Anything new under the sun?
A qualitative study on the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs and its potential sources

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Umeå School of Business
Autumn semester 2011
Master thesis, two-years, 30hp
Summary

The human kind is at risk as severe problems, such as poverty or climate change, escalate. At the root of these problems is the organization of human (economic) activity and sustainability, a simple and attracting concept that hides an ideological battle among three discourses, is pointed out as the solution. The result of this battle will dictate if we will deal with those problems by keeping all the same (market discourse), by reforming the actual system (weak sustainability discourse) or by transforming it radically (strong sustainability discourse).

Sustainable entrepreneurs, as an important source of innovation, can provide cues to what kind of change we will have. Given the non-existence of previous research on the topic two research questions were defined that try to i) understand how much of the discourse of the sustainable entrepreneurs is based upon our current way of thinking and ii) identify what social mechanisms can be conditioning such discourse.

Taking a critical realism stance, and understanding the tentative nature of the research, a retroductive process is used to obtain qualitative knowledge, in a cross-sectional study.

Drawing from the theoretical areas of sustainability discourse, sustainable entrepreneurship, discourse and social structure a conceptual map as well as framework of reference are defined, that highlight the existence of sustainable entrepreneurs inside the social structure as well as the ways how the social structure can condition that discourse.

Looking at the views of eleven sustainable entrepreneurs, collected during interviews and analysed through critical discourse analysis, it was found that the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs is identifiable with the weak sustainability discourse, albeit some traces of strong sustainability discourse. Findings also show that the discourse is characterized by having “bipolar” normative assumptions with a set of explicit weak/strong sustainability discourse values and a set of implicit market discourse beliefs. Moreover, the discourse seems to reproduce the key features of the market discourse.

Based on those findings and the analysis of the current social structure, two social mechanisms (knowledge control and collateral awareness) are hypothesized as to impact the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs.

Future research is suggested to focus on the further analysis of the phenomenon as well as a need to create knowledge to help transform the situation. Similarly, recommendations to society and sustainable entrepreneurs are made that advocate the development and application of knowledge that is free from the market discourse.

Key-words: discourse, social mechanisms, social structure, sustainability, sustainable entrepreneurship;
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# Abbreviations

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<td>SD</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>Sustainable entrepreneur</td>
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<td>SM</td>
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<td>SSD</td>
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Important concepts

**Discourse**
A particular way of representing certain part or aspects of the world. It is constituted by a level of relatively stable normative assumptions and a flexible level of action-oriented arguments, mediated by conceptualize views.

**Dominant discourse**
Set of normative beliefs, conceptualize views and actions that, at a given time, are dominant over all the others.

**Market discourse**
It is the dominant discourse among economic activity and in terms of change it assumes at best a need to make business-as-usual-but-with-a-heart. It sees nature has a resource to be exploited and puts focus on a constant achieving of economic growth.

**Social mechanism**
The set of social entities, their properties and the activities the entities engage in by which the individual’s actions and beliefs are constrained in a certain way.

**Social structure**
A relative stable, largely implicit, and continually recurring set of processes and patterns that underlie and guide surface, observable events and actions. Is constituted by a base (that comprehends the means of production and the relations of production) and a superstructure (that includes the legal/political level, social relations and the system of meaning).

**Strong sustainability discourse**
It is seen as the “radical” discourse, arguing for a deep transformation of the social structure. It sees nature value as independent of our evaluation of it and so the use of nature needs to be very limited. It puts the socio-economic stress away from economic growth and into qualitative improvements.

**Sustainability**
A process of achieving human development, in an inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent and secure manner. It is achieved through actions that produce social equity, environmental integrity and economic viability.

**Sustainable entrepreneurship**
A process aiming at achieving sustainable development, by exploiting opportunities that produce social equity, environmental integrity and economic viability.

**Weak sustainability discourse**
Discourse that recognizes a need for change while arguing for reforming adjustments of the current system. It claims a need for seeing nature in a more compassionate way even if we use it as a recourse. It also stresses the need for economic growth but it argues that more regulation is needed.
If you tolerate this your children will be next.
- Republican poster from the Spanish civil war
1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the thesis. The starting point is the highlight of the situation we currently face, in terms of environmental, social and economic problems. After, a quick overview is made on sustainability as a battle of discourses and on the research area. This provides the ground to set the two research questions as well as four purposed goals. Consequently, the relevance of the study is highlighted. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the following chapters.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The state we are in

If one should state the number one misconception in sustainability is that the planet is not in danger. That is right. Even if a major environmental catastrophe or a world war would happen there is an extremely high probability that the planet will still be around. However, the same cannot be said about us. Like other societies before we are in risk of collapse (Diamond, 2005; Mebratu, 1998, p. 496)

The examples presented in the next paragraphs point out two things: 1) the challenges we are facing are far from being only environmental, as they are as well sociological and economical; and 2) the cause of this relies in our model of economic organization.

Environmental problems

From the environmental problems we face today, global warming/climate change is probably the most well-known. Draughts, extinction of several species, sea-level rise or extreme floods are some of the examples that sadly we often see in the news. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, quoted by the United Nations (2009b, p. vi), the way the climate is behaving is no longer explained by “natural variability” and by 2050 the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will be more than twice when compared with pre-industrial levels. In other words, we have managed in 200 years to produce as much greenhouse gases as in the 4.5 billion years before.

In addition, other ecological problems pose great threat. Our current production system produces so much waste, and is so resource intensive, that producing a laptop generates 4000 its weight in waste, while the production of a litre of orange juice requires two litters of gasoline as well as a thousand litres of water (Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999, p. 50). Furthermore, the ways we are conducting business have led to soil degradation, overfishing and deforestation (Senge, 2008, p. 18), with our consumption of natural resources 30% above the capacity of Earth to regenerate (WWF, 2008, p. 1).

Social problems

1 Although there are some differences between the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development (Robinson, 2004) they are not, in my opinion, significantly distinct to justify a separate treatment, under the purpose of this thesis. Thus, both concepts are used here interchangeably.
Unfortunately, social problems do not stay behind environmental ones in terms of seriousness. According to UNESCO (2010) the world is going back in terms of human development. It estimates that by last year we had 90 million new poor adding to the existing 1.4 billion persons under the poverty line (UN, 2009a). The same report mentions that although the number of children out of school has been reduced by 33 million in 10 years, the total number is still of 72 million. And the illiteracy affects not only children, since over 800 million persons could not read or write by the year 2000 (UN, 2004).

The impact of our way of living is also felt in our quality of life. Increasing number in diseases like asthma or skin cancer have been related to the emission of industrial waste (Ott & Roberts, 1998; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005, p. 15).

**Economic problems**

The world faces as well serious economic problems. Although the current economic crisis contributed to the problems we now face, it acted mainly as a catalyst for pre-existing phenomena. According to the United Nations (2010, pp. v-vi), the vulnerability of work positions (in some parts of Asia it reaches 70% of the workforce), the fact that a huge share of workers in developing countries still cannot pass the poverty line (64% in 2009), or that youth unemployment in Europe or USA reached almost 20%, are just some aspects that the crisis contributed to, but not created.

What is more, in the last decade of the 20th century, the richest 25% of the population received 75% of the total income (Milanović, 1999) and the relation between the income of the richest 20% and the poorest 20% went from a 2:1 in 1800 to a 86:1 ratio in 1997(Banerjee, 2003, p. 150; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 48). Along with that, inequality between developing and developed countries has been getting worse, as the income gap between G7 and almost all developing countries, increased in the last 30 years (UN, 2009b, pp. vi-vii). Also, and against common belief, the net financial transfers between developed and developing countries is positive to the first ones, meaning that in fact developed countries receive and not give money to developing countries (UN, 2010, p. ix).

**Critics to these problems**

In the presence of these facts, there are still people stating that the world is not as bad as it seems. First, we have the ones who argue that climate changes are not caused by humankind and our way of living but rather explained by natural causes, despite the great consensus among researchers that state otherwise (Nilsen, 2010, p. 495; UN, 2009b, p. vi). Even if we would not take this into consideration and assume that the climate change was just caused by nature, and that it would not have any major impact, there will still be all the rest of the problems (e.g. species extinction) that endanger our life as much as global warming.

Then, we have the ones who argue that this situation is caused by developing countries and their struggle to grow, and thus it is only their concern. If we would take aside the extreme lack of empathy for other human beings that such a statement requires, there are still plenty of socio-economic reasons to refute this argument. First of all, the fact
that developed countries have a higher per-capita emission of greenhouse-gases (Roseland, 2000, p. 77) and that they consume much more of the world resources (for instance 80% of the world’s aluminium, paper, iron and steel) (Banerjee, 2003, p. 157; Haque, 1999) put industrialized countries in the front line of responsibilities to the present situation. Secondly, inequalities exist everywhere: for instance, the USA has as much income inequality as China and worse than India (CIA, 2009). Thirdly, as stated before, developed countries receive financial resources from developing ones and not the other way around. This creates, at least, a need from developed countries to have sustainable developing countries. Fourthly, a great part of goods consumed in developed countries are produced in developing ones (just take a look at your computer, clothes, etc.); and so a great dependence exist to sustain our consuming patterns.

Finally, the developed countries, especially European, due to their practices of colonialism during centuries, and the actual practices of imperialism, can be accounted as the main agents to blame on the unsustainable practices of developing countries (Banerjee, 2003; Carvalho, 2001). In that way, developed countries are greatly responsible for the practices established in developing ones. Therefore, all the countries in the world are highly connected when it comes to the problems we face and there is no way for a country to isolate itself from the world problems (Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 56). As a result, it is clear that all need to actively contribute to the solution.

**Summing up**

But how did we end up here? To find out we have to look into our history. With the Industrial Revolution productivity levels increased exponentially due to changes like mechanization or division of labour. This new paradigm in the production relations had a transforming impact in the way society was organized, changing consumption patterns, communications, etc. (Hobsbawm, 1962). The economic growth proportioned a substantial increase of the living standards but at the expense of an exponential use of energy/natural resources (Senge, 2008, p. 15; Mebratu, 1998, p. 496).

This process has been developed till our days, exposing along the way the failures of the economic system that is based upon. A system that to survive puts on the centre stage of society the creation of wealth for some at the expense of the exploitation of others (who have less power and cannot defend themselves) (UN, 2009b, p. vii), where profit is the Holy Grail (Friedman, 1970), fuelled by a materialistic society (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1212) with increasing consumption and constant promotion (Durning, 1992; Hay, 2005, p. 321), and where the dominant economic discourse infiltrates all areas of our lives (Armour, 1997). Such system ended up leaving us in the place we are now: a place where some can obtain tremendous quality of life while others live in utterly misery, where the eco-system is dissolving before our eyes and where individuals live to consume in order to satisfy (vainly) their wishes and ambitions.

**1.1.2 Our answer: sustainability**

*The introduction of sustainability*

In light of the above, we are left to recognize that the cause of the problems we face is our organization of human (economic) activity (García-Sánchez & Lorenzo, 2009, p. 1039; Roseland, 2000, p. 76) and that these problems have exponentially increased in
the last decades as the economies developed (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 231). Such situation has led to an increased contestation to the actual socio-economic system, which in turn lead to the promotion of the concept of sustainability by the system’s institutions making it one of the most central concepts of our time (Castro, 2004).

This does not mean that sustainable practices have not existed before. In fact this kind of actions has been identified as far as Greek philosophers (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 463). What it means, in my opinion, is that the concept and all the media attention given now is a result of the increasing problems we have been facing and the related social struggles.

In the last decades, as sustainability became a trendy word, the most important landmark for SD was the publication in 1987 of WCED report, *Our common future*, that defined sustainable development (SD) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 54). Due to its vagueness the definition became widely accepted (Carvalho, 2001, p. 62; Mebratu, 1998, p. 83), leading to different and antagonist interpretations while creating an ideological battle for the domination of the concept (Baker, 2006, p. 27).

**The sustainability discourses**

In this battle three main discourses for what it should be sustainability are available: the market discourse (MD), the weak sustainability discourse (WSD) and the strong sustainability discourse (SSD). MD is the dominant discourse common of economic activity and in terms of change it assumes at best a need to make business-as-usual-but-with-a-heart (Springett, 2005, p. 129). It sees nature has a resource to be exploited (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 882) and puts focus on a constant achieving of economic growth (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 561).

The second discourse, WSD, recognizes a need for change but argues for reforming adjustments of the current system (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 43). It claims a need for seeing nature in a more compassionate way even if we use it as recourse

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2Before going any further a note must be made on the designations weak and strong sustainability. In this thesis they are used to make distinction between advocates of a need for change inside the present socio-economic arrangements, and the ones who claim for a transformation of the existing structures. However, this terms have been used originally to make distinction between those who argue that natural capital and human made capital are substitutes (weak sustainability) and those who defend that they are not (strong sustainability) (Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007, p. 40; Roseland, 2000, p. 79).

Often this two uses of the terms weak/strong sustainability overlap but they are not inseparable. Thus, one can argue to defend strong sustainability, recognizing the non-substitution relation between human and natural capital, and at the same time assert the need of (only) reforming changes towards sustainability. In this way the use of the terms weak/strong sustainability could be misleading.

Despite this disadvantage, I have chosen to use such terminology. One reason for that is to make it easier for the readers. The use of a dichotomy weak/strong seems simpler than for instance a reforming/ transformation one. The second reason is the use by other authors of this terminology (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007; Springett, 2003; 2005). So, the use of the terms might not be the most correct but it will be used nevertheless, as its advantages overcome the disadvantages.
(Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 890). It also stresses the need for economic growth but it argues that more regulation is needed (Bonné Dahl & Eriksson, 2007).

Finally we have SSD, seen as the “radical” discourse, arguing for a deep transformation of the structures (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1212). It sees nature value as independent of our evaluation of it and so the use of nature need to be very limited (Mebratu, 1998, p. 507). It puts the socio-economic stress away from economic growth and into qualitative improvements (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 897).

1.2 Problem discussion & research questions

Problem discussion

From the above section two important aspects emerge, that can usefully be seen in a dialectic way. The first is that is hard to deny the fact that our economic system, and the discourse that supports its, are the underlying cause of the problems we face (Bonné Dahl & Eriksson, 2007; Carvalho, 2001, p. 62; Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 56; Mebratu, 1998, p. 507; Potocan & Mulej, 2003, p. 248). The signs are clear: we face serious difficulties and the risk of collapse is real. The second, our anti-thesis, is sustainability. This concept is a place where three different discourses battle for the domination of what means to be sustainable and what does not.

So, the question is what will be the synthesis between these two aspects? Or, in other words, which underlying logic will shape the future? Will everything stay exactly the same, with MD as the dominant discourse, will we take a reformatory approach to the current system with WSD or will we seek to transform from the roots the existing system with SSD?

To answer that it is important to look to a very important source of change in society: entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs have been central to the economy and the economic thought (OECD, 1998, p. 11; Shane, 2003). The reason for that is easy to understand since entrepreneurs are ultimately introducers of new combinations that, through a process of creative destruction, transform the existing social-economic structure. (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 66; 2008, p. 83).

As a crucial source of change, entrepreneurs are of great importance to answer the above question since the ways they behave will shape the taking one of those three paths. Furthermore, among this group sustainable entrepreneurs (SEs) are of particular important, as they represent the “vanguard” of change when it comes to sustainability. Thus, understanding entrepreneurs that work with sustainable issues and what kind of discourse they carry is something that needs to be studied. How much change are they bringing? How much are they reproducing the existing organization?

If we agree that our previous way of economic organization, ruled by MD, is the underlying cause of our problems than one must ask if the road that sustainable entrepreneurs are taking will provide us enough changes, making it the right road for a soft landing (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 566), or will it be unable to prevent mankind to follow the path of previous civilizations that were incapable to live in a sustainable way and ended up perishing (Diamond, 2005).
For all of this it is clear the need to study sustainable entrepreneurs. Despite the relevance of this topic, the research on it is non-existent, although the reason for that is comprehensible. Sustainable entrepreneurship as a research area is quite new. So, although there have been some research documenting empirical cases of sustainable entrepreneurship (Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007), the research is taking its first steps, mostly focusing on conceptualization (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 30; Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 58).

Research questions

Taking into account the role that sustainable entrepreneurs have in what kind development path we will follow, the responsibility of MD in the situation we now face, and the lack of research trying to understand this phenomenon, I formulate the following research question:

To what extent does the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs differ from the dominant market discourse?

However, with the above question this would be an incomplete research. While the proper identification of a trend among sustainable entrepreneurs’ discourse is an important first step, it does not provide a full explanation of the situation. As Schumpeter argued (1951, cited in Blundel, 2007, p. 59)), to understand how entrepreneurs act we need to study “the very foundations of capitalist society” since organizations are created in a socio-economic context where external conditions shape their orientations (Banerjee, 2003, p. 165). This means that entrepreneurs, and their discourse, are a product of the social structure (SS) in which they are embedded (Coman, 2008, p. 155; Tilley & Young, 2009, p. 84), creating a need to posit social mechanisms (SMs) that can be in the origin of such discourse. And so a second research question is needed:

What can be possible social mechanisms that cause such discourse among sustainable entrepreneurs?

1.3 Purpose of the paper

Purpose

As the title of the thesis highlights, the aim of this thesis is to gain a better insight on if there is something new in terms of discourse among entrepreneurs. Are they bringing something new or are they reproducing the existing dominant paradigm, giving reason to Ecclesiastes when he pointed out that “there is nothing new under the sun”. The underlying logic behind this is that entrepreneurs are key elements to create a sustainable future and so it is important to understand how they see the world and what kind of future will they create. In line with that the goals of the thesis are:

- Identify what is the underlying logic of the sustainable entrepreneurs’ discourse;
- Understand how different is this discourse from the dominant market discourse;
- Hypothesize what can be the social mechanisms that are in the origin of such discourse;
Based in my belief that research should not only describe reality but should also contribute to transform it, the follow secondary objective is set:

- To provide suggestions and recommendations, based on the findings, for society and policy makers to promote sustainable entrepreneurship, as well as to entrepreneurs that wish to be more sustainable;

Purpose delimitations

As it will be explained in chapter 2, the process of building knowledge is a dialectical process between theory and practice and so a thesis like this, done in a relatively short period cannot aim at producing solid knowledge. Adding to that is the fact that the areas of study focused in this thesis are in an extremely early state, where our understanding of reality is still very fuzzy.

Due to the above reasons this research is of an extreme tentative nature. This is also highlighted by the only similar research found (Springett, 2003, p. 72). In this study (Springett, 2003; 2005) the author is trying to understand the sustainability discourse of agents and how they are limited by the structure. The difference from my study is that this focus on a company level as the structure.

Acknowledging the exploratory nature of this paper is particular relevant for the determination of the social mechanisms that cause the discourse of SEs. A conclusive answer would be an illusion and at best the thesis can speculate about the origins of such discourse by means of an educated guess. Yet, such aim is still worth pursuing, given the relevance of the subject.

So, such precarious explanatory mechanisms need to be confirmed in a theorizing process (Weick, 1995), between theory and practice, in a long-term study. As a consequence, this thesis is a starting point for a process of explanation and enlightenment (Dobson, 2001, p. 202).

1.4 Study relevance

This paper is first of all, and foremost, motivated from a practical point of view, as the main reason is to understand how SEs are reproducing MD and what can be done to insure that we can move to a defacto sustainable future. Yet, I recognize that the research in the area is inexistent and hope the thesis can add value to the field as well.

From a research point of view, this paper will provide insights on something not researched so far: what is the dominant discourse among entrepreneurs that work with sustainable issues and what social mechanisms can be determining that same discourse. The knowledge produced can provide a qualitative insight on how entrepreneurs that work with sustainable issues think and see the world. So, the scientific value relies on the potential to contribute both to the fields of sustainable discourse as well as sustainable entrepreneurship.

As for the practical side, there is also a clear relevance. It is of the most importance to understand i) what is the path that sustainable entrepreneurs are taking, since they will shape greatly our economic system, and ii) if that path entails enough change to move
away from the problems we now face. With this thesis I hope to provide insights both for society in general (especially to the political level) in how sustainable entrepreneurship can be promoted and nurtured and also to individuals themselves that wish to start a business or already have a business in sustainability.

1.5 Disposition of the thesis

The thesis starts with a background of the area with Chapter 1. In it a background of sustainability is done, both in practical as well as in theoretical terms. The research questions and purpose of the thesis are discussed as well as the relevance of the study.

Chapter 2 deals with the most defining characteristic of any research: its ontological and epistemological positioning. The implications for the study as well the alignment with the research area are also discussed. After defining these general views on reality and knowledge, we have a discussion of the scientific approach on Chapter 3. That entails a setting of the paradigm and approach of this research as well as a discussion on the used methodology.

Chapter 4 moves to the how I approached the existing knowledge, describing what knowledge blocks were used, how that knowledge was obtained and what was done to guarantee the quality of the information.

The three next chapters regard the theory of the thesis. Chapter 5 deals with the core concept of the thesis, sustainability. It provides a notion of what is sustainability and its historical evaluation. Also the three competing discourses are presented and discussed. In Chapter 6 the rest of the theory is given. The concepts of social structure, sustainable entrepreneurship and discourse are analysed. Finally, Chapter 7 brings the above two chapters together in the form of a conceptual map and a frame of reference.

Chapter 8 bridges the theory with the empirical part of the thesis. It describes the research design and so issues of data collection, processing and analysis are dealt with.

In Chapter 9 the data is described. The division made, also used in the next two chapters, is based on the division of the discourse among three concerns (environmental, socio-economic and change). Chapters 10 and 11 analyse the data. In the first one data is analysed in order to categorize the SEs’ discourse, while the second discusses the ways in which that discourse reproduces the market discourse.

Chapter 12 describes the current social structure and, based on that and in the findings form the two previous chapters, hypothesize the social mechanisms that can be the cause of discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs. The final conclusions are drawn on Chapter 13. That includes a re-discussion of purpose and findings as well as it points out the contributions of this research. It finishes with academic and practical recommendations. Finally, Chapter 14 deals with the issues of trustworthiness of this paper.
2. Author standpoints

This chapter introduces my ontological and epistemological stances as well as my bias and preconceptions. Some discussion on the implications for the study is also made. All of the above is then compared and framed in the research field in order to understand how it fits with similar research. Accordingly the chapter contributes to the study and the research question by making clear what perspective is taken.

Is neither my intention to do a research that can be labelled reflexive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) or to deeply analyse it in terms of reflexivity implications (Johnson & Duberley, 2003), since that would be outside the scope of the thesis. However, I recognize the importance to reflect and describe what are the standpoints in which the following paper is built (Holland, 1999, p. 464). This is done since ‘value-free’ knowledge is not obtainable, as our discourses are impregnated with visions of how the world should be (Goddard, 1973, p. 1; Heracleous, 2006, p. 1083). So, I do not wish to pretend to be objective but rather to state my personal engagement and understand the impact of that engagement in my analysis (Jamison, 2001, p. 40; Peshkin, 1988, p. 20).

This will provide three advantages. By addressing those issues now I not only create a conductor tread to all the other sections and thus increased cohesion, but I also take the intellectual responsibility to make them clear to avoid faulty practices (Johnson & Duberley, 2003, p. 1280). Moreover providing a clear definition of how I view the world and knowledge, avoid useless misinterpretations of this thesis that do not take that into consideration.

2.1 My view on the world and knowledge

In very general terms, I believe that the “social world” is a real world, independent of the actors in it, but at some extent affected by them. We perceived and represent this world through our senses and our capacity of abstraction but the way we do this is conditioned by society. This view should not be confused with social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) that sees reality as social constructed by our interpretation of it. What this means is that our representation of reality is influenced by social construction processes but not the reality itself.

The ultimate goal of science or knowledge acquisition should be to obtain the truth\(^3\) and with that provide answers to society’s problems. Since reality is very complex, the knowledge acquisition is not a one-time action but a dialectical theorizing process (Bhaskar, 2008; Weick, 1995) that tends to the truth, as our representation of reality deepens. Finally, while the reality exists outside of us, our representation and our capacity of abstraction allows an understanding of the more general laws of development that immediate perception does not permit.

*Critical realism*

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\(^3\) In my opinion truth is achieved when the representation of reality is the same as the reality.
From the three main philosophies of science (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 15) the one more similar with my view is critical realism, although I share some common grounds with Critical Theory⁴. For critical realism the goal lies in the understanding of the deeper mechanisms of the real world (Patomäki & Wight, 2000, p. 223). This contrast with the naïve realism (Fleetwood, 2005) of positivism when it defends that observable reality is the only one that exists. At the same time, it distances itself from social constructivism and the idea of reality as socially constructed⁵, as it stresses that the social world is independent of the individuals' conception of it (Joseph & Roberts, 2004, p. 2).

It also differs from positivism and resembles social constructivism by recognizing that the social world differs from the natural world, as the former needs human action to exist (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000, p. 54 in Blundel, 2007, p. 54).

Reality is constituted by three domains: empirical (what we understand), actual (what is really there independently of whom is apprehending) and the real (what are the mechanisms that generate these events) (Fairclough, 2005, p. 922). Here “structure and mechanisms are real and distinct from the patterns of events that they generate; just as events are real and distinct from the experiences in which they are apprehended” (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 56).

But what is real then? For critical theory, real is everything that affects behaviour and makes a difference (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199). This means, that for instance, concepts are real. For example, while God may or not be real, the idea of God is very real as it impacts people behaviour (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199).

The world has a dialectic nature, where different aspects of it, when in contact with each other, give “birth”, in a contingent way, to new phenomena, that can have properties that did not exist before (Sayer, 2000).

Another central aspect of this approach, that will also be relevant in this study, is the structure and agency relation. For critical realism, not only does the structure play a bigger role in the equation but also it is argued that it should be study on its own (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 44). Structure provides the rules of the game⁶ (North, 1990), influencing how actors behave and act. In turn, this action can gradually change the structure (Archer, 1995).

This approach focuses more on ontological terms, however it has epistemological implications. The first derives from its dualistic nature: reality has an objective existence (Danermark, 2002, p. 15) and so is separated from our (subjective) knowledge from it. Secondly, what is real is not given in a direct way (Ackroyd, 2004, p. 150) and so the objective is to “probe beneath the ‘empirical’ and ‘actual’ domains in pursuit of generative mechanisms” (Blundel, 2007, p. 53).

⁴ Such as the view on knowledge as a mean to social emancipation (Bhaskar, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 198).
⁵ However it recognizes the existence of social constructions (e.g. our personal experiences) but has a representation of something real (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 41).
⁶ Although North used this to define institutions, it has a similar application to structures since the concepts, at some extent, overlap.
Adding to that, knowledge has a transitive nature as opposed to objects’ intransitive one. It is social constructed and bounded by its historical context (Joseph & Roberts, 2004, p. 2) while objects are “in general invariant to our knowledge of them” (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 22). This means that one cannot fall into what Bhaskar (1991) defines as the epistemic fallacy of assuming that things are (ontology) what we think they are (epistemology), when in truth they are what they are. As a consequence, knowledge should be assumed as a conjecture of reality (Ackroyd, 2004, p. 151) and thus under a continuous process of adjustment (Danermark, 2002, p. 15).

As in all approaches, several critics are pointed out about critical realism. Two main critics are stressed by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, pp. 44-49): that the existence of such things like mechanisms is not easy to assert and that the idea of structure and mechanisms (central concepts of critical realism) “shows a strong tendency to arrange the world in objective and sturdy categories” while “a closer and more open-minded look of what seems to be going on typically reveals a much more ambiguous view of the world”.

2.2 Bias and preconceptions

As I recognize the impossibility to experience events without any bias (Flick, 2006, pp. 13-14; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304; Webber, 1949, p. 112), and in line with the need to state my assumptions, a short description of my preconceptions must be made.

Belief bias

Is my belief that, in the face of the contradictions in our development, highlighted in section 1.1.1 of this thesis (e.g. the capacity to provide high standards of living to some while sending billions into poverty and ignorance), we need a deep change on our economic organization. Not only for environmental reasons (that are of the most importance to the survival of our civilization) as well as for social reasons. Growing up seeing people whose lives were never fulfilled due to social impositions (that can be changed), led me to believe in the need of a more fair system.

I also believe that the majority of the sustainability actions performed nowadays (such as last year’s summit on climate change) are insufficient, and more important, mostly about marketing and politically correct communication rather than actions towards effective and necessary change.

Language bias

In addition, during the process of writing this thesis, I realised how much my views are bounded by the dominant language and system of meaning. Some notions used here (e.g. developed/developing or poverty) are clearly based on a Western capitalistic culture (Banerjee, 2003) in which I am embedded.

Summing up

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7 Emphasis in “in general” added by me to highlight that this does not mean that reality does not change but an change much less and slower than our knowledge of it.
Concluding, I am aware of my bias towards sustainability. Yet, if it was not that way I would be writing about something else (Goddard, 1973, p. 1). By acknowledging this I expect to be more aware of my position and try to be critical in my analysis. Unfortunately, that critical position can only go so far and so I hope that the readers of this thesis do the rest. As for of my vocabulary, while I recognize its importance, I see no clear way to overcome its limitations in the time given for this endeavour.

2.3 Implications for the study

My ontological/epistemological orientation and my bias have implications for this study at least in two levels: methodology and trustworthiness/credibility.

Methodological implications

The first case is that while it seems to be common practice to see ontology/epistemology as aspects that an author can adapt to the research (see for instance Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108)), I believe that this is something that is bound to the author and that one cannot easily change. Thus, and taking into consideration that ontology, epistemology and methodology are not independent (Archer, 1995, p. 28; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3), my views will greatly define methodology. For instance, the use of retroduction (see the next chapter) or of critical discourse analysis (see chapter 8), are deeply related to my view on the relation of structure and agency and how reality is composed.

Credibility implications

However the great implication is that by taking a stance on the “discourse battle” I understand that I am opening my thesis to criticism and potential labelling as radical (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 100; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007, pp. 45-46). Again, the common practices promote that research should be “value-free” where a researcher should act as a “disinterest scientist” providing information needed for society (Alvesson, 2003, p. 154; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 195). Since this issue as implications for my thesis I want to grant the next lines to address it.

We use umbrellas because we do not want to get wet, eat so we would not starve, do things we do because it makes us feel good, etc. These several examples show that what we do is defined by how we think things work (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 99). Assuming that this is something that everyone can agree on, one can conclude that everything that one does is influenced by one’s beliefs and values, or in other words, our preferences towards some things rather than others. Picking up one of the above examples, we do things we like because we prefer/have a bias towards feeling good rather than bad. Thus, the notion of “value-free” is something even theoretically unobtainable (Christians, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 171).

Accordingly, it is hard to imagine how researchers can be “disinterested scientists”. Her/his research account has a set of actions that can reproduce or transform the present social structure (see section 6.3) and thus the researcher can either be reproducing the

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8 Taking completely out of the picture how we built this sense of “how things work”.
existing paradigm or contribute to a new one. Besides that, the argument of “value-free” information also goes against the existence of editorial lines among academic journals (Schwandt, 2003, p. 292; Webber, 1949, p. 50).

But if “value-free” information produced by a “disinterested scientist” is not possible why some bias is more criticized than others? Why is this thesis more likely to face that sort of criticism rather than for instance one on interest rates on developing countries? The answer is simple: because the stance taken here (SSD) is not the dominant one (Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 56), creating a question of power (Lehtonen, 2009, p. 392). Going against what has become unquestionable for the majority of people (such as the market discourse became), this thesis distances itself from the mainstream/institutionalized position which generates antibodies (Jönsson, 2003, p. 483; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007) as mainstream research tends to reproduce the prevailing order (Locke, 2004, p. 26).

Furthermore, it is the power of each competing paradigms that influences the choice of “truths” through “disciplinary power and the subsequent control of knowledge” (Banerjee, 2003, p. 145) making dominant groups able to hide between the covers of objectivity (Deetz, 1996, p. 144). For the dominant discourse the interest is the reproduction of the actual structure and so it argues for actions that contribute to this reproduction. In this case is the idea of researcher as having no potential to transform reality and being a mere observer. For me, and in line of critical theories, I see the researcher, as advocate and activist, as someone with the potential to transform reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196).

In addition, and routed in the Enlightenment era beliefs that still dominated scientific activity, we have a weak discussion on what objectivity and subjectivity different meanings are (Schwandt, 2003). This contributes to the view that value-laden arguments are less valid than value free. The challenge here is to understand that to achieve objective (true) statements, is not required to provide objective (value free) arguments but rather objective (concerning properties of an object) ones (Sayer, 2000, pp. 58-62).

Another implication for trustworthiness/credibility has to do with the language used here. While this problem can go unnoticed among “natives” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 97), people from outside Western culture will find different meaning for those same concepts. Although this situation is unlikely to happen, given the low potential of exposition of this thesis, I still think is worth to mention since it is a limitation for this thesis.


tSumming up

tTo conclude, there are two implications of my ontological position and of my bias: the impact on methodology and the potential of criticism. The first implication offers lower consideration than the second one. While recognizing that it is likely that this thesis will be criticized on the grounds of being too biased, I still assert that such critic lacks logic grounds and is based on the need for dominant discourse to create legitimization difficulties to paradigms that oppose it (Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007).

\[^9\text{Where individuals should be set free from any kind of moral order.}\]
As well, there is a need for the readers to understand that a part of having a critical perspective is to look at the dominant ideas, ideologies and institutions and how they dominate and constrain individuals (Alvesson, 2003, p. 153). In that way is expected that this thesis criticize more heavily MD (and WSD), who are dominant, than SSD.

Again, I need to stress that this does not mean that I argue that acts like making up results, descend into blind propaganda, or any practice in that area should be legitimize. Is crucial to make a critical analysis of the results and to confront that with the theory and the values that one possess. Yet, such approach is not incompatible with having a stance in the discussion.

2.4 Comparing with field standpoints

From the analysis made on the sustainability (discourse) field it is my belief that most of the authors demonstrate some form of social critic of the actual state of affairs (Banerjee, 2003; Castro, 2004; Spangenberg, 2010), levitating around ontological areas of critical realism/critical theory, while some few others have a social constructionist approach such as Springett (2003). In terms of bias, a great amount of the authors tend, as expected, to have a bias towards sustainability, both with soft as radical approaches (see Table 1 in section 5.3).

In this way, I believe that this thesis does not diverge so much from what has been done so far in the area of sustainability. In terms of ontology, it is positioned among the most common trend (some form of social critic, in my case critical realism). As for bias, I think I would be positioned in the extremity of the field (SSD) but still inside of what is “common practice” (see Figure 1 in section 5.3). Concluding, while presenting a discourse that can be labelled as “radical”, this thesis is perfectly in line with the field.
3. Scientific approach

The goal of this chapter is to provide an idea of the overall scientific approach taken. To do that I will discuss the paradigm adopted as well as the implications of that choice. Furthermore, a discussion on the nature of the research and the process of obtaining knowledge are also presented. This is followed by the presentation of the research methodology that includes the type of knowledge to obtain or the goals in doing that. With all of this, the chapter contributes to the thesis and research questions by elaborating a general guidance to the process of answering those questions.

The scientific approach regards the methodology of the thesis and it provides an overall vision of which way the research should go (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 8). It establishes how I approach the problem and seek answers (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 3).

This approach cannot be independent from my ontological considerations if I want to avoid sterile research (Archer, 1995, p. 28). In fact, the latter will have an impact on the former (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 108): the choices made in this chapter have to be aligned with my perspectives on the world and knowledge and the stance taken (critical realism) as well as with the purpose of the study (Sayer, 1992, p. 4).

3.1 Research paradigm and perspective

Understanding the underlying scientific paradigm of this work follows the same motivations presented previously on the need to make clear my assumptions: the first is of an individual order as it allows myself to have a more steady route when it comes to this thesis; the second reflects the need to make readers aware of the paradigm, in order to provide them with a better understanding of the points of departure of the research.

Research paradigm – a definition

First one needs to clarify what a paradigm is. For that reason we turn to the most accepted definition of paradigm in social sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 25): Kuhn's (1970) sees a (scientific) paradigm as a “mode of scientific activity” (p. 10) that a “particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundations for its further practice” (p. 10). We can see it as the zeitgeist of a certain scientific community. This definition is in line with others, such as Saunders et al. (2009, p. 118) that see paradigms as a certain way of studying social phenomena.

The most common view on different paradigms in social science (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 119; Sändstrom, 2005, p. 157) defines the existence of four different paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), which are defined among two dimensions: objectivist/subjectivist and radical change/regulation. The first dimension defines objectivity by the belief of existence of an external reality and subjectivist by the belief of reality as socially constructed (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 25). The second dimension is also quite straightforward: radical change presents a critical perspective on the existing arrangements while the regulatory perspective looks to improve things in the existing situation (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 120).
Yet, this view on paradigms provides some shortcomings when it comes to the differences that are now critical in research (Deetz, 1996). In that way, we need to enhance this view on paradigm and so I have chosen also another view on paradigms that, extending Burrell and Morgan’s (1979), locate “research differences in discursive moves and social relations rather than procedures and individuals” (Deetz, 1996, p. 195). The dimensions are now: local/emergent-elite/a priori and consensus-dissensus. In the first division the focus is in either if the concepts are emerging during the research process or if they are defined before and then applied to the study. The second aspect regards the relation of the researcher with the dominant social order and if either it confirms or disrupts that social order’s discourse (Deetz, 1996).

**Thesis’ research paradigm and implications**

In line with the above, I see myself as a radical structuralist (radical change plus objectivity) focusing on a critical study (elite/a priori plus dissensus). Two reasons motivate that view: seeing the researcher as an activist, allowed to make judgments on the way things should be (Easton, 1998, p. 84; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196), with the research as a tool to bring change and overcome the limitations we face (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 13; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 121). The second reason has to due with my belief of the need to carry human emancipation through radical change (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 34). For these reasons the thesis will not only present the different options of sustainability but it would ask (some times more explicitly than others): “Where are we going? Is it desirable? What should be done?” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 130).

Furthermore, in line with the tradition in critical studies (Deetz, 1996, p. 202), I see phenomena in society (being a company, an event, etc.) as a product of the social conditions and relations (of power) that exist at a certain time. The research paradigm of this thesis is thus rooted in a critical theory stance, where it is my ambition to highlight the domination of certain discourse (Sändstrom, 2005, p. 158). In that way my focus is to present the different forces that populate the sustainability discourse, their intentions and interests and how they relate in terms of domination.

**Perspective and implications**

Such paradigm will influence how I will address the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 26) because, as Taylor (1998, pp. 19-20) reminds us, when doing research a certain point of view is taken. Consciously, or not, one decides whose side she/he is on. My position is clear: I side with the powerless (the poor, the marginalized, the dominated) in opposition to the dominant group.

Based on the above, the perspective taken in this thesis is a society/mankind perspective: it focuses the actual state of the world, in a critical way. I try to understand how sustainable entrepreneurs see the world and how the social structure influence that to, ultimately, see if the road we are taking is leading the world to a sustainable and fair future for all. Thus, it will focus not only in the entrepreneurs but in the entire society.

**Summing up**
The “mode of scientific activity” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 10) taken here is a radical structuralist one, where I use a critical lens to scrutinize, from a society points of view, what discourses sustainable entrepreneurs have, how does it reproduce the dominant discourse and why that happen.

3.2 Research approach

Exploring reality

As stated in the purpose section, this study is very tentative in nature. The approach taken here is of exploring the reality, looking for insights to start to understand the phenomenon. This explorative approach is done because it as been accepted as a way to address a research when little understanding is available (Robson, 2002, p. 59), and that is the situation at hand (Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 58). Furthermore, alternative choices, as a conclusive design (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 71) or a descriptive one (Robson, 2002, p. 59), would not fit this case since there is not enough knowledge on the area. Such choice is in line with the type of research questions (“what?”), that often exist when the goal is to develop insights for further inquiry (Yin, 2003, p. 6).

Having an explorative approach will have implications in both the research method and in the design. For instance the data collection process has to be flexible enough to let additional issues emerge (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 71). Also, as the research is starting, I have no clear idea of what will be the discourses that entrepreneurs will have and much less I know what can be the causal mechanisms that are affecting the discourses. Accordingly, the exploratory approach enhances the emergent feature of the research process (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 140), affecting the course of action, since only after understanding what are the discourses of the entrepreneurs can I understand what can be the cause of those same discourses.

The process of obtaining and explaining knowledge – common approaches

When it comes to student thesis in social science/management studies, the most common books on research methodology often define the choice of approach as a dual one between deduction and induction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 4). In a simplified way, deduction departs from previous knowledge/theory, building a theoretical framework and setting hypotheses that will then be held against empirical data, which in turn will refute or confirm those hypotheses. Finally, a revision of theory is made based on that (Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 11-12). In an inverse way, induction starts from gathering data (allowing at best a minimum of pre-theoretical understandings), letting themes/findings emerge from the research and building theory from that (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, pp. 125-126).

While both approaches have qualities (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, pp. 160-161), they do not fit the purpose of this thesis: to understand what is the pattern of discourses among entrepreneurs and what is the role of the social structure in the development of such discourses. Let’s take one example of a deduction approach to research offered by Saunders et al.:
It may be that you wish to establish the reasons for high employee absenteeism in a retail store. After studying absence patterns it occurs to you that there seems to be a relationship between absence, the age of workers and length of service. Consequently, you develop a hypothesis that states that absenteeism is more likely to be prevalent among younger workers who have worked for the organization for a relatively short period of time. To test this hypothesis you utilize another characteristic, the collection of qualitative data. (2009, p. 125)

Now let’s assume that one did collect the data and it had confirmed that in fact absenteeism was more prevalent among young workers. While that offers a relation among those three variables (absenteeism, age of the worker and period of work in the company), by no means establish that the age of the worker and the period of work in the company are what causes absenteeism. This is even shown by the hypothesis as it talks absenteeism being more prevalent and not being caused by. In that way this example shows that deduction cannot provide explanations and relations of causation but at best decipher patterns among variables/regularities, thus lacking the depth to provide explanations about mechanisms that cause certain events.

Induction does not seem appropriate to this research either. Let’s pick up the same example from above and how it looks with an inductive approach:

An alternative approach to conducting research on DIY store employee absenteeism would be to go on the shop floor and interview a sample of the employees and their supervisors about the experience of working at the store. The purpose here would be to get a feel of what was going on, so as to understand better the nature of the problem. (...) The result of this analysis would be the formulation of a theory. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, pp. 125-126)

One would do the interviews, analyse the data and perhaps come to the conclusion that the persons who have been working there for less time were the ones more prone to be absent of work. But postulating that younger workers are always more prone to be absent of work would be a risky generalization from only one case (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 3). The alternative would be reducing the scope of the postulate to the studied store. But where is the value in that? It limits to repeat the empirical data, not able to lift it up to make more abstract considerations. Consequently, induction, as deduction, offer mechanical connections between things, highlighting regularities, but lack to provide an insight on what is causing those same things and the connections among them.

From the above we can see that both models are quite “flat” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 4). To achieve the purpose of the thesis there is a need to go beyond pattern identification to what has enabled it (Sayer, 1992, p. 96). In practical terms I need not only to understand what is the dominant discourse among SEs but also what is causing that and how. Fortunately, the choice is not a dual one, as there are alternatives. The one taken here is termed retroduction.

The process of obtaining and explaining knowledge – retroduction
In a simplified way retroduction can be defined as “going back from, below or behind observed patterns of regularities to discover what produce them” (Blaikie, 2003). It moves away from deduction and induction by focusing not only in a certain phenomenon but in the conditions that made it possible and how the process works (Blundel, 2007, p. 55; Reed, 1997, p. 34). We can see this approach analogically to medical diagnosis were symptoms are observed and from that an underlying pattern (a disease) is diagnosed (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 5). An example: if one would study the relation of capitalism and patriarchy, through deduction/induction we could find a relation of regularity where capitalism exists in patriarchy societies, yet it cannot be argued that patriarchy generates capitalism since capitalism can exist in a society without patriarchy (Sayer, 2000, p. 17). This shows how the explanation provided by deduction and induction is limited.

While identifying patterns is an important start, the key aspect is to identify possible mechanisms that cause them and put such mechanisms under empirical evaluation (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 12; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 13). The goal is to provide not only why X happens after Y but what is the process that makes Y produce X and in which conditions (Sayer, 1992, p. 107). Such a process is done based on abstraction and conceptualization since the level of reality where mechanisms exist is not directly observable (see section 2.2).

This process of explanation can follow two paths (an analogical and a decompository) yet the latter fits better this research (and social sciences in general) as we are working in a non-controlled open system (Bhaskar, 1986, p. 68; Sayer, 2000, p. 19). It has the following schema: “resolution of a complex event (situation, etc.) into its components; redescription of these components in theoretically significant terms; retroduction, via independently validated normic or tendency statements, to possible antecedents of the components; and elimination of alternative possible causes” (Bhaskar, 1986, p. 68).

In practical terms we have four stages. The first comprises the description of the phenomenon (chapter 9). The next two phases, presented in chapters 10 and 11, can be defined as the “lifting of the data” where abstract dimensions of the object of study are defined (second stage) and then scrutinize in order to provide a better insight (third stage) (Blundel, 2007, p. 57). As a result, the first stage regards the resolution dimension of the schema present above while the second and third stage to the redescription.

One should then hypothesize, through disciplined scientific imagination (Blaikie, 2003) and the use of analogies and metaphors (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 12), about what can be the mechanisms that could make this event possible (chapter 12). This can involve questions such as: What does the existence of this object (in this form) presuppose? What are its preconditions? Can it exist on its own as such? If not, what else must be present? What is it about this object that enables it to do certain things? (Sayer, 1992, p. 91; 2000, p. 16). This is regarded as the actual retroduction activity (Blundel, 2007, p. 57).

Summing up

10 Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) use this analogy to describe another alternative to deduction and induction, called abduction. Yet, this analogy also works for retroduction, as abduction can be seen as part of it (Blundel, 2007, p. 57).
Being this study an explorative one, based on a retroduction approach, the research is framed as a part of a dialect process, where after identifying an event, one must build and test explanations for it, just to than have to do the same for the mechanisms identified to be causing the first event. This leads to a continuous unfolding of reality's different layers (Bhaskar, 1986, p. 12). Thus, and as stated in the beginning this can only be seen as a start of a theorizing process.

The use of an exploratory approach is bound to the lack of knowledge in the area where the use of retroduction emerges from the incompatibility of deduction and induction with the purpose of the thesis. As a consequence, I will follow a flexible process and a course of action different from the common ones (see section 3.4). As well the use of retroduction will mean the use of different scientific methods (Easton, 1998). Given the exploratory nature the focus will be on qualitative evidence and where the selection of the studied object is driven by analytical requirements rather than empirical ones (Blundel, 2007, p. 56). In other words, is the purpose of the study that serves as a ruler of what things should I concentrate on (Dobson, 2001, p. 204).

### 3.3 Methodology

The research methodology provides the means to bring the scientific approach closer in contact with the empirical world (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 31; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 3). It addresses questions as the type of knowledge to obtain, the time and space of that search and the goals in doing that.

**A qualitative method**

The purpose of the thesis is to understand how SEs see the world and what are the underlying structural mechanisms in its origin. As stated in the previous section an exploratory approach is taken because there is no knowledge on the subject. For that reason I opt for a qualitative method, since this method is suited when little is known about something (Hakim, 1987, p. 26; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). As well, the use of qualitative inquiry in works which focus on the social life of individuals, as this one, has long been established (Flick, 2006, p. 11).

Regarding what is qualitative research there is a wide competing, and often contradictory, range of views (Miles & Huberman, 2001). The one taken here represents the lowest common denominator between the views, and it focus on the emphasis given by this research on the qualities of the phenomena that cannot be quantified/measured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In practical terms, qualitative research means the use of data collection and/or analysis that generates/uses non-numerical data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 145). This does not invalidate the use of some numerical/quantitative data to produce non-numerical understandings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

Qualitative research has three strong qualities. The first is the richness of both the sources that can use, as well as the use of different analytical tools, allowing a flexible research (Miles & Huberman, 2001, p. 10; Robson, 2002). This will be a very important aspect when it comes to identifying the structure and its mechanisms that influence the
SEs’ discourses, as the flexibility allows the use of retroduction. Another reason is the fact that qualitative research is argued to provide a better understanding of individual motivations, views, etc. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). Finally, it accounts for the explanations of why things happen better than quantitative methods that only offer abstract correlations (Hakim, 1987, p. 28).

Yet, qualitative research has been relegated to a second plan as it has been labelled “unscientific”, “anecdotal” and even facing a hostile environment in certain countries (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 5; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8). The main weaknesses pointed are the lack of objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and that the small number of respondents (when compared with quantitative research) prevents generalization (Hakim, 1987, p. 27).

However, these critics are pointed out from the dominant positivistic/quantitative paradigm and the assumption used does not hold under different ontologies. The question of generalization differs considerably between a positivistic/quantitative approach and other approaches that focus more on qualitative research: for the first stance it means states of commonality between different settings (statistical generalization), while for the latter, generalizing means the identification of general development laws (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 32; Sayer, 1992; 2000; Yin, 2003, pp. 31-33). For instance under critical realism generalization can be achieved with qualitative studies if one can understand how mechanisms work and under what situations (Sayer, 2000). The existence of mechanisms and their activation has nothing to do with how many times they are observed. It is about understanding under certain conditions what are the outcomes and why, not to see what is the most common one.

A cross-sectional study

While doing research two options can be made regarding the length of the study: have a cross-cutting study or a longitudinal one. The first involves the collection of data only once, opposing to the second where the data is collected for a long period of time. (Robson, 2002, pp. 157-161). Since longitudinal studies allow a detection of change, as well as collection of a higher volume of data, it would be the optimal solution for this thesis. Such choice would allow not only the development of better understanding of mechanisms that causes the SEs’ discourses, as it would be possible to understand how they change and what trigger them. What is more, it would also allow, through the collection of more data, a better triangulation and accuracy of the empirical information (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 77).

Nonetheless, such choice is not an option in a master thesis time frame. As a consequence, I have to select a cross-sectional approach. Fortunately, such question does not have a great negative impact on the research since even a longitudinal inquiry would need a first exploratory step, has the one given in this thesis.

Intensive research

Finally, a choice needs to be made in terms of how the knowledge should be abstracted. This can be view in terms of extensive and intensive research (Sayer, 1992) and the choice is on the latter. This motivated by the goal of the research: to understand how an event (the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs) work and what produces that.
Therefore I look for “substantial relations of connection” while these do not need to be representative of any group (Sayer, 2000, p. 21). Again, it is not the objective to find out what is the dominant discourse among all the entrepreneurs that ever existed or will exist, but to understand in a certain social-historical context what is the dominant discourse among the entrepreneurs working with sustainability, and most importantly, why.

As in qualitative studies, the advantage is a deeper knowledge of reality and the critics are of lack of generalization (Sayer, 2000, p. 21) but if we understand that this thesis is not as a sole act of knowledge search but a part of a theorizing process, that critic does not hold has the findings here need to be continuously confirmed.

*Summing up*

The location of this thesis in terms of the research process (a starting point) poses a great influence in the methodology. The use of explorative aspects (e.g. qualitative research) is a reflex of that. The focus is on the qualities of entrepreneurs’ discourses and not in trying to measure “how much sustainable” they are.

Since previous knowledge does not exist it seems right to focus on an explorative study, in order to start probing reality. While a longitudinal study would likely yield better results, time limitations set the choice on the time length. Finally, and again derived from the position of the thesis in the knowledge process, an intensive research will provide help to dig deeper in the empirical world.
4. Theoretical method

This chapter offers the reader three sections. The first highlights the different areas of knowledge used on this thesis. The second, how that knowledge was obtained, and finally which criteria were used to secure quality from the references. All of this contributes to enhance the quality of the thesis and make the research process more robust.

The theoretical method, as a method, refers to the ways data (in this case previous knowledge), was obtain and used (Robson, 2002, p. 223; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 3). Thus, it provides the way in which I have obtained the articles, books, etc. used as references and other related options.

4.1 Building blocks

The topic studied here is quite complex. It involves different notions (e.g. entrepreneurship or retroduction) from different areas (e.g. business, sociology, philosophy, etc.). As a consequence there is a need to identify the key knowledge building blocks that compose this research (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Burton, 2000, p. 140; Hart C., 2001). The need for that is both internally and externally motivated: it needs to be done to make a sense of what areas of literature would be needed but also to give to the reader a notion of the areas involved and the correspondent languages.

From the twelve blocks that initially I had defined as needed, the thesis incorporates seven of them as the rest were merged with the ones chosen. For instance, initially there had been defined a need to understand economic development, social development and environmental questions as separated issues. However, that was a too ambitious approach for the scope of this research and so they were merged with the sustainable development knowledge block. The follow paragraphs provide an overview on these areas of knowledge.

The first block corresponds generally to chapter 2 and it regards the philosophies of science. The use of this has to do with the need to understand ones assumptions and views on the nature of the world and knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Philosophies of science such as positivism or critical realism and concepts like ontology and epistemology are important aspects of this area.

Sustainable development is the second block and is central to the thesis. It comprises the definition of sustainability, the competing discourses and their views on socio-economic, environmental and change issues. As mentioned before the first option was to understand separately notions of social development, economic development and their relation with the environment but such was not possible due to the extension of the area.

Furthermore, in terms of sustainability I have also turn to other knowledge as sustainable entrepreneurship. Sustainable entrepreneurship is a new research area (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 30; Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007, p. 1) and so the option here was to use general entrepreneurship as a starting point to then apply the ideas from that
area in a sustainability context. The centrality of SEs in the research questions made the use of the areas obvious.

The use of the discussion of social structures and social mechanisms derives from the need to understand how sustainable entrepreneurs and the social structure relate. Despite being a consolidated area there is still a high level of discussion on what concepts such as structure or agency mean (Dobson, 2001, p. 205; Sewell Jr., 1992, p. 1). What constitutes the social structure or how it affects individuals are some questions that this area provides. Later, in chapter 12, there is a more “practical” use of social structure by trying to describe the current one. Still, one can argue that is the same knowledge block.

The introduction of the discursive block was made in a posterior time from the rest of the others as I got aware of the need to understand discourse as separate of sustainability. Discourses are in the base to define how entrepreneurs see the world, and also, as it will be mention further along, part of the actions we take are discursive and actions are often discursively represented (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 37). Furthermore, discourses are often used as a battle arena for the struggles that lead to social change (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006, p. 363). All of that made me realise to the need to see discourse as separate block.

Finally, and although not part of the theoretical framework of this thesis, I also used research methods literature and so is also a key building block (Hart C., 2001, pp. 2-3). Here the aim was to understand what are potential scientific approaches, methods, etc.

4.2 Literature research

Scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals are the main source of literature in this thesis, as they are seen as one of the most important sources (Hart C., 2001, p. 79). This because scientific articles are often representing the novelty in the field and, most important, by being reviewed before published their quality is assumed to be higher since they face external reviews. Another important source is articles in books. Although they are not as scrutinized as the ones published in scientific journals they still are evaluated by the editors of the books. Finally, books were also a secondary source used. They are also an important source (Hart C., 2001, p. 79) and the strength here is that they provide overviews of an area (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 27). In punctual occasions I used articles from conferences (for instance (Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007)).

Regarding scientific articles I used three methods to retrieve them. The first was the use of the databases available on the university’s library webpage, as Business Source Premier, Emerald Fulltext, JSTOR. Google scholar was also used as a support. For each building block I have defined different combinations of words as it is recommend by literature research authors (Burton, 2000, p. 144): for instance for sustainable development I used sustainable development, sustainability, social development, strong sustainability discourse, etc. The second one was the use of articles, as well as books, that were referenced by others texts in a snowballing process. Finally, some articles were provided as suggestion from teachers of the entrepreneurship department. As for books the main source was the library of the Umeå University, followed by personal books and some borrowed by friends and teachers.
4.3 Critique of secondary sources

Regarding the use of secondary sources three criteria were defined to enhance the quality of the material. The first, already mentioned, is the focus on peer-reviewed articles. Yet, in certain topics (like philosophy of science) the focus was on books rather than on articles, because the goal was to have overall information rather than specific one (that generally characterizes articles) (Hart C., 2001, p. 27).

The second criteria is the use of the original information sources. This means that if one part of for instance an article was interesting and based in another reference, than that latter reference would be read. In that way I reduced the number of tertiary sources by making them secondary ones.

Finally, the third choice was the use of recent articles as far as possible. However the relevance of the article/author in the area was also taken into consideration. For instance, the use of Bashkar books (that are over 30 years) is justifiable by the fact that he is a key element in the critical realism movement.
5. Theory on sustainability

This chapter represents the core of the theory as it discusses the central concept of this thesis: sustainability. It allows an understanding of what kind of discourses can SEs have, thus giving a central contribution to solve the research questions. It starts by presenting a definition of sustainability, followed by an historical evolution of the concept. This lays the foundations to understand the rest of the chapter: first, the field of sustainability discourses is mapped and three main areas are identified; this is followed by a presentation of these three areas and finalized with a critical discussion of each of them.

As pointed out in introduction, while sustainability is a widely accepted concept, its meaning is open to ideological discussion. This happens because, as an abstract representation for something real, you can see sustainability has a container where different real phenomena can be placed. For that reason it is important to understand how the concept has evolved and what each sustainability stance represents.

5.1 A definition

There are several definitions of sustainability that clash among themselves (Carvalho, 2001, p. 62; Mebratu, 1998, pp. 503-504). Based on Gladwin et al. (1995) and Katsikis and Kyrgidu (2007), but seeking inspiration from a wide range of references, I define sustainable development as:

A process of achieving human development, in an inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent and secure manner. It is achieved through actions that produce social equity, environmental integrity and economic viability.

This definition clearly highlights what should be, in my opinion, the main concern of economic organization: human development. In other words, the social system should be our main concern as long as environmental degradation does not occur. If we look to the beginning of times we see that this was the original purpose of human activities: fulfil human needs. Only in the last centuries, with the development of economic organization, the focus shifted to achieve economic benefits.

Gladwin et al. (1995, pp. 878-880) offer the definitions of inclusiveness, connectivity, equity, prudence and security. First of all, is crucial the understanding that all the problems we face are connected (connectivity). This means that both environmental as well as socio-economic concerns need to be taken into account together, putting space (here and there) as well as time (now and in the future) in the equation (inclusiveness). This goes hand in hand with equity that highlights the need for a fair distribution of resources in an intragenerational, intergenerational and interspecies perspective. Finally, sustainable development should build the resilience of both natural and human systems (prudence), keeping the development inside the systems regenerative capacity (security).

Defined as “widening or enlarging the range of people’s choices” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 878)
The ways of achieving this are also expanded. By social equity I mean that inter and intragenerational equity needs to be guaranteed by assuring that there is an “equal access of all members of society to resources and opportunities” (Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007, p. 6). Environmental integrity is about the use of nature without its degradation, what means that we can only use what the Earth provides us from its regenerative capacity and not more (Wackernagel, et al., 2002, p. 9266). Finally, economic viability means for me that while actions should not be taken in a logic of maximization of economic gains, there is a need to equal economic gains with economic losses so that any action does not deplete our economic capital, in the same way of the environmental aspect.

5.2 A historical review

As stated in the introductory chapter, sustainability was the system’s answer to the pressure of several (radical) movements (Castro, 2004, p. 196) that stressed the contradiction between our economic system and the problems it was causing (Robinson, 2004, p. 370). Therefore, the concept and its evolution cannot be disconnected from the historical evolution of our economic organization (Dryzek, 2005, p. 13): the process of globalization further shown the debilities of the way human kind has been developing since the industrial revolution, and at the same time it strengthen the conditions for the development of environmental and social movements. Thus, the increased economic growth we have been facing (Hobsbawm E., 1994) explains, in my opinion, the hype in sustainability.

A historical overview

While sustainability issues can be identify as early as the Greek philosophers or in some passages of religious scriptures (Baker, 2006, p. 18; Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 463), most of the development on the concept has happen in the last fifty years. For Mebratu (1998), the history of the concept can be divided in three periods: before the 1972’s Conference on Environment and Development, between the conference and the report from WCED (1987), Our common future, and from that report till now.

Previous to the Conference on Environment and Development, several areas have discussed sustainability issues, mostly concerning environmental questions (Robinson, 2004, pp. 370-371). For instance, religion have found to have positive and negative influences on the relation of man with nature (Mebratu, 1998, pp. 497-498), while in economy as well in politics several authors pointed out the unviability of our system (Redclift, 2005, p. 213).

The conference became a landmark in terms of sustainable development by acknowledging the need to address environmental issues (Mebratu, 1998, p. 500). This recognition led to a continuous development of concepts. Ones more reformist, such as eco-development (Mebratu, 1998, p. 501) while other presented a more radical approach requesting deep changes in society, such as the world conservation strategy (Robinson, 2004, p. 372). However, it was in 1987 that the most accepted and used definition (Baker, 2006, pp. 19-25; Carvalho, 2001, p. 62) would be born:
"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 54)

After this, several other events like the 1992’s Rio Conference (Pesqueux, 2009) helped the concept to spread quickly. It became one of most publicized words (Devkota, 2005, p. 297), used in political, academic and mundane discourses (Carvalho, 2001, p. 62; Kidd, 1992, p. 3). Such development lead to very different interpretations of what is sustainable development, with these differences reflecting old (ideological) conflicts (Robinson, 2004, p. 373). While most of the definitions still are greatly based in nature/environmental considerations, some focus the socio-economic relations (Redclift, 2005, p. 218).

Nowadays

Whereas, is a commonly accepted that sustainability is a “good thing”, some of its characteristics pose a dangerous threat. The vagueness of the term has promoted different and often incompatible interpretations (Robinson, 2004, p. 373), from agents that historically had very opposite positions (such as theologians and Marxists), sparking “a large political battle for influence over our future by linking interpretation to the concept” (Mebratu, 1998, p. 493). Furthermore, the vagueness of the term have originated a phenomenon of “green hypocrisy” on companies by re-branding old practices as sustainable (Redclift, 2005, pp. 217-218).

Also, the most accepted definition (WCED, 1987) has several unclear aspects. First, while accepting that different countries/regions need different paths of sustainable development, it does not explain which path should then be taken when different agents need to follow different (and incompatible) ways (Banerjee, 2003). Secondly, it is not clear what need to be sustained (e.g. natural stock of resources or consumption levels) and how that will be achieved. For instance if is the natural stock is the one to be sustained how will that be achieved taking the current property relations (Redclift, 2005, pp. 214-215)? What is more, some SD approaches often opt to leave the vagueness of the term unaddressed (Luke, 2005, pp. 228-229). Finally, the reformist nature of most of the sustainable development interpretations (such as the one from WCED) avoids deeper questions and keeps intact the existent (unbalanced) social relations (Bristow & Wells, 2005, p. 175; Roseland, 2000, p. 77).

Summing up

All in all, we have a “dangerously vague” concept (Mebratu, 1998, p. 503) that while widely accepted in the surface, hides very different interpretations dominated by ideological values. When stated, these interpretations are rarely analysed in terms of discourse positioning and so everything can look the same when is not (Nilsen, 2010, p. 495). In light of this, there is a need to analyse the competing discourses of sustainability to understand its value and to be able to distinguish those who implement the concept through the same solutions we find in the dominant market discourse and those who distance themselves from that (Robinson, 2004, p. 376).

5.3 Mapping discourses

Based on private possession.
The sustainability field

Due to the above, we can see that different understandings of the concept are not more than representations of different ideological discourses and their aspirations. These discourses are struggling for the domination of the concept (Baker, 2006, p. 27; Mebratu, 1998, p. 493) and this is due, in my opinion, to two reasons. First, sustainability, as a representation of certain practices in reality, is still in an emergent phase (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 876), opening a struggle for the most accepted definition. Second, and most important, the potential of the concept to threaten the position of the dominant discourse (Dryzek, 2005, p. 47; Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007, p. 44) turns the meaning of the concept into a very important battle for supporters and contestants of the market discourse.

This question is reflected in the mapping of the different approaches, with discussion being done around overarching aspects such as change of values or moral development (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 876). As well, the representations of the field express this ideological differences (see Table 1), by converging in a definition of three distinct areas: the existent market discourse, the weak sustainability discourse and the strong sustainability discourse.

These approaches can be succinctly compared in the degree of change they argue it is necessary to obtain: MD admits at best the need of humanize business as usual (Springett, 2005, p. 129), WSD has a rhetoric of reforming change within the pre-existing structure (Bristow & Wells, 2005, p. 170; Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 469) and SSD defends a radical transformation of the existing structures (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1212).
### Table 1: Representations of the Sustainability Discourse Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Stance on Sustainability</th>
<th>MD Label</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>WSD Label</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>SSD Label</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blade (2006)</td>
<td>not clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>&quot;aims to integrate capitalist growth with environmental concerns&quot;</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>&quot;Promoting sustainable development is premised upon a radical change in our attitude to nature&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnedahl &amp; Eriksson (2007)</td>
<td>WSD/SSD</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>&quot;The dominating discourse is focused on achieving increased economic wealth through market activities&quot;</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>&quot;Technological development and internalisation of environmental costs are the main solutions within a WSD - hence they are largely compatible with MD&quot;</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>&quot;The moral radical approaches share the assumptions that there are no substitutions between man made and natural resources&quot; and that &quot;we need to reconnect with nature, place and community&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carvalho (2001)</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>&quot;Attribute ecological problems to poverty, population growth and underdevelopment (...) and tend to propose as solutions mechanisms that reconcile economic growth and environmental protection&quot;</td>
<td>Radical</td>
<td>&quot;Believes that the achievement of SD would only be possible if it involved the transformation of the way humans deal with the natural environment&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castro (2004)</td>
<td>WSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>&quot;This ideology, without the environmental aspect, existed before the environmental crisis, (...) In other words, sustainable development sounds suspiciously like plain old development&quot;</td>
<td>Critical (two examples are given: post-structuralism and environment Marxism)</td>
<td>&quot;Poststructuralists have criticized development theory in general and sustainable development&quot; while Marxists focused on the capitalist aspect of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryzek (2005)</td>
<td>not clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving / Sustainability</td>
<td>&quot;Defined by taking the political-economic status quo as given but in need of adjustment to cope with environmental problems&quot;</td>
<td>Survivalism / Green radicalism</td>
<td>&quot;its adherents reject the basic structure of industrial society and the way the environment is conceptualized&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Stance on Sustainability</td>
<td>MD Label</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>WSD Label</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>SSD Label</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladwin et al. (1995)</td>
<td>WSD</td>
<td>Technocentric paradigm</td>
<td>&quot;Is dominant today, we believe, in mainstream elements of business, and in its professional academies&quot;</td>
<td>Technocentric paradigm &amp; Sustainocentric paradigm</td>
<td>&quot;Sustainocentrism draws its inspiration from claims of the universalism of life, the stewardship admonitions common to the major religions, the field of ecological economics ...&quot;</td>
<td>Ecocentric paradigm &amp; Sustainocentric paradigm</td>
<td>&quot;In reacting to technocentrism, ecocentrist offer a worldview that is more holistic, integrative and less arrogantly anthropocentric&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopwood et al. (2005)</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>&quot;Adjustments can be made without any fundamental changes to society, means of decision making or power relations&quot;</td>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>&quot;Do not consider that lapse in ecological or social systems is likely or that fundamental change is necessary&quot;</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>Problem is &quot;rooted in fundamental features of society today and how humans interrelate and relate with the environment&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kallio et al. (2007)</td>
<td>not clear</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>&quot;Bound to an anthropocentric world-view (...). Claims for intragenerational equity have been largely ignored and well-being of other species is strictly secondary to human welfare&quot;</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>&quot;The strong interpretations refuse to treat humans and nature as separate from each other&quot; and &quot;hold that more participatory, transparent and democratic processes are required&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mebratu (1998)</td>
<td>not clear</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springett (2003, 2005)</td>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>&quot;Tame the concept to mean no more than a level of social and environmental engagement that corporations can easily accommodate - even use to bumish their brand&quot;</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Perspective whose core meanings are: &quot;the entrenchment of the environmental considerations in economic policy-making; a commitment to equity; an appreciation that 'development' is wider than growth.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This author's division does not fit the fields accepted division as he look at the field with three different lenses (institutional version, ideological version and academic version) and then give some examples of different representatives discourses. However, the discourses given as example fall in the areas of MD, WSD and SSD (for instance the institutional lenses portrait discourses between MD and WSD while ideological has mostly SSD examples).
Examples of different discourses in each main area are represented on Figure 2, according to two dimensions: environmental and socio-economic concerns. In the status quo area (MD) we have most of the official institutions discourses (such as the World Bank), while the reformist position (WSD) is mostly defended by environmental groups (e.g. WWF) and transformational claims are made from socialist/minorities movements.

![Figure 1 - Different Views on Sustainable Development](source: Hopwood et al., 2005)

**Analysis’ components**

To analyse the different discourses, and based on the work of the previous studies highlighted before, it will be taken into consideration: environmental concerns, socio-economic concerns and change concerns (see Tables 2, 3 & 4) (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 233; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 41). Environmental concerns regard how nature and its relation with man are seen. Issues like nature resilience or are approached. Socio-economic concerns range issues like the primary objective of economy or the guiding principle and measurement of success. The division between these two types of concerns is needed since the dimensions are not inseparable (Marcuses, 1998, p. 104). Examples of discourses with a strong component of one of these two dimensions, while having no concern for the other dimension are eco-fascism or socialist cornucopia (Figure 1). Finally, change concerns take into consideration the type of change wanted, its objectives and mechanisms to achieve that change.

**5.3.1 Market discourse**

This discourse, rooted on the neo-liberal economic thought, dominates the economic agenda (Haque, 1999, p. 187; Nilsen, 2010, p. 496; Stead & Stead, 1994, p. 15), with the support of media, politics and academia (Lehtonen, 2009; Spangenberg, 2010, p.
561). It has on the market and firms its central artefacts and views the economic area as superior to both environmental and social (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 105).

**Environmental concerns**

The environmental concerns of MD are represented in Table 2. According to it, nature is up to exploitation for human benefit and it should be taken as a type of resource (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 462). In fact the degree of exploitation of the nature is seen as an indicator of development (Baker, 2006, p. 3; Banerjee, 2003, p. 152), which highlights the anthropocentric nature of MD.

Moreover, nature is resilient and has almost unlimited resources and in the case of resource shortage human made capital (e.g. machinery) can act as replacement (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). This means that regarding future generations the only necessity is to leave them with an accumulated stock of capital equivalent to the one found before (Springett, 2005, p. 135), regardless of the composition of the stock (share of human made vs. natural capital) (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 884). Reinforcing the anthropocentric assumption, nature is seen as isolated from human systems and thus concern for it should only be taken into account if is the most efficient option or if the market signalizes it (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, pp. 883-884).

**TABLE 2 - ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>WSD</th>
<th>SSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the Earth</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Managed</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human &amp; nature</td>
<td>Disassociation</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans role</td>
<td>Domination</td>
<td>Domination/stewardship</td>
<td>Plain member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of the ecosystem</td>
<td>Value as resources</td>
<td>Value as resources in a broader sense</td>
<td>Inherent value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecosystem resilience</td>
<td>Robust</td>
<td>Robust/vulnerable</td>
<td>Highly vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human vs. natural capital</td>
<td>Full substitutes</td>
<td>Partial substitutes</td>
<td>Complements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying capacity limits</td>
<td>(Virtually) no limits</td>
<td>(Virtually) no limits/approaching</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of the problems</td>
<td>Trivial</td>
<td>Consequential</td>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Socio-economic concerns**

The socio-economic concerns of MD (Table 3) are well known. The main objective is to achieve economic growth (Spangenberg, 2010, pp. 561-562), increasing the material standards of living and consequently happiness (Haque, 1999, p. 202). That should be achieved through market mechanisms where individuals’ wishes shape what the companies offer (Armour, 1997, p. 1061). Ultimately, these mechanisms define what is best for society, based on the utility given to the goods available (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 102).

As well, and according to Bonnedahl & Eriksson (2007), MD is centred in the role of efficiency on different levels. It offers a guideline principle on what needs should be satisfied based on how consumers value different things (macro-level), how should economy be organized to satisfy these needs (meso-level,) and what is the most efficient
solution to deliver these needs (micro-level). Thus, the primary economic concern is to maximize the returns on the resource allocation that best meet the needs of consumers.

**TABLE 3 - SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCERNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>WSD</th>
<th>SSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal fulfilment</td>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Materialism/post-materialism</td>
<td>Non-material values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of growth</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Mainly good, controlled</td>
<td>Bad/eliminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic structure</td>
<td>Free market</td>
<td>Market subject to regulations</td>
<td>Steady state economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary economic objective</td>
<td>Efficient allocation</td>
<td>Ecological integrity</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding principles and measurements of success</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Eco-efficiency</td>
<td>Multi-value effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy of systems</td>
<td>Economic system superior</td>
<td>Economic, social and ecological systems equally important</td>
<td>Ecological/social systems superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical responsibility</td>
<td>Maximise self-interest</td>
<td>Inclusion of humans distant in time and space</td>
<td>Humans, other species and ecosystems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate goals</td>
<td>Profit and growth</td>
<td>Profit, sustainable growth</td>
<td>Stakeholder satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of capital/resources</td>
<td>Maximise profit; exploit and convert</td>
<td>Use resources prudently; exploit/conserve</td>
<td>Resource view not applicable; Enhance/expand;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits to economic organization</td>
<td>Perceived utility/market price</td>
<td>Reduced benefits from the environment</td>
<td>Integrity of individuals and species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty alleviation</td>
<td>Growth trickle</td>
<td>Equal opportunity</td>
<td>Redistribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount rate</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Zero/inappropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this discourse the economic system is superior to the social and ecological ones, and based on a logic of maximization of self-interest (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 459; Milner, 1994), companies are supposed to pursue profit through the exploitation of resources (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007).

**Change concerns**

Regarding change (see Table 4), MD stresses that the problems we face are not severe and so no fundamental changes are required (Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005, p. 42). The change needed is incremental and it relies on the economies to grow more. In this line of thought, growth is not only positive but plays a crucial role for solving sustainability issues (Castro, 2004, p. 197) since it provides increasing standards of living for the poor (Mebratu, 1998, p. 505) \(^{13}\), while also increasing taxes and thus governmental capacity to protect environment (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 884). This growth should be achieved through reducing the state presence on the economy, technology development and consumer education (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007; Haque, 1999, p. 199).

\(^{13}\) Defined as the main cause of environmental degradation (Dryzek, 2005, p. 153)
5.3.2 Weak sustainability discourse

The first difference between WSD and MD concerns the recognition of the seriousness of the problems we face. It goes a step further than MD by claiming for changes towards a reform of the actual system (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 465) while also showing more concern in both environmental and socio-economic issues (Bonne Dahl & Eriksson, 2007). This claim is routed on the belief that the problems are created not by the structure itself but by some flaws in it (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 43). Environmental groups and some international institutions (such as the UN) are examples of main advocates of WSD (Figure 1).

Environmental concerns

Regarding environmental concerns (Table 2) WSD can be seen as an expansion of the MD (Nilsen, 2010, p. 461). They enhance the value of the Earth, considering the need to nurture it for our own sake: WSD identify the interdependence with nature, but still perceive it as an economic resource and so the role of the Humans is to exploit it but within its regenerative capacity (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 890).

It is recognized that the nature has a finite capacity although we are still far from reaching it and that, at some extent, human made capital can substitute natural capital. This means we need to leave at least an equal amount of accumulated stock (as in MD) but also that this as to take into consideration that some natural capital cannot be substituted (Nilsen, 2010, p. 497).

Socio-economic concerns

Also in socio-economic concerns similarities are evident (Table 3). The most important one is that economical growth and environmental protection are not incompatible (Bonne Dahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 103). (Controlled) economic growth and market mechanisms (subject to regulations) are still the way to achieve materialistic and post-materialistic goals (Bonne Dahl & Eriksson, 2007). The difference is that ecological integrity, through the introduction of eco-efficiency\(^\text{14}\) is now an economic objective as well (Mebratu, 1998, p. 509). This put the environmental domain, as well as the social, to the same level of importance of the economic one, including not only the present but also the future (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995).

\(^{14}\)MD efficiency plus internalization of the environmental costs (Bonne Dahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 103).
As in MD, the corporate goals are to make profit at the expense of the exploitation of resources, although some caution in doing this is asked by WSD. Economic activity must be limited to all that does not degrade the environment in a significant way. (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007).

**Change concerns**

Changes (see Table 4) are assumed to be of a reformist nature (Hay, 2005, p. 314; Robinson, 2004, p. 376), mainly to improve economic and political institutions. This is to be achieved through lobbying governments to produce more regulation (for instance in term of greenhouse gas emissions) as well as through innovative technology and market mechanisms (Gibbs, 2009, p. 64; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005). In addition, as knowledge imbalance has been pointed out as a cause for sustainability problems, WSD urge to develop education in developing countries, especially in terms of free-market mechanisms (Castro, 2004, p. 198). Designing policies that address the poor is also crucial to solve part of sustainability issues (Castro, 2004, p. 197).

**5.3.3 Strong sustainability discourse**

The final discourse shows great differences to both MD and WSD. It sees the exploitation of humans and nature, that defines the actual state of affairs (Dryzek, 2005, p. 209), has the root of the problems we face. The questioning of the modern structures (Bristow & Wells, 2005, p. 170; Springett, 2003, p. 73) and claims for radical different form of society (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1212) are key features of this discourse.

**Environmental concerns**

For SSD the environmental concerns are put at a higher stake (see Table 2). Nature is more than our home as it has intrinsic value (independent of us and our regards of it) and we are a part of it (as much as other species are) (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). Even though it recognizes the need of humans to use natural resources for surviving, it sets limits to this use (Mebratu, 1998, p. 507).

Due to our socio-economic system, the environment was pushed beyond its capabilities and the consequences are severe (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, pp. 886-887). Moreover, natural and human capital are seen as complements rather than substitutes (as in the market and weak sustainability discourses) (Nilsen, 2010, p. 497) and so the heritage for future generations goes past notions of accumulated stock of capital or use of discount rates.

**Socio-economic concerns**

As well, socio-economic concerns differ greatly from previous discourses (see Table 3): the goal of our organization should be to create conditions for the fulfilment of non-materialistic values (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007). Thus, economic growth is neither needed nor relevant (Carvalho, 2001, p. 64). The focus should be on “qualitative
improvements in the absence of quantitative expansion” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 897) with the objective of increasing quality of life. Achieving this would need steady state economy and using effectiveness criteria as measurements. As a result, the social and environmental are the most important ones.

Corporate assumptions change drastically. The purpose is stakeholder satisfaction (humans, other species and ecosystems) (Dryzek, 2005) and the integrity of individuals and species is the criteria to limiting economic activity (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007). Governments should develop wealth re-distribution mechanisms to eliminate poverty (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995).

**Change concerns**

Reforming changes are not enough to achieve all of this. The objective is to create a new socio-economic structure (see Table 4) through personal development and regulation, although the implementation varies among trends in SSD. For instance eco-feminism asks for different solutions than eco-socialism (Mebratu, 1998, pp. 506-509): the first claims for a change of values towards a feminist point of view while the second defends the need of social egalitarianism.

**5.4 Discussion of discourses**

After the presentation of all discourses a question rises: which is the “right” one? Which should be implemented? To help answer this question Gladwin *et al.* (1995) make an unique contribution. For them there is no sense on defining these discourses on the basis of true/false or good/evil. At best one can try to analyse the discourses (as a set of assumptions) based on the likelihood of “how much” sustainable development each discourse can produce.

For that I bring back the definition of sustainable development to which the discourses will be held against:

*A process of achieving human development, in an inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent and secure manner. It is achieved through actions that produce social equity, environmental integrity and economic viability.*

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15 Such an economic model based on a no-growth system should not be confused with a recession on a growth system (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 563).

16 Of course, one can argue that this definition, as well as myself, shows a bias toward SSD. That is true. But also do the institutions that defend WSD or MD (Carvalho, 2001, p. 63; Mebratu, 1998, p. 504; Springett, 2003, p. 71). Our choice of criteria is always based on values and so an unbiased evaluation on which discourse is better cannot be made (Goddard, 1973, p. 1; Heracleous, 2006, p. 1083). Therefore, we have to go back to an ontological/epistemological level. Sustainability is a concept, an abstraction. In other words, is a vessel that we can “fill in” with different real phenomena. Thus, it has different meaning among different individuals (Banerjee, 2003, p. 145). For some, sustainability is the process of keeping their company’s profit increasing over time while for others it has to do with developing the common good for the communal sake. It is about thinking on what social progress is or what should be regarded as development (Baker, 2006, p. 1). So, the choice ultimately relies in the question: in which “world” one would wish to live (Beck, 1992; Baker, 2006, p. 28).
Another relevant issue in analysing the discourses is the possibility of implementation given the actual socio-economic structures (Carvalho, 2001). The relevance of taking this into account is that the changes that all discourses claim, are to be made on the pre-existing arrangements and the willingness of the structures to change vary among discourses. So, as structures provide actors with the possibilities for action (North, 1990), it is also important to take them into account as they constrain the actors activities (Springett, 2005).

5.4.1 Market discourse

Concerns discussion

MD has been the dominant discourse and thus the underlying cause of our problems (Carvalho, 2001, p. 62; Haque, 1999; Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 56; Potocan & Mulej, 2003, p. 248). Beside that it has several theoretical contradictions and according to Egri and Pinfield (1996, p. 467) lacks effective tools to deal with today’s challenges.

MD put economic considerations as the key (and sometimes only) concern on human relations (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 39). In fact, this growth fetishism (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 565) is so severe that it makes this discourse offer as a solution what seems to be the cause of our problems: the imperative need to grow and the systematic need for profit (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 462). In this way, we can see that their definition of sustainable development equals the capacity to sustain economic growth. This explains the calls for market liberalization and deregulation.

In fact, economic growth is defined as the solution to social problems (e.g. poverty). This argument is another contradiction in this discourse. It is argued that economic growth will help lift the standard of living of the poorest (Mebratu, 1998, p. 505). This would likely be done through offering goods that they can afford (and so cheaper than normal), stimulate labour policies towards more fair redistribution of wealth and increase the public expenditure in social care (schools, hospitals, etc.) (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 893). To achieve that we would have less profits and increasing taxes. How will that be possible without violating the core claims of MD: efficiency above all and the reduce presence of the state in all areas of economy? How will that be accepted when such practices were defined as harmful for growth (Harvey, 1996 in Banerjee (2003))? As well, while we have experienced growth in the last century, we still struggle with the same social problems (Banerjee, 2003, p. 143). The fact is that growth, when achieved, mostly benefits those in the top of the social pyramid (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 562).

On top of that, since it is our goal to maximize our own self-interest (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 102), how can it be argued that companies would engage in practices that would benefit others at their own expenses? Of course, one can say that there is possibility for win-win situations, where poverty can be alleviated and companies can still make a profit (Prahalad, 2005). Although this can be true, given the growth constrains we will face, is hard to see how we will achieve an effective fair distribution of wealth that benefits the poorest without being at the expenses of the richest (Banerjee, 2003, p. 172; Spangenberg, 2010, p. 562).
Moreover, with the actual consumption patterns we already use more resources than the ones we have. If we would bring the developing countries standard of living up while maintaining the one of the developed countries, we would need more than one planet (Roseland, 2000, p. 77; WWF, 2008). An example from Hopwood et al. (2005, p. 48) is that if we would raise the standards of living of the world to the same of the USA in terms of motor vehicles ownership we would have around 8.5 times more vehicles (and gas emissions) in the world. How would we cope with that?

Likewise, the consideration of humans as disconnected from nature offers great criticism. Even if we do not take humans as part of nature, one cannot deny that we are dependent on it (Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005, p. 48; Mebratu, 1998, p. 514). Not understanding this as lead to deep environmental degradation, based on the idea that is possible for humans to exist outside of nature. Unsurprisingly, the biggest supporters of MD (business and industry) have resisted environmental changes towards sustainability (Castro, 2004, p. 198).

Also, the solutions promoted will further aggravate our situation. More growth, based on ever expanding industrialization and consumption, will cause more pollution and more exploitation of humans and nature (Haque, 1999).

**Definition evaluation**

This discourse fails to pass the definition of sustainability. Its focus on economic wealth in a here and now basis, failing to address the inclusiveness and equity needed to achieve sustainable development. What is more, the lack of concerns for the nature, as it is viewed (disconnected from humans and a source of resources), put MD away from the need of connectivity, prudence and security.

The social equity is unviable in here. As resources are allocated to those who can pay more rather the ones who need it more, the system creates imbalances that are self-perpetuating. The view of nature as a simple resource leads to the destruction of the environment and so to environmental degradation. As well, focusing in profits can be seen as unsustainable. If we see economic system in analogy to a natural system, we can see that in the same way that members of the natural system only take has much as they need and where the system is focused on circulating energy (cradle-to-cradle perspective), an economic system where members take more of what they need is not sustainable.

**Possibility evaluation**

As the dominant discourse the changes required are compatible with the existing structures and so MD’s notion of sustainability does not pose a threat to the state of affairs.

**Concluding remarks**

MD is clearly a faulty discourse. A quick look to the actual state of the world would be sufficient to arrive to that conclusion (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 561). It fails to address the

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17 Equivalent to make a profit.
definition of sustainability. It offers no hope. Taking an adaptive approach MD enthusiasts have increasingly adopted a sustainable rhetoric (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1211) but the use of sustainability jargon in this discourse can easily be understood as a response of an increasing awareness from individuals in terms of sustainability issues (Luke, 2005, p. 233), boosted by media hype on the theme (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 233) as well as an ideological answer (Castro, 2004; Luke, 2005, p. 229). Yet, in practice we have business as usual and sustainability is seen as something to be used for PR purposes (Springett, 2003, p. 74; 2005) and to legitimize the old practices (Sändstrom, 2005). In fact, the appropriation of the sustainability jargon by MD seems to be its core strategy to silence “radical conceptions of sustainable development and the associated contestation of economic growth and capitalist structures and institutions” (Springett, 2003, p. 73).

Concluding: MD does not serve the best interest of humankind as it possesses several contradictions and it lack fitness with sustainable development. However its discourse is very aligned with today’s economic agenda, making it a serious candidate to dominate sustainability as a concept.

5.4.2 Weak sustainability discourse

Concerns discussion

WSD is the discourse that follows. It is very tempting to see it as a dialectical synthesis between MD and SSD (Gladwin, Kenelly, & Krause, 1995). Two facts fuel this idea: that it shares with SSD a strong and appealing rhetoric (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 234) and that its solutions are quite identical to those purposed by MD (see Table 4). Nevertheless, WSD is a patched MD (Springett, 2005, p. 131) with “a little tweaking and ‘slight greening’”18 (Carvalho, 2001, p. 70), developed as an ideological response to more radical approaches (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 242). The problem is that it still lets water in.

Again, as in MD, the rhetoric and the practice differ greatly. It points out our model of development as the cause of the problems (Carvalho, 2001, p. 71) but it promotes solutions based on the same model (Devkota, 2005, p. 299; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 45) while failing to contest the problems’ source (Bristow & Wells, 2005, p. 170; Spangenberg, 2010, p. 561). For instance, it shares the idea with MD that poverty can be raised through economic growth (Mebratu, 1998, p. 505). That not only presents a solution that would create more problems (as seen before) as it shamefully neglects the role that developed/rich countries had in creating underdeveloped countries (Banerjee, 2003), putting the blame and main responsibilities to solve the problems in the “South”.

Another example is the role of international institutions (as the UN) that advocate WSD. These institutions have watched passively while countries that have agreed to implement sustainability measures resist the changes that themselves created. Two examples: the Millennium Development Goals and the Kyoto protocol. As well, they have been responsible for financing projects of economic development that have had no

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18Made, for instance, at the expense of relocating factories to developing countries (Banerjee, 2003, p. 159).
impact for sustainability and have keep their ways of doing things exactly the same (Carvalho, 2001, pp. 69-70).

In addition, several of the programmes developed by this institutions (like the “Global Sustainable Development Facility – 2B2M: 2 Billion to the Market By the Year 2020”) are run by members of corporations that are causing the problems they are trying to solve. In that way is hard to see these institutions has defending the interests of those in distress (Banerjee, 2003, p. 172). Beside these, we have other examples of local and national organizations, that while trying to promote change, fail to step way from the traditional paradigm (Sändstrom, 2005, pp. 160-165).

Seeing the economic, social and ecological systems as equally important also creates ground for criticism. Despite the advocating of regulation in the markets, it still sees market mechanisms as the mainly tool to set production and allocate resources (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005). How is that possible to conciliate with the idea that if we have environmental degradation we should limit our economic organization (Table 3)? An example: let’s say that the natural requirements (e.g. the soil) to produce X were passed the point of degradation and so the production of X would need to reduce to avoid environmental problems. But at the same time the demand of X was high. A natural answer would be that there would have to be regulation to prevent this. The problem is that this regulation would have to touch the private property by preventing the owners of the soils to use them. How could this be solved if: WSD states that only superficial changes need to be made (see Table 4) and for instance the appropriation of private property would be a radical change; but at the same time the prevention of environmental degradation is, according to WSD, reason for reforms? The circle cannot be squared.

Also, how can WSD expect to convince governments and business to change, when this model suits them best (Carvalho, 2001, p. 69)? It seems that WSD supporters are naïve to the point they forget that systems are made to sustain the interests of those who have the power (North, 1994). More, taking the development of the capitalistic system over the past centuries (Hobsbawm, 1962; 1975; 1987; 1994) it does not seem possible for the system to take this change keeping its assumptions intact (Carvalho, 2001, p. 67). And even if that would be achieved, reformist action is likely not be enough to reverse the destruction of our society (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1213; Nilsen, 2010, p. 496).

**Definition evaluation**

Despite these negative aspects, it takes a step forward in maximizing the definition of sustainable development, when compared with MD. One of the WSD merits is that introduces the logic of connectivity in their speech both connection environmental problems with socio-economic ones as well as taking into consideration the intra and intergenerational dimensions. Thus, WSD passes the inclusiveness test.

However inclusiveness and connectivity in WSD are superficial and do not address the deep mechanisms that cause the problems identified (Hay, 2005, p. 311; Springett, 2003, p. 71). Proving that is the lack of consideration for an equity-based development, as it defends measures that are in line with MD and the perpetuation of the imbalances in society (Robinson, 2004). As a consequence it fails to address the social equity
principle of the SD definition. The view that economic growth is the key to achieve sustainability fails in the same way that MD fails in terms of economic viability.

As well, it legitimates the degradation of natural systems by assuming nature as a resource and that natural and human capital are partly substitutes (Castro, 2004, p. 204). The use of eco-efficiency concept is still based on the same exploitation of nature that characterizes MD (Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009, p. 1211). In fact, eco-efficiency, a key concept on WSD, suffers from a rebound effect, where the savings generated by eco-efficient solutions are destroyed by the increased consumption of those solutions (Tilley & Young, 2009, p. 83). Thus, WSD lacks a proper recognition of the natural limits and so fails the prudence and the security tests of the sustainability concept, as well as the environmental integrity principle.

Possibility evaluation

A reformist change is seen as many authors as the most likely path of development (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 110; Gibbs, 2009; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 49). However the willingness of the structure to provide WSD with reformist opportunities is not clear. Some of the leading system-made institutions (like the UN), have a WSD discourse (Figure 1), and thus give the impression of a window of opportunity for reforms within the system. On the other hand, it does not seem possible that a change will happen. This would require a rebalancing of the power relations at the expenses of the powerful ones, and historically those who are in charge were never willing to give up their power (Castro, 2004, p. 215).

Concluding remarks

Concluding the most important aspect to keep in mind of WSD it is the perverted relation between rhetoric and practice. While often using a strong argumentation against the existing development models it asks for more of the same when it comes to putting the rhetoric into practice. In that way, it is very dangerous for the development of an alternative discourse to MD since it is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Also, while WSD is seen as a possibility for change, this will only happen if WSD keep its practice aligned with the dominant conventions (Carvalho, 2001, p. 69) or if the social struggles would reach a point where the system would have to give some concessions to avoid being overthrown (Castro, 2004, p. 215).

5.4.3 Strong sustainability discourse

Concern discussion

SSD also faces some problems. While they provide a cohesive critique to MD and WSD and elaborate on what we need to achieve, it lacks discussion on implementation issues (Dryzek, 2005, p. 47; Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 467). Such weakness can be traced to the fact that while the goals are clear, the means to achieve it are flexible and thus not very explored (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 111; Castro, 2004, p. 219). This creates legitimation issues that are used in the struggle for domination (Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007): the objective is to build the SD concept along what is seen as normal development for MD (Luke, 2005, p. 36). In other words: to institutionalize MD and WSD, SSD is put out of the spectrum of available choices (Kallio, Nordberg, &
Ahonen, 2007; Springett, 2005). The tactic known from other ideological battles where the limits of what is an acceptable opinion are extremely narrow while at the same time the discussion within that spectrum is very high giving the appearance of freedom of thinking (Chomsky, Barsamian, & Naiman, 1998, p. 43).

In this case WSD is portrayed already as a big change and SSD is labelled of utopian or silenced (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 100; Milne, Tregidga, & Walton, 2009). As a result there is a need to put SSD into practice in order to be able to conceptualize the more abstract considerations (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 112) as well to avoid criticisms (Kallio, Nordberg, & Ahonen, 2007).

Another flaw to be pointed out to SSD is a lack of discussion around the changes needed in individuals. In fact this does not seem to be an area very explored in sustainability literature beside some exceptions (Hay, 2006). Although this can be pointed out to all the discourses, is special relevant on SSD since it is the one that presents a requirement of deeper change. The cause here can be the fact that most of SSD advocates (like eco-Marxists) highlight the role of structure over agency. Nevertheless a radical change of structures is hard to imagine without a deep changes on all of us. By addressing this theme not only would strengthen SSD case but it could also stimulate a stronger call for action.

Definition evaluation

This discourse is the one who best fit the definition of sustainability. It highlights that environmental concerns and socio-economic concerns cannot be disconnected of each other as they are both results of our model of economic organization. In addition, it claims for a more equal and just world, dedicated to improving human quality of living, inside the natural and social systems limitations. In this way, it passes the economic viability principle by focusing not in economic growth, while it is consistent with the social equity principle and the environmental integrity one.

Possibility evaluation

However, the feasibility of SSD under this structure is very unlikely since it represents a radical change (Dryzek, 2005, pp. 200-202). This would require a tremendous paradigm shift, what poses as a major challenge (Stead & Stead, 1994, p. 16). Of course this statement is made under a world scale, since projects throughout the globe have been creating and applying SSD at a local level (Dawson, 2006; Devkota, 2005; Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005).

Concluding remarks

SSD presents the best overlap with the definition of sustainability. Despite that, it lacks discussion beyond conceptualization. More, the actual dominance of MD makes it unlikely to “triumph”. This should not be taken as a deterministic approach, limiting the capacity to change to what the structure “wants”. In fact, all through human history we have many examples (e.g. the French revolution and the overthrow of the feudal system) of changes that were made against what was valued by the ruling institutions.
In addition, societies are not monoliths and so there is a constant battle by competing discourses over domination\(^1\) (Lehtonen, 2009, pp. 391-392). So, although SSD is incompatible with the views of the dominant groups and will not be tolerated by it, it should not mean that is not worth of pursuing.

**5.4.4 Summing up**

To sum all up, what was said above defines the sustainability concept struggle as an ideological one (Springett, 2005, p. 131). Discourses of those who are in charge of the present system, MD and WSD, and that have nothing to win with radical transformation of society, claim for a change that lets everything the same. On the other side, SSD, rooted mostly in social movements and discourses that have been historically against capitalism, fight for a chance of changing things and build a society that they believe is fairer.

In this search for domination, all discourses present flaws and imperfection: MD is the cause of our problems (Gimenez, 2000, p. 299), WSD while trying to fix some of the negative points of MD fails to go beyond a pleasing rhetoric presenting solutions that fall in MD field (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 45) and SSD lacks discussion on making the theory operational (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 112).

While MD and WSD still domain the sustainable paradigm (Nilsen, 2010, p. 496; Sändstrom, 2005, pp. 153-154), SSD is the discourse that presents the best fit with the sustainable development idea. This happens because neither MD nor its’ dolled-up version, WSD, offer the capacity to stop nature destruction and human exploitation (Roseland, 2000, p. 126; Springett, 2003, p. 72). As Einstein argued “we cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them”. Despite that, the antagonism with the dominant discourse (Springett, 2003, p. 84) and the lack of operationalization of the discourse (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 112), hinders SD’s perspectives of dominating the sustainability concept.

\(^1\) This argument is made originally on a specific institution rather than society at large but I think the argument is also valid in a macro level.
6. Instrumental theory

This chapter works as a support chapter for the previous one. Its objective is to answer four questions: what constitutes the social structure; what is sustainable entrepreneurship; how do these two interact; and finally what is a discourse. By providing these instrumental concepts it helps to operationalize the research questions. Given the supportive nature of this chapter the main objective is not to discuss the concepts but rather focus on previous knowledge. The chapter starts with an analysis of sustainable entrepreneurship, moving to a brief overview of discourse, finalizing in the outline of social structure and social mechanisms.

Previous in this thesis, I highlighted the fact that entrepreneurs, as special agents for socio-economic change, were relevant for the area of sustainability and thus for this thesis. They lie in the hearth of the socio-economic structure as they create one of the most important artefacts of our society: companies (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 898). Their choice to reproduce or transform the social structure when introducing innovations (Schumpeter, 2008) is of great impact, putting their view on the world as something that one must look at to understand the way we are heading. Therefore the phenomena of entrepreneurship must be understood.

But to understand entrepreneurs and how they think, one should turn to how they see the world. This view is reflected by the entrepreneurs’ discourse, that provides a guide to make and judge everyday decisions (Bonnéahls & Eriksson, 2007, p. 99). Due to that, we need a general understanding of semiotic and discourses.

As referred to previously, entrepreneurs as all other individuals, are a result of the historical context on which they are embedded. The social structure provide individuals with the “do and do not” conventions that regulate human action (North, 1994), and thus its institutions end up influencing the behaviour of the individuals (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004, p. 637). In addition, the contradictions in the social structure, originate social struggles that have been the causes of change towards sustainable progress (Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005, pp. 46-47). For all of that, understanding what is the social structure and what properties possess, is also very relevant for this thesis.

6.1 Sustainable entrepreneurship

As will be discussed in this section sustainable entrepreneurship is central both to this thesis and, more importantly, to move the society towards sustainable development. This is a research area giving its first steps, focusing on conceptualizing (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 30; Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 58; Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007, p. 1), while facing a great challenge given the complexity of the sustainability issues (Hart & Mikstein, 2003, p. 64; Potocan & Mulej, 2003, p. 247).

Entrepreneurship as a mechanism for change

Entrepreneurship is a concept that has been put in the centre of the economic scenario both by academics (Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005, p. 787; Shane, 2003;
Schumpeter, 1983) as well as institutions (OECD, 1998, p. 11). The reason is simple: as Potocan and Mulej (2003, p. 248) highlight, in a capitalistic economy “the entrepreneurs introduce novelties, owners finance them, and managers use them to the benefit the business system”. Thus, as a main enabler for change (Parrish & Foxon, 2009), entrepreneurs are important in determining the direction that society takes.

Entrepreneurs are often seen has simply someone who starts a business (Coman, 2008, p. 255; Tilley & Young, 2009, p. 84). While that is partly true, entrepreneurship is much more than that, with the introduction of innovations as the focus of entrepreneurial activity (Larson, 2000, p. 306). Based on the most accepted definition in the field that sees entrepreneurs as introducers of new combinations (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 66), I use the definition provided by Shane (2003, p. 4) to define entrepreneurship as “an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organizing, markets, processes and raw materials”.

This happens through a process of creative destruction (Schumpeter, 2008, p. 83), where entrepreneurs introduce innovations, which are alternatives to existing solutions, making the old economic structure obsolete, “destroying” it, and building a new one on the old one’s ground. Through such process, entrepreneurs become key agents for changing the society’s structure (Coman, 2008, p. 256).

**Sustainable entrepreneurship as a driver for sustainable development**

Given that entrepreneurial action brings change is not hard to understand that entrepreneurs can have a leading role in making sustainable development a reality (Parrish & Foxon, 2009). This can happen by the introduction of innovations that lead the world to the next industrial revolution (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 30). There are some different perspectives on how this can happen. WSD authors (Cohen & Winn, 2007; Dean & McMullen, 2007) argue that the main reason is that markets have intrinsically imperfections that lead to environmental degradation and that these imperfections are sources of opportunities to entrepreneurs and thus entrepreneurs, by addressing market failures are acting towards sustainability. On the other hand, SSD approaches, can see sustainable entrepreneurship as an enabler of “a vision of an alternative society” (Coman, 2008, p. 256) where the potential to create sustainable value to entrepreneurial action is very high since we face such serious problems (Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 52). In any of the situations, entrepreneurship is a key driver to achieve SD.

**Definition**

In several ways sustainable entrepreneurship is not different from “regular” entrepreneurship (Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005, p. 790). That is reflected on the different definitions available on sustainable entrepreneurship (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 35; Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 58; Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 56; Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007, p. 6; Kuckertz & Wagner, 2009, p. 1). In general they reflect the need to exploit opportunities that addresses economic, social and environmental questions. For instance Dean and McMullen see sustainable entrepreneurship as “the process of discovering, evaluating, and exploiting economic opportunities that are present in market failures which detract from sustainability, including those that are environmentally relevant” (2007, p. 59). In the same line, different definitions also put great focus on the economic side of opportunities without seriously addressing the other

Other definitions give a greater focus on how to achieve sustainability also in social and environmental terms (Katsikis & Kyrgidou, 2007, p. 6; Young & Tilley, 2006, p. 402). The assumption here seems to be that new businesses need to engage in practices that, while not being economically unviable, manage to do business without destroying nature or exploiting humans, and thus contributing to human development. Picking both the definition of sustainable development and of entrepreneurship given before, and adapting Katsikis and Kyrgidou definition of sustainable entrepreneurship (2007, p. 6), I define this kind of entrepreneurial activity as:

A process aiming at achieving sustainable development, by exploiting opportunities that produce social equity, environmental integrity and economic viability.

An advantage of this definition over the first group is that addresses opportunities in general and not economic in particular. This includes public or not for profit organizations as possible sustainable entrepreneurs. Also important is that it puts focus on people by defining social equity as the first objective, while respecting the environment and limiting the economic aspect to covering costs. Entrepreneurship moves from the search for economic rents to search for enhancing peoples’ possibilities.

A new entrepreneurial paradigm

But in practical terms how does sustainable entrepreneurship fits into general entrepreneurial activity? The fact is that also in this field there is a tension between the dominant view of the field (MD) and the ones defend sustainability (Coman, 2008, p. 256). Of course this is expected to happen since the resistance to new ideas is a given fact in any area (Schumpeter, 2008, p. 132) and a change towards sustainable entrepreneurship requires a paradigm shift that supporters of the old paradigm are not willing to accept (Stead & Stead, 1994). This resistance happens despite the fact that international institutions have measured an increasing gap between the business behaviour and the sustainable pattern needed (Young & Tilley, 2006, p. 403) or that WSD forms of viewing sustainable practices in businesses, like eco-efficiency, also fall short in their capacity to solve problems (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 562).

As well, society’s institutions have to change to promote sustainable entrepreneurship, as sustainable entrepreneurs will be a product of the current institutions (Coman, 2008, p. 255). If society wants to have SD then it can only have it by having agents operating inside it to act in a sustainable way (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 897). This means that to make it possible for entrepreneurs to destroy the old business structures and replace them by more sustainable ones, than the governments (at different levels) also need to adapt their view on entrepreneurship, towards an approach centred on sustainability. We need that governments, at all levels, create the momentum for sustainable entrepreneurs to act. This view is even defended by supporters of MD like Michael Porter (Young & Tilley, 2006, p. 403).

Summing up
In concluding this section some key elements need to be highlighted. The fact that entrepreneurship is central to change, gains special relevant in studying sustainability has entrepreneurs become crucial agents. Thus, including sustainable entrepreneurship in this study of sustainable discourses becomes of special importance. In fact analysing discourses in sustainable enterprises seems to be a choice defended by other authors: Gladwin et al. argued that “little theoretical progress can be made regarding the nature of sustainable enterprise on unquestioned grounds. The underlying assumptions about the world in which it is to exist must be surfaced and confronted” (1995, p. 881).

As the nature of sustainable entrepreneurs can be determined by the nature of their views of the world, there is a need to turn our attention on what is a discourse and what role does it play on sustainability.

6.2 Discourse

Discourse relevance and influence

This thesis takes a non-subjective approach. Nevertheless semiosis is seen as important and as source of structural change (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2004, p. 30). In fact, as elaborated in the next section of this thesis, the system of meaning is a part of the social structure. The system of meanings influences and is influenced by the other parts of the structure and so it is important to understand both relations (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004, p. 637). Another important consequence of the fact that discourse is rooted in the social structure is that discourses are a socio-historical product (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007, p. 195; Ahl, 2007, p. 219).

In other words, discourse is part of reality through the system of meanings (Sims-Schouten, Riley, & Willig, 2007, p. 102) and at the same time it contributes to the reproduction or transformation of the non-discursive parts of the SS (Jones, 2004, p. 64; Joseph & Roberts, 2004, p. 6). It does that because actions are partly discursive (e.g. writing) as well as discursively represented (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 37). As there is no possible way to observe reality and guide our actions beyond the frame of our values (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304), it is easy to conclude that discourse, with is normative assumptions, is a key element to understand how individuals and society move.

When entrepreneurs have one discourse rather than other, they are contributing in a certain way for the shape of society’s view on what is right/wrong and as well influencing social relations and/or the political level of the structure. The existence of certain discourse in an individual will lead her/him to take certain actions rather than others. If an entrepreneur possesses a MD she/he will take a different course of action, more based on economic gains than an entrepreneur with a SSD.

From the discussed above I draw the conclusion that understanding the discourse that sustainable entrepreneurs have is relevant to comprehend the future of the society. Thus it is important also to understand what discourse is.

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20 The making of meaning (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2004, p. 27).
Discourse definition

Like sustainability or structure, discourse is a concept without one certain definition (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004, p. 636) where different approaches can be seen (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001) and social constructionist stances have dominated (Fairclough, 2005, p. 918).

Discourse helps us make everyday decisions as well as to make sense of them (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 99; Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007, p. 193) and so not only give rules to perform activities as well as hold the assumptions to which the rules are built from. Accordingly, and borrowing both Heracleous (2006, p. 1060)\(^{21}\) and Fairclough (2005, p. 925) definitions, we can see discourse as:

*A particular way of representing certain part or aspects of the world. It is constituted by a level of relatively stable normative assumptions and a flexible level of action-oriented arguments, mediated by interpretative schemas.*

The different levels of discourse are represented in Figure 2. While the first level represents a set of stable normative arguments, the last one, the communicative action/practice level, is more flexible so that situational aspects can be introduced (Heracleous, 2006). Between both of these levels we have conceptualize views that mediate this relation (Fairclough, 2005, p. 916). The deeper level is constituted by values, beliefs and assumptions that are stable over time (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 100) and legitimize ours actions (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001, p. 762)\(^{22}\). These values are highly influenced by the structure as each person beliefs are, at a certain point in time, limited by the existing social structure (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006, p. 302). Subsequently, we have the views that conceptualize the normative assumptions, making them “visible” and give meaning to the actions we perform (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004, p. 637)\(^{23}\). Finally, the last level includes “communicative acts that take place in social interaction” (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001, p. 758). This means that in terms of sustainability discourses the normal assumptions include the dimensions that display values or beliefs such as the perception of Earth while the conceptualize view translate those values and so include dimensions as the limits of economic organization.

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\(^{21}\)Heracleous (2006) takes a different view from mine on the relation between structure and agency that has some implications for discourse. Is my belief that this definition of discourse still holds under critical realism, as it differences have no practical implications for the purpose of this thesis.

\(^{22}\)In other words we are talking about what we think is right or wrong, etc.

\(^{23}\)Meaning what we think we should do.
From the above we can see that our actions are a reflection of our deep assumptions, which take form of “the proposed or aspired state of affairs” in our conceptualized view (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 100). Accordingly, is not difficult to understand that the influence potential of discourses to do this relies on the deep normative assumptions (Heracleous, 2006, p. 1084).

**Dominant discourse**

At all times in the social structure there is a certain set of normative beliefs that are dominant over all the others (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978). These beliefs are the ones of those who have the power and are used to dominate as well as prevent the growth of ideas that challenge the status quo in a significant way (Marx, 1970). This is done by defining what is wrong and right, what is accepted and what is not, how things should be look upon and by diffusing this beliefs until they are all assumed as natural (Chomsky, Barsamian, & Naiman, 1998; Marx, 1970).

Such occurrence has been confirmed by academic research as well. For instance Heracleous (2006) identified three general modes of discourse: the dominant discourse, the strategic discourse and the counter-discourse. The first focus on exploiting its dominance by appealing to the individual’s discourse normative assumptions that are already in line with this discourse. This is seen in the fact that MD exploits the expectation of increasing quality of life from people to legitimize growth policies (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 562). The second, while changing at the level of communicative action and interpretative schemas, draws is assumptions from the dominant one. Finally, the counter-discourse has difficulty to get institutionalized due to antagonism with the dominant one.

The parallelism with the sustainable discourses is straightforward. While MD is the dominant-discourse, WSD is the strategic-discourse and SSD the counter-discourse. In fact this application to sustainable discourses was already used (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007). From the definition provided before we can see the dominant discourse in a society defines what is wrong and right (Hall, 2001) and so the reproduction of MD is important to prevent radical changes (towards SSD).
In practice, we can see discourses in all types of verbal acts (both oral and written) (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001, p. 751) as well as non-verbal ones (e.g. gestures or actions) (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001, p. 751), although this view is not consensual (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 231). As a consequence, discourse analysis can be made of conversations, interviews, etc. (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 233).

At the ‘visible’ level we have the discourses practices defined above. It is important to realize that these are flexible in a way that individuals with same normative assumptions can describe something in a (not radically) different way, and that the same individual can tell a history in different ways in different occasions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 232). This should not be understood that one is providing false statements but just that individuals adopt their lower levels of discourse to the situations they face (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Heracleous, 2006).

Summing up

From this section four points need to be remembered. The first is that the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs is an important queue on how the future of business and thus society is, and so it is important to study.

The second point is that the impact of discourse as a representation of the system of meaning is very important to sustainability and this thesis. This happen because the system of meaning has an impact in structure, offering a possibility for chance and so the fact that key actors have the discourse X or Y is important in the future shape of society.

The third aspect regards the nature of discourse. Discourse, as a representation of the world, possesses three distinct levels: normative assumptions, conceptualize view and practice. While all levels are important, normative assumptions are the ones that provide the highest potential to influence. As well, three different types of discourse exist in general and that each works in a different way. Furthermore, these modes of discourse coincide exactly with the ones that exist in the sustainability field.

The final point is that discourses in practice take several forms and that individuals will adapt their discursive actions to different situations, albeit bound by their normative assumptions.

6.3 Social structure

Social structure and agency

The notion of structure has been central for sociology and related subjects (Hays, 1994, p. 57). Proportionally to its importance has been the debate of what the social structure is and how it relates with human agency (Dobson, 2001, p. 205; Reed, 1997, p. 21). In a simplified way, we have three stances: the one that argues that structure pose a greater influence than agency, the one that argues that ultimately agency is free from any
constrains, and the postmodern approach that rejects the division of agency and structure and looks at society in a processual-oriented way (Archer, 1995).

The present paper follows the tradition of studies that see society’s structure as determining human behaviour. However, not in a deterministic way that has characterized some of the authors that adopted this stance (Hays, 1994, p. 61) but in a way that recognizes the human action role and its capacity to choose and transform24. As Marx (2005, p. 1) put it: “men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past”.

The relation of social structure and agency taken here is built around three important aspects. Firstly, agency is at the same time supported and constrained by structure (Hays, 1994, p. 62). This means that while the structure provides agency with possibilities of action, it also limits that same possibilities (Marx, 1977; North, 1990). And it does that not only because it put choices’ availability beyond agents’ will (North, 1994, p. 361) but because it defines the individual conscience (Marx, 1970; 1977). Thus, it affects us directly by limiting what we can do (Shepsle, 1991, p. 263) but also what we want to do (Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio, 1991, p. 133)25.

The second aspect is that agents can either engage in the reproduction of the social structures or in changing the social structures in a significant way (Archer, 1995; Reed, 1997, pp. 31-33; Sayer, 1992, p. 96; Reed, 1997), albeit the fact that most of agency is reproductive (Hays, 1994, p. 61). This happens not only because choices agents make are not always conscious or intentional and are often done by habit (Sewell Jr., 1992, p. 3), but also because while we can make choices that we believe are transformative (e.g.

24 The excess of determinism in viewing structure is avoided by me in three levels. The first is at the base level of the structure (see structure constitution further in this section) and is related to the view that Marx had that the means of production are the ultimate determinant of society’s structure (Marx, 1977). Yet, there are several situations where agency can affect the whole structure. For instance, the change of government (political level) can impact the relations of production (through a new labour code). This discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis and so a pragmatic approach is taken: both sides show relevant arguments and so it will be assumed that all the elements of society (the different levels of social structure and the individuals) can impact the structure.

Although I recognize the structure as guiding human action, the second excess of determinism could rise from the focus on structure over agency. The social structure is not seen in a deterministic way where it gives no room for choice and individuals are not seen as “cleverly programmed automatons” (Sewell Jr., 1992, p. 2) that are limited to reproduce the structure (Hays, 1994, p. 62). They are “partially and potentially autonomous, as capable of self-reflection and critical examination, and as being able to clarify and prioritize their needs and wants” (Alvesson, 2003, p. 158) and so they have possibilities to transform the structures, making agency crucial for change. The point it clear: social structures influence individuals, although these individuals have the power to transform the structure, contingent on the fact that the structure had, a priori, given that power to the individuals (Archer, 1995).

Finally, structural determinism can occur in terms of not understanding the difference between the nature of the structure and its representation (Sewell Jr., 1992, p. 2). Although the representation is something static, like a picture, I understand the dynamic nature of reality and that structure is continually in a dialectic state of mutation.

25 DiMaggio (1991) takes a social construction approach but still I believe that his argument is valid under a critical realist ontology. The difference is that what DiMaggio sees as reality I see as the representation of reality/system of meanings.
reject consumption patterns and have a simpler life), that, by itself, will unlikely have structural consequences (Hays, 1994).

Finally, the impact of the agency depends in its relation with structure at a given time (Hays, 1994, p. 62), since the possibilities that the structure provides different range of possibilities both across individuals as well as across time.

**Definition**

Structures are the way something is constituted (Blundel, 2007, p. 51) and so social structure is the way society, as a whole and at a given time, is constituted. It can be seen as sets of internally related objects or practices (Sayer, 1992, p. 92), that endure in time (Hays, 1994, p. 60), can be changed through agency (Archer, 1995) and possess casual powers (Sayer, 2000).

It is at the same time the result of human existence and what shapes that existence (Hays, 1994, p. 61), providing the possibilities for human action (North, 1994, pp. 359-360). An example is the fact that every day we reproduce the system we live in: by consuming, acquiring debt, etc. we are confirming the deeper social relations that characterize the capitalistic system and at the same time we are influenced by this same social relations to act in that way (Hays, 1994, p. 61).

The social structure not only constrains and allow actions that confirm its’ reproduction, it also plays an important role on enabling our existence. As social psychology shows, without a social structure our identity would be serious compromised (Hogg & Terry, 2001).

Furthermore, it has two other important proprieties: it possesses different levels and it is contingent (Sayer, 1992). Taking back the different levels of reality defined in section 2.2 of this thesis, we can argue that: the real level has the structure and its casual powers; the actual entails when mechanisms put this casual powers in use and create events; and finally the empirical level is the observation from individuals of this events (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2004, p. 25). The deeper we go the harder it is to observe and more power and resilience to change there is (Hays, 1994, p. 62). Consequently, some levels are only observed indirectly through the examination of their mechanisms and effects and that there are independent (to a large degree) of human action (Dobson, 2001, p. 206).

Also, the social structure is dependent on the historical context (North, 1994, p. 364). This means that for instance the structure that characterize our days did not existed before (e.g. if we compare with feudal times) and most likely will be different in the future. In other words, it is contingent (Sayer, 1992, p. 97).

But what are the constituent parts of the social structure? Again there is not one consensual answer. In fact is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss that. Yet, a stance need to be made, as this is an important issue for determining what are the mechanisms that can be causing entrepreneurs to adopt certain types of discourse. The view adopted

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26 This should not be understood as that they are eternal or perpetual. What this mean is that they do not vary under all kind of stimulus and so their characteristics remain more stable over time (Sayer, 1992, p. 94).
by me combines the representations of Marx (1977) and North (1990) on structure, adding as well emphasis where this authors seemed to have short-comings: in terms of culture/the system of meanings.

The society’s structure is constituted by two parts: a base and a superstructure (Marx, 1977). The base represents in a first level the means of production and, in a second level, the relations of production. These economic relations not only define production but have a profound impact in the definition of social relations and of individuals themselves (Hogg & Terry, 2001; Marx, 1970, p. 42). In other words, these relations will affect the superstructure.

A good example, already mentioned on this thesis, is the one of the Industrial Revolution. The development of technology (means of production) had an unprecedented impact on how work was organized (production relations), through the division and “mechanization of labour” (as brilliantly portrayed in Charlie Chaplin’s “Modern times”). Consequently, there were impacts on how people lived, related to each other and how they valued different things in life. The way consumption increased and changed patterns or how communication and migration of people evolved are just some examples of such changes (Hobsbawm, 1962).

As for the superstructure, also two levels can be identified. The first level is the legal/political level where all formal constrains are (North, 1990). In a second level we have all the other social relations that define one’s life. We can also see this as the informal constrains (North, 1994, p. 360). Parallel to this system of social relations we find a system of (socially constructed) meanings. This system can be defined as “including not only beliefs and values of social groups, but also their language, forms of knowledge, and common sense” (Hays, 1994, p. 65) and is determinant on how we interpret reality (Mills, 1997, p. 50). It is in fact the representation of both the economic and social relations at one given time in society.

This does not mean that this representation should labelled as subjective or irrelevant as it is a integral part of a structure that is independent of how individuals see it. It shares the same properties with the other parts of the society’s structure: for instance is independent of how individuals perceive it, is contingent and determined by the economic relations from the base and most important it enables and constrains human action. (Hays, 1994, pp. 68-69; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006, pp. 302-303).

To summarize, the structure is constituted of several parts as portrayed in Figure 3:

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27 All the resources available to produce goods. Include land, labor, technology, etc.
28 How the means of production are transformed into goods. It includes division of labour, property relations etc.
Putting together the above discussion on what constitutes the social structure and borrowing the definition of structure from Heracleous and Barett (2001, p. 758), we have the definition of social structure:

_A relative stable, largely implicit, and continually recurring set of processes and patterns that underlie and guide surface, observable events and actions. Is constituted by a base (that comprehends the means of production and the relations of production) and a superstructure (that includes the legal/political level, social relations and the system of meaning)._ 

**Social mechanisms**

The above social structure has generative powers. Through mechanisms, the social structure puts into use these powers that generate different phenomena depending on the conditions (Blundel, 2007, p. 51; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 19), as can be seen in Figure 4:

![Figure 4 - The Power of the Social Structure](source: Sayer, 2000, p. 15)

However this relation is not linear because a certain mechanism can produce at different times different events depending on mediation of other mechanisms (the conditions) (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 19; Gorski, 2009), as seen in the above figure. Accordingly, a certain event can be produced, at some point in time, by mechanisms X and later by mechanism Y (Sayer, 2000, p. 15). This relation is portrayed in Figure 5:

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29 The capacity to act with certain effects (Blundel, 2007, p. 51).
30 Sayer uses this figure as to represent structures in general, but given that the social structure is part of that group I believe the figure is transferable.
So, when we are looking at the social structure and its mechanisms, we are looking at how a certain event come to place, which entities where involved, with which role, how they related to each other, etc. (Gorski, 2009; Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010). These types of social mechanisms can be classified in terms of the social structure/agency relation. As we can see in figure 6, we have social mechanisms that explain how the social structure constrains individual action (type 1), some others (type 2) that describe how individuals choose to act given the above mentioned constrains and finally how agency can transform the structure (type 3) (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998).

From the purpose of thesis, it is clear that I am interested in the type 1 and so social mechanisms are defined, based on diverse literature (Gorski, 2009; Hedström, 2005; Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010), as:

\[ \text{The set of social entities, their properties and the activities the entities engage in by which the individual's actions and beliefs are constrained in a certain way.} \]

31 Same as the above note.
Summing up

From this section three key ideas need to be carried by the reader throughout the thesis: i) I see structure determining human behaviour; ii) the social structure is a set of stable processes that guide events and is constituted by a base and a superstructure; and iii) due to the research question the focus is on social mechanisms were the structure conditions the individuals.
7. Framework of reference

This chapter represents a synthesis of what has been discussed in the two previous chapters, by representing a conceptual map of the concepts used before as well as a frame of reference that makes theory operational. In this way it provides a bridge from theory to empirical action, which allows the research questions to be addressed.

The two previous chapters have shed a light upon the theoretical knowledge required for this thesis. Yet, such knowledge is fragmented into each building block and so there is a need to integrate the previous discussion.

7.1 Bringing it all together

A schematic view on what has been discussed so far is presented in Figure 7:

![Conceptual Map]

As pointed before sustainable entrepreneurs are of central importance for the future of society due to their capacity to “destructor” the existing social structure and replace it by a more sustainable one. That ability to drive sustainable development positions them in the core of this study and of the conceptual map. They have a certain way of viewing the world, with that view being formed by a set of normative beliefs, interpretative schemas and a level of action-oriented arguments.

Yet, SEs do not exist in a void. As all individuals, SEs are bounded and conditioned by the socio-economic structure and so they are represented inside that structure. In an immediate level, SEs are conditioned by this structure by being embedded in the social relations and the system of meanings. This means, for instance, that SEs are conditioned by the nature of business relationships (how companies interact) and by the conception...
of those same relationships (what it means to be in a business relationship). Thus, SEs are represented in the above figure by being surrounded by this two dimensions of the last level of the social structure.

Still in a more immediate level we have the legal/political ground that represents the formal constraints of society. Formal constrains can take the form of laws or financial support for certain projects. By creating business policies that provide better conditions for a certain type of organizational behaviour (e.g. WSD-oriented organizations) rather than other, this level applies social mechanisms to condition entrepreneurs to adopt certain behaviours by signalizing the way to go. While also being in the superstructure level of the society's structure (as described in section 6.3) it is at a deeper level than the social relations and system of meanings and so it is represented in the conceptual map as being above them.

Finally the base represents the deepest part of the structure, where means of production and the relations of production lie, as we can see in the Figure 7 where these two levels are the ones most outside/above. As the deepest levels of the structure, means of production and the relations of production structuralize the superficial levels but still influence SEs. For instance the state of the technology (means of production) or the current division of labour (production relations) will condition the adoption of certain discourses over others.

7.2 Framework of reference

While the previous picture provides a general view of what has been discussed before, it does not offer a concrete way of making theory operational. For that reason a framework of reference is provided as a guideline for the empirical part of the research (Figure 8).

![Diagram](image-url)
As a whole, the social structure possesses certain mechanisms that impact the way the individuals behave and think. This situation is represented in the above figure by the existence of a social structure from where social mechanisms emanate and influence a certain phenomenon.

The social mechanisms represent how a certain event came to be. Yet, the particular social mechanisms that condition the discourse of the SEs are unknown a priori and so while I assume that they exist I do not know anything about them and accordingly they are labelled generically in the figure with SM1, etc.

Furthermore, since the focus of the thesis is on the discourse of SEs (SED1, etc.) and what came to produce it, such discourse (being a MD, WSD or SSD) is viewed by me and displayed in the framework of reference as the event produced by the social structure.
8. Research design

This chapter makes the bridge from the theoretical part of the thesis to the empirical one. It describes what type of data was collected, how it was presented and analysed. Doing that offers the reader a guideline of how the empirical world was approached in order to address the research questions.

Previously, the research methodology of this research has been discussed. Summarizing what was said before, the thesis focus on the qualitative aspects of the entrepreneurial discourse, in an intensive research process that allows a deeper knowledge of the data. Additionally, the research is carried on in a cross-sectional study.

This set of choices is now linked to empirical activity trough the research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 25). Such link describes the processes and techniques used to gather and analyse data (Curran & Blackburn, 2001, p. 58) and so the following discussion addresses all the issues that go from the selection of the respondents to the presentation and analysis of data.

8.1 Data collection

8.1.1 Respondents

Criteria for selection

To make sure that I make the proper choice and that the choice is done in a transparent way, it is important to explain the criteria that lead me to choose the respondents in question (Stake, 2005, p. 450).

The fact that this thesis is not about (statistical) generalization needs to be in our minds when it comes to the selection of respondents. The traditional sampling approach is not appropriate, because I do not wish to randomly select entrepreneurs and then see if they are sustainable or not. In this thesis, selection should be made in a purposeful way (Berchicci, 2009, p. 80; Gerring, 2007, p. 87). In this type of selection, respondents are chosen because they possess certain characteristics that make them very relevant and so will likely provide richer information (Patton, 2002, p. 46; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 78).

So a characteristic that is very important is that the individuals I will interview are sustainable entrepreneurs. In fact I am interested in finding the “extreme” sustainable entrepreneurs, the ones who have a higher “how-much-sustainable-the-entrepreneur-is” note. Such cases, categorized by its extreme “values” of certain dimensions (Gerring, 2007), are of great importance to this thesis and the research of sustainable entrepreneurship: I purposefully want to study the cases that can be considered extreme, because they represent the discourses more different you can get from the dominant one and how different their discourses are is a sign of how the future would likely turn out. If the more “extreme” cases represent only some small differences, compared with the dominant discourse than we can assume that the future will not change so much. Also, let’s say that I find that entrepreneurs have a SSD discourse. Then it is interesting to
understand what were the mechanisms leading to it as it allows to point in directions on how the findings can be used to create the same effect in other conditions. If on the other hand, they have a MD or WSD discourse it is also interesting to study the mechanisms but then the goal is to provide tools to help improve the mechanisms to achieve SSD.

This again can lead to criticism of bias in the base that I want to find entrepreneurs with stronger sustainability discourses. Again, there is no bias in the sense that my views will not affect the results of the research. My stance will not affect the outcomes in this research simply because I have no preference for the outcome. The interest is in understanding how what is right/wrong is built in the sustainable entrepreneurs’ discourses, not if those aspects under consideration are in fact true or not (Kvale, 2007, p. 112). There is no point on me to create biased results that shows falsely that SEs have an SSD discourse because that would make the goal to provide recommendations on how to have more sustainable businesses fail. Since is my wish that more entrepreneurs would adopt that discourse, only by understanding truly what conditions create it, can I achieve my goal.

But how can be determined a priori if certain entrepreneurs are (or not) sustainable entrepreneurs? I have not found an answer for this question. To solve the problem I have taken a solution that clashes partially with my ontological beliefs: I based my choice in a subjective condition. Entrepreneurs should seem sustainable, meaning that there should be an idea that this certain entrepreneur is a sustainable one, even if she/he is not. This is a choice that weakens the process of selection, but to which I did not find a better solution given the resources I have.

Having a characteristic of what kind of entrepreneur I wish to interview and a criterion to help me determine in an easy way which entrepreneurs fall into this category is not enough as there are more entrepreneurs that could be used in this research than the ones I need. Accordingly, I also introduce a convenience criterion to reach these individuals. As the name indicates such type of respondents is choose in the basis of their accessibility and the use here is motivated by time-cost reasons (Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 197-198). What is more, given language barriers I also had to add a language criterion, so that the interviewees are comfortable in speaking English.

Finally, since I do not know a priori what are the mechanisms affecting the entrepreneurs, I opted not to define other parameters, besides being sustainable entrepreneurs. So, it was not important the age, industry or sex of the entrepreneur.

Accessing the respondents

The process of accessing the respondents was greatly influenced by the identification of a network in Umeå of sustainable businesses (Umeås Hållbara Företag). According to the website of the network the group is constituted by companies and entrepreneurs that have sustainability in the core business and that are focused on promoting sustainability both in Umeå and globally (Umeås Hållbara Företag). While I cannot affirm that members of the network are more sustainable than other sustainable entrepreneurs that are not in the network, I will have to assume that the fact that these entrepreneurs are engaged not only on their own businesses but also involved in a network to push
sustainability forward, can be a sign that these entrepreneurs are more likely “extreme cases” of sustainable entrepreneurship than others that are not be in the network.

The process of reaching the respondents was done to avoid difficulties that are usually patent in research on small businesses research (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). I decided to take an active approach to the situation and contact the individuals by telephone rather than by e-mail at first. This seems to have yield good results because from all the persons contacted I managed to get interviews from all except three.

**Number of respondents**

When asked about how many respondents should be used in research Kvale’s answer (2007, p. 43) is straightforward: “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know”. In fact, in qualitative research a small number of correspondents can provide such level of knowledge as a large number, as opposed to quantitative approach where more equals better results (Easton, 1998, p. 85; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 91). In qualitative research the number of respondents is determined by the purpose of the study and it emerges during the process of research when the data has reached a level of saturation, meaning that new data does not add anything new (Eisenhardt, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Yet, for reference, Kvale (2007, p. 44) offers a 15 ± 10 rule.

Based on this I defined an initial batch of 10 respondents. During the process of contacting respondents I end up with 11 interviewees. After collecting and presenting the data I came to the conclusion that it would be enough, since a preliminary analysis of the discourses showed a dominant pattern and by the end of the collection of the initial data there was no new evidence. As a consequence no more potential respondents were contacted.

**8.1.2 Data sources**

**Type of sources**

In order to increase better results the data should be collected from diverse sources in a process of triangulation (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 722; Yin, 2003). This process consists of comparing data from one source with data from other sources in order to verify how trustworthy the data is. Since, collecting other type of data, beside interviews, would require a longitudinal study, I decided to use interviews as my only data source but built the interviews so that several questions would address the same topic in order to have some sort of triangulation.

Interviews are the most common and important tool in social sciences when it comes to collecting data (Yin, 2003, p. 89) with many reason to support such choice. First, the simple fact that conversation is a central aspect of human relations (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 874). As well, interviews direct the research to understanding how people see their lives, experiences, etc. (Kvale, 2007, p. 1). In that way it a very important tool for this thesis since it allows to understand how entrepreneurs view and define the world, exposing their underlying normative assumptions. Furthermore, the fact that I faced time constrains and the language barrier (as I do not speak enough Swedish) prevented the use of a more rich data collection method such as observation (Taylor & Bogdan,
1998, p. 91). This method would be more suitable as it allows to understand people’s taken-for-granted assumptions (Kvale, 2007, p. 45). Another positive aspect is that interviews direct the data collection in the direction needed by the researcher (Peräkylä, 2005). Finally, interviews as texts are rich manifestations of discourse (Achtenhagen & Welt, 2007, p. 195) and so very relevant for this thesis.

Yet, interviews face some weaknesses. The most important one is that the interviews are social interactions were knowledge and understanding is produced (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 698) and as a consequence, questions of power arise. So, issues as the evaluation that the interviewee makes of the interviewer (e.g. in terms of empathy) will determine how much they will give back (Kvale, 2007, p. 55). Furthermore, even when there is no leading question in the interview, still respondents will likely answer in a way they believe is in line with what the respondent wants to hear (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 229; Yin, 2003). So, even if my interview guide might not have highly leading questions, the fact that respondents were aware that I was doing a study on sustainability could have leaded them towards a pro-sustainability discourse. One cannot forget that all interviews are not neutral or value-free (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Among the different types of interviews I opted for a semi-structured one, where the goal is to obtain knowledge on the respondent views (Flick, 2006, p. 149). This is done because while I did not want to use structured interview, that lacks depth, I also did not wish to use an unstructured one, since I lack the interview competences to do that. In semi-structured interview, while there is a line of inquiry, the question order is more fluid and open to the respondent answers (Robson, 2002, p. 270). In that way is better seen as a “guided conversation” (Yin, 2003, p. 89).

*Interviews*

The interview guideline (Appendix 1) approached three main areas: the company, the municipality/political level and sustainable development. The idea behind it was to go from more concrete themes (e.g. the interviewee company) to more abstract (sustainability). The theory was incorporated by having specific questions regarding each concern (e.g. question 11 relates the environmental concerns) but also by having questions whose answers will touch some of concerns (e.g. question 2 to 5, while dealing with the respondent company is related to socio-economic concerns, in particular to economic ones).

Previous to the beginning, and in order to make respondents feel more at ease and reassured, I started by reminding them why was I doing this thesis, why we were there, etc. Often, before the interview had started, some informal conversations about topics non-related with the thesis (e.g. my stay in Sweden) were also discussed in order to try to create a bond of trust with the respondent, by sharing some of my personal experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 708). Additionally, after the tape recorder was off a debriefing was made to offer some closure to the interview. Here the participants were asked to express their experience on what just happened. This part of the interview, as well as the briefing, are quite important to guarantee that the respondents have a pleasant experience (Kvale, 2007) and thus share more information.

The idea was that the introductory questions should be about a concrete situation that leads the respondent to describe something that she/he is familiar with and that she/he
enjoys (Kvale, 2007, p. 60). This was done to make the respondent at ease. The topic chosen was the respondent’s background and also her/his company and how it started (questions 1 and 2). The company related questions (questions 3 to 8) will also provide useful information on, for instance what are the motivations and aspirations of the entrepreneur.

Afterward, the interview moved gradually to more abstract considerations. To do that, between the company theme and the more abstract theme of sustainable development, questions about the municipality were introduced (questions 6 to 9). This also allows to understand the opinion of the entrepreneurs about sustainability and the immediate political level. Thus, it offers some foundations to which mechanisms are causing the discourse.

The discussion was followed by the introduction of the theme of sustainable development in general (questions 8 and 9). First, it was important to clarify what was the meaning of such concept to the respondent. This offered, when it comes to data analysis, an initial clue on what type of discourse does the entrepreneur show. Subsequently, I introduce each of the specific areas of sustainability: environmental (question 10), social (question 11) and economic (question 12 &13). Here the questions address more specific aspects like poverty or global warming, although the type of questions is still open. The discussion was finalized with the views of the entrepreneur on what kind of changes was needed (question 14). To introduce that theme I made an overall summary of what had been said before.

The requisite of all the questions was that they should be open-ended in nature and that the focus was on respondents’ opinions (Yin, 2003, p. 90). In other to achieve this I tried to create the interview with a colloquial language that should correspond to the everyday language of the respondents (Kvale, 2007, p. 58). This option on language was also motivated by the fact that English is neither mine nor the interviewees first language. However this might have increase ambiguity since the language was simpler, creating ambiguity if certain concepts had the same meaning to me and the respondents. To mitigate that, I introduced several follow-up questions in order to make the answers as clear as possible. Also, prompt questions like “Can you give me an example?” or “What do you exactly mean by that?” were introduced whenever I felt that the position of the respondent was not clear. The goal was also to minimize the ambiguity as far as possible (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 697).

In general, the guideline followed a logic of using an introductory question to introduce an issue and then use follow-ups questions. Also, when using follow up questions there was a concern to introduce them in the logic of the person just said. So it was always tried to repeat some of the important words from the previous answer not only to show that I was listening but also to stimulate elaboration (Kvale, 2007, pp. 64-65)

The questions were formulated trying to use mostly “How” and “What” since this type of answer lead to more descriptive questions, where “Why” likely lead to less spontaneous and more intellectualized answers (Kvale, 2007, p. 58). As a doctor, the goal is not to understand the “symptoms” but to get descriptions of how the respondent see things and make the diagnosis yourself (Kvale, 2007, p. 59).
After formulating the questions, an evaluation of each was made to understand why was I asking that question, how it was related to theory and if it was formulated in a clear way (Flick, 2006, p. 167). A special concern was given to prevent leading questions (Kvale, 2007, p. 88) and several reformulations were made until the final draft. Still, I understand that in the later part of the interview, where more specific themes are introduced, I artificially inserted themes in the respondent discourse that otherwise might not have been mentioned. However the negative impact of this introduction is small since the data will be analysed not in terms of which themes are approached but what are the arguments and assumptions used in that same themes.

In practical terms, the interviews were conducted by me face to face, except one that was conducted by e-mail due to last minute changes on the interviewee schedule. The option of having face to face interviews was made since it allowed a better adaption of the line of inquiry based on the respondents’ answers and non-verbal cues (Curran & Blackburn, 2001, p. 73; Robson, 2002, pp. 272-273). As the interview is semi-structured, often questions that were not initially in the guide were asked and some that were in the guide were skipped. While this could be seen as a mistake, it is important to keep in mind that it is not important what the respondents answer to a certain question but how issues that are to be analysed come up in different questions and for different reasons. A negative practical aspect was the use of only one interviewer which increases the bias (Kvale, 2007, p. 41). Yet, no other option was possible.

As for location the access to the information, the interviews were conducted in a place of choice to the respondents which in general meant the entrepreneur’s office, except in two cases (Gisela and Ingrid) the interviews were conducted in a café (Ingrid) and in the university’s library (Gisela). The fact that the interviews were done in a familiar environment for the respondents that themselves chosen, should be seen as a positive aspect as it allowed them to be comfortable (Kvale, 2007, p. 41). Yet, in the case of David and Erik, the choice of a familiar location also offered a drawback as we were interrupted a few times to answer the phone and address an employee.

8.1.3 Ethical issues

The actual action of interviewing raises some important practical considerations such as ethical issues (Stake, 2005, p. 459). The ethical issues considered were the informed consent and the right to privacy (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 715). To secure informed consent two steps were taken. The first is that previous to the interview being scheduled as well as before the interview occurred I have explained to the respondent the general purpose, what we were going to discuss, etc. Since I wanted to avoid a “preparation” from the respondents to the interview, the guideline was not offered (Kent, 2000, p. 82). However, to supplement the fact that the respondents did not know beforehand everything that would be asked to them another step was taken. This consisted in providing the respondent with the transcript of the interview so that she/he could confirm that it did not had any errors and that they would consent for me to use it. Furthermore, in some cases there was an informal discussion about certain things that were said but should not be quoted/mentioned in the thesis. By doing all of the above, I believe that not only informed consent was guaranteed but also the quality of data is higher since it was confirmed.
As for the right to privacy all respondents names’ are not shown on the interviews as there are anonymously labelled “X”, where X correspondent to a name (different from the SE’s real name). Also, names of companies and other references were removed since they add no value to the interview in itself.

8.1.4 Outcome of data collection

In total, I conducted 7 single interviews and 2 double interviews leading to a total of 9 interviews with 11 entrepreneurs. The reason for the double interviews is that in those cases the entrepreneurs had a business together and so it was easier for them to be interviewed simultaneously. Yet, in the data description and analysis their ideas are taken separately.

Regarding background information about the entrepreneurs I have interviewed 6 female entrepreneurs and 5 male entrepreneurs, with the large majority of them (over 70%) working as consultants (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Date of the interview</th>
<th>Duration (aprox.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2010-06-08</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2010-06-08</td>
<td>66 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Consulting/Education</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2010-06-09</td>
<td>132 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David &amp; Erik</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Male / Male</td>
<td>2010-06-10</td>
<td>102 minutes + 65 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2010-06-14</td>
<td>70 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2010-06-15</td>
<td>62 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2010-06-21</td>
<td>e-mail interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>Consulting/Education</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2010-06-28</td>
<td>62 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica &amp; Karin</td>
<td>Consulting / Education</td>
<td>Female / Female</td>
<td>2010-06-28</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews were conducted during June of 2010 and the transcripts were done in the subsequent weeks after the interview had taken place. The interviews amounted for a total of 12 hours of recording and yield 112 pages of transcripts.

8.1.5 Critique of primary sources

From the above sections it is possible to see that I employed three actions to assure the quality of the data: used cross-questioning, assured the existence of a good environment to share information and stimulated the honesty of the respondents.

While triangulation would be most appropriate alternative to cross-reference data, for reasons mentioned above that was not possible. Instead I have used cross-questioning during the interviews. Two examples: the section of questions regarding the company (questions 2 to 6) approach similar topics to the one on economic issues (question 13) and general questions about sustainable development (questions 9 and 10) are then approached again in the following sections (questions 11 to 13). Thus, it is easier to detect contradictions and so assure proper data.

Also, as mentioned before I have allowed the respondents to choose the location of the interview as to assure that it would be a safe environment for them. This means that the
respondents are likely to share more and better information than if they would be in an atmosphere that would make them uncomfortable.

Finally, as detailed in section 8.1.3 I have stimulated the honesty of the respondents by allowing them to confirm the transcript and by making them anonymous. This sense of safety is likely to yield better data than if the respondents would be clearly identified or had no control about what they had said in the interview.

Given all of the above I believe that the data is credible and has enough quality to be used.

8.2 Processing and presenting the data

In a process of gathering data there is a need to understand not only what data was collected but how the data was processed. The goal here is to guarantee that a chain of evidence is built, in a way that allows readers to understand how the data went from being collected to being analysed (Yin, 2003, p. 105).

The process of processing and presenting the data followed the scheme presented in Figure 9:

![Figure 9 - Process of Collecting and Presenting the Data](image)

The interviews were transcribed using exactly the same words used originally, in order to maximize the exactness of the interview (Flick, 2006, p. 288), but still not all words were included since a verbatim transcription would include a very broken speech and would be harder to analyse. Regarding the transcription of the interviews I followed Kvale’s (2007) method of numbering each intervention on an interview. So for instance my first intervention would be labelled S1 and the entrepreneur’s A1 and so forth. This is done to allow a better orientation of where the quotes are placed in the interviews. Also obvious non-verbal cues such as laughter, stressing of a word, long pauses, etc. were transcribed as well, in order to approximate the written translation from the oral original. After, I sent the transcripts to the respondents to that they could confirm that the transcript represented the interview.

Following that came the coding of the interviews into the different dimensions of the discourses. This was done by definition for text segments that would categorize them (Kvale, 2007, p. 105). Here some operationalization of the data had to be done in order to make it easier to display (and analyse). Since to achieve the purpose of the thesis there is a need to identify what discourse to entrepreneurs possess, and given that to achieve this I need the theoretical overview of the different discourses, the starting point has to be the theory. Yet, this creates two problems that need to be solved. The first is that not all the interviewees address all the dimensions of the discourses. The second problem is that in order to present and analyse the data, I cannot have an analysis to specific in each dimension (because of the problem above mentioned and because it
would be easier to be lost from the bigger picture) but also I cannot have just overall categories such as socio-economic changes, since it would lead to a very vague discussion. Thus, I decided I would need to have sub-categories that created groups among some dimensions and that were at the same time connected with the overall-categories, as grounded-theory method does (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this way I will have the initial dimensions of the discourses, grouped in sub-categories that will be connected to the core-categories also used in theory.

The environmental concerns were divided in two sub-categories (Table 6). The first, general environmental views, deals with the dimensions that describe the way that individuals look at the environment and its relation with humankind, while the second, views on environmental problems, deal with the dimensions that address how individuals view the problems of nature.

**TABLE 6 - OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General environmental views</td>
<td>Perception of the Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human &amp; nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humans role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value of the ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views on environmental</td>
<td>Ecosystem resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems</td>
<td>Carrying capacity limits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The socio-economic concerns were divided in four sub-categories (Table 7). Three of them, economic organization, companies’ responsibilities and society’s responsibilities deal on the individuals’ views on how economy, companies and society should behave in general. Finally, connection between systems addresses the importance of the different spheres of our lives (social, economic, environmental).

**TABLE 7 - OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCERNS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic organization</td>
<td>Role of growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary economic objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guiding principles and measurements of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limits to economic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection between</td>
<td>Hierarchy of systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies’ responsibilities</td>
<td>Ethical responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of capital/resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society’s responsibilities</td>
<td>Human vs. natural capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty alleviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal fulfilment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discount rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the change concerns were only three, and so the sub-category is the same as the main category (Table 8).
The division of the dimensions among the sub-categories does not follow any scientific rule rather than the fact that under my view the certain dimensions should be grouped in this way and that also they were compared with the research question and the theory so that they would be defined in a way that would make sense to the thesis (Miles & Huberman, 2001, p. 65). Yet, even if this is not an optimal division I believe there is no negative influence in the final result. Since the data will be in any case compared against the same theory, the way how the theory, and thus the data, is divided to be analysed, does not pose great influence in the results of the data analysis. In an analogy, it does not matter in a mathematical sum if I do 2 + 5 or 2 + 3 + 2, as the result is the same.

After all interviews were coded, the data was combined and presented, according to the sub-categories, in the chapter on empirical findings.

8.3 Data analysis

The data analysis process has critical discourse analysis (CDA) as overarching method. To achieve the purpose of this thesis, it is important not only to identify the kind of discourse that sustainable entrepreneurs possess but also, and most importantly, to understand in what ways does this discourse differs from the dominant MD. To do that it is needed to go beyond the surface knowledge of reality that data provide (Pentland, 1999, p. 712) since the deeper levels of discourses (the normative assumptions) cannot be understood in an immediate way (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007, p. 199; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004, p. 636). In that way, CDA provides the tools to probe under the surface.

CDA presuppose two important ideas that need to be highlighted. First, discourse mediates social life (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). This means that the way discourse is built and builds actions has an impact in the social relations, and of particular interest, the ones who include dominance of a group(s) over other(s) (Locke, 2004; Poole, 2010, p. 136). In that way, CDA is focused on highlighting the way that a certain discourse reproduces these social relations of (power) inequality and exploitation (van Dijk T. A., 1993). Second, it assumes that the critical revelation of the role of discourses in maintaining dominant relations, can lead to change (Locke, 2004).

CDA focus on “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (van Dijk T. A., 1993, p. 249), meaning that in this thesis I will use CDA to determine in what ways does the discourse of the sustainable entrepreneurs interviewed reproduce or challenge the dominant market discourse. It can use several approaches to the actual
analysis of text (Fairclough, 2003, p. 6) and so there is no restriction in the process of data analysis followed\(^{32}\) (Figure 8):

![Diagram of Analysis Process]

**FIGURE 10 - PROCESS OF ANALYSIS**

The first step regards the analysis of how the discourses fit each dimension of a certain sub-category. So based on the chapter on the empirical findings I analyse which sustainable discourse the entrepreneurs have in a certain sub-category. From that a general analysis of the category is made, in order to identify the common discourse(s). After all the three categories have a defined discourse, an analysis is made to define the overall common discourse(s). Based on this definition, the two first steps were repeated in order to confirm that the choice has been appropriated.

Since it is not possible to assess an entire discourse as one, the main focus of the discussion is on the different sub-categories and categories as part of the discourse (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007, p. 198). This was done by first discussing the sub-categories and how the discourse present on them reproduced (or not) the dominant one. After that, it is possible to discuss each of the three overall categories and finally to have an overall discussion on the discourse and how it reproduces (and in what ways) the dominant discourse.

\(^{32}\) When it comes to the process of analysis one previous note has to be made. The choice of the number of analysis is a choice of what is the case about (Yin, 2003, p. 22). Accordingly, this study is about sustainable entrepreneurs’ discourse and so there is a holistic approach with a single unit of analysis. This means that I see the set of entrepreneurs/interviews as an “interrelated system with a deep structure” (Light Jr., 1979, p. 552). Of course one could say that each entrepreneur as a unit of analysis but that would be true only if I would be comparing their discourses. In this case I wish to have an overall idea of the main discourse among them.
9. The discourse of SEs: empirical findings

The chapter offers an overview of the discourse of the respondents. It is divided in three sections, each one representing one of the three concerns (environmental, socio-economic and change). By providing the empirical findings from the research the chapter offers the readers an (independent) outline of the data gathered.

The chapter cast a light on what SEs think about sustainability. With the interview as a tool, the chapter deals with the three categories highlighted in chapter 5 (environment, socio-economic and change) and is organized based on the operationalization of the theory presented in section 8.2.

In order to balance presentation and information, quotes are only used partly on the text but for each dimension there is an appendix with quotes that represent the views of the respondents in a given topic.

9.1 Environmental concerns

As mentioned in the previous chapter the environmental concerns of the respondents are divided in two sub-categories: general environmental concerns and views on environmental problems. The first sub-category represents the view of the respondents on nature while the second sub-category shows how the SEs see the problems that nature face.

9.1.1 General environmental views

The first aspect that emerges from the way SEs look at nature is how they believe we should relate with it (Appendix 2a). The answers show individuals very far away from the view of humans as isolated from nature. In fact SEs critique this view, characterizing it as not caring for nature and with a thinking that “the Earth is for the people and that we can have some nature here and some nature there and the rest should be roads” (Gisela).

But that is not how SEs see it. For them we are connected with nature as it provides the base for our lives (Jessica) and so we need to relate in a different way, as we do with people we love (Ingrid). These considerations are aligned with the idea put forward by the SEs that we are part of nature as much as others species, with Carl explaining it through a business metaphor where nature has “(...) a subsidiary company called HomoSap AB, and you have as every subsidiary company you need to deliver profit to Tales”.

Moving to how the respondents perceive Earth (Appendix 2b) the answers go in a slightly different direction. While there are some examples of SEs that perceive Earth as a sensitive being, such as David or Ingrid, most of the SEs point out to nature and Earth as something that needs to be managed for our sake (and of future generations). The requirement to have a sustainable ecological footprint so we can survive (Andreas) or to
take into consideration the needs of future generations (Jessica) enforce the idea advanced by Carl when he points out that “You need to get a win-win relationship with nature. (...) We need to understand that this is the only way for us to survive.”. To have such relation Hanna points stresses the importance of getting “a sense for how to take care of our earth”. Thus, SEs endorse the anthropocentric view of the need of nurturing for our own sake.

This idea is confirmed when it comes to the role of humans on their relation with nature (Appendix 2c). All of the SEs expressed that humans need to exploit Earth, by using its resources, but only within the limits in which the Earth can recover. Again the relation with nature is conditional of our own well being. We need to look at nature “as the thing that decides how much we can do, the limits of the nature are the limits for our growth” (Gisela). In that way, several mentioned the need to have no impact on Nature when it comes to their businesses. For instance Daniel and Erik share the common goal of running their company with a minimal impact on the environment: "Before production, during production, after production. The whole idea is to make everything green." (Erik).

Also, the respondents expressed concerns about the fact that nowadays we live outside the regenerative boundaries of Earth. Again Carl provides a useful metaphor for the actual situation:

“What is GDP if you compare it with a company? It’s a turnover of the company of Sweden, if I’m looking at Sweden, but it’s nothing more than that. Do you have a balance sheet about the economy of Sweden? No. You only have a cost/benefit sheet. And if the growth of the turnover is the most important of the society, we will also find an economy where we believe that if I take money from the bank, if I compare that to taking resources from nature, and the amount on the bank or of resources in nature is declining, this is actually what is happen making us becoming poorer and poorer every time, although the turnover of the company is increasing, so by ruining ourselves and taking all the resources for nature, so we have less and less resources on the bank, we believe that we are becoming richer and richer, but in fact we have less in the bank that we had before. For me it’s a simple answer: as long as we don’t see the balance sheet, don’t talk about it, we have a robber economy, [pretending to be someone else] “If I cut down a forest, the GDP will get higher” [stop pretending to be someone else]. Of course, but there is no forest for the future.”

From the above is clear that SEs do not share the dominant view of nature as just any kind of resource yet they still look at Earth in resource terms (Appendix 2d). For instance, in the example given by Andreas (“When you build the roads, it’s more important to build a road then to preserve the agriculture land. Is more important to build a shop market outside the town than to build it in the city.”) or when Hanna talks about the need to “consume less of the earth’s resources”, we can see that there is still much of a view that looks to Earth and nature in terms of resources.

Nonetheless there are some exceptions to this view of Earth as a resource. Erik discuss the difference between using natural resources when necessary and when is not: “I think that things that are not life dependent, food we got to have it to survive, but a lot of things we have on this world are not necessary and to have this production of
unnecessary things that affects species of birds, etc. If you have this production you have to destroy the rain forest, you remove species that are too weak to decide. “We need cheap paper”, yeah ok but then we need to sacrifice this two bird kinds, a living organism that we can’t get back”. By doing that it seems to be looking more at the ecosystem as something that has value independent of us.

9.1.2 Views on environmental problems

When it comes to the view of SEs on environmental problems respondents become more assertive and less hesitant, showing to be very concerned about the extreme vulnerability of the ecosystem (Appendix 3a). Such vulnerability is rooted, according to the respondents, in the catastrophic way we have been affecting the planet, to the point of making it sick.

And as Hanna also points out, we are affecting the ecosystem resilience not just in a local base but in a world base: “An important part is to try to understand that our way of life in industrialized countries affect the environment negatively for people in other countries.”. This argument is also shared by Erik when he states that “We are dumping a lot of electronics in China and pollute their environment, make it worst for next generations living in China just because we want to cheaper easy fix, fast fix.”

Talking about the possibility of having passed a breaking point, where Earth would not be able to recover, answers are quite consensual (Appendix 3b): all belief that we either are extremely close to approach it or we already have done so. For instance Barbro expresses her disbelief on the situation “Because I believe we are too late (...)we haven’t been aware of the danger and now it’s in the spot because we are on the last, it’s our last chance to take responsibility (...)”), while for others, like Jessica, we have already passed that point since “you can see effects already, but the effects are too small for people to care about it (...)". In any of the cases the conclusion is the same: continuing the way we are the consequences will be severe. For Andreas “if we continue in this way it will be mass death of people, starving, we will not have enough food. In 20 years time there will be a lot of problems”.

9.2 Socio-economic concerns

Socio-economic concerns cover the way society should be organized. The sub-categories represent the three levels of the organization: as a whole (society), in economic terms (economic organization) and in company terms (companies’ responsibilities). It also approaches how respondents view the balance between the three sides of society (economic, environmental and social).

9.2.1 Society’s responsibilities

Starting from what should be the ultimate goal of society and individuals, SEs question nowadays approach (Appendix 4a). There is a general sense that we have gone too far in terms of trying to achieve materialistic goals: we consume too much (Gisela) and produce things that are not necessary (Erik) or do not contribute to our happiness (Ingrid).
For almost all of the SEs we should reduce our consumption or consume in a different way. It is about working less to enjoy more life (Jessica) and appreciating other things than just money (Karin), or in more general terms, is about balancing our materialistic goals with post-materialistic ones. Yet, for few, consumption and material values are irrelevant. For Ingrid consuming is not needed to achieve happiness and for Carl post-materialistic goals are the true way to achieve happiness.

Beside this, society faces two main problems: unequal resource distribution (to which poverty is the most obvious outcome) and our (destructive) relation with nature. Regarding the latter, the question is if we see natural and human capital has substitutes or complements and the answer clear point out to the second option (Appendix 4b). For SEs the goal is that we maintain our natural capital “in the next 100 or 200 years to come” (Fredrik) and that is independent from our human made capital. For instance Erik exemplifies how these two types of capital are not substitutes with the following example:

“If you have this production you have to destroy the rain forest, you remove species that are too weak to decide. “We need cheap paper”, yeah ok but then we need to sacrifice these 2 bird kinds, a living organism that we can’t get back, even if in 20 years we find out another way to make paper that doesn’t harm anyone, but if we do it now then it’s gone forever and I don’t think we have the right to decide these things.”

Jessica sums it up by point out that we need to “take into account the situation in the environment has it is now and thinking about generations coming after us, so they are able to live a life and even better than that”.

When it comes to poverty while all recognize the seriousness of the problem the solutions to the situation are split in two (Appendix 4c). Some point out that solving poverty is about providing equal opportunity especially through education. “It’s important for developing countries to make training available so they can decide what is best for their country.” (Hanna) or “I believe that a lack of education has to do with poverty...” (Barbro) are examples of arguments that SEs used to stress that to solve poverty we need to educate people.

On the other hand, others believe that solving poverty is about solving the imbalances in resource distribution. For Carl the fact that we have spent an enormous amount of money to save banks, in the last financial crisis, is an example that we have the resources to solve poverty. Another argument used by Fredrik and Gisela is that the uneven relations between developed and developing countries need to be restructured in order to solve poverty.

9.2.2 Connection between the systems

The hierarchy between the different spheres of society is viewed by the SEs as unbalanced (Appendix 5). For all of them it is clear that “the society is more economic oriented” (Andreas) and that “it sets the rules” (Gisela). Due to that the entrepreneurs leave a (sometimes implicit) wish that social, economical and ecological sides of society would be in the same level. As described by Hanna “sustainable development should be about the economy, social relationships and ecology”.


Carl is an exemption here. For him economy is just a tool to achieve the best possible life for citizens and so the social and environmental spheres come before the economic.

9.2.3 Economic organization

For SEs market economy is still the way to go when it comes to organize economic activity (Appendix 6a). A common argument to support this claim is that competition will be good to sort of between sustainable and not sustainable companies. Other arguments are also use to support this idea such as the fact that people “must have the choice to do whatever they want” (David) or that “it is a way of distributing wealth and setting prices” (Fredrik).

However, there is a consensus among the respondents that the market needs more regulation. The biggest reason for that is the fact that we do not take into consideration in the costs of goods the entire social and ecological impacts we create, as Fredrik and Gisela point out. In the same way, more regulation could assure that companies respect the environment and individuals. Ingrid gives an example from her own life to explain this:

“For instance if a Sweden company have children-workers they could really shut it down. If you’re going to sell clothes in Sweden, the lowest salary should be this salary because right now we are just moving stuff, for instance I was in Cambodia in a factory for Swedish brands and they were working for 12 hours and they couldn’t even go to the toilets, we can’t buy things like that in Sweden. If we are going to have social responsibility we can’t just have it in Sweden, we have to have it in the whole world so that we can’t just move things to where is cheaper to we can have cheaper clothes.”

The market economy should be built to achieve different goals (Appendix 6b). For some SEs is efficient allocation while others think that is as important to maintain ecological integrity. Finally, some point out guaranteeing quality of life as the goal of economic activity.

From the example given by David (but also from the one given by Erik) we can see implicitly the idea that when conducting economic activity (such as running a business) is all about efficient allocation of resources, and thus, providing ecological or social help should be done if there were gains that offset that “costs”:

“Most of the companies are built to make money, but the government could say that if you do this for the poor or for the forest, you get this and that discount. If the company is made for a reason, to make money, so they are pleased. “We do what we are supposed to do”. But if they got the opportunity to maybe make even more money by tax cut or something like that than they can still have the same vision and the same board with the same goals but they are doing it right.”

Several other SEs extend this argument of efficiency to the environment by arguing that we need also to guarantee ecological integrity. For example, for Barbro is important that “every step you’re taking you have to think what is doing to the environment”. Such
argument is substantiated by Jessica since for her you need to think in a cradle-to-cradle way and not just about how to maximize profit.

Finally, some SEs advance the idea of quality of life has the primary economic objective. In a curious way David and Erik believe at the same time that efficient allocation of resources and quality of life are the primary economic objective, and according to them, we need to take money out of the picture and focus on what people need instead of what they can buy (David) or that stop thinking about money would improve quality of life (Erik). Beside them others put forward the idea that we need to focus on providing quality of life.

When it comes to how to achieve these goals there are three aspects to keep into consideration: the principles that should guide economic activity, what are the limits to economic organization and what role does growth plays on the economy.

Given the above mentioned regarding efficiency (both of resources and of the environment) as a goal of activity is not strange that almost all SEs express that eco-efficiency is a key guiding principle to conduct economic activity (Appendix 6c). As the above quotes from Barbro or Jessica express the goal is that economic activity is conducted “normally” but by also integrating the costs that result from destroying the environment. This idea is shared by all in some way or another. The ultimate measurement of success is when everything is “green” (Erik).

Accordingly, the limits to economic organization partly voice that eco-concern by defining reduced benefits for the environment as one of the limits to economic organization (Appendix 6d). Erik brings his own company as an example:

“Our product is not like food that it’s a base product, you got to have it, but advertisement is not a base product, is not something the world need to work. And since it is an unnecessary product that the humans have develop, that makes a need to be environmental friendly when it’s not really necessary, not like food.”

Yet, for some SEs the limits of economic organization are based on the integrity of both individuals and the environment. Examples of this are Barbro’s concern how her company affects all other living beings or how Fredrik realise in his former company that his business model was just possible because someone in a developing country was being exploited.

Finally, the view of SEs on the role of growth is very consensual since for all growth is ok as long as it is “sustainable growth” (Appendix 6e). For some, such as Andreas or Carl, that means a growth that reduce levels of energy and materials that we use while for others, like David and Erik, is about achieving growth while acting in a sustainable way. But even if the definition of “sustainable growth” varies among answers there are two aspects that are transversal: a) the growth we have now is not the kind of growth that SEs want and b) the growth we need is a growth that takes into consideration certain (environmental and/or social) boundaries.

9.2.4 Companies’ responsibilities
The views of the SEs on what should be the goals of companies (Appendix 7a) are aligned with the above views on growth: it is OK to have profits and growth as long as they are sustainable. An important aspect is that several respondents were careful to stress not only the sustainable side as well as the business side of their behaviours by pointing out that they are “business-driven” (Barbro), that they have the business “to make money” (Erik) or that they are not working with aid (Fredrik).

This path of achieving profit but at the same time protecting nature and people is for them a perfect achievable path, since you can get the best of both worlds. As David elaborate “We don’t want to view as it you can either save the environment or make money. We want to say that you can have both, you can even make it better if you make it both”.

Nonetheless, there is also another view among a few of the respondents. For Carl and Jessica the goal is to achieve stakeholder satisfaction, in particular at a society level, meaning that the company exist as a tool for achieving a greater objective. In both of their personal cases the goal was to spread sustainable behaviours: “At the bottom it is to spread sustainability” (Jessica). This idea is also supported by Carl previous work experience in creating sustainable municipalities, where business ideas/companies where developed from the perspective of trying to understand what kind of organizations where missing at a municipal level.

While the goal of companies maintain some elements of today’s world (e.g. purpose is to make a profit), the view presented above in which SEs need to achieve profit but in a sustainable way can be seen as a derivation of their views on corporate ethical responsibilities (Appendix 7b). For SEs companies need to have an enhanced responsibility, since for them they should take into consideration in their decisions humans (both us and future generations) as well as the environment.

For instance, in their view of humans SEs show a great concern to guarantee that the materials they buy were done with sustainable labour, meaning that “employees have decent salaries, good working conditions, health care and so on” (Andreas). The concern for sustainable labour is in some cases extended to their own company. For instance Barbro mention that is important to be “economic sustainable for their employees” and Fredrik pointing out the need to create a “sustainable social situation” for their workers.

As for environmental concerns again SEs introduce the impact on the environment on their decisions. For instance, David expresses that in his company they do not want to make investment if that money does not improve their environmental impact. Also, SEs point out the close relation between environmental concerns and responsibility for future generations, since by taking care of the environment you are allowing “the coming generations to have the same” (Fredrik) and also to let them live at least as good as we did (Jessica).

So, given that the goal is to achieve sustainable profit and growth but that at the same time companies have an ethical responsibility with humans and the environment, the way this is achieve is also interesting to understand (Appendix 7c). Regarding this aspect the answers follow the same pattern of smoothing what is done nowadays with a
sustainable behaviour by stating that it is acceptable to exploit resources but it should be done in a prudent way.

For SEs the actual continuous exploitation of the human and natural resources we have is not viable. As Gisela points out we “(...) cannot grow beyond the limits of the environment, we cannot just keep growing, growing and growing”. But that does not mean we should change radically, since we can still exploit resources but we should do it in a sustainable way, meaning that, for instance in terms of the environment, we “take more things from nature than the ones that can be restored” (Jessica).

9.3 Change concerns

The last category of the discourses is only comprised by one sub-category with four dimensions: severity of problems, type of change, objectives of change and mechanisms of change.

Regarding the situation we are in we have a generalize concern among SEs although some group views the problems as catastrophic another group views them as consequential (Appendix 8a).

The idea that we are “too late” (Barbro) or that we need to change so much that enables people from taking any steps (Ingrid) is put forward by some of the SEs. As for others, while there is the notion that we affect the planet considerably (Andreas), the source of these problems are flaws in the system, such as a very strong capitalism (Erik) or wrong choices (Jessica), and so the problems are not catastrophic.

When it comes to the type of change that SEs wish it would be achieved the examples are diverse (Appendix 8b). For many like Erik or Hanna is about constructing a softer capitalism, where the rules are more or less the same but more attention on people and the environment is incorporated, for others, like Barbro or David is about conscious organizations/countries/persons putting (economic) pressure to stop unsustainable practices and promote sustainable ones. In any case the underlying idea is the same: changes are to be done within the pre-existing structures.

Even those who express a wish for more radical changes, express at the same time a wish of change within the current socio-economic framework. For instance Fredrik question if the changes we need are compatible with the pre-existing structures (more specifically with the notion of growth economy), opening the idea of the need for radical changes, while at the same time expresses his preference for adding “to an existing system than actually trying to change to something completely new”.

Another example of such ambivalence is also found in Gisela’s thoughts. While this sustainable entrepreneur question the “strange world” where we live “where some people have so much and some people have so little”, she also offers as examples of change modification within the structure such as the creation of “carbon dioxide taxes”.

Given that when it comes to the type of change wished SEs share a common idea of change within the existing structures, it is natural that they also express a same view on what are the objectives of change (Appendix 8c). In general terms, and given that the
type of change is change within the existing structure, the objective of that change is to improve that same structure. That is both explicitly mention as well as implicitly (through examples).

Both Carl and Fredric are quite straightforward about it. For Carl markets can only work with regulations and that "we need sustainable rules for that". Fredrik, in a similar way, points out that he does not "see a solution where we leave the market economy for something else" and so, for him, "it is easier to add to an existing system than actually trying to chance to something completely new".

As for other SEs, examples are provided about how society could be improved. As above, the examples vary. Being the shift away from fossil fuels (Jessica), the need for a *humanization* of capitalism (Erik) or a fairer trade between Europe and Africa (Gisela) the underlying substance is the same: the objective to improve economic and/or political institutions.

Finally, the ways we should achieve this change vary among SEs (Appendix 8d). For some like David or Gisela is about the creation of more regulation on the markets: "(...) maybe a carbon dioxide taxes could be one way to include the environmental costs in the economy" (Gisela). The reform of the institutions is also pointed out as a mechanism of change. For instance Andreas argues for the reform of the global market into local markets: "(...) We should have for example local economies instead of EMU".

Lobbying and market mechanisms are also, according to the SEs, mechanisms for change. We need to put pressure in the government to stop unsustainable practices according to Barbro and for Fredrik "companies bear a great responsibility" and so for him, as a business owner, is important to show "that is profitable to be sustainable".

There are also SEs that point out to more "radical" mechanisms. The need for persons to look inside themselves and make the necessary changes in their lives is pointed out by Barbro, Ingrid and Jessica as the way to go. As Barbro puts it: "So you have to educate the world so that everyone can take responsibility for the environment and for your co-workers and for your family and for your society."

Another example of a more "radical" mechanism is the one given by Carl as an example of a past work experience trying to develop sustainability where companies where created based on a collective discussion and as co-ops and where the development decisions were discuss and built in a decentralized way.
10. The discourse of SEs: discourse identification

This chapter analyses the data from the previous chapter in order to categorise the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs. In that way it provides a start to answering the first research question by fulfilling the first goal of the thesis: identifying what is the underlying logic of the sustainable entrepreneurs’ discourse.

In chapter 8 the data analysis was described in two overall stages. The first, what we can identify as analysis, regards the identification of the general discourse among the SEs. This means that the focus of this chapter is more to understand what constitutes the discourse in the different categories/sub-categories/dimensions and see how they fit with the three discourses available in literature.

Both analysis chapters (10 and 11) follow the layout of the results chapter, starting by analysis of the environmental concerns, moving to the socio-economic concerns and finalizing with the change concerns.

10.1 Environmental concerns

As discussed in the chapter 5 and in the section 8.2, the environmental concerns include how humans and nature relate and it is comprised by two sub-categories: general environmental views and views on environmental problems.

10.1.1 General environmental views

As mentioned in the results section, when it comes to how SEs view the relation between humans and nature, they steer away from the dominant MD view where nature and human are isolated from each other (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, pp. 883-884). Some of the respondents show implicitly a wish that people would look at nature and other species as equals and dependent. For them, humans should take a step down in the hierarchy ladder to be at the same level of all other species. This acknowledgment can be identified with the WSD, where the interdependent relation between humankind and nature is recognized (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 890).

Yet, most of the SEs go even further and clearly take a stance identified with SSD where we are as much part of nature as other species (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). In fact this view is explicitly discussed by some entrepreneurs: “We are part of it but it is not ours. We share it with other species in this world and also other people” (Fredric). In their eyes humans have the same value as other species and all belong to nature.

The above SSD position is not consistent with their perception of the Earth. For them the Earth needs to be nurtured. However, this should be done for our own sake, so that “we don’t destroy the ecological system that is needed for our survival” (Andreas). Such statements move SEs away from the SSD, where Earth is a sensitive being that has been exploited, and into a WSD, where Earth has been exploited and that need to be...
correct for us to survive. Thus, while previously the SEs started by showing a SSD they also present WSD views.

Furthermore, the WSD views are also displayed when it comes to what role should humans have. Their belief is that we should be able to exploit Earth but only within certain limits. They go past the idea of blind exploitation of nature (MD) and move into a compromise where limits are introduced, which is a characteristic of WSD (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 890).

Finally, when it comes to the value of the ecosystem the opinions are divided but all move away from the MD. While in the market discourse we have an oppressive relation where the single purpose of nature is to serve humankind by acting as a resource (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 462), SEs are divided between a WSD view where the Earth is described in terms of economic resources (“consume less of the Earth’s resources” (Hanna)) and a SSD view where the Earth’s value is independent of what we think about it (“(...) you remove species that are too weak to decide (...) I don’t think we have the right to decide these things (...)” (Erik)).

Overall, in terms of general environmental views the SEs apparently display a discourse that shares both elements of the WSD and the SSD. Yet, a closer look tells a different story since looking on how the views on each individual dimension interact, we can identify some contradictions.

First, we have a view on the relation between human and nature where SEs appear to have a SSD by claiming that we are a part of nature and that we are as much important as other members. At the same time we have, under their claims of nurturing Earth for our own sake, an implicit normative assumption that humans are superior to other species. We are not nurturing the planet because it is the right thing to do or because we have the obligation to create good living conditions to all living-beings, but because we want nature to be here to support us and the future generations. Thus, the previous identification of SSD is weakened.

Second, the division of opinions regarding the value of the ecosystem can also be misleading. If we take into consideration their views on human role and how they perceive Earth we see that among them the dominant view is that we need to nurture Earth for our own sake and that the role of humans is still to exploit nature (but within certain limits), both views from a WSD. Such views are also dominant among those who then share a SSD take on the value of the ecosystem, meaning that the claim that Earth as inherent value is not confirmed when one sees the relation with Earth and its value from an anthropocentric lens.

Concluding, the prevalent view is that the Earth should not be looked upon as inferior than humankind, that we need to take care of it for our own sake, exploiting it but only inside certain limits (showing a resource-view upon it). And so when it comes to general environmental views, the SEs present a weak sustainability discourse. Although some of opinions could be considered as belonging to SSD, the contradictions analysed previously weaken these opinions.

10.1.2 Views on environmental problems
As for how SEs see the problems the environment currently faces, their position seems to be consensual among respondents but not coherent among sub-categories. When it comes to the capacity of nature to take hits SEs show a SSD by viewing the ecosystem as highly vulnerable. Answers show individuals very far away from the idea, shared by MD and WSD, that the environment is still robust. For them the destruction we are inflicting on the eco-system is “catastrophic” (Gisela).

However, when it comes to how far we are from reaching a breaking point the majority of the respondents take a less radical stance and agree that we have not reached that point but we are extremely close (in 10 or 20 years) or even entering (several respondents mentioned that we are already seeing signs). This view is, according to the theoretical understanding of the thesis, a characteristic of the WSD, yet very close to the SSD.

Thus, when it comes to the environmental problems we have both WSD and SSD among their answers: they share a weak sustainability view when it comes to the question if we have (or not) reached a breaking point and have a strong sustainability view when it comes to the resilience of the ecosystem. Given that in the WSD views they are very close to SSD and that the respondents show a very strong belief that the planet is in a highly at risk, I would argue that when it comes to their views on environmental problems the SEs possess a SSD.

10.1.3 Environmental concerns

Summing up the environmental concerns we have a complex situation, with SEs displaying both WSD and SSD views. When it comes to their general views about the environment the respondents show a view that should be labelled as weak sustainability discourse even if it shows some (minor) traces of SSD.

As for their views on environmental problems the discourse becomes more radical. While they display at times a WSD they do it in a very close way to a SSD. In that ways their views on environmental problems are characterized by an overall SSD tone.

If we look in general terms, one can see the views on environmental problems as an evaluation of how society (driven by a market discourse) has been relating with the environment and the general environmental views as how SEs themselves would like it to be. In that lens we have SEs that heavily criticize the MD, taking a SSD approach, but then would want things to be improved but not to change in an entirely different way (WSD approach).

In conclusion, SEs have a SSD approach when it comes to their evaluation of the problems we face now and a WSD view on how we should be acting.

10.2 Socio-economic concerns

The socio-economic concerns contain the most extensive amount of categories (4) and dimensions (12). The categories range different subjects like economic organization or the responsibilities of society.

10.2.1 Society’s responsibilities
As mentioned in the previous chapter the view defended by the MD of increasing standards of living as a goal of society (Haque, 1999, p. 202) is not accepted by the SEs since they believe that we also need to focus on post-materialistic goals (such as being able to enjoy life more). Still, they do not fully reject MD by focus only, as SSD does, in non-materialistic values. Their focus is on reducing the influence of materialistic goal as to let space for other type of goals, in the same line of WSD (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007).

When it comes to the view on natural and human capital the respondents take a SSD stand by viewing them as complements rather than substitutes (Nilsen, 2010, p. 497). This means that there is no point on growing our human capital if it is at the expenses of the natural capital, since the latter is not replaceable.

As for poverty alleviation all SEs agree in the importance of the problem and a solution for it but the discourse splits again between WSD and SSD when it comes on how to solve it. The respondents that take a WSD view are a precise replication of what is discussed in theory by pointing out that education is crucial to solve poverty (Castro, 2004, p. 198). In the meanwhile those who argue for a restructuring of the relations between developed and developing countries are in line with the SSD claim for the creation of wealth re-distribution mechanisms to eliminate poverty (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995).

So, society responsibilities do not have a clear discourse among the respondents. The SEs believe that society should focus on creating conditions for both materialistic and post-materialistic goals (WSD) and that human and natural capital are complements rather than substitutes (SSD). Finally, the mechanisms for poverty alleviation come from both WSD (education) and SSD (wealth re-distribution mechanisms), leading to an overall discourse between WSD and SSD.

Alternatively, if we take into consideration the previous concerns about the credibility of SSD claims when it comes to the relations between humans and nature, leading to question the answers in the views of human and natural capital, it can also be suggested that the overall discourse is somewhere between a WSD and a SSD but with a higher influence of WSD.

10.2.2 Connection between the systems

While the society currently puts the economic side upfront social and environmental aspects (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 105), SEs have a different view. As mentioned in the results chapter they wish that the social and environmental aspects of society would be given the same consideration as the economic side. Thus, the respondents have a WSD when it comes to the connection between the systems, since all the three domains have the same importance (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995).

10.2.3 Economic organization

From the answers provided by the respondents in terms of economic structure there are two important features to highlight. The first is the agreement with MD that a market economy is the way to go. This claim is supported by arguments of efficiency ("it is a
way of distributing wealth and setting prices” (Fredric)) just in the same line of thought of the market discourse (Armour, 1997; Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007). The second is that, SEs argue that the current system is flawed (e.g. companies do not incorporate environmental costs) and thus regulations need to be added. Thus, SEs are not aligned with a MD but with WSD when it comes to the desired economic structure (market with regulations).

While there is a consensus among the SEs about the economic structure, the discourses disperse significantly when it comes to what should be the main objective of economy, leading to evidence of all the three discourses. First, some SEs express their belief that economy should be driven by efficiency and so other type of goals should only be added if the benefits of adding them are higher than the costs (e.g. tax cuts for sustainable practices). In that way their discourse is aligned with the idea of efficiency and maximizing return allocation argued by MD (Bonné Dahl & Eriksson, 2007). Second, WSD claims that ecological efficiency should also be added to the existent MD (Mebratu, 1998, p. 509) are also echoed by many respondents. Concepts like cradle-to-cradle are examples of ideas that SEs would like to see in practice to complement the pursuit for profit. Finally, SSD displays are also very common among the SEs. The theoretical review of SSD points out the focus of this discourse in “qualitative improvements” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 897) and that is exactly what the SEs also argue for. From the several examples provided by them (e.g. focus on what people need instead of what they can buy (David)) convey an idea of focus on providing quality of life. However, this claims need to be taken cautiously since some of the same that argue for this are the ones who argue for efficient allocation of resources independently of environmental and social considerations. So again we have another example of how claims among SEs are contradictory. Nonetheless, it is still clear that SEs display a drift towards WSD and SSD, even if displaying MD views.

Moving to the principles that should guide economic activity the respondents condemn partly the MD but do not dismiss it completely. Instead they add to the existing efficiency measure the eco-efficiency measure as a way to guide/limit economic activity. This is well in line with is described in literature as belonging to the WSD (Mebratu, 1998, p. 509).

Correspondingly, and as described in the previous chapter, the limits to economic organization, follow the eco-concern advocated by WSD. As seen in the literature (Bonné Dahl & Eriksson, 2007, p. 105) economic activity should be limited to what does not hurt the environment and that is exactly what some respondents show: “and since it is an unnecessary product (...) that makes a need to be environmental friendly” (Erik).

SSD is also present in this dimension of economic organization. When SEs express the belief that certain activities should not be carried because they penalize other persons and/or the environment (e.g. Fredrik when he mentions that he understood that his previous company was only possible because someone in a developing country was being exploited) they are in fact taking a SSD stance. As described in the theoretical chapter, for SSD advocates economy should be limited to activities that do not violate the integrity of individuals and other species.

Finally, when it comes to the role of growth the SEs are far away from the SSD view of growth as not needed (Carvalho, 2001, p. 64) and quite close to the MD view of
economic growth as a central need of the economy (Spangenberg, 2010, pp. 561-562).
For the SEs growth by itself is not good or bad but is instead the type of growth you achieve. For them the actual growth is not positive and the goal should be to have sustainable growth. That fits the WSD views were the aim is to achieve controlled economic growth (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007).

Summing up the discourse of the SEs when it comes to economic organization, we can see that for them the economy should be structured in a market economy but with more regulations that we have now. The primary economic objective seems to vary but points out to a view that sees a need to shift the economic objectives either in a small way (to include the environment’s integrity) or in a bigger way (focus exclusively on qualitative improvements and not quantitative growth).

Furthermore, the SEs display a belief that economic activities should be guided also by eco-efficiency and so limited to activities that do not damage the environment. For some others it is also about promoting the integrity of humans and not only the environment. Finally, economy activities should aim at achieving sustainable growth.

From the two previous paragraphs we can conclude that while all discourses are displayed in the answers of the respondents the predominant discourse seems to be the weak sustainability discourse, although with some SSD presence.

10.2.4 Companies’ responsibilities

As stated in chapter 9 the views of the SEs on what ought to be goals of companies are the same as the views on growth in the way that both are acceptable as long as they are sustainable. In fact, according to the SEs profit is as important as the sustainable side (e.g. several answers stress the for-profit nature of their business) and so while the SEs do not present the MD distinctive logic of maximization of self-interest addressed in the literature (Egri & Pinfield, 1996; Milner, 1994), they are also not close to the view of SSD of company’s driven by the satisfaction of several different stakeholders (Dryzek, 2005). What can be extracted from the above situation is that WSD is the discourse that better fits the views of the SEs.

However, WSD is not the best fit when it comes to ethical responsibilities. Mentioned in the answers is the idea of enhanced responsibility, focusing both on the environment and humans (present and future generations). Based on the literature such opinion is aligned with SSD where, as mentioned in the above paragraph, companies have moral responsibility for a large base of stakeholders (humans, other species, etc.) (Dryzek, 2005). Again this view is weakened by the contradiction discussed previously in the environmental concerns section.

When it comes to the role of capital/resources the pattern of smoothing the existing behaviour is again the norm. SEs take a WSD stance by reasoning that exploiting of resources is acceptable as long as done within certain limits. In this way they do not fully disregard the idea of exploiting resources to achieve growth but argue that this should be done in a more cautioned way.

In summary, the SEs believe that companies should still have profit and growth as goals but they should be sustainable, adding to the companies an enhanced responsibility over
a wider stakeholder base. This growth is to be achieved by exploiting resources, but taking into consideration the limits that the stakeholders add. In that way, have a view on companies’ responsibilities that can be identified with WSD, while still sharing some SSD views.

10.2.5 Socio-economic concerns

In the same way of the environmental concerns the social-economic concerns expressed by the SEs reflect a complex situation with the displaying of different discourses. In fact, while in the environmental concerns each sub-category had a clearer dominant view, among the sub-categories of the socio-economic concerns we have a trend of a mixture between WSD and SSD (although with a higher influence of the former). That is the situation for the responsibilities of society, for how economy should be organized and for the responsibilities of companies. The exception is the views on the connection between the three spheres of society, where SEs present a clearer WSD.

10.3 Change concerns

When it comes to the last category of the discourses we start by looking at how the SEs see the problems we face. From the result chapter we can see that in this dimension the answers split in two distinct groups: while both groups deny the view of MD where the problems we face are not severe (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 42), some do it by taking a SSD view where they argue that the problems are catastrophic. Others point out not critical problems but flaws in the system (e.g. wrong development priorities) meaning that while recognizing the gravity of the problems they do not see it as disastrous. In that way they are aligned with the WSD.

Given that the seriousness of the problems is viewed in two different ways it would be expected that the type of change needed would also come from two different perspectives. Although there are some displays of SSD among respondents (e.g. questioning the need of a growth economy), the common view shared by all the SEs is the one that in literature is linked with WSD where the goal is to reform the actual system (Hay, 2005, p. 314; Robinson, 2004, p. 376). Expectably, the objectives of change follow the same WSD. The goal is to improve the existing economic and political institutions, for instance how the market economy works.

Additionally, the ways to achieve this reform are also aligned with WSD. The examples vary from carbon dioxide taxes to lobbying and fit perfectly with what the literature describes as the way WSD pretends to create change (Castro, 2004; Gibbs, 2009; Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005). Also some radical views are identified such as personal development or a more communal and democratic regulations, which address the SSD point of view (Mebratu, 1998, pp. 506-509).

In overall, the change concerns have WSD as the common tone. While there are some stronger views (such as in the severity of the problems), the overall view fits better with the WSD.

10.4 Overall analysis
The analysis of the data was done by a simple algorithm of trying to match the results with the different theoretical representations. Yet, this simple process already yielded two interesting results: i) the identification of the SEs discourse as an overall weak sustainability discourse with some strong sustainability views; and ii) the apparent contradiction between dimensions seems to hide a bipolar set of normative assumptions.

First we had the overall discourse of the SEs as being a WSD with the some SSD features. Sustainable entrepreneurs show a divided view in terms of environmental concerns. While perceiving the environment in a WSD way, they become more assertive when it comes to the evaluation of the current situation taking a SSD perspective. This suggests a divided discourse between the weak and the strong sustainability standpoints.

Looking at the socio-economic concerns we can see the same two discourses but that WSD has more influence. While in the environmental concerns we have the same influence of each discourse, now we have a clear dominance from the WSD, while SSD only is visible in some dimensions. Finally, the change concerns follow the same situation of the existence of WSD and SSD, but with WSD being the predominant.

This relation between WSD and SSD in the views of the SEs leads to the second interesting aspect of the analysis. If we look again at the contradictions in the general environmental views we can see, for instance, that at first they claim that humans and nature are of the same importance. This belief can be labelled as a normative assumption about nature. More, as discussed in the section 10.1.1 the idea displayed by the respondents on the need to nurture Earth for our own sake is a conceptualize view of a different normative assumption: humans are superior to other species. This example suggests that while the respondents display certain normative assumptions during the interviews, their conceptualize views are influenced by a different set of beliefs.

This finding is supported by several other examples. For instance when it comes to the responsibilities of the companies we look at their ethical responsibilities (a normative assumption according to me) and we see a SSD view, where there is an obligation for humans, other species and ecosystems. Yet, that belief is not followed through in the corporate goals (a conceptualize view), since this dimension shows a view where profit is acceptable suggesting a belief, in terms of ethical responsibilities, that accepts the MD logic of maximization of self-interest.

Given the above the analysis seems to point to that SEs possess a WSD discourse. While it also SSD aspects emerge it seems that they do at a level of normative assumptions that then are not confirmed by the WSD conceptualize view of the respondents. This and the contradictions pointed out during this chapter, suggest the existence of other normative assumptions beside the ones that the SEs explicitly show.
11. The discourse of SEs: the reproduction of MD

This chapter builds upon the analysis made previously by discussing the ways in which the discourse of SEs reproduces MD. In that way it fulfils the second purpose goal of understanding how different is this discourse from the dominant market discourse. Adding to the previous chapter it delivers the information needed to answer the first research question.

The previous chapter pointed out to the SEs’ discourse as a WSD, with some SSD features. That allows an initial assessment of how the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs diverges from the dominant discourse. Yet, to better assess the differences the discourse must also be analysed in terms of the reproduction and/or challenging of MD.

11.1 Environmental concerns

11.1.1 General environmental views

Already mentioned in the previous chapter is the fact that SEs drift away from the MD by having a SSD view when it comes to the relation between humans and nature. A look at the answers of the respondents shows a critical tone of the actual system and a challenging of the dominant view of isolation from nature.

Moving to their perception of Earth as something needed to be nurtured for our own stake we have the first clear reproduction of the ideas of MD. The idea of keeping Earth safe for “own survival” (Andreas) or “for our children” (Gisela) draws attention to the anthropocentric nature of such claims. Subsequently, while this view is identifiable with WSD, the respondents reproduce the MD and its anthropocentric nature since the perception of Earth as something to be used for our benefit (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 462) remains intact, only changing by adding a limit to the existing exploitation. In fact this idea of adding limits is also the view from the SEs on the role of humans in their relation with nature, which further confirms the reproduction of the anthropocentric nature of the MD.

Finally, when looking to how SEs value the ecosystem we find some reproduction of the dominant discourse. While some have an SSD view, the ones who present a WSD and look at Earth still in resource terms, reproduce the MD discourse idea of nature as a resource (Egri & Pinfield, 1996, p. 462). This is line with the above mentioned view of the Earth as something that we should interact with based on humankind’s interests.

From the above, it can be suggested that although the SEs have a WSD they clearly reproduce a key feature of the MD: the anthropocentric nature of the discourse.

11.1.2 Views on environmental problems
In the previous chapter I suggested that the sustainable entrepreneurs views on this sub-category where related with the SSD. Even in terms of if we had or not crossed a breaking point, where the answers are softer and in line with WSD, the opinions still challenge the MD idea of nature as having (almost) unlimited resources (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). Thus, in this sub-category we have a deviation from MD.

### 11.1.3 Environmental concerns

When it comes to environmental concerns the analysis show a reproduction of the MD idea of the superior value of humankind over nature. This anthropocentric view has implications in how SEs will likely conduct economic activity. While the answers point to some likely changes in terms of practice, the fact that the overall normative assumption is the same leads me to believe that changes will happen within the limits of MD accept practices. This could be for example by accounting environmental costs into the total costs of their economic activity but without questioning the economic activity itself.

### 11.2 Socio-economic concerns

#### 11.2.1 Society’s responsibilities

In chapter 10 it was shown that as far as goals of society goes the SEs do not reject the MD idea of need to achieve materialistic goals. They believe that there is too much consumption, especially in terms of “unnecessary” products, and so we need to reduce that consumption and focus also in other goals. This means that they do not reject the idea of “consuming to be happy” and so it only differs from MD by adding this request to refrain our materialistic behaviour, meaning that SEs reproduce the MD idea that we need to buy and own things to be fulfilled.

However, when it comes to the view on human and natural capital the SEs clearly challenge the dominant discourse. The critics of the SEs to the dominant way of thinking (e.g. how now we destroy nature and species without thinking about the impossibility of recovering those losses) demonstrate that the sustainable entrepreneurs question and contest the MD when it comes to this dimension.

Finally, in terms of poverty and its solutions, it was identified in the previous chapter that some of the SEs possess a WSD while others have a SSD. For the former group is education for the poor (especially for the “developing countries”) the way to solve this problem. Such idea, while well intentioned, neglects that the situation of the “developing countries” has been historically determined by the “developed countries” (Banerjee, 2003; Carvalho, 2001), meaning that the former have been sentenced to poverty by the latter. Failing to understand this is failing to understand that it is the socio-economic relation between the countries (that clearly benefits the “developed countries” as discussed in chapters 1 and 5) that is causing poverty. And so, it reproduces the underlying MD idea that the onus of solving this painful situation is not on the ones that caused it. Yet, some of the SEs seem to identify this and challenge the MD.
As a result, SEs reproduce from MD the idea that materialistic goals should still be a goal of society in order for us to be happy and also that, while criticising the problem of poverty, the problems’ source goes uncontested.

11.2.2 Connection between the systems

For SEs the economic, social and ecological systems should be equally important and so they criticize MDs idea that economy is the most important. In that way they do not explicitly reproduce the market discourse. Yet, if we accept the SSD views of economy as a tool to fulfil the needs of individuals or if we look at history where in the beginning economic activities were developed with the goal of realize the needs of the members of a tribe, we can see that the SEs reproduce the MD discourse idea of economy as something at least as important as the well being of individuals and of the environment.

11.2.3 Economic organization

Give that, has mentioned in chapter 1, our economic activity has been a key cause of the problems we face (García-Sánchez & Lorenzo, 2009, p. 1039; Roseland, 2000, p. 76), the way how the SEs reproduce/challenge the dominant MD is very important. In the previous chapter was understood that the sustainable entrepreneurs agree with MD in terms of which economic structure we should have. While they also argue for regulation to the existing market mechanisms, the key point is that they reproduce one of the most fundamental constructs of the market discourse: the market place as economic structure. This means that ideas as supply and demand or competition are populating the minds of the SEs.

Turning into the main objective of economy I have found out evidence of all three discourses. In terms of reproduction, ideas put forward by those with a MD as well as WSD converge in the importance given to efficiency. Such concept is key for the MD (Bonnedahl & Eriksson, 2007) whereas, if we look into a different approach like SSD, the focus is on effectiveness (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). Although this can sound like a simple matter of semantics it has significant practical implications. For example, at the level of the economy, this means a focus on producing what people are most willing to pay for, where an effectiveness-oriented approach would focus on what people most need, independently of the benefits-costs ratio.

Nonetheless, there are still SEs that challenge the MD and the focus on efficiency. Just has mentioned in the previous paragraph these answers focus on the improvement of quality of life, or in other words, in effectiveness.

Expectably the guiding principles for economic activity and the limits to economic organization also reflect the reproduction of the MD’s efficiency focus but with a special emphasis in terms of environmental concerns. Still, in the latter we see some challenging of the emphasis on efficiency by concentrating again in effectiveness terms, i.e. focusing on limiting activities that do not warm other species or individuals.

The final dimension of economic organization touches a key characteristic of the market economy: the role of (continuous) growth. Mentioned in chapter 10 is the idea that SEs
do not reject the centrality of growth in market economies (Spangenberg, 2010, pp. 561-562) but simply criticizes the “unsustainable growth” that we now have. In fact growth is seen as something natural and desirable as long as is achieved among certain boundaries. This acceptance and reproduction of the idea of continuously growing economy give the idea that SEs share MD’s growth fetishism (Spangenberg, 2010, p. 565).

In view of the above, is undeniable that that the SEs reproduce the bulk of the MD. An economic structured organized by market mechanisms, focused on efficiency (with or without environmental concerns) and where growth is a desirable outcome is a view that could easily be credited to someone with a market discourse.

11.2.4 Companies’ responsibilities

In the same way of the above sub-section, it becomes very important to understand how the ideas expressed by the SEs when it comes to the responsibilities of companies reproduce (or not) the market discourse.

From chapter 10 it was identified the similarities between SEs’ views on growth and on profit. For them both are acceptable as long as they are achieved in a “sustainable way”. Profit is seen as natural and so it is not only acceptable as also highly commended. In doing so, these individuals carry with them the distinct MD characteristic of self-maximization of interests (Egri & Pinfield, 1996) although it is argued by the SEs that such maximization is done without warming others. Yet, there are also among the answers clear signs of challenging of the MD. Put forward by some respondents, and in line with the SSD (Dryzek, 2005), is the idea that companies have primarily a social function of satisfying the needs of the general population.

Despite this reproduction of the dominant discourse, the SEs’ SSD views on corporate ethical responsibilities clearly question the dominant paradigm. The idea that companies are accountable for an enlarged base of stakeholders visibly clashes and questions the logic of self-interest.

Finally, the perspective on the role of capital/resources replicate the MD’s anthropocentric nature by assuming that what is wrong is not the exploitation itself but the rhythm or the conditions in each it is done.

Thus when it come to the responsibilities of companies again we see SEs reproducing key forms (e.g. profit) of the prevailing view.

11.2.5 Socio-economic concerns

From the analysis of the discourse of the SEs we seen that the socio-economic concerns exhibited are located between a WSD and a SSD, but closer to WSD. Yet, a look at the reproduction of the dominant discourse tells a different story, with sustainable entrepreneurs reproducing many of the key socio-economic views of the market discourse.

The goals of society are still material wealth (complemented by non-materialistic goals) and market mechanisms are still the way to achieve them. Also, the economy is still as
important as the well-being of individuals and the environment, and while they display a concern for poverty and exploitation of the environment the sources of these problems are not addressed. Finally, SEs still share the growth fetishism of MD by view growth (as well as profit) as something positive and needed.

11.3 Change concerns

Starting with the severity of the problems all SEs challenge the perception of the market discourse about the triviality of the complications we face. Yet, while some clearly question this idea and point out the catastrophic situation we are to deal with, others focus on the notion of imperfections of the system originated this problem. The lack of questioning about the system itself suggests an underlying acceptance of the current socio-economic system as something natural that just needs to be tuned in.

This (passive) acceptance of the current system as natural is replicated in the rest of the dimensions. The type of change is the reform of the actual system with the goals of improving the current institutions. Furthermore, the majority of the mechanisms purpose to achieve change lie in the current system: lobbying, market regulation, market mechanisms, etc.

Thus, while in this category there is no clear reproduction of the MD, we have another way of (re)producing the dominance of that discourse. The current social structure is not challenged by the SEs but accepted as natural, creating a confinement where all ideas must come from and hindering any possibility of real change.

11.4 Overall discussion

From all the above two key aspects emerge that support the idea that SEs reproduce the dominance of the market discourse: i) the reproduction of key values/views of the market discourse and ii) the (passive) acceptance of these values and views as natural.

Looking at the data we find individuals that carry with them the dogmas of MD. Starting from the concerns about the environment, the SEs clearly see nature as something to be dominated by humankind and this suggest that economic restrictions on the account of nature interest will only be achieved if there is not a significant loss for humankind. In that way is likely that SEs will focus on environmental gains that do not negatively impact individual choices.

The reproduction of the MD in terms of socio-economic concerns is the most significant one, in my opinion, since is where the SEs more reproduce MD. The most important notions of the market discourse (market mechanism, growth economy and profit-seeking companies) are reproduced in the opinions of the SEs, though in a slightly “greener” way. Given that not only previous research but even many sustainable entrepreneurs highlight that our problems are derived from MD and subsequently its views (e.g. the view that poverty in developed countries is caused by the profit-seeking multinationals), is hard to understand such similarities that greatly promote the dominance of MD.
Furthermore, in terms of change concerns we see the reproduction of the power of the MD by the SEs in the way that they use the same tools and defend the same structure that exist right now.

And so we have SEs that reproduce the MD in terms of their conceptualize view (e.g. market economy) and in terms of values (e.g. humankind is superior to nature), especially in the socio-economic concerns. Therefore I must contend that SEs carry with them the substance of MD. Of course there are also challenging aspects in the discourse of the sustainable entrepreneurs that create a possibility to change.

Even with an anthropocentric view, SEs still perceive nature as closer to us and in need for more caring, than MD does. Such view opens space for improvements in the way we interact with the environment. This caring tone also exists in the SEs’ view of workers and their needs, which could suggest a reengineering of how employers and employees interact. Moreover, among the respondents there are two or three entrepreneurs with a clear more radical tone which can be a sign for an emergent different way of doing business.

Curiously, this higher reproduction of MD’s socio-economic concerns is subliminally identified and criticized by the SEs themselves. Across the interviews it is possible to see remarks about how socio-economic concerns are much more complex than the environmental ones (Fredrik) or how “the difficult part is the economic sustainable development” (Hanna). What is more, such difficulty seems to lead to an emphasis on environmental-oriented businesses and that is something that some SEs criticize. All of this gives idea that SEs might feel conditioned but cannot understand how.

Turning to the acceptance of MD’s values and views we have a passive tolerance and a perception as something natural and immutable in its essence. The acceptance of the existing socio-economic system (seen for example in the change concerns) or that companies are to make profit (clearly stated in the sub-section of corporate responsibilities) as something given, as a point of departure from which inevitably we have to work from, which suggests an (blind) acceptance of the MD central views.

Yet, in general SEs do not openly subscribe such ideas. They do not state that companies are for profit and that they highly agree with it. But at the same time they do not question why instead they cannot have companies that cover the costs of the company (including a fair salary for the owner). They do not question why, if they argue that we should imitate the environment (e.g. the cradle-for-cradle approach), we do not it in the same way as in the environment where living beings take what they need to live and not more. It is a passive acceptance without questioning. In that way such MD views become parasites that unaware SEs carry with them.

Adding to this we have the findings from the previous chapter. Besides identifying the discourse of the SEs has a WSD with some traces of SSD, it was also found that there were some contradictions between what individuals believe and what they want to do. It was mentioned inconsistencies in terms of the views of nature and in terms of corporate responsibilities. SEs showed beliefs and values where nature and people have a higher level of consideration but then in how they do things it emerges also an anthropocentric
and self-centred beliefs (e.g. nature is up to exploitation and achieving profit is desirable).

The findings suggested that other normative assumptions can be driving the discourse of SEs and this chapter confirms it. The conclusion of a significant reproduction of the dominant beliefs and views corroborates the idea that other normative assumptions (driven by MD) are impacting the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs.

Looking at the contradictions underlined in chapter 10 we can see how the reproduction of MD explains them. First, we have the contradiction between a belief that nature is as important as humankind while at the same time the conceptualize view of nurturing Earth for our own sake. If we add the fact that SEs also share an anthropocentric view on our relation with nature, we can understand the view of nurturing Earth for our own sake as a dialectical result of the opposing normative assumptions.

The same result is found in the other contradiction emphasized in the previous chapter. The conviction that companies are bounded to a responsibility for both humans as well as the environment clashed with the conceptualize view of companies has profit seekers. Again, the conceptualize view is understood if we add to it the belief by the SEs that profit is indispensable.

Furthermore, this finding is given strength by the fact that such contradictions are also found inside the discourses of each SEs. One example can be used in the views of one sustainable entrepreneur around the idea of profit. At one point of the interview the respondent argue that profit is the reason why the “developed countries” do not put pressure in their suppliers in the “developing countries” so that the latter can improve working conditions. This denotes a strong belief of enlarge corporate ethical responsibilities. However, when talking about her company the sustainable entrepreneur stressed that, while they also focus on the social aspects, they are “driven by the profit, that is our goal”.

Accordingly, all of what is discussed so far suggests a discourse of SEs constituted in the same way as displayed in Figure 10. The normative assumptions are of a dualistic nature where in one hand they have WSD/SSD beliefs that translate into their visible “sustainable profile”, represented for example by the wish for a society more caring for humans and nature, and in the other hand, the invisible MD norms that that are shown for instance in the idea that profit is desirable. By being accepted as natural this MD norms are carried in a subliminally way and thus represent in a different way in the figure.

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33 If we see the economy as a cake, one can only take profit/surplus (an extra slice of the cake) if someone else eats less.
Additionally, and as discussed in chapter 10 and in this chapter, the conceptualize views are in general characteristic of a WSD and reflect the dialectic nature of the SEs normative assumptions. They show a balance between the “sustainable beliefs” of the SEs and the views that SEs bring from the current society.

The above research can be summarized into the following points:

- The discourse of the SEs is complex but can be categorized as a WSD with some traces of SSD;
- It reproduces the substance of the market discourse, specially in terms of norms and beliefs, but does it in the passive way of accepting many of the MD values as natural, lacking a deeper question of the causes of the problems;
- The discourse is characterized by dualistic normative assumptions with explicit sustainable beliefs (most WSD but some SSD) and implicit market values. The conceptualize view can be labelled as being part of a WSD;
12. The discourse of SEs: potential sources

This chapter draws from the main results found by the thesis so far and from a description of the current social structure to posit what social mechanisms can be in the origin of such results. And so it provides an answer to the second research question of what can be the possible mechanisms that cause the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs.

The two previous chapters found the discourse of SEs to fit the WSD although with some indicatives of SSD. It was also found that it implicitly reproduces the core of the MD, especially at the level of normative assumptions.

But what causes such phenomena? In chapter 6 it was discussed the determinant role of the social structure on the behaviour of humans. Furthermore, it was argued that the social structure has powers that, through social mechanisms, create certain events, which in this case is the observed discourse among SEs.

Given that the social structure is dependent on the historical context (North, 1994, p. 364), we first need to understand what comprises the contemporary social structure to then be able to theorize possible social mechanisms that, emanating from the social structure, produce such discourse.

12.1 A general overview of the contemporary social structure

Even a general overview of the contemporary social structure is a complex task. The biggest challenge is, in my opinion, the scope of the social structure. Can one argue that we have one global social structure or many national, regional, local social structures? The answer seems to lie in between. While obviously there are local, regional and national characteristics that are distinct for instance among the social structure of Sweden and England or among Umeå and Stockholm, one can argue that the substance of the social structure is significantly the same (McDonough & Nardone, 2006, p. 205).

As a result, the analysis of the current social structure benefit from being done from a global perspective as it focuses on the most important characteristics. Such scope is also important since many of the core characteristics (such as the division of labour) are clearer at this level.

Means of production

As discussed in chapter 6 the first level of the social structure is the means of production. That entails the land, labour, capital and technology/knowledge that society puts into use in order to create value and produce goods. At this level we have witness two major changes that characterize this level: the development and globalization of capital and the technological development.
In a capitalistic society a key feature is the private ownership of the means of production (Screpanti, 1999, p. 1), such as capital. With the passing of time, the socio-economic structure became more complex (e.g. the development of the banking system) and from that capital started to become more autonomous as well as more determinant and powerful (Hossein-zadeh I., 2010; Screpanti, 1999, p. 19). This lead to a globalization of capital through an increased international movement (Fulcher, 2004, p. 94; Jessop, 1997; Olssen, 2006, p. 217) as well as a shift from industrial capital to financial capital 34 (Kotz & McDonough, 2010).

Another important point as been the knowledge/technology development, specially in terms of transportation and communication (Hobsbawm, 2000, pp. 62-63; Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 102; Jessop, 1997, p. 571), leading to (or maybe a consequence of) an economy based on knowledge (Orsi & Coriat, 2006, p. 162).

Relations of production

The goal of production, under capitalism, is to achieve surplus from the production of goods by combining the available means (Screpanti, 1999, p. 3; Fulcher, 2004, p. 14) and so the relations of production entail how the means of production are transformed into goods. These relations include two important features: the division of labour (who does what) and the property relations (who gets what).

With the growing emphasis on capital, came a growing power for capital owners, leading to a dominant position in the relation with those who do not have capital and that for survival must sell their labour (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 106; Bokanski & Chiappello, 2005, p. 162).

This current characteristic of the SS has implication in the two important features of the relations of production. The first two implications regard the relations of production. With the globalisation of capital came the globalisation of the division of labour (Hobsbawm, 2000, pp. 63-64; McDonough & Nardone, 2006, p. 205) through “the ability to fragment production across borders” (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 100). The other implication was the standardization of precarious labour contracts in order to create more flexible and mobile (and thus more profitable) production (Jessop, 1997, p. 571; Scott, 1998, p. 124).

The last two implications have to do with property rights. While capital is still highly concentrated among a tiny part of the population (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 103), the fact is that more individuals have had access to wealth/property (e.g. through the development of stock exchanges more individuals can have access to stocks and thus to the earnings of capital) (Screpanti, 1999, p. 4). However, while the above mention “democratization” of capital is positive, the tendency was the advance of stricter private property. A good example is the development of intellectual property rights that used to be characterized by a weaker regime that took into account not only the owner of the right but the need of society to access the knowledge contained in that right, where now the focus is singly on providing benefits to the owner of a certain intellectual right (Orsi & Coriat, 2006).

34 Meaning that the capital was more and more being investment in speculation and earnings derived from capital itself and less from investments in “real economy” (e.g. construction of factories).
Legal/Political level

Moving to the first level of the superstructure we find a SS that keeps its democratic form unchanged and such form is argued to be only possible due to capitalism (Berger, 1992, p. 9).

Yet in terms of content much has change. After WWII, we witnessed a heavy intervention from the state both in the economy (nationalizations, etc.) as well in terms of social programs (the welfare state) (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 93; Boltanski & Chiappello, 2005, p. 163), yet in the 1980’s a shift was made in the direction of liberalization of the economy (e.g. reducing the role of the state) with obvious effects in the (reduction of) social welfare (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 94). Nevertheless, some countries, such as Sweden, managed to maintain (or at least dismantle it at a slower rate) the welfare state (Berger, 1992, p. 9; Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 115).

Furthermore, with the globalization of capital, states and their national institutions no longer supporting the process of capital accumulation (Chitty, 1997, p. 436; Fulcher, 2004, p. 96) and so, there is an adaptive change to the transformation of the SS’s base (McDonough & Nardone, 2006). This translates to a growing emphasis on supranational regulatory institutions (e.g. the IMF or the WTO) and regional political projects (e.g. EU) (Jessop, 1997, pp. 573-574; Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 94), alongside the deregulation of capital movements (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 100; Wolfson, 2003, p. 255).

Social relations

As far as social relations the SS is characterized by a crescent invasion of the economics practices of capitalism into our social life, transforming everything in commodities (Chitty, 1997, p. 436) and reducing all (social) relations to exchange relations with a dynamic of supply and demand (Olssen, 2006, p. 218; Screpanti, 1999, p. 19). Decisions in terms of education or health are now made considering profitability, creating subservient individuals/organizations to the imperative of a good economy (Jessop, 1997, p. 567).

This process of “mcdonalization” of society also has the perverted impact of creating homogeneity/standardization, destroying the cultural distinctions existent in the world (Ritzer, 1996). Finding the same clothes (and styles) or same food between countries is now highly common, creating a homogenization of everyone’s’ lives.

One other important informal constraints is the built of an entrepreneurial/individualistic culture where “each individual is now an autonomous entrepreneur responsible ontologically for their own selves and their own progress and position” (Olssen, 2006, p. 219), leading to an individualization of the responsibility to fulfil individuals’ needs (of job, security, etc.) at the expense of the reduction of the responsibility of the state and of the society as a whole.

Finally, with the globalization of other levels of the social structure, came the globalization of social relations. This means the creation of citizens of the world, through a global cosmopolitanism (Jessop, 1997, p. 576).
**System of meanings**

As mentioned before in the 1980’s we have seen a change in ideology power relations with a shift back towards more radical MD, with revival of ideas advanced by classic liberal economic theory such as the seminal “invisible-hand” advanced by Adam Smith (1990) that describes a self-regulated market where individuals focusing on self-interest end up creating, as a by-pass of their egoistic behaviour, social wealth.

Yet the development of the dominant ideology is twofold. With the fallen of the Soviet Union, capitalism stopped having an alternative model of comparison (Fulcher, 2004, p. 100), paving way for the ideological domination of MD. Yet, contestation against capitalism did not ceased and, as the ideological battle of alternative discourses for the domination of sustainability or the recent events in Greece or Portugal against the IMF prove, the system of meaning is not fully dominated by capitalism. Furthermore, there is a growing awareness for sustainability issues (especially environmental ones such climate change) (Hopwood, Mellor, & O’Brien, 2005, p. 1; UNESCO, 1997, p. 7).

Another important aspect mentioned before is the idea that the two main producers of knowledge (and thus meaning), media and academia, support and reproduce the dominant discourse (Lehtonen, 2009; Spangenberg, 2010, p. 561).

**Summing up**

From the analysis of the SS we can identify some key characteristics. The means of production are characterized by a globalization and dominance of capital as well a growing body of knowledge (especially in terms of communication and transportation).

The globalization of capital have leveraged the position of capitalists over other economic actors (e.g. wage earners) leading to the globalization of the division of labour as well as the creation of more precarious labour contracts. Furthermore, and still in the level of the means of production, we see that the current social structure allows more individuals to access capital and its earnings (albeit the high concentration of capital among a little part of the population) although in the other hand, we see a trend of stricter property rights (especially in terms of intellectual property).

At a legal level we see a reducing of the state (both economically and socially) as well as a focus on transnational legal projects at the expense of national states. The SS is also characterized by a progressive “invasion” of capitalist economic values into all areas of our life by introducing a logic of costs-benefits into all areas of our life as well as by creating an increasingly homogenous SS (e.g. among countries), that emphasis individual responsibilities at the expenses of social ones.

With the struggles and fall of Soviet Union, Capitalism/MD is now the clear dominant ideology, reproduced by all (e.g. media). Yet, the recent opposition to the intervention of the IMF in the south of Europe is an example that while dominant, MD is still contested.

And so the revived liberalism and a clear globalizing trend leads to a description of the contemporary SS as a global neoliberalism (Kotz & McDonough, 2010, p. 93).
12.2 Possible social mechanisms

From the chapters 10 and 11 we could see two distinct dimensions of the SEs discourse: a challenge of the current dominant discourse values and its practices (both with features of WSD as well as SSD) and at the same time reproduction of the core features of the market discourse.

But in what way is the SS constraining individuals to have such (seemingly antagonistic) discourse? In my opinion there are two distinct social mechanisms that are simultaneously affecting SEs: “collateral awareness” and “knowledge control”.

**Collateral awareness**

The first social mechanism can be decomposed into two parts. With the development of capitalism we have witnessed a rising of material standards of living of the population, in special of the Western countries (Senge, 2008, p. 15; Mebratu, 1998, p. 496). Such rising as been fuelled by consumption and the underlying MD’s idea of “consuming to be happy”. Yet, while material standards have risen, that did not strongly correlate, as argued by MD, to an increase on happiness (Hagerty & Veenhoven, 2003; Kahnemanl & Deaton, 2010; Kahnemanl, Krueger, Sckade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2006). Individuals have longed to achieve materials goods but know find out that it does not make them any happier. Which, in my opinion, leads to an increase sense of awareness and evaluation of oneself and society, in particular how we live our lives.

In fact, such behaviour can be found among the interviewees. When talking about his company, Fredrik mentions:

> It started to become successful and we started to ask ourselves what were we doing, sure we were making money, sure this is going good and we can expand to all of Sweden. (...) We started to realise that we weren’t satisfied or happy just by running a successful business, we wanted something more. We realised that is not about more money, is about being able to be proud of the company we were running, be able to be proud of what we were doing in a working day.

This insight is a good example of how people in developed countries often find that achieving material wealth does not bring happiness and start to look for alternative solutions.

Is not only a self-awareness that characterizes this mechanism. The SS is now characterized by a high level of globalization: in terms of division of labour (and thus production) but also in terms of “globalized” individuals (what leads to globalized consumption). The globalized division of labour often translated into the relocation of factories/production from developed to developing countries, where labour is cheaper and labour regulation is weaker. Also, the creation of “globalized” individuals, more aware of the problems in the world, increases the perception that those individuals (from developed countries) have about the distress that human beings in other countries are subjected to in order to satisfy the consumption patterns of the developed countries. The growing number of sustainable initiatives, even if controlled by MD, still has the power to create awareness among individuals (Luke, 2005, s. 233).
Again, evidence of such mechanism is found among the answers. According to David:

*I don’t want to sell a shirt that was made by a 12 year old working 16 hours a day. I can’t be proud of that shirt and I can’t stand behind it. If you have a boutique you need to know where your products have been made and how they have been made. We have goals to visit all of our factories and we know that our suppliers how they make it and that it’s not child work, that the work is right pay, right insurance and all those important things.*

Also, Ingrid let us see it on her experience:

*I think that the state have to have more to say on it. For instance if a Sweden company have children-workers they could really shut it down. If you’re going to sell clothes in Sweden, the lowest salary should be this salary because right now we are just moving stuff, for instance I was in Cambodia in a factory for Swedish brands and they were working for 12 hours and they couldn’t even go to the toilets, we can’t buy things like that in Sweden.*

However, I believe that all of this rising of awareness comes not from an aim to create it but as a side-effect from the pressure to consume as well as the globalization of economic and social relations. In that way the first social mechanism is labelled as “collateral awareness” and, I suggest, it is partly responsible for conditioning individuals into adopting WSD/SSD discourses.

**Knowledge control**

So we have as a by-product of MD activity, individuals more willing to change their life and behave in a different way, yet this individuals see in the source of the problem the solution. That has to do with the second social mechanism in effect: knowledge control.

Raised before is the idea that SEs discourse reproduces significantly MD in the socio-economic concerns and it does it in a natural way. Indirectly, SEs seem to somehow sense this has several mention “*the difficult part is the economic sustainable development*” (Hanna) as for instance issues like poverty and so “*are much more complex than maybe approaching the environmental issues*” (Fredrik).

Such conditioning is due to the control by MD of knowledge production and dissemination. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter the system of meaning is dominated by MD with the active support of academia and media (Lehtonen, 2009; Spangenberg, 2010, p. 561). In that way MD controls what is accepted as natural/correct (e.g. through the controlling of “sustainable” initiatives such as Global Sustainable Development Facility – 2B2M: 2 Billion to the Market By the Year 2020) as well as removing from the picture more “radical” discourses such SSD, either by blocking their assess to dissemination channels or by destroying their legitimacy.

Furthermore, there are no socio-economic alternatives to MD in practice. Historically, since the advent of capitalism, and except for the period of the Russian revolution and

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35 See section 5.4.2
the development of the U.R.S.S., capitalism, as a socio-economic system, had no alternative that could be compared too\(^{36}\).

Adding to that is that economic concerns from WSD (and even SSD) are easier to accommodate to MD than socio-economic ones, as the former do not challenge MD as much as the later. That explains why sustainable development has been mostly about the environment (Mebratu, 1998, p. 500; Robinson, 2004, pp. 370-371). And so knowledge, especially in socio-economic terms, is more easily controlled.

Given the above the SS is able to control people wanting to change by conditioning the available knowledge, leading to the second social mechanism that, in my opinion, conditions the sustainable entrepreneurs.

*Summing up*

In conclusion, the social structure influences the discourse of SEs in the way displayed on figure 12:

![Diagram showing social mechanisms affecting SEs discourse](image)

**FIGURE 12 - THE SOCIAL MECHANISMS THAT AFFECT SES**

The first mechanism (collateral awareness) is a result of an increase of self-awareness, created by the failure of the premise “consume to be happy”, and an increase of the awareness of the conditions that other individuals in the world face, due to globalization. This creates of sense of dissatisfaction among individuals.

The second mechanism (knowledge control), that leads SEs to perceive MD core ideas as natural, steam from the control by MD of the production and dissemination of knowledge, through the support of academia and media. This controls the dissatisfaction to limits accepted by the social structure.

\(^{36}\) Albeit the existence of other socio-economic system such as in Cuba, the power balance is overwhelmingly pending to capitalism side.
13. Conclusions

The current chapter offers the reader the concluding discussion of the thesis. It includes a re-discussion of purpose and the findings that leads to the answering of the research questions and the highlighting of the contributions to the existing body of knowledge. It also offers recommendations for further research as well as for society and SEs.

After identifying what is the discourse of the SEs, in which way it reproduces the market discourse and what are the potential mechanisms that can determine that discourse, the knowledge is now sufficient to draw conclusions and make final remarks.

13.1 Concluding remarks

Research questions and purpose

As described in chapter 1 our planet and society are under strain. From environmental to socio-economic problems the challenges we face question every day if the path we are taking is the best one, with research pointing out at fault our mode of organization.

Offered as a response to the current situation, sustainability appears as a seemingly simple and straightforward concept, yet it is in fact a concept facing different and conflicting sets of ideas. Furthermore, given that MD (and partly WSD) is in the root of our current situation, I have argued that the ability of sustainable practices to solve our situation is highly dependent on which discourse will prevail. To find out clues to where we are heading I turned to what is a determinant source of change in society: entrepreneurship. As introducers of innovation, (sustainable) entrepreneurs become an important piece in shaping society and so this thesis was set to study their discourse.

Given the above, the aim of the study was to see if there was “anything new under the sun”, meaning that it was directed at understanding how the SEs discourse is different from the dominant MD. Accordingly I have defined two research questions:

To what extent does the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs differ from the dominant market discourse?

What can be possible social mechanisms that cause such discourse among sustainable entrepreneurs?

Results and implications

The findings of the thesis are threefold and regard the nature of the discourse, the reproduction of MD and the potential social mechanisms in its origins.

Regarding the nature of the discourse we have seen in chapter 10 that the discourse of SEs is identifiable with the weak sustainability discourse, albeit some traces of strong sustainability discourse, in particular in dimensions that analyse the current situation (such as in terms of how we relate with the environment or on how much we need to change).
Looking at the three different concern areas we can see that when it comes to environmental concerns, SEs take a SSD approach to criticize our current problems while having a WSD general view about the environment. This translates into a belief that we have been to harsh with nature, causing it distress, but with an (implicit) agreement with MD that nature is up to exploitation for human benefit, as long as within certain limits.

Moving to the socio-economic concerns, the discourse is characterized by a WSD focused on improving current MD ideas by refraining/setting limits. This happens in different areas such as in terms of market economy (and the introduction of regulation) or the goals of life (not only material but also non-material). Finally, change concerns also reflect this idea of improving the current situation by focusing on reforming the existing arrangements.

Still in terms of the nature of the discourse, it was also found that their discourse suffers from some “bipolarity” in terms of normative assumptions, where the SEs possesses at the same time visible “sustainable” values (both WSD and SSD) and hidden MD values.

All of this means that the findings show a discourse that is in nature a WSD, driven by both WSD/SSD values as well as MD and where the conceptualize views are mostly WSD, as represented in Figure 10.

As for the reproduction of the market discourse, chapter 11 has shown that SEs still carry the biggest artefacts of the MD and that they do it often in a passive way by accepting them as natural. The critical discourse analysis used in the thesis showed that SEs still convey an anthropocentric view on nature. Also, ideas like growth or profit seeking companies are viewed by SEs as given. More, solutions to the problems we now face are heavily based on already existing tools, driven by the MD. This means that SEs carry both conceptualize views from MD (e.g. profit seeking companies) as well as values (e.g. humankind is superior to nature). Yet, among the discourse of the SEs we can also see challenging of the market discourse. For instance environment and individuals have a higher value among SEs than in MD.

Finally, based on the results described above and in an overview of the current social structure I have hypothesize about what social mechanisms can be in the origin of the discourse and identified two mechanisms through which the current social structure condition SEs to have such discourse. The first mechanism, collateral awareness, regards a growing awareness from individuals about their lives and the lives of others, which leads to a search for alternative behaviours. This awareness steams in one hand from the lack of fulfilment that material goals fail to provide, and in another, to a growing globalization that creates awareness in developed countries about the injustices in developing ones.

The second mechanism, knowledge control, concerns the dominance by MD of the production and dissemination of knowledge, with the alignment of academia and media being the biggest sign. In this way the acceptance of the bulk of MD as natural creates an impossibility among SEs of changing their behaviour since the only possible solutions are those offered by MD or highly similar (WSD).
Answering the research questions

With the above results it is possible to answer the research questions. The first question tries to find how to the discourse of sustainable entrepreneurs differs from MD and from the results we see that in nature SEs’ discourse is partly different and partly similar to the dominant one. As displayed in Figure 10 we can see that the discourse of the sustainable entrepreneurs differ from the MD by having conceptualize views that are identified as WSD as well as normative assumptions related with WSD and SSD. Yet, in the same figure we can also see that the discourse is similar to MD by sharing normative assumptions.

But how to evaluate the extent to which the discourse differs? In my opinion a good rule of thumb is based on how much actual change the discourse will likely bring, since it is possible to have a strong rhetoric of change and in practice things remain the same. And while SEs show underlying values that are far from MD (take care of people and the environment) they transport those values into “real life” using the key concepts of MD (market, profit, etc.) and thus carrying all the crucial flaws of the system. This result is in fact a characteristic of weak sustainability discourses, where the rhetoric is quite strong/critical (near SSD) (Pesqueux, 2009, p. 234) but the views of how things should be is disconnected from that rhetoric and is instead influenced by MD (see Table 4).

While it cannot be argued that such reproduction will definitely incapacitate these individuals from solving our current problems, the past track record of such ideas legitimizes at least a doubt about what can be achieved. The discourse from SEs is different from the market discourse, but given the reproduction of the substance of MD, I argued that is not drastically different. Nevertheless, SEs and their discourse are still likely to have a positive impact in society (e.g. by creating awareness on sustainability), albeit my reserves about the impact of such actions in terms of change.

Moving to the second research question, it was wondered what social mechanisms could be the source of the SEs’ discourse. The two mechanisms suggested (collateral awareness and knowledge control) offer a plausible explanation for this discourse, with the former explaining the “calling” of the SEs to such endeavour and the latter how SEs are refrained from adopting SSD. Yet, such answer need to be understood in the light of the delimitations of the thesis, meaning that I am aware that such claims lack stronger theoretical as well as practical support and should seen as a speculation that needs to further be assessed.

Knowledge contributions

By answering the research questions the thesis provides two contributions, one to the field of sustainable discourse, through the confirmation and extension of previous research, and another to the field of sustainable entrepreneurship, by contributing to set its direction and purpose.

To my knowledge, prior research in the field of sustainable discourses has focused in analysing and discussing the competing discourses at a theoretical level. Yet, there has been some research done in the field where these competing discourses were analysed empirically. The previous research (Springett, 2003; 2005) found that the discourse displayed among individuals working on business organizations was WSD at most and
that sustainable rhetoric is used to keep the same operations. The author also argues that individuals have difficulties to remove themselves from the capitalism/MD paradigm.

The results from the previous research are highly similar to mine. My findings also connect the SEs discourse with an overall WSD discourse and point out the emersion of SEs in the MD by reproducing it as natural. Hence, this thesis contributes to strengthen the results of previous research. More, it adds to the previous research by introducing a new context (sustainable discourse among SEs) as well as by providing a potential source to the problems identified before. This is done since Springett highlights the difficulty of individuals to set themselves apart from the dominant paradigm and the social mechanism “knowledge control” offers an explanation to that situation by hypothesizing how the SS condition SEs to reproduce MD. Therefore this thesis contributes and expands the existing knowledge.

As for the field of sustainable entrepreneurship the contribution of the thesis lies in the fact that the findings question what should be the purpose and the direction of the field. Mentioned in section 6.1 this research field is giving its first steps, dealing mostly with conceptualization. It is not clear what is the direction that this field will take or what is its purpose.

The findings of this paper show that the discourse of SEs is not significantly different from the market discourse. Thus, one can question in what way (if any) are sustainable entrepreneurs different from ordinary entrepreneurs, which leads to a questioning of what should be the purpose and direction of this field of study. Should researchers accept this has a fact and focus on adapting existing knowledge from the entrepreneurship field or should they aim at creating new knowledge that will allow SEs to escape that discourse? Hence, by demonstrating the reproduction of MD by SEs this research contributes to the discussion of what direction should the field of sustainable entrepreneurship take.

13.2 Future research

As mentioned previously, the process of building knowledge about reality is continuous and so this thesis needs to be followed by more research. Accordingly, based on the findings, I provide research issues that are, in my opinion, important to look at. Future research in this area should be concerned with two main areas: analysis and transformation, where analysis concerns inquiries about the current situation whereas transformation deals with research on tools to change the current situation.

Regarding the analysis suggestions methodological, empirical and theoretical issues should be highlighted. While this thesis has identified the presence of MD among the discourse of the SEs it is not completely clear how the discourse is built and what role plays MD in it. Accordingly, studies that use rhetorical analysis (see Heracleous (2006) and Heracleous and Barrett (2001)) as a methodological tool could contribute to a better understanding of the structure of the discourse and which role does MD plays on it, since rhetorical analysis of discourse focus on the way argumentation is built (Heracleous, 2006, p. 1064).
Furthermore, another important methodological issue for future research is data collecting tools. The use of interviews, while adequate, lack to provide information about the last level of the discourse (practice) and thus the use of other collection tools (such as observation or simulations) can allow a better understanding of what constitutes the discourse of the SEs, as it tests the rhetoric used in interviews.

Carrying out similar studies with a different empirical base (either by a bigger number of interviewees or by doing it in a different spatial context) is an obvious empirical suggestions for further research as to confirm and strengthen the findings of this paper.

Finally, one theoretical important aspect should also be looked upon. The purpose of the analysis of the discourse of the SEs, relies upon the assumption that given a certain discourse (e.g. WSD), SEs will shape the society in that direction. Yet, such assumption can be better assessed. In other words, research should also focus on what impact do SEs have in society.

While the above suggestions focus on the analysis of the SEs, an important area of research is to provide tools for SEs to create a sustainable future, as transformation entails both analytical explanation and practical actions (Bhaskar, 1986, p. 171). In order to achieve that three issues are of interest. The first is related with the findings on how SEs reproduce MD as being something intrinsically natural and good. In that way an important direction for further inquiries is the deconstruction of the core concepts of MD such as growth or profit in a way that highlights its flaws and brings the concepts out of their neutrality.

The second issue, still in the theoretical scope of research, regards the domination of MD in terms of business tools and the lack of operationalization of SSD. This means that SEs with weak or strong sustainability discourses will face difficulties translating those discourses into sustainable practices. Accordingly, the development of business tools that are “MD-free”, should be a priority in the field.

Finally, the last issue concerns a methodological suggestion. Contributing to offer tools requires a more active research that is in line with action research. Gathering data is insufficient in this case as for instance the application of MD-free tools would require an engagement of the researchers on terms of development and application of such tools that goes simple analysis of the situation.

### 13.3 Recommendations for society, policy makers and entrepreneurs

As mentioned before the concept of sustainability is not more than a receptacle of different practices. It can be used to make capitalism look more compassionate or to describe liberating changes (Springett, 2005, p. 131) and the recommendations bellow are based on the emancipatory view of the concept and derived from the findings of this thesis.

*For society and policy makers*

Given that SEs and other individuals are conditioned by the SS through the social mechanism of “knowledge control”, the priority in creating a sustainable future should
be to cancel that mechanism, through the introduction of knowledge centres that are able to create a new dynamic in the relations of power among discourses.

Such knowledge centres should include both the production and the dissemination of sustainable knowledge. The production should focus on developing knowledge around the area of sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainability in general, both in terms of analysis of the current situation as well as in ways to transform it. The diffusion of that knowledge should focus on SEs (potential or current), as to maximize their capabilities of shaping the current SS. A possible organizational model for such knowledge centres could be such that the production of knowledge can be done in partnership with universities while the dissemination can work in terms of a business incubator as it allows the continuous training and coaching of SEs during the first steps of their development.

Furthermore, awareness also needs to be stimulated. SEs seem to have also been pushed by a collateral awareness, resulting in an dissatisfaction about their lives, and so communication policies should be designed in order to stimulate the evaluation of ones life and society in general.

For entrepreneurs

Individuals that choose to work for a better future through entrepreneurial activity should be commended for that single effort. Yet, while intentions are important the effects of those intentions cannot be neglected. The reproduction (intentionally or not) of MD features in the discourse of SEs is a important roadblock in the construction of a better future, granted that the existence of a given social structure ultimately depends of repeated actions that confirm it (Sayer, 1992, p. 96). Consequently, SEs need to have as a priority their personal development in order to emancipate themselves from the dominant paradigm.

Such emancipation should be built upon a constant critical examination of their actions and rhetoric as to identify what is effectively being done to challenge the current SS and what is done to reproduce it. For instance many interviewees claimed that they can use the company profit to help other, which appears to be a challenging of the actual SS. Yet, the underlying normative assumption of such statement is that the surplus is their private property and so they can choose what to do with it (which is in all similar to the view of MD and profit seeking companies). Furthermore, such conception reproduces the undemocratic idea of “one penny, one vote” (Screpanti, 1999), by defining that those with economic power should decide the allocation of resources. And so an idea that apparently seemed positive for creating a more sustainable future, is in fact reproducing the current SS.

Adding to this constant critical self-awareness, is the need for SEs to develop their holistic competences in sustainability. For example, during the interviews several references appear about the difficulty of addressing socio-economic issues as they are less straight-forward than environmental ones. And so SEs need to strength their knowledge in sustainability both in terms of concepts and values as well as business tools that are sustainable/“MD-free”. The sources of such education could be the knowledge centres mentioned before.
14. Research trustworthiness

This final chapter concerns the self-evaluation of the thesis in terms of its trustworthiness. It entails an evaluation in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In this way, it contributes to the thesis by providing an assessment of its quality.

When it comes to qualitative research evaluating one’s self-work is not a clear and easy task (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 265), with some authors arguing that it is up to the readers to decide (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305). The traditional ways to assess the quality of the thesis (validity and reliability) emanated from a quantitative/positivist tradition leading to the question if such criteria are appropriated in qualitative research (Flick, 2006, p. 367). Yet, a quite accepted answer is to benchmark from the qualitative field, criteria that fit the qualitative area (Morrow, 2005, p. 251; Shenton, 2004, p. 63). From that the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) seem to be the most accepted (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 412; Morrow, 2005, p. 251; Seale, 1999, p. 468) and based on that acceptance I have decided to also use such criteria.

Credibility

The first criterion regards the assurance that the findings are credible. Such criteria can be assured by a multitude of strategies such as guaranteeing that the research is done based on practices accepted as reliable, familiarity with the culture of the informants by prolonged engagement, random sampling, triangulation, tactics to ensure honesty from informants, respondent validation where respondent corroborate the research, substantial description of the data, clarification of researcher’s bias and congruency with previous research (Merriam, 1988, pp. 166-170; Shenton, 2004, pp. 64-69).

From the above strategies some were used while others were not. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 8 highlight the choices made in this research. All of them are anchored in books and articles on the subject and were used previously in other researches. Also, as mentioned in chapter 8, respondents were made anonymous and were asked to confirm the transcripts of the interview. These steps ensure that respondents validate the research by confirming the data as well as it stimulates honesty since their names/what they do will not be public and they had control over what could be used from the transcripts.

As for myself, I have openly stated my bias towards SSD and have discussed how that bias does not translate to lack of objectivity (see chapter 2). To make the research more credible I also have provided extensive description of the data (Chapter 9) including appendixes with extensive quotes (Appendixes 2a to 8d).

Finally, in the previous chapter I have identified congruency between my findings and findings from previous research what, in my opinion, gives credibility to this paper.

Yet, some strategies were not accomplished. Apart from a short research about the network of SEs and their companies I have not engaged in a prolonged way with the informants. Accordingly, I might not been able to build a sufficient rapport to guarantee sincere answers.
Regarding data I have not used random sampling or triangulated my data. Due to the need to find sustainable entrepreneurs and to time-cost reasons I have used purposeful sampling, complemented with convenience sampling. Thus, readers can judge as not credible. Yet, I have argued (see chapter 8) for such method and furthermore I had no previous connection with the informants and so I would not be able to select informants base on my knowledge of their discourse.

The lack of triangulation is, in my opinion, the aspect that could have cause more impact on the results. As discussed in chapter 13, future research needs to use other gathering tools to obtain data, as interviews do not allow to access the last level of discourse. This is particular important since previous research as shown that individuals can have strong rhetoric but in practice have a different discourse. Accordingly, the lack of triangulation (i.e. through the use of observation or simulations), weaken the findings about the discourse of SEs.

Transferability

Transferability regards the possibility that the findings will also be truth in another environment (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 413). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that in qualitative research such question is not possible to determine by the author as the authors do not know the “receiving” context and so the only possible action is to provide as much significant information as possible to describe the current environment. That will allow readers to determine if the situations are similar enough to relate the research findings with their own context (Shenton, 2004, p. 69).

Yet, I do not agree with that stance. As discussed in my ontology, reality is consisted by three domains, from which the deeper contains the mechanisms that generate such events. This means that what we experience is dependent of the mechanisms that are being in use, independently of the context. Given that, as seen in chapter 12, the current social structure is overwhelmingly homogenous in terms of key features wherever you may be, I argue that the discourse of the SEs found among the informants will be, in essence, similar to other SEs in other contexts. The social mechanisms that influence such discourse exist at a world scale and so it is expected that individuals in Sweden would be under similar conditions than those in Australia.

Accordingly, I argue that the findings are, in its essence, transferable. Of course such argument is based on the assumption that I have currently identified the social mechanisms. Such assumption must be confirmed by further research.

Dependability

Given that the social context is a non-controlled one, precise original conditions are hard (if not impossible) to replicate (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 266). And so the criterion of dependability can be translated into the metaphor of accounting, as it deals with the description, by the author, of the steps taken to assure a transparent procedure and avoid “creative accounting” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 317-318).

Accordingly, choices made as well as the research process should be available (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 414; Merriam, 1988, pp. 172-173). As for the choices I have try my
best to discussing and explain all choices made. The process of collecting and analysing data is described in chapter 8 while the process of gathering the theory is accounted for on chapter 4.

**Confirmability**

The final criterion, resultant from the impossibility of objectivity, regards the idea that the researcher have acted in “good faith” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 414). Strategies too prove such neutrality entail triangulation, discussion of bias and detailed description of the method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 318-319; Shenton, 2004, p. 72). As mentioned in the credibility criterion, triangulation was not pursued. Yet, mentioned before is the fact that I have clearly discussed my stance and bias as well as provided a methodological description.

**Overall evaluation**

From the above we can see that while more could have been done in terms of credibility (e.g. triangulation) I have still engaged in the majority of the strategies to guarantee a credible paper. More, and based on my ontological understanding, I believe that the results are transferable. As well, dependability and confirmability are achieved in a satisfactory way. Thus, this thesis is considered trustworthy.

References


Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Briefing

Introduce myself and the thesis. Restate the situation (goals, time, purpose, use of a recorder and issues of confidentiality) to guarantee that there are no misunderstandings. Ask if there are any questions.

1. I would start by asking you to tell me something about yourself and your background?

Company

2. Can you describe the motives that lead you to become an entrepreneur? How did it all start?
   2.1. Why did you decide to start your own company?
   2.2. How did it happen?
   2.3. What does your company do?
   2.4. Why did you develop that particular produce/service/idea?
3. How would you describe your company’s mission/purpose?
4. In what way would you say your business is sustainable?
   4.1. Why start a business related with sustainability?
5. Where do you see your company to be in 3/5 years? How do you plan to get there?
6. In more general terms, which role do you think companies in society should have?
   6.1. What should be the goals/objectives/purpose of companies?
   6.2. How should they achieve those goals?
   6.3. What should be companies’ social responsibilities?

Municipality

7. One thing that I would also like to talk about is the municipality of Umeå. Can you tell me your experiences from having established a company in this municipality?
   7.1. Which benefits do you find from creating a company here?
      7.1.1. What about disadvantages?
8. How do you see Umeå’s municipality in terms of sustainability?
   8.1. In what ways do you think that this municipality is sustainable?
   8.2. How does this affect your company?
      8.2.1. How did that influence you when you developed your business idea?
      8.2.2. And, in general, how do you think that this impact the companies in the municipality?
Sustainable development

9. We have been talking about sustainability. What is for you sustainability/sustainable development?
   9.1. Nowadays we have everyone talking about this theme. What is your opinion on that?

10. Before we talked about the role of companies in our society. What do you think that should be the role of companies in achieving sustainable development?
   10.1. What about regarding environmental issues like pollution?
   10.2. What about issues like poverty or future generations needs?
   10.3. What about regarding economic questions of profit, growing, etc.?

Sustainable development – environmental issues

11. We have been talking about sustainable development and the different aspects of it. Situations like global warming have been in the media a lot lately. What do you think about that?
   11.1. How do you think that human activity affects the planet?
       11.1.1. How would you describe that effect?
       11.1.2. How far do you think we are from reaching a breaking point?
   11.2. So, in your opinion, how should we see nature and relate with it?

Sustainable development – social issues

12. I also mentioned earlier that social issues such as poverty or guaranteeing quality of life are also relevant things nowadays. What is your opinion on all of this?
   12.1. How serious do you think these issues, like poverty, are? And how can we fix it?
   12.2. What do you think we are leaving for the future generations?
       12.2.1. What do you think we should leave?

Sustainable development – economic issues

13. We talked early on this interview about companies. Ideas like market, profits, growth are very used when we talk about starting a company. What is your opinion on the role of those things (like markets or growth) in our society?
   13.1. What about the idea of markets, supply and demand, competition, etc.?
   13.2. What about the idea of profit and growth as the goals of a company?

14. How do you think that the economic side of society relates to other parts of society such as the environmental one (and for instance the issue of global warming) or the social one (and for instance the issue of poverty)?

Future of society

15. Based on what you said before it seems that is your belief that our actual situation is good/bad/very bad (insert the impression given so far). Is that correct?
   15.1. Based on this situation how much do you think we, as a society, need to change?
15.2. How should things be in the future then?
15.3. How should we achieve that?

Conclusions

16. We have now reached the end of this interview. We have talked about very different things like how you became an entrepreneur, your opinion on issues like environmental problems and how the future of our society should be. Is there anything you think is important to add?

State how thankful I am and how important this interview is for the thesis. Remind the entrepreneur that the transcript will be send to her/him so that she/he could confirm that the transcript does not contain any misrepresentations of what was said. Ask what her/his experience of the interview was.
### General environmental views: humans and nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;(…) For example, when you build the roads, it’s more important to build a road then to preserve the agriculture land. Is more important to build a shop market outside the town than to build it in the city.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;(…) So you have to have the profit goal in your company but I believe that you should not to it if it affects another person, a group or plants, the environment or something, whatever, in a not good way. It has to be, like, in a positive way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;(…) I sometimes use economic languages to describe evolution and I suppose you know that much about the evolution, and you can see the evolution has a big company called Tales limited (…). We also had a subsidiary company called HomoSap AB, and you have as every subsidiary company you need to deliver profit to Tales. And this exactly how we need to see ourselves, human beings has been here all the time because we have been profitable for the big system, for nature. It is better that human being has been here rather than not. That’s the reason why we are there. (…)&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;I think we have got to a point where we don’t think we are guests here, like we own this planet, this is our planet. we don’t think we are sharing it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;If you have this production you have to destroy the rain forest, you remove species that are too weak to decide. “We need cheap paper”&quot;, yeah ok but then we need to sacrifice this 2 bird kinds, a living organism that we can’t get back, even if in 20 years we find out another way to make paper that doesn’t harm anyone, but if we do it now then it’s gone forever and I don’t think we have the right to decide these things. We are the only specie in the planet to do these things. Of course big birds eats mice but just to survive, but we do it for a lot of unnecessary things. If we did it just to get food that would be a different thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;We are part of it but it is not ours. We share it with other species in this world and also other people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t think that we should see that the Earth is for the people and that we can have some nature here and some nature there and the rest should be roads. I think that we should save the nature as the thing that decides how much we can do, the limits of the nature are the limits for our growth. ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>&quot;It is also important that in schools working with nature experiences as children and students to get a sense for how to take care of our earth. They must understand that everything does not last forever. A sense of nature, all insects, birds and animals makes us humble and is very important for the commitment to sustainable ideas.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;In the same way we interact with people we love. Because people think that we own the world but nature and the animals and everything own the world as much as we do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;As the foundation for our lives because that’s from where we take food, build houses, where we are living.”</td>
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</table>
### General environmental views: perception of Earth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>“I think it is to have an ecological footprint that is sustainable and that, so we can survive in the long time, in this planet, that we, we don’t destroy the ecological system that is needed for our survival. For example, we have a sustainable fishery that we don’t exhaust, oceans of fish, rain forest and so on and so on. (...) if we continue in this way it will be mass death of people, starving, we will not have enough food. In 20 years time there will be a lot of problems. We have to change direction, if we want to survive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>“You need to get a win-win relationship with nature. This is a long-term goal. We need to understand that this is the only way for us to survive. What happen to the subsidiary if we have red numbers to many years? Sustainable development is not about nature, it’s about saving humanity, human beings and the society. This is very important to understand. Although this sounds some kind of dream, it’s the only way to look at nature.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;What is GDP if you compare it with a company? It’s a turnover of the company of Sweden, if I’m looking at Sweden, but it’s nothing more than that. Do you have a balance sheet about the economy of Sweden? No. You only have a cost/benefit sheet. And if the growth of the turnover is the most important of the society, we will also find an economy where we believe that if I take money from the bank, if I compare that to taking resources from nature, and the amount on the bank or of resources in nature is declining, this is actually what is happen making us becoming poorer and poorer every time, although the turnover of the company is increasing, so by ruining ourselves and taking all the resources for nature, so we have less and less resources on the bank, we believe that we are becoming richer and richer, but in fact we have less in the bank that we had before. For me it’s a simple answer: as long as we don’t see the balance sheet, don’t talk about it, we have a robber economy, [pretending to be someone else] “If I cut down a forest, the GDP will get higher” [stop pretending to be someone else]. Of course, but there is no forest for the future. We have to redefine economy in a different way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>“The planet didn’t want to have a lot of buildings like this, I imagine. It wants to be a planet, it wants to be nature, it is a living organism. And this houses are not living organisms so it can’t be good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>“I would like us to see the boundaries of nature and we need to look to the Earth in a way that the resources that it has will still be there in the next 100 or 200 years to come. We cannot take out resources that we don’t put back.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>“Taking care of our waste, not change the climate too much, keep a planet that we haven’t destroyed for our children.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>“The economy is making us hurt the environment (...)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>“For instance if you are a mining company and you’re calculating how much you have taken out you have to count the costs that you created to make this because it is something you can’t put back for the next generation.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2c – General environmental views: human role

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>“In Sweden we have the aktiebolaglagen, you know what I mean, so you have to have the profit goal in your company but I believe that you should not to it if it affects another person, a group or plants, the environment or something, whatever, in a not good way. It has to be, like, in a positive way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>“The most important growth is the growth of nature because that’s the only thing we can rely on. So economy, the cost side of economy is to see that the resources are within the system conditions or the growth of nature.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>“What is GDP if you compare it with a company? It’s a turnover of the company of Sweden, if I’m looking at Sweden, but it’s nothing more than that. Do you have a balance sheet about the economy of Sweden? No. You only have a cost/benefit sheet. And if we turnover, the growth of the turnover is the most important of the society, we will also find an economy where we believe that if I take money from the bank, if I compare that to taking resources from nature, and the amount on the bank or of resources in nature is declining, this is actually what is happen making us becoming poorer and poorer every time, although the turnover of the company is increasing, so by ruining ourselves and taking all the resources for nature, so we have less and less resources on the bank, we believe that we are becoming richer and richer, but in fact we have less in the bank that we had before. For me it’s a simple answer: as long as we don’t see the balance sheet, don’t talk about it, we have a robber economy, [pretending to be someone else] “If I cut down a forest, the GDP will get higher” [stop pretending to be someone else]. Of course, but there is no forest for the future.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>“Connecting to the question you asked earlier about what make us sustainable the goal is to make us completely climate neutral. Like our webhost it’s environmental friendly. We try to take it as fair as we can.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>“Before production, during production, after production. The whole idea is to make everything green.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>“If we look to the cradle-to-cradle concept about not polluting or not trying to be less bad in the production but actually trying to be something good for the production. Since we don’t use any chemicals in the production, since we are working with natural materials, basically what you can do with our products after you used them is to put them in the compost and they will degenerate and create soil again. So basically we don’t have any waste in our production. Going from trying to minimize the pollutants and the back impact that production has to how can we have a production without any bad impact at all or actually a production that is doing something positive for the environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>“As it right now very much so, very much so. As long as we live outside the boundaries of the environment, we of course affect the planet and we have been doing so for the last 100 or 200 years. We greatly affect the planet.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>“Well they have to think that they cannot grow beyond the limits of the environment, we cannot just keep growing, growing and growing. I think that we should see the nature as the thing that decides how much we can do, the limits of the nature are the limits for our growth. For example fishing in the seas, we can’t see that the fish in the sea is there for us and we can take it a lot but we should see how much we can fish from the global seas without changing the population. We need to see the limits, that maybe we can take 1/10 of that and that’s it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>“It is also important that in schools working with nature experiences as children and students to get a sense for how to take care of our earth.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2d – General environmental views: value of ecosystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;For example, when you build the roads, it’s more important to build a road then to preserve the agriculture land. Is more important to build a shop market outside the town than to build it in the city.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;I think that things that are not life dependent, food we got to have it to survive, but a lot of things we have on this world are not necessary and to have this production of unnecessary things that affects species of birds, etc. If you have this production you have to destroy the rain forest, you remove species that are too weak to decide. &quot;We need cheap paper”, yeah ok but then we need to sacrifice this 2 bird kinds, a living organism that we can’t get back, even if in 20 years we find out another way to make paper that doesn’t harm anyone, but if we do it now then it’s gone forever and I don’t think we have the right to decide these things. We are the only specie in the planet to do these things. Of course big birds eats mice but just to survive, but we do it for a lot of unnecessary things. If we did it just to get food that would be a different thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;We first though we were going to work with organic cotton but what they said was that &quot;Sure organic cotton is good because you get read of the agricultural chemicals but still the bad part about cotton, organic or not, is that is consumes a lot of water to grow”. 20 to 25000 litres of water per kg of cotton. So basically cotton is not a sustainable fibre for the future anyways. So that’s how we came to the conclusion that we needed to work with raw materials that can be farmed without agricultural chemicals and without irrigation, and also in our production chain we won’t use any chemicals at all. After researching for 1 and ½ years we realise that if we were going to research all the way to textiles, to clothing we would have 5 or 10 years of researching so we thought what can we start doing where we stand? So we found a fibre in Bangladesh called jute, that can be grown without agricultural chemicals or irrigation. In the village where Anders parents worked in the 70’s there was a group of women who worked with jute doing handicrafts. Basically we went down to Bangladesh in October of 2008, we hired 20 women in that village and started selling the production of home decoration items to Swedish chains. So basically now we grown from having 20 people working half time to 45 people working full time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;For example fishing in the seas, we can’t see that the fish in the sea is there for us and we can take it a lot but we should see how much we can fish from the global seas without changing the population. We need to see the limits, that maybe we can take 1/10 of that and that’s it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>&quot;Another important factor is that we consume less of the earth’s resources and working to recover as much as possible.”</td>
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</table>
## Appendix 3a – Views on environmental problems: ecosystem resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>“We are affecting the planet a lot, so I am afraid that we are going to use all the cheap oil before we change our behaviour. Perhaps when the oil will be much more expensive we will change our consumption and travelling behaviour.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>“Because I believe we are too late, that’s why is so much in the media, it’s like ... we haven’t been aware of the danger and now it’s in the spot because we are on the last, it’s our last chance to take responsibility and then everyone must know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>“I’m sure than in the next 10 years we’ll have dramatic changes all over the world. We are not far from that breaking point, and it’s like the Berlin wall, no one could expect it to happen when it happen but I’m pretty sure that we’ll see within 10 years dramatic changes. And for a business company, if you don’t realise this you’ll be out of business in 10 years, if you are not prepared for this dramatic changes that will come.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>“(...) think we can’t wait for this super medicine to heal the planet (…)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>“We are dumping a lot of electronics in China and pollute their environment, make it worst for next generations living in China just because we want to cheaper easy fix, fast fix.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>“If we go into detail as well there are some basic truths like the boundaries of the world so I would say that accepting those boundaries and living according to those boundaries is sustainability.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>“We are destroying it, in a catastrophic way. (...) The biggest question I think it’s the global warming and I think it’s already very serious. The ice of Greenland it’s already melting and so it’s not far way (…).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>“An important part is to try to understand that our way of life in industrialized countries affect the environment negatively for people in other countries.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>“We are destroying it, we are using resources that we don’t have, that we can’t give back to the planet, that we can’t replace (…) and we just watch the world falling apart.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3b – Views on environmental problems: carrying capacity limits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;I think it is very serious because it will be, if we continue in this way it will be mass death of people, starving, we will not have enough food. In 20 years time there will be a lot of problems. We have to change direction, if we want to survive.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;Because I believe we are too late, that’s why is so much in the media, it’s like ... we haven’t been aware of the danger and now it’s in the spot because we are on the last, it’s our last chance to take responsibility and then everyone must know.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;I’m sure than in the next 10 years we’ll have dramatic changes all over the world. We are not far from that breaking point, and it’s like the Berlin wall, no one could expect it to happen when it happen but I’m pretty sure that we’ll see within 10 years dramatic changes.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;I want to say that it’s not so far, I want to say 20 years. We can talk about this for 20 years and have the same arguments, pro and against. There will be always people against change. But at the same time we know we’ll be out of oil not so far. So the nature will force us to make changes. But we can’t rely on that. 100 years, yeah, 50 years maybe.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;If by breaking point we mean a point where the structure of the Earth could actually crumble because we have overused natural resources, it is impossible to say when it will happen but I don’t think it is too far. It is inevitable that we’ll reach that point, living above the boundaries of the Earth.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;The biggest question I think it’s the global warming and I think it’s already very serious. The ice of Greenland it’s already melting and so it’s not far way, and maybe we reach a oil peak soon and so the oil will run out soon. I think there’s a lot of signs already that it’s really, really bad.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;I think that we need to change so extremely, that’s the point we have to change so much to save the environment so we don’t make the effort. It goes back to the thing that I said before, if I’m going to think about sorting my garbage then I have to think about my transportation or how I buy my clothes. It gets to big so everybody should take the small steps and then bigger steps but now people don’t even take small steps to change anything. And that’s why we end up doing nothing and we just watch the world falling apart. So we have to make big changes.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t know, I think you can see effects already, but the effects are too small for people to care about it. I think that maybe in 10 years we’ll see quite big effects but I don’t know if they happen so slowly that people don’t want to acknowledge that. We are sadly waiting for this big catastrophe to proof that it is really happening.&quot;</td>
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## Appendix 4a – Society’s responsibilities: goal fulfilment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;Or when you do, you’re making some unnecessary product. We can do something better. Or cars, do we need those big jeep cars?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;So if I go from this perspective and what’s the meaning of life, not having so much money at the bank … it can helps you of course to satisfy the needs also but it depends on how you use the money. The most important thing is how do you satisfy the needs and on that perspective, yes I’m very rich, I have a fantastic life. (...) It’s not fun to go out to people and tell “we must reduce”, if you believe that this is a measure of richness and how wealthy I am, consuming as much as possible, and specially regarding things. Convincing people, make them see that we will create a much better society than the present society, where we are meeting the needs much better than now, even if we are reducing the flow of materials and energy in the society, is absolutely the crucial part of understanding the paradigm shift&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;Change the basic though about live and living. If you really need that big humvee. Nowadays is a status’ symbol to have a big car or other unnecessary products.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;If we think that optimizing our own standard of living is the goal for society than sure we have come quite far but if we want to take into account future generations or the right for a fair life than the situation is quite serious.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;We started to realise that we weren’t not satisfied or happy just by running a successful business, we wanted something more. We realised that is not about more money, is about being able to be proud of the company we were running, be able to be proud of what we were doing in a working day.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;I think that overall is a kind of strange consumption society, where we consume to much. I think that we don’t need so much consumption.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;For me sustainability in my own life is not to consume, I don’t buy new clothes or things like that, I don’t buy meat, I don’t buy so much food, we dumpster dive a lot. We consume so much and we develop so much new things, for me we don’t need companies to develop more things we need companies that try to find ideas that change things. Look around, I don’t think we need anymore, I don’t think we’ll be more happier if we have faster cars, a new espresso machine. We need better alternatives.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;You can see that there is a wish from people to be able to work less and live more and also get less money. I think that is not consuming focusing in the same way that we have been for the last decades.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin</td>
<td>&quot;People have this illusion that is something that would be like a punishment, to start living in other way, that you would have to sacrifice a lot. I think that the attitude has to be shifted. Just what I said early about appreciating other values not only money.&quot;</td>
</tr>
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## Appendix 4b – Society’s responsibilities: human vs. natural capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;I think is to have an ecological footprint that is sustainable and that, so we can survive in the long time, in this planet, that we, we don’t destroy the ecological system that is needed for our survival. For example, we have a sustainable fishery that we don’t exhaust, oceans of fish, rain forest and so on and so on.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;What is GDP if you compare it with a company? It’s a turnover of the company of Sweden, if I’m looking at Sweden, but it’s nothing more than that. Do you have a balance sheet about the economy of Sweden? No. You only have a cost/benefit sheet. And if we turnover, the growth of the turnover is the most important of the society, we will also find an economy where we believe that if I take money from the bank, if I compare that to taking resources from nature, and the amount on the bank or of resources in nature is declining, this is actually what is happen making us becoming poorer and poorer every time, although the turnover of the company is increasing, so by ruining ourselves and taking all the resources for nature, so we have less and less resources on the bank, we believe that we are becoming richer and richer, but in fact we have less in the bank that we had before.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;If you have this production you have to destroy the rain forest, you remove species that are too weak to decide. “We need cheap paper”, yeah ok but then we need to sacrifice these 2 bird kinds, a living organism that we can’t get back, even if in 20 years we find out another way to make paper that doesn’t harm anyone, but if we do it now then it’s gone forever and I don’t think we have the right to decide these things.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;We need to look to the Earth in a way that the resources that it has will still be there in the next 100 or 200 years to come.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;For example fishing in the seas, we can’t see that the fish in the sea is there for us and we can take it a lot but we should see how much we can fish from the global seas without changing the population. We need to see the limits, that maybe we can take 1/10 of that and that’s it.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;We are destroying it, we are using resources that we don’t have, that we can’t give back to the planet, that we can’t replace.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;(...) so you don’t destroy the environment and take more things from nature than the ones that can be restored. It takes into account the situation in the environment has it is now and thinking about the generations coming after us, they are going to be able to live as we live and even better than that.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4c – Society’s responsibilities: poverty alleviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;I think that the developing countries have to develop the economy in a sustainable way and I think that Africa now is reducing poverty by economical growth in many countries. I think they will reduce the poverty if you can work in a sustainable way. I think that a traditional way of economic growth is not good but I think we have to teach them about ecological methods of agriculture, for example. And I think they don’t need the type of growth that we have, they need another type of growth, sustainable growth. But also there is a need of help from the rich world, for example if you use some money from the military industry you can reduce poverty quite easily (laughter) it is so much money spent in the military around the world.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that a lack of education has to do with poverty and I believe that those two are very well connected and I believe that then you don’t have the education and you don’t have the power to choose your environment and you don’t have the power to affect your environment either.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;Poverty is absolutely one of our biggest challenges or threats to humanity as a whole. It doesn’t cost so much to actually extint poverty if we wanted to. I think Manfred Max-Neef mentioned a number: if we put the same amount of money that we did to save all of the big banks during the last crisis now, we could had eliminated poverty for 450 years [laughter] or something like that. It will be very very easy to actually change or actually see that all poverty in the hand could disappear, but the barrier is a mental barrier built on an authoritarian society where you have an hierarchy and were people are oppressed. Poverty is one of the easiest, it’s not a question of, we have all the resources in the world, we could save the banks, we can also fix poverty if we want to do that.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;They are deadly serious, but at the same time I can’t make a rule that says that you can make more money than that, that you have to spend your money on this and that. (...) Maybe here comes a bit of the responsibility that the companies have. You asked that question earlier. The choices we are given, is like, if we do this you are good, but maybe people need to say “it’s good you buy this green product from us but you need to do more”, we all have to do more. In the same with the poverty.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;Poverty is a hard question. Instead of supporting a village with 1 million, instead building a factory that themselves can make. But things like that, we need not to make donations but things that are sustainable. Like a factory, like a company.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;If you look at how we ended up where we are, we have for example the fact that Western countries have been going around the world extracting precious resources and raw materials from others, basically taking them home for their own. In that way we created a unbalance in this world and I don’t have a good solution for how it should be fixed. But I also have come to some conclusions of what the solution is not, because one solution for example for Sweden could be to think that it would be hard to find sustainable productions in the world and move all production back to Sweden, build a wall around the country, and even though I think that transport in the future will not be so common as it is now, I still think that trade is one way of balancing imbalances but trade has to be done in a more fair manner than is today. So I still think trade has a part to do with it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;It’s very very serious. It’s a very very strange world where some people have so much and some people have so little. So it’s very strange that we don’t do more and I think that there are a lot of things that should be done. Take away the support for the European agriculture and also for instance taking away the debt of the developing countries. It is really, really strange that they should have to pay interest on their loans to us since we already are the ones who have all the money, the money should go in the opposite direction, not from them to us. A lot more help to give to people who can’t support themselves, for instance micro-loans to people.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hanna

"It is difficult, but it's important for developing countries to make training available so they can decide what is best for their country. In a country where you do not have food for the day, it is difficult to invest in the latest environmentally friendly technological solutions."

Jessica

"I think that the environmental issues and the social issues should be treated equally because sometimes is easier to respect nature than respect the people that produce our clothes because we don’t think about them, because when we see that a ship liking oil we panic but there is so many hidden things in the way that we live that contribute to a lot of bad things for other humans, like the people that make our clothes that work 20 hour/day and get no money, that’s horrible. And if we won’t start thinking about them, nothing will change. I think people have it easier to say they want to save a panda than to think about saving the lives of people that make our clothes. I think they are serious but UN has some project called the Millennium something and they are saying that there is no need for poverty in the world if we do the right things and I think that that is possible, we just have to act differently, stop contributing to conflicts and war, like there is many countries selling guns and so for countries in war and also how we buy, we need to think about how are the things we buy made, how do people that make them live, start thinking in those ways and maybe think more in terms of not only who produces the things, what happens when I’ve use it, what happens next, who takes over when I used the product."
Appendix 5 – Connection between systems: hierarchy of systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;The society is more economic oriented. The economic system because now the economy is the over, the top goal is economical growth in the whole system and the environmental question is the third goal or something like that. It is a system’s defect. So they should be in the same level, those goals, but they are not today.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Barbro       | "That we are not focused on the equality and everyone’s, I mean that is children and women most, have the right to be not hungry, not cold and not afraid. It would be a start, even in Umeå. And I think that also in the rest of the world. Of course."
| Carl         | "But economy, if we’re looking at economy comparing with social perspectives or ecological perspectives, economy is just a tool. And it will never be nothing more than a tool, a tool between how to deliver services and satisfactions to citizens, you can say that’s the social goal, to make sure that the people have the best life they can have, but it must be done within the framework of the growth of nature."
| David        | "So I think they are connected far more than what we think."
| Fredrik      | "The way that the economy works today is that it is greatly affecting the environment negatively. Also affects social issues like poverty. Western countries are kind of reaping all the profits from developing countries and not giving enough back, not doing it in a sustainable way."
| Gisela       | "Difficult. It’s very much associated, it’s usually the economic side that it’s responsible for the pollution and the decisions made in the economic is what it influences the environment. And also of course it decides the salaries that people should have, to little or enough money. So we are most depend on the economy, it sets the rules."
| Hanna        | "Sustainable development is about the economy, social relationships and ecology."
| Ingrid       | "If we are always run by the economy it is not going to exist enough room to think about environmental and social aspects. If it is always cheaper to buy not eco-friendly products, it is a matter of money if you can be sustainable, a lot of people can’t afford to buy ecological food, only rich people do that. And it is like a class thing to take care of the environment, what you consume, what kind of brands you afford and I don’t think it should be more expensive to think about the environment."
| Jessica      | "I think that the economic side is put foremost, that’s the one that is more important, economic growth is the most important thing, more than environmental pollution or poverty, and it has been for quite a while but I think that there are, for instance pollution in Sweden, we don’t have so much, not for business anyway, but the poverty side, where we buy our things from, is really big and we don’t see it. If we have a company here in Umeå and it was spitting out a lot of smoke and was dumping stuff in the river there will be a lot of demonstrations, but the things we buy and consume are creating problems in other parts of the world and we don’t see it, they don’t exist for us. And that’s a problem."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;I think it’s important because, for example, if we mention the car industry competition is very important because the car produce that will survive are those who make the first electrical car, for example. So, companies that don’t do any efforts in development and still have gasoline cars, the will be out competed in some years. My opinion is that, I think that is difficult now to see but that capitalism can change, the most sustainable companies will survive in the long run before other companies that are not sustainable. So it will be a competition between sustainable and non sustainable companies. I hope. And I gave you an example with the car industry how I hope it will be. But in another way the disadvantage of this competition, of this market is that also companies that produce cheap things they also survive so ... I don’t know, but hopefully the consumer will see that this product is better than other product.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;I can see that if we are using our competition between companies and markets to be best we can also make development if we take the right decision for development, sustainable development. So if your company take social, you are deciding that you’re going to make social or environmental development with you, in your business ideas than the competition is good.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;As you understand I’m very market oriented in some perspectives, I believe in a market economy but we need sustainable rules for that. Well it depends on what kind of products are you talking about. If you’re talking about non-lasting products like houses, that are supposed to last for 100 of years, you need to have very strong public regulation around that. You can still have a market but it’s decided by rules that the public sector has taken. I don’t believe in the free market, it must be the regulated market.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;I think that companies must have some kind of responsibility but still a company is made from 1 or several persons, from the ideas, so they must have the choice to do whatever they want. You can make some rules &quot;you can’t do that, that and that” but to force them to always look for the best alternative is hard. What I think it would be perfect, what I would like to see in the future is that companies that don’t have this though of how the environment should be or what you can do for it, is selective buy, because customers won’t accept it, the customers make active choices, not the companies make them for the customers. Back again I think it’s the customers that have to make that choice for them because in any kind of products you have both good choices and bad choices, and it’s up to the customer to show where the market should go. I’m thinking a little bit like, if you’re a customer and you’re always going to buy the cheapest, the cheapest, the cheapest than the company is still going to make the cheapest, the cheapest, the cheapest. The companies have the responsibility to acknowledge, if they see that this is something that customers talk about then they need to develop that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;I want to believe that it is the people that make the most effort in the job that in the long run will make the most money. In some cases that’s not truth but in industries like ours the more time you get into it the more possibilities you can see, the more possibilities you have to be a big part of the market and a success concept.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fredrik

"It started to become successful and we started to ask ourselves what were we doing, sure we were making money, sure this is going good and we can expand to all of Sweden. But we didn’t know where the things we sold were coming from and we start realizing that "Hey, this is too cheap. We’re buying stuff from Swedish whole-sellers and the whole-sellers are buying from agents and agents are buying from other agents and then from the factories. So we realised that there were a lot of middle-men and still things were really cheap. And we added to the price and the stores added to the price, so at least 6,7,8 middle man from the factory and still it was a fair price to the customer as well. So we realised that something was wrong, someone is paying the price in working conditions and health for our cheap consumption here in Sweden. (...) Of course we need some kind of economic system and for what we now there are many positives things related with the market system, as well as negative things. As far as what we know, I don’t see a solution where we leave the market economy for something else. The positive thing is that it is a way of distributing wealth and setting prices but it is not a perfect way of distributing way and setting prices. Because into the market economy equation today we don’t take into consideration the costs of harmful impact on the environment and human beings. So that needs to be added and I think it is easier to add to an existing system than actually trying to change to something completely new."

Gisela

"So it’s a bit strange to say that the market should control everything because it works quite strangely sometimes. It should be more regulated. The boundaries of the nature should be incorporated somehow, now it’s doesn’t cost anything to cut a lot of trees or destroy the forest but that should be included in the cost of the furniture for example, so it’s quite of strange that we don’t have to pay for the impact in nature."

Ingrid

"I think that we have to have harder rules. I think that the state have to have more to say on it. For instance if a Sweden company have children-workers they could really shut it down. If you’re going to sell clothes in Sweden, the lowest salary should be this salary because right now we are just moving stuff, for instance I was in Cambodia in a factory for Swedish brands and they were working for 12 hours and they couldn’t even go to the toilets, we can't buy things like that in Sweden. If we are going to have social responsibility we can’t just have it in Sweden, we have to have it in the whole world so that we can’t just move things to where is cheaper to we can have cheaper clothes. We have to approach the whole circle. (...) I don’t like market economy so much because the companies can tell us what we want to buy and I think that we should find something more in between planned and market economy. I can’t say so much about this question because I don’t know so much about it but I think that is hard to make changes if we always have to produce new things that people want. If we have market, everybody have to develop new things to compete among each other and so we can’t think so much on what is best for the world. If we had something were we could say “now everyone has to work more this and this will have better taxes benefits” than the system will be better for the world."

Jessica

"I think there is a need for a market, there is a need for supplying things because it won’t be, I don’t think we can go back to being farmers and produce all of our things again but I think that in the market there is a too much focus in the profit and in making money and in short-term. It is not sustainable in the long-term. I think we’ll see more financial crisis and more crisis if we don’t change the way the market it built upon and it needs to be built in sustainable foundations."

Karin

"Personally I’m not a friend of that way of building a society, but it is a society that we live. When I think about [inaudible] for example, I think that we will do our thing by serving another way of doing things."
## Economic organization: primary economic objective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
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<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;Too many companies are profit-based, that you, is the highest goal, to make so much money as you can. Of course is important so what we are trying to do is to both think on the environment and make profit.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;And it’s also important to take a responsibility for what your are doing in your business idea. It is really important to take, every step you’re taking you have to think what is doing to the environment.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;And for me the deepest answer, the paradigm shift, is exactly regarding this, going from the old industrial society where GDP is the most important measurement that we have on the society to other main goals for the society, where we are more looking at the life quality of what we are doing.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;Most of the companies are built to make money, but the government could say that if you do this for the poor or for the forest, you get this and that discount. If the company is made for a reason, to make money, so they are pleased. &quot;We do what we are supposed to do&quot;. But if they got the opportunity to maybe make even more money by tax cut or something like that than they can still have the same vision and the same board with the same goals but they are doing it right.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;Yeah, people with good money can go and buy their green food maybe, but students, people on welfare, they will buy food that it’s enough, it doesn’t need to be the best, it has to be enough. Now it is a class issue. I think that we need to move away from that because then we are back on money again. The thing is that it’s money that actually control, you can take this so far as to say that people with money can control the newspaper, the newspaper control the people. Someway you have to get the money out of the picture and then we can see it in a new way. What does people need, instead of what people buy or what will people buy.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;I would say that most entrepreneurs, their whole personal character is based on that you give something, you get something back. You just don’t drop something if you won’t get something for it. If you sponsor a hockey team or a football team, you’ll get your own logo in their shirts or own the wall. If you’re an entrepreneur you both want to see results and how you can get something back. You can invest 1 000 crowns in a project to get kids out of the street but you also want to see how your company will get publicity from that. “Because of this company was so kind we could make 5 kids out of 10 to start school”. See the result and also the publicity from it. And also, there will always be social entrepreneurs that would do it for the well-being of others.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;As long as you have this very strong capitalism, there will always be people thinking that if you can make it cheaper here and I don’t have to care about. As long as it will be these strong capitalists that can see that they can save money in some way it will be hard. If we didn’t had money, we would have a lot of less problems with leaving, poor people, lousy conditions, a more community feeling and less crime. A lot of lives are destroyed because of money. But it is a very distance thought that we’ll live in a world without money. A lot of problems with that too.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;If we think that optimizing our own standard of living is the goal for society than sure we have come quite far but if we want to take into account future generations or the right for a fair life than the situation is quite serious.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>“The boundaries of the nature should be incorporated somehow, now it’s doesn’t cost anything to cut a lot of trees or destroy the forest but that should be included in the cost of the furniture for example, so it’s quite of strange that we don’t have to pay for the impact in nature.”</td>
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<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;Look around, I don’t think we need anymore, I don’t think we’ll be more happier if we have faster cars, a new espresso machine. We need better alternatives.&quot;</td>
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<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;They have to approach it in the ways that their products and services are done in a way that makes the smallest amount of pollution, they’re thinking not only from where their company starts, they’re thinking from the cradle of the product to the their companies and then they also have to think further own, what happens to the consumer when the consumer uses this product, how can you make a product that makes the smallest amount of impact on the environment? The whole cradle-to-cradle aspect. And not only thinking about how can I make the most money from this product or thing I’m selling.&quot;</td>
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### Appendix 6c – Economic organization: guiding principles and measurements of success

#### Economic organization: Guiding principles and measurements of success

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<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;And it’s also important to take a responsibility for what your are doing in your business idea. It is really important to take, every step you’re taking you have to think what is doing to the environment.”</td>
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<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;But economy, if we’re looking at economy comparing with social perspectives or ecological perspectives, economy is just a tool. And it will never be nothing more than a tool, a tool between how to deliver services and satisfactions to citizens, you can say that’s the social goal, to make sure that the people have the best life they can have, but it must be done within the framework of the growth of nature.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>“If we make something environmentally good someone else will try to make it better than us, and then we have to make it better than them. It help us proceed.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>“Before production, during production, after production. The whole idea is to make everything green.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;I think that supply and demand and competition is something good as it creates value and it also creates efficiency. (...) I see a problem with the current economic system where the social costs and the environmental costs are not in the economic system.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;Well they have to think that they cannot grow beyond the limits of the environment, we cannot just keep growing, growing and growing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;Look around, I don’t think we need anymore, I don’t think we’ll be more happier if we have faster cars, a new espresso machine. We need better alternatives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>“There is a lack when you calculate the profits in a company, for instance if you are a mining company and you’re calculating how much you have taken out you have to count the costs that you created to make this because it is something you can put back for the next generation.”</td>
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### Appendix 6d – Economic organization: Limits to economic organization

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<td>Andreas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>“I believe in every decision, strategic and also in the every-day combat of the company development, you have always to think how your company affects people around you, and your customers, your suppliers, how your decisions affects your suppliers and your customers in all of these three areas, all the time. So when I do my printing at [inaudible] down here, who is our who do the printing, what are they doing on their environment, what are they using, colours and how much water, and how does that affect the environment, how are they working with their employees and if we’re buying something from China how does that factory looks like, how are they treating the children, co-workers, in every step of the way, I believe is important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>“But economy, if we’re looking at economy comparing with social perspectives or ecological perspectives, economy is just a tool. And it will never be nothing more than a tool, a tool between how to deliver services and satisfactions to citizens, you can say that’s the social goal, to make sure that the people have the best life they can have, but it must be done within the framework of the growth of nature.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>“Our product is not like food that it’s a base product, you got to have it, but advertisement is not a base product, is not something the world need to work. And since it is an unnecessary product that the humans have develop, that makes a need to be environmental friendly when it’s not really necessary, not like food.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>“It started to become successful and we started to ask ourselves what were we doing, sure we were making money, sure this is going good and we can expand to all of Sweden. But we didn’t knew where the things we sold were coming from and we start realizing that “Hey, this is too cheap. We’re buying stuff from Swedish whole-sellers and the whole-sellers are buying from agents and agents are buying from other agents and then from the factories. So we realised that there were a lot of middle-men and still things were really cheap. And we added to the price and the stores added to the price, so at least 6,7,8 middle man from the factory and still it was a fair price to the customer as well. So we realised that something was wrong, someone is paying the price in working conditions and health for our cheap consumption here in Sweden.”</td>
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<td>“It should be more regulated. The boundaries of the nature should be incorporated somehow, now it’s doesn’t cost anything to cut a lot of trees or destroy the forest but that should be included in the cost of the furniture for example, so it’s quite of strange that we don’t have to pay for the impact in nature.”</td>
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### Appendix 6e – Economic organization: Role of growth

**Economic organization: Role of growth**

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<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;So far growth resulted in energy consumption and material consumption and we have to reach another type of growth that reduce energy consumption but it's difficult, so maybe we have to change the system. Is economic growth the goal? We should have other goals to have sustainable growth. (...)&quot;</td>
</tr>
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| Carl         | "Well you can consume our services without any impacts on the environment. Knowledge is very environmental friendly [laughter]. As long as we are selling knowledge there’s no problem. Our services are not connected to consuming more material things. If you’re looking at the dematerialized society you can still sell as many products or services as you did in the past but without that much of matter and energy in what you’re selling."
| David        | "The company’s profits should be to take the company a step ahead. If it is a better system to deal with paint that’s left over, perfect."
| Erik         | "It’s about finding ways to have it both sustainable and have the same profit."
| Fredrik      | "Growth is good as long as it is in the boundaries of Earth. As long as you can achieve profit and growth within the boundaries is something positive and something that should be encouraged. But as soon as growth harm the environment or harms people than is something negative. Growth in itself is nothing that is positive, growth is nothing if it is not sustainable. (...) As long as we are within the boundaries of what is sustainable those are positive terms but as long as we live above and beyond those boundaries growth is worth nothing. As it is today growth for growth sake it is crazy."
| Jessica      | "You can still grow but maybe you will grow in different ways, not only growth in money, you can grow because maybe more people want to be involve in this company, good-will...”
| Jessica      | "I think that it is possible to make profit and growth when you are a sustainable company, but maybe it won’t be as a big profit in the short-term but I think that in the long term it would be more stable."
### Appendix 7a – Companies’ responsibilities: corporate goals

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;Too many companies are profit-based, that you, is the highest goal, to make so much money as you can. Of course is important so what we are trying to do is to both think on the environment and make profit. (…) I think if you can combine profit and sustainability, I mean, it is the only way to change this system. If you want to be a big company that work with sustainability, you must be able to make a profit but you have to produce the right things. If you produce windmills you have to make profits and grow. So, profit is not bad but you have to produce the right things in the right manner.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;We have, of course, we have, we are business-driven, we have an Aktiebolag and we driven by the profit, that is our goal, but who also have the social responsibility as a goal, whatever we do always affect another company or another group of people, but the goal is to make a better world.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;Well profit is always a good tool but it shouldn’t be the main goal. For me profit in money terms is something that helps you in the short term but in the long-term you will not make even profit in money terms if you’re not meeting the long term goals and those are not in money terms. (…) So, that’s when I decided to start up my own firm, to get a platform, a tool to, for me a company is just a tool for doing what I want to do. As I said, it’s crazy but the purpose was to have a tool to change the world. In this early stage we were working very much in the national level actually and you can say that the income to survive we got from the municipalities buying our services, our sustainable trainings, but we used the money to invest in what we thought was important for driving the whole country into sustainability. And that you could say was the main goal of the company for us. Yes we were going to make money but we were using the money to ... it wasn’t to be rich, that wasn’t the reason why.”</td>
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<td>&quot;Around food for instance, you can have a group with actors around food, from the farmer to the food industry to the stores that are selling food, to the restaurants, to the tourist industry, so you can bring lot of actors to this round-table, but also municipals organizations because to return the nutrients back to the farming land you need those actors to be a part of it. If you build up this kind of round tables you will also find that they’re missing links all the time and that missing links are potential businesses. If you look from that way you suddenly realise how much possibilities ... some of those are not possible to have a good economy, special in the begging, but it’s easier if you have a good around to set up those together because the contribution to the whole economy will be that big that everyone earns on that.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;We want to show people that we can make an active choice but still make choices that others make. We don’t want to view as it you can either save the environment or make money. We want to say that you can have both, you can even make it better if you make it both.”</td>
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<td>&quot;I would say to leave this green footmarks in history. And of course to make money. We don’t try to hide it, we’re in it to make money of course, we’re not on this for free. We see those combined: to do something for the environment and make money. It’s the perfect combination. (…) It’s about finding ways to have it both sustainable and have the same profit.”</td>
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</table>
Fredrik: "The basics of our company is to show that it is profitable to be responsible. We’re not working with aid. This is quite strict on trying to show that this is a business because we think that the way to a sustainable society it’s actually full of business opportunities. (...) I think that the role of companies in society is wider than the traditional market economy way of looking at it. As I said before I don’t think that the costs for the negative impacts on humans and the environment are added into the economic system, I see it as a responsibility to companies to take that into consideration. So basically the role of companies is to make a profit without harming the people or the environment. (...) If you had a good worker environment, if you give good salaries to your workers, if you work on a cradle-to-cradle philosophy, than the profit you will have at the end of the year will be less than what you have today because it is more expensive to be sustainable but I don’t see a need to have a different way of distributing the surplus so basically is up to the owners how to use the surplus of a company."

Gisela: "... nowadays most companies have as goal to make money for their owners, that’s the drive force, but hopefully they can also have others goals to do something for the society and the environment."

Hanna: "I think all companies must make profits to survive, in one way or another."

Ingrid: "If we see schools for example, the private schools we have right now, we can really see the difference with the municipality schools and the company schools because in the company schools they can’t even get a psychologist or a nurse on the schools, they really cut down the things that are needed for the kids. And then they make profits so they can build better houses for themselves. I don’t think that’s the way to go, the profit have to go back to good things."

Jessica: "At the bottom it is to spread sustainability and to make it more every person’s thing. Not to make it so big and hard to understand and incorporate into your life. And everyone can do small things. That’s the main thing. And that’s the other thing that we want to have shops to pop up and that’s a tool for the vision, to spread sustainability in Umeå (...)"

Jessica: "(...) they focus most on the environmental side and economic but the social side, for instance, your employees, you have to understand how they are coping with their work. For instance, if you have a coffee shop it is easy to hire young people and make them work a lot because they have no experience and don’t know how to say stop. That’s often happens in Sweden as well. I think that you are not entire sustainable company if you don’t take care of your employee and let their rights be respect."

Karin: "(...) it doesn’t mean that you can’t make money but it not just about the money."
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<td>&quot;Is more like that you maybe think what you’re buying for materials, that is produced in a fair way. I mean, so that the labour is not used in a bad way. For example, if you buy food, bananas. That you are more aware when you buy different things. That the employees have decent salaries, good working conditions, health care and so on. (...) I think, that a company should be more sustainable an should consider more how their products or services affect the environment and the society. (...) I think companies have to think in a cradle to cradle approach. Many companies today are practicing green washing, they make smaller changes that appear to improve the environment but it is more green painting on the organization. Serious companies have to change system from the beginning.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;I believe the companies have a responsibility to be economic sustainable for their employees. That is important. And it’s also important to take a responsibility for what your are doing in your business idea. It is really important to take, every step you’re taking you have to think what is doing to the environment. Economics, social and the green. That’s really important, the three of them, I don’t think just the green.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;Of course you need to have a good economy in the company and I used to say that you’re not making the world more sustainable if you’re bankrupt tomorrow, so you need to have a long term perspective. Actually you can talk about the real economy besides the money economy. (...) The real economy is the non-money indicators like becoming less and less environmental, being better and better at satisfying the human needs.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;(...) We don’t want to use money that will not affect the quality or the environmental aspect. So instead of buying a car at [inaudible], let’s have the worst car ever and we faster can get money to get a car that’s environmental friendly, a hybrid or something like that.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;We talked a little bit earlier like the clothes we buy, we are very very concern about where the clothes come from. I don’t want to sell a shirt that was made by a 12 year old working 16 hours a day. I can’t be proud of that shirt and I can’t stand behind it. If you have a boutique you need to know where your products have been made and how they have been made. We have goals to visit all of our factories and we know that our suppliers how they make it and that it’s not child work, that the work is right pay, right insurance and all those important things.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;We study business [laughter], not workers rights or ecology, so we needed to go back to basics. Instead of inventing the wheel we decided that the best way to take care of our workers and the best way to take care of the environment, the best way was to go to organizations that had this knowledge already. (...) When it comes to the social part we are trying to improve the situation for our workers and also trying to be a role model on how companies should treat their workers. So we are trying to create a sustainable social situation for our workers and also trying to find ways to do that in whole Bangladesh. When it comes to environmental we are operating according to basic structures that will not degenerate the possibilities for coming generations to have the same, our production is not decreasing coming generations’ possibilities to make a living or having a healthy environment. And we are doing this economically sustainable what means that we are actually making a profit from this. (...) I think that the role of companies in society is wider than the traditional market economy way of looking at it. As I said before I don’t think that the costs for the negative impacts on humans and the environment are added into the economic system, I see it as a responsibility to companies to take that into consideration. So basically the role of companies is to make a profit without harming the people or the environment.&quot;</td>
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Gisela: "... nowadays most companies have as goal to make money for their owners, that’s the drive force, but hopefully they can also have others goals to do something for the society and the environment. (...) If they create a waste, for instance in the industry, then they should take care of the waste, so if they build a mobile phone they should also build a place where you can take of the mobile phone, disassembled it and take care of the waste. No waste, using as little energy as possible, hopefully renewable energy. They should have solar cells on the roofs for example. Well one thing is to have equal opportunities between man and woman. So that it is not that the man are giving the opportunity to work and make money and the women are just at home and take care of the children. It’s about equal opportunities. They should have of course, do as redQ, to help the people organize in unions so that they get fair wages, so that they are not being used working too much for too little money."

Hanna: "The organic piece, I think companies are on track to handle. Many are working with environmental impact assessments, ecological engineering. It is important that companies in developed countries, focuses on developing energy-smart solutions."

Ingrid: "I think that it’s a good thing that companies should have more social responsibility. Of course we need companies that make profits also in our society but if municipalities and everything that take care of the society than companies have should have it as well. I think that everybody should have the role to try to make it a better world so also the companies. I think that it depends but for instance if you are Volvo you should think about for instance the environmental question, because that is what you are destroying. If we want to stay in this planet so much longer we need to think on that."

Jessica: "Employing people and producing products and services. That’s the main thing. For me the main purpose of companies is to produce products and employ people but do it in a way that it is sustainable in the short and long term, so you don’t destroy the environment and take more things from nature than the ones that can be restored. The bottom thing in sustainability is for the next generations to live how we lived and that’s how I think, we have to think on everything we do it and do more. (...) They have to approach it in the ways that their products and services are done in a way that makes the smallest amount of pollution, they’re thinking not only from where their company starts, they’re thinking from the cradle of the product to the their companies and then they also have to think further own, what happens to the consumer when the consumer uses this product, how can you make a product that makes the smallest amount of impact on the environment? The whole cradle-to-cradle aspect. And not only thinking about how can I make the most money from this product or thing I’m selling."

Karin: "Companies have a great responsibility of course. Take H&M for example, or another big company, I know that a lot of the big companies that have their production in Asia for example, not always take their responsibility. There are big companies with a great amount of employees, and so they have to have a great responsibility towards environment and their employees."
Appendix 7c – Companies’ responsibilities: role of capital/resources

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<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;I believe in every decision, strategic and also in the every-day combat of the company development, you have always to think how your company affects people around you, and your customers, your suppliers, how your decisions affects your suppliers and your customers in all of these three areas, all the time. So when I do my printing at [inaudible] down here, who is our who do the printing, what are they doing on their environment, what are they using, colours and how much water, and how does that affect the environment, how are they working with their employees and if we’re buying something from China how does that factory looks like, how are they treating the children, co-workers, in every step of the way, I believe is important.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;(...) because if they understand it, they’ll find new solutions on how to sell services that are not connected lots of materials or energy. So we are talking about a dematerialized society.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;The plan is to have a total green production from the electricity, to the printing, to the delivery, invoices, ...So we can use solar panels, the windmills, in 3 years we will be so green as we possibly can be.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;I think that the role of companies in society is wider than the traditional market economy way of looking at it. As I said before I don’t think that the costs for the negative impacts on humans and the environment are added into the economic system, I see it as a responsibility to companies to take that into consideration. So basically the role of companies is to make a profit without harming the people or the environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;Well they have to think that they cannot grow beyond the limits of the environment, we cannot just keep growing, growing and growing.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;Employing people and producing products and services. That’s the main thing. For me the main purpose of companies is to produce products and employ people but do it in a way that it is sustainable in the short and long term, so you don’t destroy the environment and take more things from nature than the ones that can be restored. The bottom thing in sustainability is for the next generations to live how we lived and that’s how I think, we have to think on everything we do it and do more.”</td>
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## Appendix 8a – Change: severity of problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;We are affecting the planet a lot (...)&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;Because I believe we are too late, that’s why it’s so much in the media, it’s like ... we haven’t been aware of the danger and now it’s in the spot because we are on the last, it’s our last chance to take responsibility and then everyone must know.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;It’s not a question of if, it’s just a question of how and how fast we need to change the society and changes will come, and in my opinion if we can build up this grassroots movement, built on some kind of trust in democracy than this changes might be more or less, will be as smooth as it can be, it will still be very very much problems during the road.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;As long as you have this very strong capitalism, there will always be people thinking that if you can make it cheaper here and I don’t have to care about. As long as it will be these strong capitalists that can see that they can save money in some way it will be hard. If we didn’t had money, we would have a lot of less problems with leaving, poor people, lousy conditions, a more community feeling and less crime. A lot of lives are destroyed because of money. But it is a very distant thought that we’ll live in a world without money. A lot of problems with that too.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;Yeah, if we continue the way we are, it depends on how we look at it. If we think that optimizing our own standard of living is the goal for society than sure we have come quite far but if we want to take into account future generations or the right for a fair life than the situation is quite grave.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;[laughter] I would say bad (...) it’s difficult, so many things need to be changed.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;I think that we need to change so extremely, that’s the point we have to change so much to save the environment so we don’t make the effort. It goes back to the thing that I said before, if I’m going to think about sorting my garbage then I have to think about my transportation or how I buy my clothes. It gets to big so everybody should take the small steps and then bigger steps but now people don’t even take small steps to change anything. And that’s why we end up doing nothing and we just watch the world falling apart. So we have to make big changes.&quot;</td>
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| Jessica      | "I think they are serious but UN has some project called the Millennium something and they are saying that there is no need for poverty in the world if we do the right things and I think that is possible, we just have to act differently, stop contributing to conflicts and war, like there is many countries selling guns and so for countries in war and also how we buy, we need to think about how are the things we buy made, how do people that make them live, start thinking in those ways and maybe think more in terms of not only who produces the things, what happens when I’ve use it, what happens next, who takes over when I used the product. All the plastic in the world it doesn’t dissolve, it just stays here."
### Appendix 8b – Change: type of change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>&quot;Yeah, I hope so. The communist system has not worked out. It has failed. The only system we have is capitalism. I think that capitalism must change and the only way it can change is by companies thinking in a sustainable way. (...)Yeah because the big impact comes from consumption and from activities by companies, so the big change has to be done there, in production methods, consumptions.&quot;</td>
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| Barbro       | "And, that we are a powerful people, in Sweden, we as a country, and so like USA, UK, France and all Europe, we have to put pressure on our suppliers in the whole world but we are not. (...) Because of the economic profit, I believe (...)"
| Carl         | "They don’t think it’s possible to do anything against their masters so from that perspective I believe in some kind of revolution where people understand that they can do much more about their situation. (...) I think it’s a question of power and we have societies where people that have the power don’t want things to be change, for some reasons they need to have poverty in that society. So real democracy is absolutely necessary. So in that perspective I believe in some kind of social revolution"
| David        | "We want to show people that we can make an active choice but still make choices that others make. We don’t want to view as it you can either save the environment or make money. We want to say that you can have both, you can even make it better if you make it both."
| David        | "I think competition makes other set up their games, and if their set up their games we have to step up our game. Market, competition, give and take, it all as to be there some way. If we make something environmentally good someone else will try to make it better than us, and then we have to make it better than them. It help us proceed. Someway it has to be there."
| Erik         | "For a couple hundred years it has been the same. The very rich company owners have a big farm and it is a pattern that had followed through generations and generations. So we need to change this type of view, that just because you got a lot of money you are not better than your employees. I think that capitalism in that way is egocentric capitalism. I would like to change it to a more open capitalism, you can still make money for entrepreneurs to have that possibility that if you really really want it you can have a lot of money. I don’t want to take that opportunity away but you have to have more consideration for people that work with you, that work for you. And have a more human side.
| Fredrik      | "The positive thing is that it is a way of distributing wealth and setting prices but it is not a perfect way of distributing wealth and setting prices. Because into the market economy equation today we don’t take into consideration the costs of harmful impact on the environment and human beings. So that needs to be added and I think it is easier to add to an existing system than actually trying to change to something completely new. (...)I think that the role of companies in society is wider than the traditional market economy way of looking at it. As I said before I don’t think that the costs for the negative impacts on humans and the environment are added into the economic system, I see it as a responsibility to companies to take that into consideration. So basically the role of companies is to make a profit without harming the people or the environment."
| Fredrik      | "We need to rework the whole society. (...) We can’t have a negative impact on the environment. It is also a question of definition, some people define any kind of impact as a negative impact. In terms of not taking away possibilities for common generations to meet future needs. (...) I think that the only basic thing that we can say is that in the future we need to live within the boundaries of the world and we need to take them into account. It is not yet be proven if that philosophy is compatible with growth economy, there is also theories of balanced economy where the economy is not growing, where you have a flat line when it comes to growth."
Gisela: "We have to say that for example the market economy can be very good in many ways but that it’s not a good tool to take of the environment, it doesn’t work, so we have to think about how to change the economy so that the environmental issues are included. Maybe a carbon dioxide taxes could be one way to include the environmental costs in the economy."

Gisela: "For example the import taxes in the EU, it’s difficult to import things to Europe because we have a lot of subsidies for companies in Europe in agricultural. I don’t like it, I think it should be better to have a more just trade in the world and then we could import things from Africa and they could develop their export."

Gisela: "It’s a very very strange world where some people have so much and some people have so little. So it’s very strange that we don’t do more and I think that there are a lot of things that should be done. (...) for instance taking away the debt of the developing countries. It is really, really strange that they should have to pay interest on their loans to us since we already are the ones who have all the money, the money should go in the opposite direction, not from them to us. A lot more help to give to people who can’t support themselves, for instance micro-loans to people."

Hanna: "I think all companies must make profits to survive, in one way or another. It is important that companies in developed countries, focuses on developing energy-smart solutions. Another important factor is that we consume less of the earth’s resources and working to recover as much as possible. Here the equation is not really linked to GDP (BNP brutto national produkten), but you can find products which promote energy solutions so it can work (Green capitalism)."

Ingrid: "(...) I don’t like market economy so much because the companies can tell us what we want to buy and I think that we should find something more in between planned and market economy (...) If we have market, everybody have to develop new things to compete among each other and so we can’t think so much on what is best for the world. If we had something were we could say “now everyone has to work more this and this will have better taxes benefits” than the system will be better for the world."

Ingrid: "I think that we need to change so extremely, that’s the point we have to change so much to save the environment so we don’t make the effort. It goes back to the thing that I said before, if I’m going to think about sorting my garbage then I have to think about my transportation or how I buy my clothes. It gets to big so everybody should take the small steps and then bigger steps but now people don’t even take small steps to change anything. And that’s why we end up doing nothing and we just watch the world falling apart. So we have to make big changes."

Jessica: "A lot. I don’t have any calculated numbers but I think that it has to be big changes. We have to develop alternatives, shift into something else rather than fossil fuels for energy and transportation. We also have to deal with the things that we buy, were are they produce, think more about the people, think more about the whole chain."
## Change: Objectives of change

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbro</td>
<td>&quot;I believe that they ... the economic side has their own interests in being just rich and successful and economically independently and power. I believe it has a lot to do with power of the white man. It’s a gender discussion, I believe. Power and gender. I think it’s important that the ones with the power have to do something more than just being powerful. You can say that lots of powerful white men maybe in the software world are heading through philanthropic side and I believe that they are, we are heading towards the same goals but these middle companies are not that way, yet. So I can see it happen but it’s a long way to go.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>&quot;As you understand I’m very market oriented in some perspectives, I believe in a market economy but we need sustainable rules for that. Much more regulations that a market without regulations, so the problem is to get the sustainable regulation, the sustainable rules for the market.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>&quot;We want to show people that we can make an active choice but still make choices that others make. We don’t want to view as if you can either save the environment or make money. We want to say that you can have both, you can even make it better if you make it both.&quot;</td>
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<td>Erik</td>
<td>&quot;For a couple hundred years it has been the same. The very rich company owners have a big farm and it is a pattern that had followed through generations and generations. So we need to change this type of view, that just because you got a lot of money you are not better than your employees. I think that capitalism in that way is egocentric capitalism. I would like to change it to a more open capitalism, you can still make money for entrepreneurs to have that possibility that if you really really want it you can have a lot of money. I don’t want to take that opportunity away but you have to have more consideration for people that work with you, that work for you. And have a more human side.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>&quot;Yes, as I see it is about making profit without harming people or the environment. Of course we need some kind of economic system and for what we now there are many positives things related with the market system, as well as negative things. As far as what we know, I don’t see a solution where we leave the market economy for something else (...) I think it is easier to add to an existing system than actually trying to chance to something completely new.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;For example the import taxes in the EU, it’s difficult to import things to Europe because we have a lot of subsidies for companies in Europe in agricultural. I don’t like it, I think it should be better to have a more just trade in the world and then we could import things from Africa and they could develop their export.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>&quot;I think all companies must make profits to survive, in one way or another. It is important that companies in developed countries, focuses on developing energy-smart solutions. Another important factor is that we consume less of the earth’s resources and working to recover as much as possible. Here the equation is not really linked to GDP, but you can find products which promote energy solutions so it can work (Green capitalism).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;If we had something were we could say “now everyone has to work more this and this will have better taxes benefits” than the system will be better for the world.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t have any calculated numbers but I think that it has to be big changes. We have to develop alternatives, shift into something else rather than fossil fuels for energy and transportation. We also have to deal with the things that we buy, were are they produce, think more about the people, think more about the whole chain.&quot;</td>
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## Appendix 8d – Change: mechanisms of change

### Change: Mechanisms of change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
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“One goal, for example, instead of having a trading goal that you have to trade between the countries, you would have a goal that will measure how many things are produced in Umeå and circulates in Umeå, locally. Because that will reduce the transportation. This is for example one goal. We should have for example local economies instead of EMU, we would have money for Umeå. So I think we need a trend from global to local.”

| Barbro |

“I believe that we also should put pressure on the government (...) And, that we are a powerful people, in Sweden, we as a country, and so like USA, UK, France and all Europe, we have to put pressure on our suppliers in the whole world but we are not. (...) Because of the economic profit, I believe (...)”

| Barbro |

“(...) You can say that lots of powerful white man maybe in the software world are heading through philanthropic side and I believe that they are, we are heading towards the same goals but these middle companies are not that way, yet. So I can see it happen but it’s a long way to go.”

| Barbro |

“So you have to educate the world so that everyone can take responsibility for the environment and for your co-workers and for your family and for your society. But it’s a really long way to go.”

| Carl |

“Because the concept we created was regarding a cooperation, to star co-op companies, about ecological society, about informal economy, about local culture, about mobilizing people into taking the future in their own hands. And all of this together, no one understood it from the Establishment but they saw the results in terms of new companies, new jobs. So during a small period of 6 years, several hundred new companies were established in this municipality with only 6,000 inhabitants. It’s total incredible. There’s a lot of reasons behind it, not only that we became an eco-municipality. It was a very oppressed and had a deep depression for decades, and people were moving out from the municipality. All of this together with the concept of the eco-municipality, where the most important thing, what I said as a leader was, I said “no one up there will help us, if we want to fix this we have to do it by ourselves”. And this was the starting point, were in each village, small village, they had groups studying the future and so on, and also in the end continuing with making up some kind of plans on what can we do in our village, who can do that and who can do that, and from that all of these new companies were actually created.”

| David |

“What kind of benefits? Taxes, etc. (...) If you have a system that it is “if you do this of others you’ll get more” that’s ... I think that’s slowly starting to change.”

| Erik |

“The government has to step back and really offer official support to sustainable companies, sustainable way of doing a lot of things. If you do it that way you get benefits, to attract people who aren’t so environmental friendly in general (...) It can be like a tax reduction or something if you have a sustainable company. They can show how they see it easily like that, giving benefits to the companies.”

| Fredrik |

“I think that we are trying to take one step, showing that is profitable to be sustainable and hopping that others follow. Of course we need politicians who act, we need society to change but I think that companies bear a great responsibility to make a difference. The whole society needs to be involved.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gisela</td>
<td>&quot;We have to say that for example the market economy can be very good in many ways but that it’s not a good tool to take of the environment, it doesn’t work, so we have to think about how to change the economy so that the environmental issues are included. Maybe a carbon dioxide taxes could be one way to include the environmental costs in the economy.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;As I said before the leaders have to make rules on how we consume, how we use oil, how we import/export, the transportation. Everything like that has to change. (...) I think that we have to have harder rules. I think that the state have to have more to say on it. For instance if a Sweden company have children-workers they could really shut it down. If you’re going to sell clothes in Sweden, the lowest salary should be this salary because right now we are just moving stuff, for instance I was in Cambodia in a factory for Swedish brands and they were working for 12 hours and they couldn’t even go to the toilets, we can buy things like that in Sweden.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>&quot;I think that everybody have to take in their own life more responsibility on how they live and companies can be role models, because everything you see in the commercials or newspapers that you see are paid by companies.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;My vision is that people live a bit more, they live for themselves and not for the work that they have. Today we consume more than we need and I don’t think that it make us happier, we lost the connection that some things that area really important for us like company, laughter or free time and not just work, get money and buy things. (...) We start by down-shifting, working a little bit less, earning a little bit less but living more. And it doesn’t have to be like I drop from 100% to 50%, it can be 1 or 2 hours a week or just start focusing on what we do in our lives.”</td>
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