employer, as it gave the impression that they were constantly embellishing their company’s sustainability efforts. Lastly, it needs to be noted that the study was conducted within the Öresund region, which is considered as a forerunner in sustainability with a relatively high level of general awareness (Vojnovic, 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that for instance leaders’ predictions of future employee demands are influenced by this and represent a comparably high demand for sustainability.
7 Conclusion

The presented study was designed to provide insights on sustainability and its contribution to employee engagement from a managerial perspective. Previous research indicated that levels of EE were steadily declining in organizations and that the integration of sustainability could serve as a method to prevent this and simultaneously increase overall employee satisfaction. Even though recent literature covers this subject, there is no information available how sustainability and its effect on EE are linked to leaders of multinational corporations, located in the Öresund region. With indications that this region of Denmark and Sweden provide unique infrastructures and advanced awareness levels of the population towards sustainability, the findings from the research can be seen as a role model for other regions.

The academic literature and the interviews have shown that leaders in the Öresund region confirm that sustainability in organizations provides a positive influence towards employee engagement, although individual leaders might have never drawn the direct link between both factors. One of the most significant findings that emerged from this study is that all interviewees highlighted the importance of a strong organizational purpose concerning EE. Although the purpose can have considerable effects on EE when it is based on sustainability, interviewees highlighted that a strong purpose in general, regardless of sustainability, can positively increase engagement levels at work. As all interviewed leaders were employed by multinational corporations that shifted towards more sustainable conduct of business, the findings show that this change positively impacted the engagement amongst their employees.

The second aim of this study was to understand which actions leaders take to support EE through sustainability. The findings in this regard showed that especially the organizations and their CSR departments are aware of the need to provide activities and actions in regard to sustainability to their employees. The interviewed leaders highlighted the surprisingly positive response towards the actions as mentioned above and activities on EE, but they did not provide many examples where they actively integrated these elements within their teams. The leaders perceive that it is the organizations’ responsibility to offer sustainability actions to the employees, rather than their own duty. On the contrary, the interviewees agreed that it is their task to communicate organizational efforts on this subject internally, while also mentioning that they could improve in this field.

Thirdly, this research examined how leaders perceived the future of employee demands towards organizations. In this context, it needs to be highlighted that all interviewees, as well as several scholars, indicate that sustainability will gain more importance for employees, especially for new talents from the younger generation. Many organizations, therefore, also increase their focus on sustainability, as this improved their chances of attracting new talents, retaining their employees and obtain a better competitive advantage. Additionally, the conducted research revealed that employees more and more prefer to work in a flexible working environment that respects their individual contribution to the organization and presents a substantial purpose within their working life.

Combining these factors, this study has shown that sustainability influences the engagement levels of multinational organizations within the Öresund region and indicate that the importance of integrating sustainability will further increase in the future.

Throughout the process of the research, several suggestions for future research ideas were noted. First of all, the same research could be conducted with a different geographical orientation. This could be beneficial to gain a more holistic picture of the connection between sustainability and EE. The same applies to a specific examination of other industries or company sizes, as this might also give different insights on the phenomenon. Another approach could be to conduct quantitative research on the topic to strengthen the findings and to develop the discourse further. The authors of this study also suggest elaborating on this topic from the employee’s perspective, as this could give more profound insights on
the topic. This, in turn, could be the basis for new research, which would examine the role of sustainability as the purpose at work.

As a final note towards this study, it is essential to remember that sustainability should not only be seen as a measure to increase engagement levels, as it should rather be seen as a positive side effect and the primary focus should remain on pursuing true sustainable conduct of business.

“We are not doing it to keep people happy. We are doing it to save the planet.”
List of References


Van Allen, S. (2013), Engagement at work: its effects on performance continues in tough economic


Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

1. Thank you for the time

2. Introducing ourselves:

Students at Malmö University

a. Pascal Pelikan
b. Justus van de Loo
c. Ann-Christin Terkowski

3. Interview focus:

a. Subject: “Trying to understand the connection between sustainability and employee engagement from the perspective of the manager in the Öresund region”

b. Interviews: We Interview several managers with team responsibilities from international organizations.

4. Definitions:

a. Organizational Sustainability:
Organizations balancing social (people), environmental (planet) and economic (profit) aspects without compromising the potential of current and future generations.

b. Employee Engagement:
Employees’ ongoing motivation and commitment to work towards the organization's success

5. Permission to record: Ask & start recording! (Interviews are anonymous)

____________________________

Interview Questions:

1. Introduction of Interviewee (Name, Job title, Company, # of team members managing)

2. How do you see your organization's position on sustainability?
   a. What role does sustainability play in your job?

3. What do you think are the basic requirements to have engaged employees? -> Why?
   a. What do you think motivates your employees to be engaged? -> Why/how?
b. Which tools or practices do you think work best to create engagement? -> Why?

c. How important is the role of sustainability in the context of employee engagement for you?

4. What actions did and do you take to create engagement within your team?
   a. Do you offer sustainability related activities to your team in order to achieve engagement? What activities? Why

5. How do you see your responsibility as a leader to engage your employees?

6. How would you describe the level of engagement of your employees and how do you measure it? -> Why?
   a. (If manager for a long period of time): -> Has this changed over the last years? -> How -> what happened?
   b. What differentiates your organization (and team) from others regarding employee engagement?

7. What do you think disengages your employees? -> Why & how?
   a. What actions would you take if you have an unengaged employee?

8. What do you think is the relation between sustainability and employee engagement? -> Why?
   a. Have you ever heard of using sustainability as a tool to increase employee engagement?
   b. Yes: How do you think sustainability influences employee engagement?
   c. No: Would you be interested in learning about the connection between sustainability and employee engagement?
   d. Do you think there is a correlation between the organization’s sustainability practices/efforts and employee engagement?
9. Do you inform/educate your employees about your organization’s sustainability efforts?
   a. What do you want to achieve through this?
   b. How do you do this?

10. What are jobseekers nowadays looking for in an employer?
   a. Has this changed in recent years?

11. Have you experienced an organizational transformation towards a more sustainable conduct of business?
   a. How did the transition towards sustainability influence the level of employee engagement? Why

12. How do you see the future development of employee engagement?

13. What lessons did you learn over the past years as a leader or manager?
   a. Are you actively trying to educate yourself on the topic of leadership?

14. Is there anything else you want to share with us that we did not ask about?