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# Corporate Sustainability Communications

*Legitimation through co-creation and impression management*

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# Abstract

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<b>Title</b>	Corporate Sustainability Communications Legitimation through co-creation and impression management
<b>Author</b>	Scull Yumai Zheng
<b>Advisor</b>	Åsa Thelander
<b>Problem</b>	The emergence and popularity of the concept corporate sustainability, the lack of research on this topic and the implications it poses to the field of corporate communications.
<b>Objective</b>	To understand the ideas behind corporate sustainability, the reasons for communicating corporate sustainability strategies and how it affects corporate sustainability communications.
<b>Methodology</b>	Collection of empirical data for this research consisted of qualitative methods. Interviews were conducted with five communication experts and a case study at Getinge through interviews with six managers to better understand corporate sustainability communications through their perspectives.
<b>Conclusions</b>	Corporate sustainability is concerned with environmental, social and economic efforts in an organisation's performance. Legitimacy is a central theme in corporate sustainability communications and this can be acquired through co-creation and impression management strategies. The maintenance of stakeholder dialogue and relations is highly recommended and should be managed by the public relations department/ professional.
<b>Key Words</b>	Corporate Sustainability Communications, Sustainability, Public Relations, Relationship, Dialogue, Reputation, Legitimacy, Communication Experts, Getinge Infection Control

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Halmstad, June 2011

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Scull Yumai Zheng', written in a cursive style.

Scull Yumai Zheng

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# 1. Introduction

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Throughout the history of mankind, the issue of being able to provide for the future generations has always been one of the fundamental concerns. It can take the form of caring for one's grandchildren's welfare, saving the world or even making the world a better place. These intentions usually stem from a concern, or perhaps a worry, if the inhabitants are going to be able to survive on the same planet earth for many generations after we have passed on.

We cannot deny the fact that working is part and parcel of everybody's livelihood and that corporations play a big role in shaping our society and environment. Therefore, any minor shift or emphasis on certain issues from companies should not be taken with a grain of salt.

In recent times, there has been a growing interest and awareness about the environment and the buzzword among communication professionals is 'sustainability'. Even trade and academic periodicals have special editions aimed entirely at highlighting the issues of sustainability. In one article published in a career and academic magazine, Björn Lindström, a specialist in investor relations and sustainability communication, stresses "*the best way to increase business advantage in sustainability efforts is to start communicating about it in a reliable way*" (PerfectMatch, 2009, p. 5). For now, sustainability strategies are only implemented and communicated by companies of a certain size. Larger organisations can work and communicate their sustainability efforts because they have far more resources to do so in comparison to smaller companies. A quick check on any international corporation's website (such as Electrolux, Skanska, Scania, The Body Shop and Microsoft) will reveal a dedicated section on the sustainability efforts undertaken by these organisations.

The future of sustainable development is big business especially in developed nations, where they are often the largest users of resources. Governments in countries like the United States, Sweden and Singapore have allocated sizeable amount of their budgets (129 billion US dollars, 795 million Swedish kronor and 1 billion Singapore dollars respectively) to promote greener initiatives that will affect the way people live and the way businesses will operate (Budget Statistics).

Incidentally, in March 2011, survey consultancy IDG Research published Sweden's first ever annual Sustainable Brands report. In the report, 151 companies were ranked through a survey conducted with more than 3000 consumers. What is worth noting is that these consumers were asked about how they *perceived* issues like human rights, corruption and environmental responsibility in those 151 companies. In addition, the project leaders behind this report have underscored that companies which do not communicate their sustainability strategies are not considered "*smart*" because "*what is not*

*communicated does not exist*". This suggests that communication plays a vital role in creating a perception among consumers<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, an article endorsed by leading public relations consultancy in the Nordic countries, Prime PR, suggested that corporate social responsibility (CSR) will be replaced by corporate sustainability (CS). In the article, author Per Grankvist (PRIME, 2010) claims that customers now not only expect companies to say what good deeds they are doing on the side but rather how the entire organisation can contribute to a better world. The author stresses that companies have to put actions before talk and that when communicating it should be about what one has not done as much as what one has actually done. Grankvist argues that only this way companies can increase their credibility and the possibilities to talk about it.

My interest and decision to write a thesis on CSC was further reinforced from a conversation with an ex-colleague who used to work in the same public relations consultancy when I was living in Singapore. At the time of the discussion, CS was still a very new concept and we wondered what the effort entails and what are the consequences that are in store for the public relations discipline.

### **1.1 Prior Investigation**

Due to the relatively modern nature of corporate sustainability communications (CSC), the literature review served as the primary source of data during the research phase for this thesis. It is fundamental that a review of the literatures covering CSC be conducted in order to have a better grasp of the themes. Three bodies of literatures – corporate communication, sustainability and public relations, were perused during the course of this research.

During the initial stage of the review, it was discovered (through general searches on the internet and Lund University's catalogue LibHub) that there is a lack of books and empirical research conducted in the field of CSC. Some of the most recent literatures that discuss environmental and social responsibilities, to a certain extent, still came under the management concept of CSR. Needless to say, no attention was paid to the economic aspects involved in CS. Even though a handful of literatures covered the topic of sustainability, their focus were targeted more at the history and the management of sustainability in organisations, specifically at the production and life cycle assessment phases. Unfortunately, not a single book on the communication perspective of CS was available. In addition, research papers that dealt with the sustainability communication were scarce.

As mentioned above, most literatures lacked empirical findings and they were mostly based on opinions from the respective authors. However, the literatures reviewed in this thesis were not just chosen purely on the basis that there was nothing else to choose, but rather, on the merits of the researchers and the inspiration they have provided.

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<sup>1</sup> Carroll and Buchholtz (2003) describe 20 situations in which corporations enhanced their profits through sound environmental management. Savings came not only from cost reduction but through avoiding litigation and liability while enhancing reputation and sales. Incidentally, Wood (2001) also considers that strong reputation helps companies survive crises with less financial loss.

Nevertheless, a study in particular captured my attention and has further inspired me to explore the communicative aspects in CS. This paper “Corporate Sustainability Communications: Aspects of Theory and Professionalization” was presented by Signitzer and Prexl at the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Communication Association in Dresden, Germany in June 2006. The report highlighted the importance of communicating sustainability efforts in organisations and why this function should be the responsibility of the public relations department (Signitzer & Prexl, 2006, p. 18). I will be drawing inspiration from this report and further develop the concept of CSC and put the communicative function in focus which is very much lacking both in the academic and corporate arena.

## **1.2 Purpose & Research Questions**

The point of departure for this research was motivated by the popularity of the CS concept, the communicative aspect of it and what it involves. The purpose of this research is to illuminate the concept of CSC while examining the perspectives from two groups of subjects. Coupled with the inspiration from prior investigations and the interest what role public relations can play in CS, these three research questions will motivate this study:

1. How are the concepts corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility perceived by communication experts and Getinge managers?
2. What are the reasons for communicating sustainability strategies from communication experts and Getinge managers?
3. What are the differences in their perspectives and the implications they have on corporate sustainability communications?

I will answer these three research questions from two sets of methodological approaches. Arguments regarding the choice of my informants will be further discussed in the methodology chapter.

Firstly, experts in the field of communications from five different industries (public relations, food processing/ packaging, shipping/ logistics, chemical manufacturing and construction) will be asked to provide feedbacks on their understanding of CSC. My attempt to gather feedbacks from these experts will illustrate their opinions about the topic with the aim to better understand the current practices of CSC when contrasted to the researchers and literatures reviewed in this paper. Secondly, a case study will be conducted on international organisation Getinge to illustrate the perceptions management members have of CSC. Interviews with the six managers will offer their sentiments on this issue, i.e. if sustainability is a concept they are knowledgeable and are concerned about, how is the company working with CS, how should Getinge’s sustainability strategies be communicated, etc. In addition, I would also like to examine whether



public relations models and concepts can be applied to our postmodern time when dealing with CSC.

By conducting this research from these two approaches, the findings presented will be able to demonstrate the perceptions of CS and CSC held by the communication experts and Getinge managers, the reasons behind for communicating CS strategies, and whether communication expert opinions are shared by management members in an international organisation. Due to word constraints, from here on, communication experts and Getinge managers will be referred to as experts and managers respectively.

## 2. Research Perspective

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### 2.1 Postmodernism

Today, organisations operate in complex, uncertain and often contradictory situations. It is therefore necessary to learn and think about organisations from multiple perspectives to embrace these demands, be more conscious for doing things and better able to understand the reasons behind the actions taken by others. Different ways of looking at the world produce different knowledge and thus different perspectives come to be associated with their own concepts and theories. Beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of the world influence how researchers carry out their research, how leaders manage and design their organisations and how each of us relates to the world and other people. By explaining the perspective that I am using to view our world, I will assist the reader in understanding the aims and practice of this social research. As May (1997) asserts, this will also enable a consideration of my arguments and the assumptions which each make about how we can come to know the social world and what properties it contains. For this thesis, I have chosen to depart from a postmodernist approach as it is my strong belief that the world we live in is socially constructed. Moreover, as the central theme of this research is on communication, which in my opinion should be considered as the essence of our interactive social existence where the act of communication itself is constructed and deconstructed (interpretation) by the very person engaging in it, the critical take of the postmodernist approach can allow us to better scrutinise the subjective nature of this topic.

According to Eriksson-Zetterquist et al. (2006), the concept of postmodernism has two meanings. Firstly, the concept can be used to define the end of the modern time (from 1800s to 1980s) and start of the postmodern era. Secondly, postmodernism is considered a perspective rather than a timeframe. In other words, a tradition of thought or a way to view the society, science and other social factors which are relevant in organisation. One central focus of postmodern theory is “*the critique of the subject*” (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2006, p. 346). This, according to the authors, concerns the view of the human subject – the actions and thoughts of the human individual – and how human individuals are capable of ruling and deciding their own lives. Instead of the subject being regarded as an independent variable, postmodern thinkers consider it as an effect of different social practices and theoretical systems.

## **2.2 Social Constructionism**

Postmodernism is distinguished by the highly post-structuralist proposition that the social universe is inherently paradoxical and indeterminate (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). In other words, reality does not even exist – all are words which refer to words, etc. Even if reality existed, it would have been a constellation of words which means that it would not have been possible to capture it anyhow. From this perspective, the social world obeys no rational guiding principles and follows no pre-determined historical trajectory. This is also the part when social constructionism comes in play. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the social world is a creation of human beings and they in turn are also the creation of their social world. This view also mirrors Giddens's (1993) concept of "*duality of structure*". Put simply, social order is not provided by nature but develops through human activity and interaction (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Therefore, social order is a product of human beings and is characterised as an ongoing and never-ending process.

Consequently, a postmodern organisation theory would relate to organisations not as natural or permanent phenomena, but as temporary and contingent expressions of a systemic modernist impulse to "*order social relations according to the model of functional rationality*" (Gergen, 1999). Meyer and Rowan (1977) stress that economic markets place a premium on rationality and coordination. In addition, size and technology increase the complexity of internal relations. Cunliffe (2008) supports this argument and asserts that when relational networks becomes complex, bureaucratic structures are thought to be most effective and rational means to standardise and control subunits. As one can see, the 'order by default' mindset of organising pervades the routines in our daily lives. Until someone dares to think otherwise and challenge this notion, I do not believe we are any different from 'sleep-walkers'.

Another focus highlights the issue of power. Eriksson-Zetterquist et al. (2006) argue that power is something that cannot be separated from the society and that it is distributed and divided over the entire society, in which the mechanisms and practices that control and rule our daily lives. The subject and power focus contributes to the social constructionistic views of organisations in postmodern times. Foucault (2000) argues that since knowledge is power, when anyone privileges particular forms of knowledge, they push other forms to the margins where they are likely to be ignored. It is through this perspective, that many postmodernist commit themselves to uncovering and challenging all forms of power, including knowledge, in order to expose the sources of domination that are so easily taken for granted.

As such, the postmodernism approach I am in favour of can be seen as critical tool, one that might be deployed in order to expose the prevailing dominance of an essentially repressive systemic modernism both in the process and analysis of organisation. The outcome of this line of thought, was a postmodern inspired approach that would seek to analyse critically the informal aspects of organisation and the various ways in which informality and irrationality are 'organised out' of

the workplace (Gergen, 1999). Therefore, a postmodern organisation theory, would expose the historically privileging of the formal over the informal, the rational over the irrational, the masculine over the feminine – or what one usually terms as conventional thinking. Hence, postmodernism will generate healthy scepticism toward any dominant theory and will challenge one to try something completely different. The postmodern perspective does all this by expanding the focus of theorising from the organisation, to how we speak and write about organisations. Thus, one phenomenon postmodern organisation theory addresses is theorising itself: how what you may perceive as stable or objective elements of organisations and organisation theory (structure, technology, culture, control, etc.) are but the outcomes of linguistic convention and discursive practice (Gergen, 1999). As such, similar to what Giddens (1993) recommends, postmodernism always makes you aware that theories are open to revision and invites you to ask who supports them and why.

In short, the postmodernist approach advocates a critical way of thinking and understanding of how the society is constructed. These are the lenses that I will be looking through when analysing the topic of corporate sustainability communications. But before we can delve further into the research question, it is vital that the reader is provided with a background of the chief topic that is pertinent in this paper – Corporate Sustainability which will be presented in the following chapter.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

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### **3.1 Corporate Sustainability Communications**

Corporate sustainability (CS) is not a concept that can be easily defined. It consists of many efforts that contribute to the holistic approach of sustainable development on the corporate level. Therefore, it is necessary that I establish these concepts to allow the reader to understand the origin and ideas behind corporate sustainability communications (CSC). This chapter presents the definition of sustainability and how it has conceptualised the overall sustainable development in the corporate arena. Nowadays, both terms are used interchangeably by organisations to describe the commitments and efforts they are engaging in (Bell & Morse, 2003, p. 3).

#### ***The Origins of Sustainability***

The idea that we should live ‘sustainably’ has become central to social and environmental discussions in recent years in the western world. But why has the idea of **sustainability** become so important all over the world, especially within the business arena where an increasing number of corporations are paying special attention to the commitment to sustainability? Dresner (2002) reasons that it is perhaps much more powerful rhetorically than an idea like being ‘environment friendly’. However, that cannot be the sole explanation as the term sustainability was hardly heard until the later 1980s, 20 years after the contemporary environmental movement got going. So why the sudden attention about caring for the future generations? And more importantly, why are corporations paying so much emphasis on this idea?

In 1971, American green economist Herman Daly (1992) suggests three operational rules<sup>2</sup> that constitute sustainability. According to Dresner (2002), environmental economists also define sustainability in terms of non-depletion of capital, which is the central theme in the Daly Rules. Dresner argues that we are presently depleting the ‘natural capital’ of the Earth and, as Daly (1992) puts it, treating the world “[...] as if it were a business in liquidation”. Environmentalists now claim that sustainability requires people in the industrialised countries to reduce their consumption of resources per head to a level that everyone in the world would be able to live on indefinitely. In the most general term, sustainability refers to characteristics of a process that can maintain the environment indefinitely.

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<sup>2</sup> (1) Renewable resources such as fish, soil and groundwater must be used no faster than the rate at which they generate, (2) Non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels must be used no faster than renewable substitutes for them can be put into place, (3) Pollution and wastes must be emitted no faster than natural systems can absorb them, recycle them, or render them harmless (1992, p. 248).

The term ‘**sustainable development**’ emerged in the World Conservation Strategy of 1980, published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Sustainable development was defined as “[...] *the integration of conservation and development to ensure that modifications to the planet do indeed secure the survival and well-being of all people*” (Dresner, 2002, p. 30). This accord stressed that development had to be combined with conservation.

The terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’ finally came to prominence in 1987 (Dresner, 2002; Bell & Morse, 2003; Gibson et al., 2005) when the United Nations’ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by former and later Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, published its report *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987). This was also when the task of making the idea of sustainable development politically acceptable. The Commission came to focus on one central theme. They believed that many current development trends leave increasing number of people poor and vulnerable, while at the same time degrading the environment. They were concerned if such development could serve next century’s world of twice as many people relying on the same environment. The Commission felt that a new development path was required, one that sustained human progress not just in a few places for a few years, but for the entire planet into the distant future.

The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as “[...] *development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need*” (WCED, 1987, p. 398). The report also emphasised that sustainable development was a matter of equity both between generations and within generations. This focus on equity reflects the basic principle of sustainability. The central recommendations of this document recognised that to truly meet present and future resource requirements, sustainability development as an approach must address not only the economic but also the social and environmental aspects of society (Dresner, 2002). The slogan ‘sustainable development’ was quickly adopted by governments and international agencies. The unanimous support from politicians at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 for the goal has encouraged the suspicion among some environmentalists that sustainable development is a meaningless concept as the parameters are not specifically defined. Dresner (2002), Bell and Morse (2003) further claim that different people use the term sustainable development in different ways; some emphasising development through economic growth, while others emphasising sustainability through environmental protection.

However, the WCED acknowledged that the achievement of sustainable development could not be simply left to government regulators and policy makers. It recognised that industry had a significant role to play<sup>3</sup>. They argued that while corporations have always been the driving force for economic development, they needed to be more proactive in balancing this drive with social equity and

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<sup>3</sup> Also advocated by two publications: (1) Business Charter for Sustainable Development (1990) by the International Chamber for Commerce (2) Changing Course (1992) by Stephen Schmidheiny and the Business Council for Sustainable Development.

environment<sup>4</sup>. Wilson (2003) asserts that this is partly because corporations have been the cause of some of the unsustainable conditions and also because they have access to the resources necessary to address the problems.

The contribution of sustainable development to corporate sustainability is twofold (Wilson, 2003), which is of special concern for this thesis. First, it helps set out the areas that companies should focus on: environmental, social and economic performance. Second, it provides a common societal goal for corporations, governments and civil society to work towards: ecological, social and economic sustainability. The author argues that sustainable development by itself does not provide the necessary arguments for why companies should care about these issues and suggests that those arguments come from corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory and corporate accountability which will be discussed in the next section.

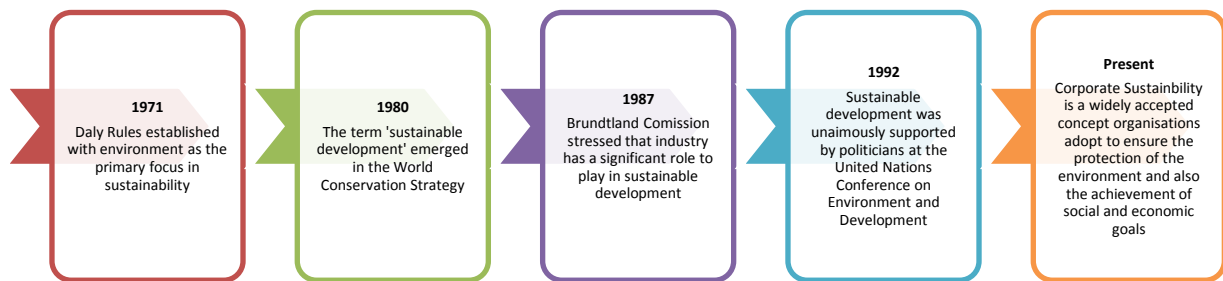


Figure 1. Timeline – Evolution of sustainability

### *Sustainable Development In Organisations*

Corporate sustainability (CS) has emerged as a new and evolving management concept and is considered to be the planned and strategic management processes that seek to address not only economical needs of the organisation but also environmental and societal needs (Signitzer & Prexl, 2006, p. 2). Wilson (2003) holds the same opinion and further explains that while the concept of corporate sustainability recognises that corporate growth and profitability are important, it differs from the traditional growth and profit-maximisation model in that it places a much greater emphasis on **environmental, social** and **economic** performance, as well as the public reporting on this performance. Corporate accountability (see Section 3.1.3) can be seen as this form of reporting on why companies should inform the society about their performances.

Signitzer and Prexl (2006) hold the idea that sustainable development finds its equivalent in the term of CS at the company level. The researchers suggest a terminology in which the concept of CS contributes to overall sustainable development which sets out the performance areas, visions and societal goals that

<sup>4</sup> According to Womersley (2002), based on ecological theory and the laws of thermodynamics, scholars have argued that the Daly Rules should be considered the basic foundation and most straightforward system for operationalisation of the Brundtland Report. In this view, the Brundtland Report and Daly Rules can be seen to complement each other – Brundtland provides the ethical goal of non-depletion of natural capital, and Daly details how this ethic is operationalised in physical terms.

organisations should focus on. Wilson (2003, p. 1) goes on to define what CS encompasses:

*“Mix sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory and accountability, and you have the four pillars of corporate sustainability. It’s an evolving concept that managers are adopting as an alternative to the traditional growth and profit-maximisation model.”*

In agreement with Wilson (2003), Loew et al. (2004) and Signitzer & Prexl (2006), I will also suggest to use CS as an umbrella term for the different concepts such as – corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, corporate accountability, corporate social performance, people planet profit (PPP), corporate governance, and corporate communications. Figure 2 illustrates these different concepts and how they contribute to overall sustainable development.



Figure 2. Corporate sustainability and other related concepts (Signitzer & Prexl, 2008, p. 3)



A research summarised in ‘The McKinsey Global Survey of Business Executives: Confidence Index’ in 2006 indicates that executives around the world increasingly recognise that business has a broader contract with society. Former US Vice President Al Gore and David Blood, previously the head of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, argue that sustainability investing is essential in creating long-term shareholder value. When asked how CS influences investment philosophy, Blood (in McKinsey, 2007, p. 2) insists that:

*“Sustainability investing is the explicit recognition that social, economic, environmental, and ethical factors directly affect business strategy – for example, how companies attract and retain employees, how they manage risks and create opportunities from climate change, a company’s culture, corporate governance standards, stakeholder-engagement strategies, philanthropy, reputation, and brand management. These factors are particularly important today given the widening of societal expectations of corporate responsibility.”*

It is interesting to note that Blood’s perception of CS focuses on society’s expectations and also takes ethical factors into consideration which mirrors Dresner (2002) and Wilson’s (2003) views that sustainability concerns must be based on moral obligations. Wilson (2003) adds that while not all companies currently subscribe to the principles of CS, a significant number of multinational companies have made public commitments to incorporate CS thinking into their business operations. Signitzer and Prexl (2006) argue that the reason that these global corporations tend to be more involved is because they have more financial means compared to small companies with limited resources. Wilson (2003) believes that the number of organisation engaging in CS will continue to grow, regardless of their size, and this trend will be reinforced if shareholders and other stakeholders support and reward companies that conduct their operations in the spirit of sustainability.

It is worth noting that the above opinions stress that society’s expectations should be the focus while at the same time through the support from the society only can CS further advance. This would suggest that CS cannot advance if there are no demands to meet to gain support. This leads me to wonder if this is a paradox. In order for the society to perceive that CS is an effort worth pursuing, would this not mean that this perception has to be ‘instilled’ into the society. If this perception is non-existent, how can the society judge that CS is a worthwhile effort for corporations? From this perspective, we fail to acknowledge that societal expectations are very much shaped by the consequences of corporate activities.

Interestingly, Wilderer et al. (2005, p. 28) provide us with this very thought provoking take on sustainability from a social constructionist perspective. They assert that sustainability within the social sciences is:

*“[...] the social and cultural compatibility of human intervention in the environment with the images of the nature and the environment constructed by different groups within society. It does not matter whether there is a real*

*environmental crisis in the sense of facts proven by natural sciences. The social science perspective takes as its starting point the social perception that there is a crisis. Social perception of environmental conditions is always selective and suggests that certain (culturally determined) assessment patterns are to be used. Statements on sustainability are thus preferences of the current generation as to the levels of environmental quality and quality of life that it allows itself, and those that it will allow future generations.”*

This idea seems to reinforce my social constructionist stance that the social (and environmental) issues are problematised through our own construction of reality. With that said, I have to stress that I am not dismissing my strong conviction that we are a generation that is living unsustainably. On the contrary, I have been fortunate enough during the course of the research to be challenged with the vast amount of information to make my own judgement that we are in fact over-using our natural resources and that sustainability issues should be of our utmost concern. Nevertheless, how does the average Joe gain access to this sort of knowledge and be given the opportunity to be ‘enlightened’, especially when the sustainability movement has gained momentum only in the last couple of years? Whether the general public believe that this is something worth their attention really depends on how their perceptions of the issues are created. As Wilson (2003) mentions earlier, sustainability will be accepted if stakeholders will support and reward companies in doing so. In other words, the author is suggesting that companies have to *communicate* and convince the public that investing and working towards sustainability is a rewarding way to conduct business. In my view, communicating CS strategies is then not just about meeting society’s expectations but rather a pro-active effort from the organisation to convince stakeholders that CS is a worthy effort that should be supported.

So far, I have provided the reader with an overview of what CS entails from the literature review. As the goal of this thesis is to understand the communicative function within CS, I have chosen the three key concepts that are also outlined by Wilson (2003) which will be of relevance for this study. In the following three sections, these concepts will provide readers with a background and their relevance to corporate sustainability communications (CSC). Firstly, **corporate social responsibility** contributes the ethical arguments why sustainable development is an effort organisations should be concerned. **Stakeholder theory** provides business arguments as to why corporations need to engage stakeholders in order to legitimately implement CS strategies. Thirdly, **corporate accountability** delivers the rationale as to why companies should report to society on their performance in these areas. Figure 3 illustrates how these three concepts contribute to CSC. Moreover, the choice to focus on these three concepts will enforce my argument that CSC should be undertaken by public relations practitioners. In contrast, the other remaining concepts (other than corporate communications) illustrated in Figure 2 are usually considered to be technical aspects that are least likely to be the responsibilities of the communications department.



Figure 3. Three key concepts in corporate sustainability communications

### 3.1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is principally about how organisations plan and manage their **relationships** with key stakeholders. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009, p. 97), CSR is an organisation's defined responsibility to its society and stakeholders. Its basic premise is that corporate managers have an ethical obligation to consider and address the needs of society, not just to act solely in the interests of the shareholders or their own self-interest (Dresner, 2002). Wilson (2003) believes that CSR can be considered a debate (dialogue) and what is usually in question is not whether corporate managers have an obligation to consider the needs of society, but the extent to which they should consider these needs.

For an organisation to be socially responsible is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, already in the beginning of the 1950s managers overwhelmingly thought their responsibilities to society were substantial and far beyond what was covered by their profit and loss statements (Carroll, 1999). In that era, writings about the concept were often referred to as *Social Responsibility*. In the 1960s, the term CSR emerged and in the 1970s it was further developed into *Corporate Citizenship* which paved the way to the understanding of 'multiplicity of interests' – the root for stakeholder theory (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006). Wilson (2003, p. 3) also perceives the central focus of these concepts as to whether corporate managers had an ethical responsibility to consider the needs of society. Many authors and researchers insist that CSR must take the needs of the society into consideration. However, American economist and recipient of the Nobel Prize in

Economics, Milton Friedman (1970) was a staunch believer that the social responsibility of companies is to increase its profits. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009), although there are a few contemporary academic papers supporting Friedman's views, they are frequently cited as the opposing arguments to CSR.

Then, in the 1980s, more empirically grounded research on CSR emerged in the business academic fields (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006). This led to the suggestion of alternative or supplementary themes such as *Corporate Social Performance (CSP)*, *Stakeholder Theory* and *Business Ethics Theory*. CSP can be thought of as measuring the activities and more precise thinking of CSR. Wood (1991) asserts that CSP stresses the results focus of CSR and the quantification, measurement and evaluation of CSR efforts (which resembles the concept of corporate accountability). It was also during this era that it was generally agreed upon by many authors like Carroll (1999), that corporations have an ethical responsibility and the focus changed to what CSR looked like in practice (Wilson, 2003).

Carroll and Buchholtz (2003) argue that while these terms are attractive, they are not distinct from one another and the central theme in CSR can be found in many different forms, depending on which expressions organisations choose to use. This can also be seen in modern time's corporate accountability and its equivalent in triple bottom line reporting which is the reporting of people, planet, profit (PPP). With so many concepts with similar objectives, it is difficult for one to look away and not wonder if we are confusing ourselves with all these terms. Can this be seen as a marketing gimmick to keep up with modern times by coining new terms for the same thing? Much like old wine in new bottles? Carroll (1999) believes that similar to academic disciplines, the constantly evolving business and societal norms adopt different terms to cope with times while still mirroring the original concepts that were intended from the original conception.

Frankental (2001, in Morsing & Beckmann, 2006, p. 17) considers CSR is about the extent to which an organisation is prepared to examine and improve its impact on all those affected by its activities and view its long-term reputation within the context of the *social* and *ecological* sustainability of its operations. Similarly, Loew et al. (2004) claim that from a managerial view, CSR can be viewed as the corporate implementation of the concepts of sustainable development and stakeholder management. These notions will align with Wilson's (2003) view that CSR is one of the pillars that supports corporate sustainability (CS).

CS embraces a great deal of ethics which are the central basis for CSR. Wilson (2003) asserts that CSR contributes to CS by providing ethical arguments as to why corporate managers should work towards sustainable development. Hence, ethics play an important role in understanding the foundation and origin of CS. According to Carroll and Buchholtz (2003, p. 170), ethics is regarded as a set of moral principles or values. Morality is a doctrine or system of moral conduct and this moral conduct refers to the principles of what is right and wrong in behaviour. Therefore, business ethics is concerned with good and bad or right and wrong behaviours and practices that take place within the corporate context. Erikson

(2008, p. 135) defines ethics as the ‘art of living’ – where one tries to improve oneself. Ethics also require one to use the freedom as an individual to make conscience decisions and take responsibilities for those choices (Erikson, 2008). From a social constructionist stance, these views concur with Grunig and White’s (1992) opinion that worldviews are subjective and that people can become aware of their worldviews and choose an alternative worldview if they want to. In terms of communication, Larsson (2008) contends that openness and truth are the two most common criteria for good ethics.

I believe that without ethical arguments, individuals and corporations can choose whichever actions that conform to their own ‘moral’ beliefs. In this situation, the line that separates what is right and wrong is non-existent and any responsibilities need not be fulfilled. Therefore, companies that comply with ethics adhere to their obligations set out by the society. Wilson (2003) adds that if society in general believes that sustainable development is a worthwhile goal, corporations have an ethical obligation to help society move in that direction. Homann and Blome-Drees (1992, in Morsing & Beckmann, 2006, p. 18) claim that business ethics has developed a ‘modern’ **dialogue**-based concept of responsibility. This is similar to Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) fourth era public relations model where the open communication in dialogues lead an organisation’s management to exchange views with other groups, possibly resulting in both management and publics being influenced and adjusting their attitudes and behaviours. Homann and Blome-Drees explain:

*“Accepting responsibility means to give answers to inquiries of internal and external stakeholders, to give account for business behaviour, and to develop a culture of transparency, reliability and trustworthiness in a dialogue on equal terms of sovereign partners”.*

While it is not naïve to acknowledge responsible dialogue as being transparent, reliable and trustworthy, I do, however, question if there is a way to ensure the authenticity and honesty in the information exchanged during dialogues. What characterises truthful, open and honest communication? Will an organisation be perceived as dishonest if information was withheld with no intention of misleading the public? Morsing and Beckmann (2006) state that even if most large corporations have accepted and responded to CSR, they argue that the reason for them to engage in and how to communicate CSR are rooted in different factors. This also raises the doubt whether the form of dialogue these organisations practise resembles Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) two-way asymmetrical or two-way symmetrical public relations model?

In a study conducted on rhetoric of responsibility presented by Swedish corporations, Fredriksson (2008) found that it is first and foremost marketplace rhetoric and the results support the description of corporate communication as promotion and advertising. In other words, Swedish companies are communicating their social responsibilities utilising marketing communications typically associated with the two-way asymmetrical model.

With regard to the role of public relations in CSR, Somerville (2001) is of the opinion that public relations practitioners can use public relations to act in the public interest by making genuine attempts to discover the requirements of community stakeholders and help companies be more responsive to social needs. A report published by Sweden's leading public relations consultancy Prime PR also suggests that a good CSR project is built on knowledge of the customer's demands and needs, employee's demands and needs, the complexity in society's problem and the potentials for improvement (PRIME, 2010). Somerville (2001) states that in order to achieve this, a stakeholder model is a prerequisite. The next section will elaborate more on the stakeholder theory.

### 3.1.2 Stakeholder Theory

The term *stakeholder* refers to groups or individuals who have an interest or stake in an entity such as an organisation, community or country. According to Wood (2001), the concept of stakeholding advocates a democratic approach to business which values **relationships** with a range of stakeholders. For Somerville (2001) this entails contribution to the decision-making process. In corporate terms, a company's stakeholders can include customers, employees, suppliers, members of the local community, general public, pressure groups, competitors, etc. (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 102). Each of these groups can affect or are affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organisation (Freeman, 1984).

The goals of stakeholder theory are to (1) better understand the organisations by allowing us to have a fuller description or explanation of how they function, (2) establish the connections between the practice of stakeholder management and the resulting achievement of traditional goals, such as profitability, stability and growth, and (3) identify the organisation's target groups by their interests, strengthen these relationships and how they should be regarded (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003, p. 76). To this ground, these goals can be seen as prerequisites that can further CS efforts.

Also according to Wilson (2003), the basic premise of stakeholder theory is that the stronger your relationships are with other parties, the easier it will be to meet your corporate objectives and they are based on trust, respect and cooperation. Wood (2001, p. 72) asserts that stakeholder theory is used by public relations practitioners to inform a pragmatic, strategic approach to practice and that it is intimately connected to *societal values* and interactive with them. From a social constructionist view, this would mean that the interaction in stakeholding is a constant activity to cope with the changing demands of the society. Carroll and Buchholtz (2003, p. 37) insist that businesses are expected to be responsive to newly emerging concepts of what constitutes ethical practices.

With different stakeholders at hand to consider, Windahl et al. (2009) see the necessity for the communicator to be aware of internal and external factors, in order for the planner to decide which is the best way of communicating in certain situations. This approach takes after Katz and Kahn's (1978) view of organisations as open social systems. In addition, Windahl et al. (2009) maintain

that an interesting facet of stakeholder theory is the concept of the dominant coalition – an organisation's constituencies with the most power, both inside and outside the entity. This resembles Grunig's (1992) power-control theory in which it suggests that organisations practise communication the way they do is because of the people who have the power in the organisation choose that behaviour. In view of this, the case study in this thesis seeks to uncover this perspective from the management members at Getinge.

From a critical stance, perhaps this might somehow expose the role of public relations are not as autonomous in goal-setting as might be thought. The real, perhaps hidden, agenda of engaging in CS may resemble the propagandistic one-way press agency model depicted by Grunig and Hunt (1984), where complete truth and feedbacks are not essential. While Pearson (1989) argues that symmetric strategies are a prerequisite for an ethical approach to planned communication, one can question how much, if any, input do stakeholders (other than the managers) have in an organisation's CS strategies? This also leads me to have reservations whether CS efforts are dictated by top management out of 'peer pressure' from other organisations that are already engaging in such activities or if they are initiated out of genuine concerns towards the overall contribution to sustainable development. Can this resemble the concept of isomorphism in which the process forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009).

In addition, reflecting from a social constructionist stance, this also leads me to wonder if this can be considered as a shift in power between companies and the people, and that the people are no longer at the mercy of organisations. These days, society has the ability to give companies the licence to operate or put them out of business for good. Companies are obligated to comply with the expectations and guidelines set out by their stakeholders. Perhaps power is no longer limited to an individual or a select group anymore, but a larger collective.

Assuming that the stakeholders have been identified, the next challenge for corporate managers is to develop strategies for dealing with them. To be able for an organisation to CS strategies, the company needs to provide credible information to its stakeholders regarding its undertakings. The next section will highlight the arguments as to why companies should report on sustainability performance.

### **3.1.3 Corporate Accountability**

Accountability is the legal or ethical responsibility to provide an account or reckoning of the actions for which one is held responsible. Accountability differs from responsibility in that the latter refers to one's duty to act in a certain way, whereas accountability refers to one's duty to explain, justify or report on his or her actions (Wilson, 2003). According to Bavly (1999, p. 7), corporate accountability means holding the management of an organisation accountable for its performance and it entails making judgements on the proper use of executive power. Such judgements can be exercised only when the information is available.

In addition, corporate accountability ensures that behaviour is consistent with the purpose of the company's undertaking, and that it complies operationally with the stipulations that guide the company's programme. In the simplest term, corporate accountability involves organisations to be held accountable for all their actions and to provide the necessary information to their stakeholders. When organisations abide by moral and ethical obligations, they will be perceived as **legitimate** in the eyes of their stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2004).

Wilson (2003) also contends that the contribution of corporate accountability to CS is that it helps define the nature of the **relationship** between corporate managers and the rest of society. For example, companies that receive environmental permits and approvals from regulators to operate facilities are often held accountable by the regulators for whether the terms of the approval are being met. Corporations are given a 'licence to operate' by society in exchange for good behaviour, and as such the corporations should be accountable to society for their performance.

In order for organisations to be held accountable, they have to provide information about their performances. Somerville (2001) sees it as a requirement to track a company's performance in a way that can be reported to its stakeholders. John Elkington, founder of SustainAbility – a think tank and consultancy that works with businesses through markets in the pursuit of economic, social and environmental sustainability, called this type of accounting as 'triple bottom line' reporting. It has become increasingly common for larger companies to describe their environmental, social and economic performances in sustainability reports, either as a separate publication or integrated into a self-contained section of the annual report (Hassel et al., 2008). According to Tench and Yeomans (2009, p. 205), the past few years have seen the emergence of an increasing number of standards and guidelines in the areas of CSR and CS. These include the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSI), FTSE 4 Good Index, Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility Index and the Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI) Reporting Guidelines. The authors allege that companies use these guidelines as a form of guidance in order to consistently verify the information across all boards. This kind of guidance resemble the certificates that the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) issue to companies that have complied to the standards set out by the body. In this sense, reporting sustainability strategies conforming to these guidelines can earn company legitimacy from its stakeholders.

Currently, sustainability reporting is in principle, voluntary. In Sweden, the only requirement is that certain non-financial information, primarily disclosure regarding the environment and personnel, shall be provided in the administration report, to the extent required for understanding the financial development of the company's operations (Hassel et al., 2008). If sustainability reporting is voluntary, why do companies choose to publish these information? According to the authors, a study conducted by the International Business School in Jönköping in 2005 showed that the highest ranking reason for companies to publish sustainability reports was a matter of credibility. These companies consider the information in sustainability reports to be important at directing to stakeholders other than just



shareholders. Another reason revealed in the study showed that companies experience that their stakeholders, in fact, request this type of reporting.

From this, one can see how stakeholder theory and corporate accountability are very much intertwined. Both concepts emphasise the relationships between the organisations and their stakeholders. While the former stresses the need for organisations to identify their stakeholders, the latter provides a useful communication tool to reach out to them. A proactive approach in corporate accountability to reveal such information will not only seem to allow organisations to be perceived as responsible and credible but also strengthen the relationships with their stakeholders (Wilson, 2003). Moreover, by showing openness and truth in reporting contributes to good ethics (Larsson, 2008). In my view, these are the attributes of legitimacy.

Up to this point, three central themes have emerged when discussing CSC – relations, dialogue and legitimacy. In the next section, I will be providing the social and communicative perspectives to these three concepts to further one's understanding of CSC.

### **3.2 Legitimation**

Defining legitimacy as the justified right to exist, Max Weber (1978) observes that any formal system of organisation needs legitimacy and the potential for acquiring legitimacy lies in the citizens' **perceptions** of the system. Similarly, Carroll and Buchholtz (2003) maintain that legitimacy is the perceived validity or appropriateness of a stakeholder's claim to a stake. These authors see legitimacy as a condition that prevails when there is a consensus between the organisation's activities and society's expectations.

With legitimacy as a condition, legitimation is a dynamic process by which business seeks to preserve its acceptance. Carroll and Buchholtz (2003) assert that this dynamic process should be emphasised because society's norms and values change, and business must change if its legitimacy is to continue. Hence, for organisations, legitimation is an on-going process of re-construction that seeks to adapt to the expectations set out by the society in order to be found legitimate by their stakeholders.

Waeraas (2009) contends that the basis for legitimacy is found in beliefs of the public and that successful legitimation comes from the strategic influencing of those beliefs. In addition, the survival of the system must be ensured by continuously enabling the support and endorsement of stakeholders, ensuring that they perceive the system as 'worthy' of voluntary compliance. As such, if organisations do not communicate their personality and their values, their legitimacy may be threatened. Weber (1978) and Suchman (1995) not only imply that legitimacy is socially constructed, but also that the potential for acquiring legitimacy lies in stakeholders' perceptions of the system. Thus, acquiring legitimacy is a matter of influencing beliefs and gaining acceptance for a particular 'myth', making legitimation a strategic process that entails justifications as well as attempts to influence stakeholder opinion.

### 3.2.1 Three Types of Organisational Legitimacy

Suchman presents three types of organisational legitimacy which involve “[...] *the perceptions that organisational activities are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions*” (1995, p. 577). Firstly, to achieve *pragmatic legitimacy*, an organisation must either meet the substantive needs of various audiences or offer decision-making access, or both. The former task involves the familiar marketing challenge of responding to client tastes and the latter involves co-opting stakeholders without succumbing to goal displacement. Secondly, to achieve *moral legitimacy*, organisations tend to associate the organisation with respected entities in its environment (e.g. see reporting systems in Corporate Accountability). Thirdly, *cognitive legitimacy* can be achieved by conforming to established models or standards. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), in order to survive, organisations must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in the environment because institutional isomorphism<sup>5</sup>, both structural and procedural, will earn the organisation legitimacy. In essence, these three types exemplify how an organisation can attain legitimacy. However, they lack the communicative elements during legitimation. This will be further explored by viewing legitimation in co-creation and impression management processes.

### 3.2.2 Legitimation through Co-Creation

According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), with the commoditisation of industries and dissatisfied consumers seeking to exercise their influence in every part of the business system, organisations must escape the firm-centric view of the past and seek to co-create value with their stakeholders. The authors propose a DART model that facilitates this interaction between the firm and stakeholders<sup>6</sup> - *dialogue* (interactivity, deep engagement, and ability and willingness to act on both sides), *access* (providing access to information), *risk-benefits* (the stakeholder becomes a co-creator with the company where risks are shared) and *transparency* (openness in communication and information gives credibility). They add that dialogue must centre around issues of interest for both parties (i.e. issues are not the same for all stakeholders), access and transparency are critical to a meaningful dialogue, and provided with dialogue, access and transparency, the stakeholder can assess the risk-benefits and make a decision. In other words, organisations are shaping stakeholder perceptions by supporting and influencing them during the value creation process.

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<sup>5</sup> Following the footsteps of social constructionism in institutional theory, isomorphism is a process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Even though the term customers have been used in their paper, it is my opinion that the DART model can be applied to various stakeholder groups.

The DART model shares similar characteristics when the organisation is viewed as an open system<sup>7</sup>. Open systems are systems that take their environment into account and change their business activities accordingly. It is characterised by exchanges of inputs and outputs with the environment and subsystems that form the system<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the concept of **openness** or **transparency** is particularly useful in understanding that the organisation relies on the complex interactions the system has with the society and that this is a prerequisite in building **relationships** between the system and its environment (Ledingham, 2003; Tench & Yeomans, 2009). This focus of relationships by definition requires greater involvement from organisations which means genuine **dialogue** but it is actually not as easy as it sounds because the outcomes of dialogue may not be what was desired and that dialogue itself requires disclosure of information that may make the owner of that information vulnerable (Tench & Yeomans, 2009). However, from a postmodern perspective, Falkheimer and Heide (2007) argue that a reactive and defensive approach to communication can strengthen this relation with stakeholders.

### 3.2.3 Legitimation through Impression Management

According to Goffman (1959), impression management signifies that people use communication deliberately and strategically to create desired impressions of themselves. The communication process is asymmetric because the individual is aware of only one stream of communication (verbal) while the audience of both (verbal and non-verbal). Through his analogy of frontstage and backstage, the author also suggests that impression management is widely practiced in a way where communication performed on the frontstage is easily manipulated, whereas the impression fostered by the performance on the backstage (kept closed and hidden to the members of the audience) is knowingly contradicted. One example that can illuminate this is the concept of greenwashing, where a company claims to be environmentally but their actions prove otherwise.

Furthermore, chief to the understanding of perceptions is the contribution of impression management<sup>9</sup> to an organisation's reputation. For Davies et al. (2002), reputation is a collective term referring to all stakeholders' views of corporate reputation, including identity and image – *identity* (what the organisation thinks it is and likes to be seen as) and *image* (how an organisation's audiences perceive its corporate identity)<sup>10</sup>. Varey (2001) and Fombrun (1996) see the reasons for

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<sup>7</sup> Envisioned by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), system theory broadens the lens through which we view organisations and see them as an 'organism' (Modaff et al., 2008; Merten, 2008; Scott, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> From this view, the interrelated parts (e.g. marketing, engineering, sales, accounting) in an organisation must function together for the overall strength of the system to be maintained, also called synergy. If inputs are restricted (closed system) or the internal processes of the organism do not function optimally, it begins to deteriorate which leads to entropy.

<sup>9</sup> Goffman's concept of impression management has previously been referred to as image or reputation management (Johansson, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> The identity is a result of interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders, as well as the organisation's understanding of their stakeholders' opinions (Argenti, 1994; Varey, 2001). The image that is mediated within the surroundings is absorbed back by the company and used as a form of validation or as a call for change to their identity (Heide, 2005).

attempting to manage corporate image and identity centre principally on trying to make clear to stakeholders what the values and beliefs of the corporation are and how it is striving to achieve its objectives while conforming to social norms. More specifically, an identity is communication presented to gain and maintain legitimacy and as such it is aimed to influence the public debate and people's **perception** of the corporation and the subject areas related to its activities (Fredriksson, 2008; Johansson, 2009).

As exemplified, the notions behind impression management and corporate reputation suggest that when acquiring legitimacy organisations are concerned with constructing images that emphasise its positive attributes (identity) by manipulating stakeholder perceptions (image). Suchman (1995) states that legitimacy represents a relationship with an audience rather than being a possession of the organisation. So if one were to view legitimacy from this perspective, then legitimacy is not something one can manage through impression management where the focus on dialogue and relationship is lacking.

### **3.2.4 PR Perspectives and Strategies on Legitimation**

Public relations is about obtaining and preserving legitimacy and should be primarily concerned with the societal legitimation of organisations (van Ruler & Vercic, 2005; Waeraas, 2009). Furthermore, public relations practitioners are expected to play complex and involved roles in "*promoting the bottom line, building harmonious relations with stockholders, and protecting corporate interests in ways that must be sensitive to the needs of a variety of external interests*" (Regester & Larkin, 2005, p. 44). These ideas are also reflected in van Ruler and Vercic (2005) call for a reflective approach to practical public relations which advocates viewing an organisation from a societal or public view to analyse changing standards and values in the society and discuss these with members of the organization, in order to adjust the standards and values of the organization accordingly. Signitzer and Prexl (2006, p. 11) also share this 'outside-in' approach, as it is of "*great relevance as the concept of sustainable development itself puts society at centre stage by aiming to meet the needs and aspirations of both current and future societies*"<sup>11</sup>. The authors affirm that only by taking a societal view, such public needs can be discovered and argued with an organisation. Thereafter, only can public relations activities influence attitudes and values with key stakeholders (Falkheimer et al., 2009).

Since the public relations discipline is concerned with the need for support from the general public as well as how to retain it, I believe the four strategies I have identified from Grunig's (1992, p. 37) ten generic principles of excellent public relations may provide a valid argument as to why public relations practitioners have the expertise to take on the role to assist an organisation in gaining legitimacy through co-creation and impression management.

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<sup>11</sup> According to the sustainable development concept set out in the Brundtland Commission in 1987.

- Involvement of public relations in strategic management – develops programs to communicate with strategic publics, both external and internal that provide the greatest threats and opportunities for the organisation.
- Integrated public relations function – all public relations functions are integrated into a single department or have a mechanism to coordinate the departments. Only in an integrated system is it possible for public relations to develop new communication programs for changing strategic publics.
- Two-way symmetrical model of public relations – this is based on research and uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. A combination of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models is also used in a “mixed-motive” model.
- Organisational context for excellence – excellent public relations departments are nourished by participative rather than authoritarian cultures, activist pressure from the environment, and organic rather than mechanical management structures.

### **3.3 Summary of Legitimation Process in CSC**

Corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory and corporate accountability have underscored the importance of legitimacy as a fundamental element in CSC which lies in the perception of the society. Of particular interest is the process of acquiring legitimacy and the roles relationship and dialogue play in it. Through co-creation and impression management processes, two types of organizational legitimacy of relevance for this study were identified – pragmatic and cognitive<sup>12</sup>.

Pragmatic legitimacy takes after the co-creation approach where openness, relationships and dialogue are key. In addition, the DART model supports the reflective communication approach and two-way symmetrical model advocated in public relations strategies.

Cognitive legitimacy resembles the impression management model where perceptions are manipulated to portray an entity in a favourable way and conformance to society’s expectations. It is not entirely a closed system (entropy) where external communications are strictly ignored by the organisation but the lack of focus in dialogue, relationship and openness makes it resemble the two-way asymmetric model which is also often used in public relations. In addition, the presentation of sustainability reports can be argued as a way of “showing” accountability.

The concepts presented are not meant to imply that they are practiced exclusively when acquiring legitimacy but rather that they can be achieved through various approaches, much like the idea of equifinality<sup>13</sup> in open systems.

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<sup>12</sup> Moral legitimacy is concerned with the organisation’s association with respected entities which can be seen as a form of impression management. In my opinion, this form of legitimacy lacks communicative attributes and deserves further scrutiny in further research in communication studies.

<sup>13</sup> An end state that can be reached by many potential means (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

## 4. Methodology

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### 4.1 Research Strategy

The purpose of this research strives to shine a light on the concept of corporate sustainability communications (CSC), while examining the perspectives from two groups of subjects. This will be achieved by gathering empirical findings through interviews with communication experts and management members from Getinge. The research approach most appropriate for this study from a social constructionist perspective will be by applying a qualitative method. As Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) claim, one distinguishing feature of qualitative methods is that they start from the perspective and actions of the subjects studied, while quantitative studies typically proceed from the researcher's ideas about the dimension and categories which should constitute the central focus. This statement supports my intention to focus on my informants and their knowledge as my point of departure for this study. Moreover, communication is not a topic that is easily quantifiable. It is crucial for a researcher to be able to understand, describe and discover the meaning behind, in order to make sense of communication. Lindlof (1995) adds that qualitative researchers seek to preserve the form and content of human behaviour and to analyse its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations. This further strengthens my emphasis for this research to be conducted qualitatively.

There are different approaches that affect how conclusions are drawn. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) state that it is necessary to be influenced by a research approach that will guide the researcher where to gather information, how to analyse and interpret the information one comes across. For this study, I have chosen to adopt the abductive approach. The abductive approach alternates between the inductive<sup>14</sup> and deductive<sup>15</sup> approaches. This method will begin to analyse the empirical results as the platform but does not dismiss theories. This process of referring back and forth between theories and empirical findings will allow the empirical results to be more defined (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). By using the abductive approach, I will be able to conclude by analysing and arguing with an iterative view between the result of the empirical study and the theoretical framework. This method will make it possible for me to find answers to my questions, and also these questions will arouse new concepts that will then revise the applied theories.

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<sup>14</sup> The inductive approach aims to interpret information from empirical study to generate new theory that can explain a phenomenon. While the concept of CSC is relatively new, it is not entirely suitable for this research as I already have some basic understanding and there are theories I wish to examine which I have acquired during my academic years.

<sup>15</sup> The deductive approach is mostly used in areas that are highly explored and studied and useful if the aim is to test if existing theories are valid (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). Since I want to understand more than just the relation between the findings and theories, and CSC is not yet thoroughly explored, applying only this approach is not suitable either.

## **4.2 Communication Experts**

To gain a deeper insight into the evolving field of CSC, it will be appropriate to understand this concept through the people who are knowledgeable in the area of communications. Perspectives from communication experts will serve as an 'idealistic' backdrop on how CSC is perceived among these experts and how they are practiced in the corporate arena. Insights gained from the expert interviews will be used to compare with the empirical materials from the case study to illuminate the nuances in CSC among them.

### **4.2.1 Selection Of Informants**

Due to the relatively new nature of CSC, I see it crucial that the choice of expert informants are selected based on their expertise in the corporate communications area and that they also have prior knowledge on sustainability issues. It is paramount that a strategic selection of these knowledgeable experts will provide relevant findings and substantial contributions to this study (Patton, 1987).

After the research topic has been decided, I started contacting experts within the field of communications/ CSC and asked if they were interested in participating in this research. Experts whom I have contacted included those that were 'discovered' in the media by myself, my ex-colleagues, referrals through ex-colleagues and recommendations from lecturers.

Two experts from Sweden, two from Singapore and one from the United Kingdom were interviewed (see Appendix). Two informants are previous colleagues from a public relations consultancy, one informant is an expert in sustainability communication and the remaining two informants were shortlisted through referrals from my contacts in the communications field. These communication experts were not selected specifically due to their geographic location but rather their expertise in different industries.

### **4.2.2 Access To The Field**

As mentioned earlier, informants in this research are experts that I have contacted through my own initiative, albeit two informants were from recommendations. While there is a certain risk that the selection of informants through recommendations could result in the informants sharing identical views, the lack of experts in CSC made this probability inevitable.

My initial contact with these five experts was by e-mail seeking their participation. All five experts agreed. Since my informants were not served to me on a silver platter, I believe all subjects had voluntarily agreed to participate in the interviews. As Lindlof (1995) sees it, the willingness of how a person contributes to a qualitative study is always his or her individual decision.

However, there was also one request made face-to-face to a consultant from a leading public relations agency in Sweden. The consultant said that he would find someone in the consultancy to contact me. After two weeks, I was contacted by the same consultant and was informed that there were no suitable consultants in the company that has the expertise in CSC that could participate in this research. I

thought that this is worthy of mentioning because it proves to show how new CSC is even in the public relations field.

In preparation for the interviews, documents like brochures, annual/sustainability reports and the company websites of the informants were reviewed to serve as background information. This allowed me to pose questions that are relevant to the activities and industry that my informants are representing<sup>16</sup>.

### 4.2.3 Expert Interviews

Qualitative interviews are sometimes also known as unstructured or a nonstandardised interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Due to the flexible structure of these interviews, there are few standard rules or common methodological conventions when it comes to conducting them, which means that the technique on how the interview should be conducted has to be made by the interviewer during the interview. In order for that to happen, a high level of skill is required from the interviewer, who *“needs to be knowledgeable about the interview topics, as well as having a grasp of the conceptual issues of producing knowledge through conversation”* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 13).

Having specialised in media and communication studies for many years now, I believe that I have acquired the knowledge and skills to understand corporate communication. My experience in this field will allow me to make sensible and informed decisions on how to conduct quality interviews on this topic with the aim of producing useful information for the research. For this thesis, I adopted the form of a semistructured interview. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain that in this form it has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions<sup>17</sup>. Yet, at the same time, there is an openness of changes to sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects.

Before the interviews, a copy of the interview guide was sent to each informant to give them an overview of the topics that will be discussed. This would help the subjects to prepare and think about their replies. Some of the main themes that were covered included the various concepts within corporate sustainability communication, the communication process and the tools used. Not all questions were included in the interview guide that was sent out as there were responses that I would like to gather spontaneously on certain issues. I was constantly aware that the qualitative research interview seeks to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. In line with my social constructionist stance, my role as an interviewer is to register and interpret what is said, as well as how it is said by my informants. With that in mind, the interview guide was then designed after the purpose of the investigation was conceptualised through thematising (Kvale & Brinkmann,

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<sup>16</sup> During the interviews, two experts also provided me with hard copies of the sustainability reports that their companies have published.

<sup>17</sup> See Interview Guide in Appendix for division of themes and suggested questions.



2009). The interview guide contained an outline of the topics (thematic dimension) and questions that will be discussed during the interview. However, the questions will never be exhaustive as they must be modified constantly to adapt to the interview situation. By not following the interview guide religiously, I was able to engage the informant in the conversation by asking questions that are spontaneous and related to what I aim to discover. This will also motivate the subject and encourage positive interaction with the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In compliance to the ethics set out by Lindlof (1995) and Kvale and Brinkmann, (2009) in conducting interviews, informants were informed of the procedures used in the research at the start of each session. Consent was obtained verbally for the voluntary participation and I ensured they understood that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Permission was sought from each expert if the interviews could be recorded. They were also informed that their feedbacks will be presented anonymously in the report, notes and other materials will remain confidential in my property and will not be released to anyone else and will be destroyed after the research is completed. I neither immersed myself too quickly into the field nor develop too intimate relationships with my informants which could influence my impartiality of the research. As Aspens (2007) advises, the rule of thumb is to steer away from the field if one's integrity will be compromised.

Interviews with the informants that are based in Sweden were conducted face-to-face in Malmö. Due to geographic barrier with the informants from Singapore and the United Kingdom, two interviews were conducted by telephone and one was conducted over Skype. All interviews were conducted in English<sup>18</sup> and were recorded using a voice recorder<sup>19</sup>. The length of each interview was approximately between 40 to 60 minutes.

Interviews were recorded in order to be documented which can be analysed at a later time. When transcribing, the recordings will serve as a form of verification to ensure that the findings presented in this thesis are accurate and true to what has been said by the informant. This also allows me to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview (Lindlof, 1995). None of the informants opposed to the use of a recording device. In instances when the dictaphone was used, the informants seemed oblivious to the presence of the device as soon as I posed the first question. Although I was not distracted by the dictaphone, I still found myself checking the device to make sure that it is recording the session. Even when I have shifted my eye contact momentarily from the informants to look at the recorder, they were not at all disturbed.

As the interviewer, I defined and posed specific questions, introduced focused themes of the conversation and through further questions steered the course of the

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<sup>18</sup> As all my informants are proficient in the English language, which also happens to be my mother tongue, I felt that by conducting the interviews in English would allow me to interpret the responses accurately and as intended by the informants. This would significantly minimise misunderstandings should the interviews be conducted in another language.

<sup>19</sup> As this interview focuses on the content of what is said, it is not necessary to use a videotape recorder which is considered a time consuming analysis process due to the wealth of visual information it provides (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I formulated my questions so that they were easy to understand, short and devoid of academic language to avoid confusion for the subject. By conducting my interviews in this casual manner, I created a relaxed social setting where the informant can open up to me more freely. At the end of the session, my informants were debriefed and were asked if they had anything more to add. The final question was open ended to allow the expert to share any additional information or views that he/ she finds relevant.

It is important to note that the above qualifications and skills on how to conduct interviews, but not limited to, are expected from the interviewer in order to conduct a successful interview. A well-conducted qualitative interview can be an enriching and positive experience for the subject who may obtain new insights into his/ her life situation. There are risks for the informant participating in the study where the person might feel embarrassment or discomfort in discussing his/ her personal views and understanding of the interview topic or the organisation. There are also factors that may affect the outcome of the interview. It might happen that subject's statements are sometimes ambiguous. It then becomes the responsibility of the interviewer to clarify if the contradicting statements are due to a failure in communication during the interview or if the opinions are held as such by the subject. This had happened in a few instances where I had to confirm with my informants that I had understood their replies as they have intended them to be.

One of the risks of relying heavily on interviews is always the potential *reflexivity* on the part of the informant, who may be tempted to say what he/ she believes the interviewer wants to hear (Yin, 2003). Another critic to this aspect is that people often say one thing, but do another. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that only by observing and questioning one can better understand the meanings and their processes. As Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) point out, data and facts are the constructions or results of interpretation. With this in mind, I have to be aware that the data I collect are to some point the result of social constructing between the informant and me, and how I interpret the feedbacks from my informants. A risk of using interviews as method is the possibility that the data will be too coloured by my own translations of the gathered data rather than mirroring the situations the interviewees are trying to describe.

### **4.3 Case Study**

The case study is designed to examine how management members at Getinge perceive CS and their arguments for communicating sustainability strategies. A case study method is used because it is the preferred research strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control of (Yin, 2003, p. 1). As the focus of this study is interested in Getinge and not other companies, conducting a case study is particularly useful when one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great depth (Patton, 1987).

The advantage of using this strategy is that it allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Another advantage with this methodology is that it allows the researcher to conduct systematic interviewing. Furthermore, the case study method requires the researcher to carry out a review of existing literature. Although this can be a time consuming process, it can prove to be very important in helping the researcher develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic (Yin, 2003).

One of the disadvantages of using this method is that there is a traditional prejudice against case studies as a research technique. Some people criticise the case study method as being less rigorous than other types of research and weaker due to the lack of empirical evidence. Others argue that case studies provide little basis for scientific generalisation. With that in mind, however, this particular research is an explanatory case study, as the focus is on contemporary event and the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. The case study includes competing explanations for the situation and indicates how much explanations may apply to other situations. As with most case studies, this research tries to illuminate a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result (Yin, 2003).

#### **4.3.1 Selection Of Case Company - Getinge**

As mentioned earlier, CS strategies are most often implemented and communicated by large international organisations which have the required resources to do so. Hence, it is imperative that the case company for this research should be categorised as large (employees) and international (markets) to better represent and substantiate the findings in this study.

Founded in 1904 and listed on the OMX Nordic List, Large Cap, in Stockholm since 1993, Getinge Group is a medical technical company that comprises three business areas: Medical Systems (Maquet), Extended Care (ArjoHuntleigh) and Infection Control (Getinge). For fiscal year 2010, net sales for Getinge Group amounted to SEK 22.1 billion and profit amounted to SEK 3.1 billion. The number of employees in the Group for 2010 was 12 146 (Getinge Group Web).

For apparent reasons, there is a need to limit the scope of this study to a more manageable size to provide more insightful analysis. Thus, this thesis will focus

on the Group's Infection Control business area, commonly known as Getinge. The head office for both Getinge Group and Getinge are located in the town of Getinge, Sweden.

As mentioned, a discussion with a previous colleague during the initial stage of this research indicated that companies in the healthcare industry are at the forefront of CS. With this in mind, the choice to use Getinge as a case company was further strengthened with its diverse portfolio of stakeholders which include employees, suppliers, shareholders, customers (from hospitals, clinics, research institutes, etc.). For these reasons, this business area is appropriate in understanding CSC as this concept affects a wide spectrum of stakeholders. In addition, the company's size and position in the industry would most likely require Getinge to work with CS strategies. The location of Getinge's head office in Sweden also means that informants will be more accessible.

#### **4.3.2 Access To The Field**

The reasons brought forth above motivated me to contact Getinge in November 2010 to enquire about the possibility of an internship and also to conduct my case study at the company. The idea on my part was that this arrangement would provide Getinge and myself a win-win situation. My application was accepted and I started in January 2011 to practice at Getinge's global marketing department. The privilege of being in the organisation gave me unrestricted access to key informants in the company which would otherwise have been almost impossible for any researcher. Nevertheless, a formal request was made to the marketing manager about my choice of informants that I wished to interview. The risk here is that the manager might have assumed the role of a gatekeeper where the choice of informants was filtered by her. However, not only were all my initial choices accepted but the manager also referred me to a host of other informants which I further considered based on their relevance. In this sense, the position and experience of the marketing manager has opened other doors which would have otherwise remained closed to someone who is new in the organisation.

#### **4.3.3 Management Interviews**

According to Grunig's (1992) power-control theory, organisations behave the way they do due to the people who have the power managing it. This means that to be able to understand the way Getinge is working and communicating CS is by understanding how the top management view this concept. Gathering empirical materials of this sort will require one to start from managerial positions because they are the ones responsible for implementing strategies.

An advantage with being in the company, in addition to having access to a detailed organisation chart, is that colleagues provide a valuable source of information in identifying the roles and functions of key personnel in the organisation. Five informants based on their profession, position and relevance to the study were shortlisted at Getinge (see Appendix). A sixth manager from Getinge Group was added after learning that he is the key person managing the

Group's overall sustainability strategies (see Appendix). In all, six interviews with Getinge management members were conducted. Interviews follow the same guidelines as with the communication experts although the interview guide differed (see Appendix).

An initial interview revealed that Getinge intends to work more actively with sustainability strategies. This sparked the curiosity to delve into why they wish to work with this and communicate these efforts. In this sense, the interview guide was also reformulated as new knowledge and information were acquired through the different interviews.

In preparation for the interviews, documents from Getinge (e.g. brochures, organisational chart, communication and environmental policies, annual reports, company newsletter, website, intranet, etc.) were also perused to provide background information on the company. This step was crucial in preparing the researcher for asking relevant questions that pertain to the thesis.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

Patton (1987) claims that the mechanics of organising data varies for different people. Because different people manage their creativity, intellectual endeavours and hard work in different ways, there is no one right way to go about organising qualitative data. In order for me to analyse the data effectively and efficiently, I have chosen to organise the empirical material that were collected from the interviews from the communication experts and Getinge managers.

In order to provide valid findings in the thesis, transcribing the empirical data that I have recorded during the interviews will allow me to compare the results from all the informants. Transcription itself is an interpretative process. Transcribing involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that even though transcription seems like simple and reasonable procedure, the process involves a series of methodical and theoretical problems. For example, once the interview transcriptions are made, they tend to be regarded as the solid empirical data in the interview project. However, they are artificial constructions from an oral to a written mode of communication. Hence, from a social constructionist stance, there is no one true form in transcribing. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 166) suggest to approach transcriptions from a "*What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?*" angle in order to transform the conversation into a literary style that facilitates communication of the meaning of the subject's stories to the readers.

For this research, responses from all interviews were transcribed. However, information such as the informant's background and 'small talks' were deliberately left out as they were irrelevant in the study. Thus, focus was paid on the quality of the interviews and not the quantity. Research questions were grouped according to their central themes. This task was made much easier when the interview guide was already designed this way. The central themes were then coded into different categories and topics, when necessary. Coding is a part of the analysis which divides the empirical materials and enables the process of analysis

on a more detailed level. Coding is not just a passive process where one fills up 'theoretical boxes' with empirical materials but it can also form the foundation for creating new theoretical categories (Aspers, 2007). The headings and informants were then laid in a table format. Materials from each informant were then tabulated into the respective box in the table. This technique will allow for easy cross-referencing and comparison.

After all the empirical data from the interviews have been collected and organised, it was then time to analyse the results. Yin (2003) suggests three general strategies to help the researcher - treat evidence fairly, produce compelling analytical conclusions and rule out alternative interpretations. I do dispute with Yin's third view on ruling out alternative interpretations, as I believe there is no one true way of interpreting. After all, interpretation of the data is my construction of what is said by my informants. To be able to rule out alternative interpretations, the researcher has to be aware of the variations of how it can be constructed which can be challenging. Therefore, I will be focusing on the strategy that will rely on theoretical propositions in this study. This strategy is derived from following the theoretical propositions that led me to my research. This meant that my original objectives and design of the study were based on my ideas and concepts about the research problem, which in turn led me to develop a set of research questions, reviews of the literature and new hypotheses or propositions. This also meant that the propositions have shaped my data collection plan and therefore have given priorities to the relevant analytical strategies. This strategy helped to guide my research analysis and focus on certain data and to ignore other data.

From the tabulated data that I have categorised, I was able to select the data that were relevant to the research questions. Finally, as the data collection method was based on a converging line of inquiry, it was then possible to consolidate all the findings to validate whether the theories applied to the topic. Theoretical propositions about causal relations, answers to 'how' and 'why' questions, can be extremely useful in guiding a research in this manner. I found this strategy systematic, productive and less labour intensive during the analysis process.

## 5. Presentation Of Empirical Materials & Analysis

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As this research seeks to understand CSC from the perspectives of communications experts and Getinge managers (case study), this section will be presented in the form of a “coherent case description” where the epistemological ambition is to present a meaningful entirety which can be achieved through varying degrees of detailed richness and overview (Nylén, 2005). This form of presentation is also considered an appropriate way to give credibility and prominence to the researcher’s interpretation where the collective descriptions will also reflect the empirical voice.

While the presentations of a social constructionist perspective is typically associated with contradictions and paradox which can undermine credibility, it is my opinion with (1) the limited number of pages for this thesis, (2) the acknowledgement of the existence of various paradigms held by the readers, and (3) the need to ‘make sense’ of the empirical materials, that it is crucial that I adopt a ‘sensible constructionist’ stance where the coherent presentation of my data is necessary to convey knowledge about the studied reality to the reader (Nylén, 2005).

In this section, data have been selected, rewritten and reorganised to provide a logical structure under the specific themes and categories that have been previously outlined in the interview guide. Furthermore, findings through interviews with experts and the case study will be presented as two separate sections due to the focus of the enquiry. This will provide the reader with a clear distinction between the perspectives of the communications experts and the managers at Getinge.

### **5.1 Communication Experts Perspectives**

#### **5.1.1 Views on Corporate Sustainability**

Experts felt that there has been a change in the public mindset about how companies should operate and behave over the last ten years. Recent scandals of organisations not operating responsibly or ethically (e.g. contaminated milk in China, Enron, Lehman Brothers, British Petroleum and Vattenfall) have prompted activism from various stakeholders to show their expectations of how companies have to change. In particular, informants cited Al Gore’s campaign on climate change as the turning point of how people view their planet. An expert from the food processing/ packaging and the another from the chemical industry said:

*“The film (An Inconvenient Truth) in particular has captured an audience that never cared or never had any thoughts about what was going on the planet. It has*

*popularised it in a Hollywood style and has been shown in classrooms in many countries that changed the whole idea about caring for the planet which has been a very academic debate until then. Al's film made it popular and provocative."*

*"More and more companies are moving beyond focusing just on the bottom line to looking at how its business activities and products are impacting on the society and the environment."*

Experts remarked that this contributed to increased awareness about the society not just among the ordinary people but also companies and that people are expecting and putting pressure on companies to view their operations from environment, social and ethical perspectives.

Feedbacks from experts showed that sustainability is a wide subject and there are different interpretations of sustainability depending on who and which organisation is using it. However, they seem agree that both terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' mean the same thing, which, when applied to businesses or corporate sustainability, is the long-term strategies that an organisation should perform to ensure that these decisions should not affect the environment, people or the viability of the company in the future. An informant from the chemical industry added:

*"Sustainable development is a term that is often overused and misused. It is a rather superficial term that people tend to associate it with just the environment but it is actually more than that."*

Their views concur with the Brundtland Report which states that in order to truly meet present and future resource requirements, sustainability must address not only the economic but also the social and environmental aspects of society (WCED, 1987). Informants believed that sustainability is a phenomenon that has caught on recently in the last five years while an informant who argued that it has been built in us since the beginning of time provided this interesting statement:

*"Sustainability is very very old. They just put a name on it. But the concept is totally engrained in the indigenous people like in Australia and Canada. I think it died somewhere and it got reborn. It is their entire life and philosophy. A piece of land or area and it is their sense of making sure that it is going to be there tomorrow."*

Daly (1992), Holmberg and Robèrt (2000), and Dresner (2002) have also demonstrated this opinion and share the view that the ideology of sustainability has been with us since birth and the researchers believe that the essence of sustainability or sustainable development is 'continuation'. That is, the need to ensure that future generations are taken care of and that they have the resources to survive and also provide for their future generations.

Experts also believed that as people become more knowledgeable and savvy, due partly to the large amount of information available in the media and on the



internet, people realise that there is a better way to do things as our natural resources are not limitless. Hence, the society sees that it is time to change and expect companies to also do their part and operate with environment and society in mind. Since corporations have always been the driving force for economic development, the industry needs to be more proactive in balancing social equity and environment based on moral obligations defined by the society (Dresner, 2002; Wilson, 2003).

With that in mind, experts acknowledged that **corporate sustainability** (CS) is a relatively new phenomenon and caught on quickly as it provided what the consumers want. Here, they seem to imply that the CS has gained momentum due to demands. From a social constructionist view, this implies that norms and values change in the society and businesses must adapt to these changes in order to secure their existence (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003; Regester & Larkin, 2005).

In line with the concept of equifinality in open systems (Modaff et al., 2008), experts agreed that CS very much depends on business and society, and what the company is dealing with. One expert from the shipping/ logistics industry remarked that companies dealing with petrochemical and healthcare are at the forefront of embracing CS and that only in recent years have maritime and logistics companies started to place a stronger focus on taking concrete steps in doing their part. When asked what CS should entail, experts offered a wide range of activities and tools that could be utilised. It covered philanthropic activities (charities, sponsorships), employment policies (respect for diversity, human rights, safety at work), environmental protection (reduce, reuse, recycle and other green initiatives) and business operating practices (corporate governance, ethics). Experts also indicated that there is no one-size-fits-all mould that can be applied to all organisations (van Riel, 1995). However, they suggested that CS must include corporate social responsibility, reporting and stakeholder management, which also are the three concepts advocated by Wilson (2003).

Experts asserted the importance for organisations to engage in sustainability efforts if companies are in it for the long haul, particularly with globalisation. They felt that organisations have a responsibility to change the way the society looks at communities and take environmental considerations seriously. The informant from the food processing/ packaging industry said:

*“Sustainability efforts are not just important but it is core to survivability. This earns them the licence to operate and a positive impact to the environment”.*

An informant from the public relations industry added:

*“It is necessary for organisations that want to differentiate themselves from the masses. Corporate sustainability is a strategic competitive advantage”.*

From these feedbacks, it seems that the former expert informant is stressing that working with sustainability should be seen as a philosophy that is ingrained into the company's operations where the focus is to contribute to a lasting future. Whereas the latter is focusing on impression management which puts an emphasis

on ‘branding’ that could be used as a tool to advance the company’s position in the market.

Experts agreed that working with CS has a huge impact in contributing to a company’s overall performance and goals. According to them, the focus on environment, society and economics is a prudent business decision, especially in economics when reducing waste also reduces resources and that organisations will be vulnerable if they are not concerned about such matters. One expert added that it is also the “*politically correct*” thing to do and that organisations do not want to stand out that they are not being sustainable. Another informant replied:

*“There are many models to giving back. Part of the challenge is the perception of the right or wrong way to do it”.*

These experts are emphasising the need for organisations to be perceived as doing the right thing. Perception is related to an organisation’s identity (Argenti, 1994; Varey, 2001) and identity is a result of interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders (Heide et al., 2005). In this case, communication. Hence, if the society perceive CS as a worthy effort, organisations have to communicate their CS strategies in order to gain and maintain legitimacy (Fredriksson, 2008).

Experts felt that the recent economic crisis has challenged companies whether to continue putting the money where their mouth is or perhaps reconsider if engaging in sustainability is good for business, society and planet<sup>20</sup>. Informants foresee that the awareness of CS will continue to increase in the future. Some suggested that perhaps certain areas will be under intense spotlight, e.g. environment, employees, energy savings, etc. There will even be new buzzwords and initiatives seeking to replace CS but they believed that this is an effort that would not go away.

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<sup>20</sup> Informants identified The Body Shop, Electrolux, Scania and Microsoft as companies that have excelled and are role models in the sustainability movement. They maintained that business and environmental considerations must go hand in hand and singled out the motor industry as one sector that has failed at accomplishing that in recent years.

### 5.1.2 Corporate Sustainability versus Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an effort that has been widely popular and used by organisations for the past decade. However, in recent times, the concept has been challenged whether CS is a better way to conduct business (Wilson, 2003; Loew et al., 2004; Signitzer & Prexl, 2006).

Experts implied that CSR is a subset of CS, where CSR is only concerned with the social aspects in CS. However, the informant in the chemical industry has specifically included the environmental aspect into CSR which shares the view by Frankental (2001, in Morsing & Beckmann, 2006, p.17). This informant said:

*“CSR focuses on the people and environment. It is more about giving back to the society. About living up to the social responsibilities. CSR will stay as it focuses on the external aspect of corporate management. It is also a handy reference of the two thirds of the corporate sustainability pie”.*

It is interesting to see that there are different interpretations of CS and CSR even among communication experts. The lack of a unified agreement could explain why organisations still use these concepts interchangeably<sup>21</sup>. Much like how the term CSR evolved to what it is today, business and society adopt different terms to cope with times (Carroll, 1999).

An expert felt that CS is a wider term that takes into account the business perspective that a sustainable business is also a business that is economically sustainable, whereas CSR is more philanthropically inclined. This informant continued by saying that there will always be trends in these abbreviations and believed most people mean the same thing as they are used interchangeably. Experts indicated that CSR is not just a fad and will continue to be part of the business language and planning. Companies will continue to use that terminology but CS will be the most basic and expected way to do business. Especially since CS gives more added value to companies because it encompasses not just the social but also the environmental and economic perspectives which can drive a company into sustainable development (Wilson, 2003).

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<sup>21</sup> A quick review on the websites of some companies like Microsoft, General Electric, Volvo and Airbus revealed that these organisations are still using Corporate Citizenship or Corporate Social Responsibility to describe both their social and environmental undertakings. However, many multinational organisations are also now replacing these efforts with CS. While organisations have traditionally incorporated environment issues into CSR, companies are using CS to clearly distinguish that the environment is a separate entity of society which demands its own focus. From this, it seems that there is no universal agreement which efforts CS or CSR should comprise. Organisations appear to choose the term that best suits their business operations.

### 5.1.3 Corporate Sustainability Communications

Experts claimed that when managing CSC, organisations could use different tools and channels. They may include but not limited to, media outlets, sponsorships, events, speaking opportunities, websites, company's newsletter, seminars, annual reports, sustainability goals reporting, etc.

The objective of communicating the company's sustainability efforts is to show accountability, set sustainability goals and thus create rooms to make incremental improvements. According to the informants, these goals are set with the input from stakeholders, endorsed panels and members of the community. Their feedbacks reflect the co-creation approach, where **dialogue** or the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), is a prerequisite with these stakeholders. Goals will not be agreed upon without the participation from those who are 'expecting' the organisation to meet them. Hence, their participation and a dialogue are of utmost importance. Without stakeholder's input, it is basically the organisation meeting its own expectations. It has been established in this thesis that an organisation cannot survive without the approval or the 'licence to operate' from their stakeholders and the society, or as suggested by Varey (2001) – the legitimising basis for business.

Experts are convinced that it is extremely important for organisations to communicate their sustainability efforts **honestly** since it serves as a form of check for any progress for the company and this in turn can be seen as accountability to stakeholders. However, an informant noted that the need for an organisation to communicate their sustainability efforts would very much depend on the decision made by the company's management. This can be depend on the size of the company and how much emphasis the management places on communication (Signitzer & Prexl, 2006). Nevertheless, informants agreed that the aim for CSC is not different from public relations efforts where the emphasis is on relationship, dialogue and reputation.

Experts claimed that an organisation should maintain good **relations** and communicate with "*all*" stakeholders, i.e. anyone and everyone who has an impact on the continued sustainability of the company<sup>22</sup> and recommended that information should be available to everyone who is interested. Fostering good relations with stakeholders, both internal and external, could facilitate in more effective communication (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003; Wilson, 2003). As suggested by Regester and Larkin (2005), the public relations discipline can acquire legitimacy through open communications (dialogue) with stakeholders through the management of these relationships. This has been reinforced by Grunig's (1992) public relations model where it is not just feedback that is necessary (two-way asymmetrical) but rather dialogue (two-way symmetrical) where feedbacks flow in both ways as this creates understanding and consensus from both parties.

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<sup>22</sup> Stakeholders include, but not limited to, the whole value chain, such as employees, suppliers, customers, society, students, prospective employees, etc.

Experts stressed that practitioners of CSC must acknowledge that this practice must underline relationship with stakeholders. Establishing and maintaining relationships is the core essence of CSC rather than marketing, which as a practice is more concerned with meeting sales targets. One informant commented that a good practitioner has to be analytical so perhaps an advertiser<sup>23</sup> might not be suitable for this role, an advice also recommended by Pelsmacker et al. (2005). Larsson (2008) add that while marketing communications tend to be commercial and short-term, public relations is concerned with the long-term goodwill towards stakeholders and reputation of the company as a whole. Experts continued:

*“I believe CS should be used as a tool to develop relationships with stakeholders and that the messages with them should be a direct one. It is different from marketing communications. Companies that use advertising and marketing to communicate CS are using it for publicity. These companies have to be very careful because they better live up to their words”.*

*“I don’t think there is any special skill required. A general PR practitioner is able to handle corporate sustainability communication. In fact, corporate sustainability communication should be included as part of any PR professional’s role and responsibilities. He or she can then ensure that the company’s stance is consistently reinforced across all avenues”.*

Even if one can see a slight difference in opinions in terms of CSC, with the former advocating it as a tool while the latter as a prerequisite, informants are still stressing the need of a function in the company that can manage relationships with stakeholders with the focus of synergy. These feedbacks further reinforce the idea Grunig (1992), van Riel (1995) and Hassel et al. (2008) share where organisations must strive for increased mutual **coherence** between all forms of internal and external communication.

Like the open system where it continually adapts to changes in the society, experts indicated that by managing CSC, the organisation sends signals both internally and externally which can drive development. This open-**dialogue** process generates new patterns that foster learning, innovation and change (Barge & Little, 2002). Experts stressed that what is not communicated does not exist, like the closed system where non communication will lead to the destruction of the organism, although action must come before communication every time.

*“Start by reporting what you do, for example – more initiatives from people in the company, comments from customers, demands from suppliers regarding impact of your efforts, and reap market fruits for what you have done. If you don’t communicate about it, then it is just your own conscious, but if you want to change then it is important to communicate. If you don’t publicise, they don’t reach full potential by raising issues to other companies up and down the value chain”.*

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<sup>23</sup> Roles of advertising and marketing communication are dominated and characterised by one-way communication (van Riel, 1995).

From my perspective, this supports the view that legitimacy is earned through a company's reputation shaped by the creation of stakeholder perceptions. If the company does not communicate (create) this belief among their stakeholders, they would not know that it exists (Argenti, 1994; Varey, 2001). According to one informant, the benefits of CS cannot be captured in a balance sheet (unlike in marketing communication where the aim is to generate sales which can be measurable) but it strengthens a company's biggest asset which is its reputation. Furthermore, ingraining CS within the culture of an organisation and integrating it within business strategy supports and protects future reputation. An expert reasoned:

*“The main objective of communicating CS is to portray the company as an economically, environmentally and socially responsible organisation. This should be one of the most important goals in the company's integrated communications programme. The underlying communications messages must be consistent across the board to enhance credibility and top of mind recall”.*

This comment coincide with Hassel et al.'s (2008) conviction that mixed messages from the company will compromise the organisation's reputation. Informants stated that an organisation's reputation is built on credibility and legitimacy and these can only be earned by communicating honestly. Similarly, this is suggested by Carroll and Buchholtz (2003), and Cornelissen (2004) that when organisations are guided by moral and ethical principles, they will be perceived by their stakeholders as credible and legitimate. However, I do question the notion of honest communication and whether it is verifiable. Just like Grunig and Hunt's (1984) belief that a responsible dialogue can develop a culture of transparency, reliability and trustworthiness for an organisation, I do wonder if honesty is a trait that companies convince their publics that they possess. Is honesty then not the subjective perceptions of the publics? Much like Grunig's (1992) suggestion that worldviews are subjective?

Ironically, an informant provided this insightful account. The current employer of this informant does not believe in publicising the goodwill activities undertaken by the company. These charitable efforts, I have been informed, have substantial monetary value but is not documented in any reports because they are paid out from the owners' own pockets. The owners do not believe in receiving credit for doing good. If their actions are not communicated, they do not exist. One can then wonder, what do the owners of this organisation hope to achieve by not communicating? Is there a need to communicate that one is doing good? Or are we living in a society that will only reward and give legitimacy to those who will document and talk about what they have done?

Informants believe that organisations have to be held accountable and can no longer afford to operate autonomously like they used to before. Therefore, they are arguing for the need to communicate as **transparently** as possible in order to be found credible and legitimate by their stakeholders (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2003; Cornelissen, 2004; Regester & Larkin, 2005). In addition, this form of

accountability also serves as a reality check for organisations that they are not superior and they need the understanding and participation to ensure their existence. Communication is no longer about instant gratification but what companies are doing to ensure continued existence. Experts also insisted that the public should not simply take a company's claim without questioning it:

*“Saying you are does not necessarily mean you are doing it. We need proof.”*

*“Companies who don't take corporate sustainability communication seriously will be on very thin ice. It is no different compared to 'greenwashing'<sup>24</sup>. One must have facts behind every statement”.*

Here, experts are underlining the need for accountability in what they are communicating. What they are also suggesting is that CSC should not be about making claims that the company cannot support. However, in the study conducted on rhetoric of social responsibility presented by Swedish corporations, Fredriksson (2008) found that it is first and foremost marketplace rhetoric and the results support the description of corporate communication as promotion and advertising. In other words, Swedish companies are typically acquiring cognitive legitimacy through strategies like impression management.

However this form of communication is not consistent with what expert informants are advocating. Their views support the idea that public relations as a discipline can give CSC legitimacy because their task is not sales oriented. The primary function is to interact and create a dialogue with all stakeholders to drive the company towards a common goal that everyone has agreed on based on responsible dialogue. My informants concurred that there has to be action behind the words because people will find out when it is just a publicity stunt. When that happens, it would no longer be sustainable for the company.

*“It doesn't really matter if the company wants to make a profit, the most important thing is that they save the environment. Sustainable business makes profit long term. And destroying the environment is not”.*

Informant stressed that when communicating CS, organisations must not make claims that they cannot back up. They believed that with marketing communications, companies do not need to substantiate their claims and felt that this form of communication, to market or to gain publicity, does not serve the purpose of CSC.

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<sup>24</sup> Greenwashing is a form of spin in which green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that a company's policies or products are environmentally friendly.

#### 5.1.4 Corporate Sustainability Reporting

Besides the other tools mentioned earlier that are used to communicate CS, informants have stressed that one of the primary channels when communicating CS is through reporting. Exemplified in corporate accountability, this supports the argument that companies have to be held accountable for their actions and as a way for stakeholders to track a company's performance (Wilson, 2003). Experts also stressed that it is important for organisations to report on their sustainability efforts since it serves as a form of accountability to stakeholders. Reporting is also a proactive way to establish and maintain relations with stakeholders. Experts insisted that if companies want the business to benefit optimally, strengthen the brand and be better prepared for issues and crisis management, then it is crucial for investors and stakeholders to get a better picture of the company. Here, stakeholder perception is stressed.

An expert within the area of sustainability reporting highly recommended that companies<sup>25</sup> should comply with the recommendations set out by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) because it is a standardised way of reporting sustainability through a list of recommended indicators of measurements. According to the informant, GRI is also a sustainability reporting guideline endorsed by the UN Global Compact. The expert added that by following this guideline, companies are comparable to one another even through the value chain. It is also interesting to note that other informants have cited the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) that companies can use as reporting guidelines. An informant also mentioned the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) as the leading advocate on sustainable development. The purpose of sustainability reporting is so that organisations gain legitimacy from the checks that they perform, if it is reviewed internally or externally. The voluntary compliance of these guidelines can be seen as 'worthy' by their stakeholders (Waeraas, 2009). This bears resemblance to the certifications issued by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) to companies that have complied with the standards set out by the body.

Companies around the world are obligated by law to report on their financial status (annual reports) but this is has not been the case for CSR or sustainability reports. However, informants believe this will begin to change. An expert mentioned that it has started to be a requirement by the Swedish government for all Swedish government owned companies to submit sustainability reports. The sustainability report usually comprises the economic, social and environmental performances of the company. An informant said that it is advisable to have these reports separate and if a company chooses not to incorporate them together, then at least have all three elements covered in the same report. In other words, to publish the reports simultaneously as, according to one informant, it will be easier to manage and communicate. According to the informants, sustainability reports

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<sup>25</sup> Currently, there is no law that requires companies to report on their sustainability efforts. These reports, if published by companies, are largely done voluntarily.



are targeted at everyone and anyone who is interested, but mainly customers and investors. Experts asserted that by issuing these reports, it leads to more **attention** and also allows the organisation to receive **feedbacks** from their stakeholders through direct engagements (Cutlip et al. 1994). An expert from Sweden noted that not many organisations in Sweden are good at receiving feedbacks from reports and that this is something they should work on.

Sustainability reporting<sup>26</sup> is still not mandatory nor required by the government, it is up to the companies at their discretions to provide these information. Moreover, with different guidelines on how to report CS results, there is not really any ‘true’ standard on how to report these measurements. In other words, companies may choose the reporting guideline that best suits them. This will also suggest that stakeholders will perceive a company’s sustainability reporting ‘genuine’ if they conform to a reporting guideline/ are endorsed by a body that they themselves consider as legitimate (moral legitimacy).

With the various kinds of information that are required to execute sustainability activities and reports, consolidation with the various departments within the organisation is crucial. Again, Signitzer and Prexl (2006) have earlier suggested that public relations department should undertake this task since they have established relationships with the internal publics and the expertise in internal communication. My experts said:

*“All departments should be involved. For example, with the sustainability reports one has to work with production, human resource, procurement, etc. All departments are involved in some way. Communication departments are often the project manager driving the project.”*

*“Communicating sustainability efforts require participation from various departments such as industrial, business to business, production, environment, health and safety, human resource, finance, legal and tax, business owners, etc. There are many players.”*

Here, informants have underscored that CS is not an undertaking that belongs to any specific department. However, when it comes to communicating CS, next to the communications department, the second most important division that contributes to CSC is the environmental department. Communication with the environmental department is essential because they are the ones responsible for supplying statistics, ideas for improvements and maintaining good relations with authorities. This next feedback supports Signitzer and Prexl’s (2006) opinion that although environmental or sustainability managers certainly have detailed knowledge about a company’s processes towards CS, they do tend to lack the communicative expertise that public relations practitioners possess:

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<sup>26</sup> A quick check nowadays on any multinational corporation’s website will reveal a dedicated section on the sustainability efforts they are engaging in. In these sections, they will usually include the sustainability goals and reports. Different companies report differently but it seems that more are incorporating their economic, environmental and social performances into one all-encompassing report. It is important to highlight that the economic aspects in the sustainability reports are not as detailed as the financial reports that companies are obligated to submit annually.

*“At the previous company I worked for, the people at the Health & Safety Environment department owned the relationship with regulating bodies who conduct audits and issue permits that provides the licence to operate. They are key stakeholders. At [Company X], the environment department is responsible for recycling and messaging activities, renewability of products and lots of information and data analysis. They are experts and will keep track of the best practice. They have a big role to play like funnelling information to the communications department”.*

From my interpretation, experts contend that one of the vital tasks for the CSC practitioner is to **coordinate** communication to ensure a constant flow of information within and outside the organisation (open system). Like Signitzer and Prexl (2006), informants asserted that the public relations department has the competence to consolidate all the information required to publish these sustainability reports, particularly with the environmental department as they already have established relationships with these stakeholders within the organisation. Furthermore, coordination and consolidation are key in CSC, not just externally but internally as well. The public relations function is essential when communicating sustainability efforts as organisations have to work as a corporation. With the skills in communication and relations, the public relations department must engage all other departments to work towards the same goal.

## **5.2 Getinge Management Perspectives**

### **5.2.1 Views on Corporate Sustainability at Getinge**

Managers are aware that sustainability is one of the Group's core values. They associated sustainability with “*long-term commitment*”, “*looking after the next generations*” and “*environment focused*”. When asked about the differences between Corporate Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility, managers have very mixed opinions.

*“Nothing really. It's kind of the same thing. Sustainability in our company is part of CSR. So it is more or less under the same heading”.*

*“CSR is a lot about how you treat your employees. And how you treat stakeholders to your corporation. Sustainability has a lot to do with the environmental aspect and responsibility of making sure that what we deliver to the next generation is actually is more than what we receive when we were born with, so to speak”.*

*“I would say sustainability means a long term commitment that we would do with initiatives that we would go forward while CSR would be more short term to me at least where we take responsibility when something happens”.*

It is interesting to see different perceptions of these two concepts even among the managers in an organisation with sustainability as one of their core values. While some managers think that CS and CSR actually mean the same thing, others stress environment as the focus in CS and employees in CSR. This leads me to wonder if an organisation can effectively manage CS strategies when the management (employees) do not have a collective understanding of what these concepts mean. One can question if employees know where the organisation is heading and what are the specific issues Getinge is working on.

Informants said that it is important for organisations to work with sustainability efforts but they have provided different reasons why organisations should work with it.

*“One thing is embedded in the value of the company, what you stand for, what kind of company you are trying to become. And to take responsibility towards the society in the company is very much aligned with our values and targets. For that perspective as employer branding it is extremely important”.*

*“From an internal point of view, I think it is important because younger employees they will put more and more emphasis on the corporation to actually address sustainability issues. From an external point of view, I'm also convinced that we will see more and more demands on us in terms of products and solutions*

*we deliver that they are sustainable. Customers, the environment, governments, the authorities will put pressure on us to deliver more sustainable solutions”.*

*“I think it has always been important. But I think the focus has been higher in the last seven years. It’s been a fashion to have it. It’s been a prerequisite to have it because of the shareholder’s demands”.*

Managers have highlighted the importance of branding and meeting demands as two key factors for organisations to work with sustainability. While this might just be the view on how organisations should work with CS, it is my opinion that this perception will form their impressions of how CS should be driven at Getinge as well. While it is no surprise that meeting demands is one of the reasons to work with CS, what is worth noting is that managers believe that by **branding** itself as a sustainable company, an organisation will be able to differentiate itself among the masses. My interpretation is that managers believed that by promoting the positive attributes, the organisations will be able to provide what society wants (cognitive legitimacy).

### **5.2.2 Corporate Sustainability Strategies at Getinge**

There is a strong awareness about the Group’s sustainability strategies among my informants but the company’s environmental ambitions took centre stage. Managers stated that one of Getinge’s primary focus is to reduce water and energy consumption in their products through better design and product development. My analysis of the feedbacks from managers showed that CS strategies at Getinge are primarily product oriented with much focus on the environment even though informants have previously acknowledged that sustainability does not just concern the environment. Further, managers revealed that the decision to work with sustainability strategies was decided by the board and group management:

*“It was decided by the board in conjunction with the group executive and vice president. It’s really a top-down decision and it is also one decision that is very much supported by the employees”.*

*“I think it is group management who has decided that but it also comes from the demand from people who are dedicated in the organisation and want the company to work in a sustainable way. It is not just a top-down decision but also from employees”.*

While it seems that the board at Getinge has been driving sustainability strategies in the organisation, managers also believe that even though this might be considered a top-down approach, stakeholders within the organisation are also supporting this effort<sup>27</sup>. Here, one can see that the dominant coalition has set the

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<sup>27</sup> This ‘consensus’ shared by stakeholders within the organisation supporting CS strategies were the opinions provided by managers. Since this research is only concerned with the perspectives from these managers, I will not be able to establish if stakeholders are indeed supportive of the strategy.

overall goals in the organisation (Grunig, 1992; Windahl et al., 2009). However, it seems that this dominant coalition has somehow selected a ‘cause’ which conforms to the norms accepted by the society. Managers were then asked why Getinge needed to work on sustainability strategies:

*“I believe we have to, both the society will demand that from us but also future employees will expect that from us as a company. And thirdly, I believe in many cases, sustainability is also profitability”.*

*“There are a lot of things we can do. The view has to be holistic and not just look into [XX]<sup>28</sup> which is only for products. We have to look at other areas as well if we gonna really really communicate sustainability in a broader perspective”.*

*“I think we already are working with sustainability. We are continuously doing it because we need to be competitive. And we do it from the point of the biggest resource we have, the people in the company”.*

Managers asserted the need to meet demands from the society and to differentiate themselves from the other players in the market. However, it is worthy to note that one of the quotes above from a manager from the marketing department reflects a sentiment that Getinge has plenty of room to improve in sustainability. Managers have also claimed that they do not feel that the company is currently under a lot of pressure from stakeholders to work with sustainability issues because their core business is to save lives. But they admitted that they cannot expect this to go on forever and that soon stakeholders are going to demand that Getinge begin to deliver sustainable solutions.

Managers remarked that by working with sustainability strategies, Getinge will be able to better position itself as a company both as a partner and also in winning tenders. They cited costs as a challenge for the organisation because Getinge is a profit driven company. Managers added that while it might be good for the company in the long run, investing in sustainable solutions will incur substantial costs initially. This in their opinion will not reflect well on their annual profits/ reports. Here, one can argue whether Getinge is abiding to the three basic principles (environmental, social and economic) of sustainable development. Because while a company still needs to make a profit, they have to ensure that their financial responsibilities also contribute to the environment and society.

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<sup>28</sup> Getinge’s environmental design concept.

### 5.2.3 Corporate Sustainability Communications at Getinge

Getinge (Infection Control) currently does not communicate their sustainability strategies<sup>29</sup> but managers suggested that once protocols are in place they will start communicating. Similar to the need for Getinge to work with sustainability, managers also mentioned that it is important for the company to communicate these efforts:

*“Yes. It’s important. It can also differentiate yourself as an employer”.*

*“We can use it for the employer branding and product branding. And I am strongly convinced that there will be question in the future about it”.*

*“I fundamentally believe that sustainability is a topic or theme which is of high importance to many companies in many industries. Certainly company like ours, I definitely believe that this is going to be an important parameter when it comes to competition”.*

Feedbacks resembled the earlier comments when asked why organisations should work with CS efforts. Emphasis on **meeting demands** and **differentiation** (competitive advantage) are main reasons why Getinge should communicate these strategies. Managers implied that by communicating, an organisation will be able to use it as a branding tool to set itself apart from competitors by creating an identity. Fundamentally, it seems that CSC in their opinion is about advertising which challenges Heide et al.’s (2005) idea that identity should be a result of interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders, as well as the organisation’s understanding of their stakeholders.

My interpretation is that one can also see that the focus on dialogue is clearly lacking from these managers. Their recommended strategies suggest that stakeholders are not supported during the value creation process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Instead, Getinge intends to acquire legitimacy through conformance. This is of no surprise considering that Getinge’s primary focus is on marketing communications than any other form of communications.

My views are further supported when managers mentioned that Getinge has limited and informal tools to receive feedbacks or create dialogues with their stakeholders. Communicating sustainability has also not been a priority for the company. Hence, I do wonder how much feedback or dialogue Getinge managers have received/ conducted to have formed the opinion that Getinge will be the preferred choice of company to work for even if there are other players in the market working with sustainability. And more importantly, how much input from

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<sup>29</sup> However, Getinge Group first started to incorporate sustainability reporting (environmental, social and financial responsibilities) in their 2008 annual report. In the latest annual report for 2010, Getinge Group has for the first time started to provide environmental data for CO<sub>2</sub>, recycled waste, harmful waste and solvent emissions. In addition, according to Getinge Group’s latest corporate newsletter, a plan for external communication of their environmental commitment will be developed together with the marketing departments in each business area during the autumn of 2011.

stakeholders contributed to the company's sustainability goals and support their strategies?

Furthermore, what is worth noting from these feedbacks is that the first two quotes from informants managing HR have specifically stressed the social (employment) aspect while other informants not working with HR did not bring up this topic. This suggests that different departments within the organisation have different focus depending on the area of their specialisation. Hence, with sustainability as holistic approach that involves the entire organisation, Grunig (1992) and Signitzer and Prexl (2006) have recommended that the PR practitioner with the expertise to coordinate information and manage relations to be responsible of CSC.

Managers acknowledged that communication is an area Getinge needs to improve on and that someone should be managing communication and CSC. However, they were unsure which tasks the communication person should undertake or placed under which department. This could be because there are currently no defined communications function (except for marketing communications) or employee who can meet the qualifications of the six competitive advantages suggested by Signitzer and Prexl (2006). Managers added that it is the management's responsibility to manage sustainability strategies and specifically stated that the Group Executive Board should own the issue.

Lastly, managers have mixed views on the topic of transparency. On the one hand, they believed that Getinge can be very transparent and expressed willingness to disclose information about environmental and social performance data to the public<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, they were sceptical about revealing too much information:

*“If we were to do a life cycle analysis on our equipment, I would expect that one of the key reasons to run such a study is so that we can share it with the public. And of course we can use that to show that we are making improvements. We have nothing to hide”.*

*“I think information on statistics about our life cycle analysis can be too sensitive to be revealed. I'm thinking about our competitors. So I think we need to be very careful.”*

Reporting on the company's performance is a form of corporate accountability which allows organisations to be perceived as responsible, credible and strengthens the relationships with their stakeholders (Wilson, 2003). But based on the scepticism from the second feedback, one can wonder if the issue of 'sensitive information' is a factor to consider in CSC. Researchers have been stressing the need for organisations to be transparent but where does one draw the line to how much information is too much to the extent that it might jeopardise a company's performance and competitiveness?

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<sup>30</sup> Financial reporting is mandatory.

### **5.3 Two Perspectives in Focus**

This summary will provide the reader with a comparison of the findings from communication experts and Getinge managers with additional analysis.

My research revealed that experts agreed that CS needs to encompass the organisation's environmental, social and economic performance while managers' perception of CS is environmentally inclined. Moreover, experts have understood CSR as the social aspect in CS whereas managers have mixed perceptions with some considering CSR and CS as interchangeable concepts and others CSR as employee focused. Furthermore, managers' feedbacks on the areas where CS should focus is related to their respective area of specialisation. What is also worth noting is that none of the managers have mentioned the need to consider the company's economic performance in CS. My analysis showed that the perspectives from experts correspond to the ideas demonstrated in the literature. This means that the varied opinions at Getinge can only imply a lack of awareness and consensus of what CS should include.

Experts stressed the need for the organisations to embody CS as a business philosophy which must be integrated into their business operations which in turn can provide them the "licence to operate" and also a competitive advantage. While also focusing on creating a competitive advantage, managers see it as a branding tool that can be used to meet the demands from their customers. Even though both perspectives suggest the acquirement of pragmatic legitimacy, they are fundamentally different in the sense that experts also see the need for the organisation to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process while managers would use impression management to respond to their needs. This again suggests that a focus on CSC at Getinge is lacking, a function crucial particularly with the size of the company and sustainability as a core value. It can be questioned if sustainability strategies (in annual reports and code of conduct) are understood by managers.

Regarding reasons for communicating CS strategies, experts expressed relations to facilitate communications, open-dialogue to foster relations, build reputation, show accountability, earn legitimacy, give credibility and coordinate information as key reasons. Their opinions expanded the core concepts exemplified in the DART model where pragmatic legitimacy can be acquired in CSC when co-creation is applied. In addition, public relations strategies I have identified also support their arguments.

Similar to the feedbacks earlier on why organisations should work with CS strategies, managers again focused on meeting demands, branding and marketing when communicating CS strategies. They also shared that CSC can be used as a tool to set itself apart from competitors and give it a competitive advantage. This further reinforced the notion that seeking this form of legitimacy does not pay much emphasis on transparency, relations and dialogue where the stakeholder opinions and participation are not necessary in company strategies and that stakeholder perceptions can be shaped by portraying the organisation in a favourable way. Furthermore, communication through branding resembles the



public information model in public relations where “truth and honesty” is not necessary.

I have learnt that at Getinge, neither a strategic communications nor a public relations function exist in the organisation. I consider this to be the reason why the lack of consensus in CS, focus to engage stakeholders in a dialogue and decision-making process is not a priority on their list. In addition, managers indicated that the decision to work with CS strategies is still a top-down initiative. This might also suggest that involvement is restricted to a limited number of employees and not everyone is “onboard”.

In terms of communication, experts claimed that sustainability reporting is not only useful at showing accountability but also provides the organisation a useful tool to reach out to its stakeholders. They added that the organisation should also seek third party verification when publishing sustainability reports from established agencies to verify that the reports are credible. My analysis shows that this adds a new dimension to corporate accountability. Not only is the organisation seeking legitimacy by reporting (transparency), it is also seeking legitimacy by associating itself with respected entities. Since the purpose is to “show”, it also contributes to image creation. Hence, corporate accountability in the context of sustainability reporting carries with it two forms of legitimacy. First level pragmatic legitimacy through the organisation’s willingness to disclose information and level two moral legitimacy through the reputation of the endorsing agencies. This begs the question of how third party agencies are perceived by stakeholders, how it affects a company’s sustainability report and if a strategic alliance with a reputable third party agency is crucial. In other words, how would the “piggy backing” backlash if an agency were to be found illegitimate?

	Pragmatic Legitimacy	Moral Legitimacy	Cognitive Legitimacy
Co-creation	CE	X	CE
Impression Management	GM	CE	GM

Figure 4. Table depicting types of legitimacy acquired through either co-creation or impression management. CE denotes communication experts, GM for Getinge managers and X for Not Applicable.

So what do all these mean to the practice of CSC? From my analysis, I have discovered that perspectives from experts and managers have shown that the three types of legitimacy I have identified can be acquired when practising CSC and is dependent not just on the perceptions held by employees but also the resources available (i.e. the type of communication function available in the company).

Experts have shown that legitimacy should be acquired through co-creation where stakeholder engagement is crucial. This might prove to be a challenge for large organisations like Getinge due to the wide variety of stakeholder groups to consider and engage. Hence, it is even more crucial that CSC has to be managed by competent expert communications persons or departments. As established in this study along with recommendations from Signitzer and Prexl (2006), the public relations profession is suitable in managing this task through dialogue, relations and even coordination.

Corporate sustainability is an effort that involves the entire organisation. Access and input to strategies on how the organisation can improve is crucial. Like the open system, all parts are dependent on one another. Hence, co-creation provides a convincing case for acquiring pragmatic legitimation. The co-creation model sees stakeholders as co-creators of meaning, and communication as what makes it possible to agree to shared meanings, interpretations and goals. This perspective is long-term in its orientation and focuses on relationships among publics and organisations. Publics are not just a means to an end. Publics are not instrumentalised but instead are partners in the meaning-making process (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, it calls for the need of transparency. This transparency creates an arena for honesty and openness which even public relations models have yet to guarantee. Only when relationships are based on honesty, then a platform for genuine dialogue can be established and relationships can be further strengthened contributing to the maintenance of good reputation.

## 6. Concluding Discussion

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This study has given an account of corporate sustainability (CS), demonstrated the concepts associated with corporate sustainability communications (CSC) and provided perspectives from communication experts and Getinge managers on the subject.

As demonstrated from the literatures, CS is a management concept that challenges companies to rethink their operations in considering their environmental, social and economic performances with the primary goal to ensure continuity. The management of CS strategies requires the participation and cooperation from various (if not all) stakeholders in the organisation in ensuring that these three performance areas are synergised. In addition, understanding from both internal and external stakeholders is needed for the organisation to be found legitimate for their actions. Hence, a strategic approach to CSC is crucial in managing the relationship and dialogue required in the legitimation process.

However, this study revealed that not all my informants subscribe to the same ideas. Findings showed that experts and managers have different perspectives on what CS entails and the reasons for communicating CS strategies are rooted in different motives. This was exemplified in Figure 4 illustrating the different strategies when seeking legitimacy.

Returning to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that experts consider the three key performance areas prerequisites in CS. The primary objective for communicating CS strategies is to show accountability. This function, in their opinion, maintains relations and facilitates dialogues with all stakeholders, a process essential for the organisation to earn legitimacy.

Then we have Getinge, an international organisation that has sustainability as one of their core values. Perspectives from managers in the company showed a lack of consensus which areas CS should focus on. Furthermore, branding and meeting demands were cited as motivating factors for working with CS. Similarly, managers hold the opinion that by communicating (or branding to be more specific), the organisation will be able to meet demands and provide Getinge a competitive advantage by differentiating itself. The lack of a strategic communication role (and efforts) at Getinge may provide an explanation as to why the perspectives from my two groups of informants differed.

From my study, both sets of perspectives on CSC revolve around the idea for the need to acquire legitimacy and manage the company's reputation (image & identity) through stakeholder perceptions. However, my analysis showed that there are two ways in accomplishing that. On the one hand, I have experts managing this perception through co-creation with stakeholders. On the other, managers would like to acquire this legitimacy by constructing images of positive attributes through impression management. Furthermore, experts take a pro-active

approach and insisted that organisations have a responsibility to change the way the society looks at communities and take environmental considerations seriously. Whereas, managers take a more re-active approach and sees it as a way of meeting demands.

In my opinion, what sets these two perspectives apart is that opinions from experts incorporate the need to earn legitimacy through co-creation when managing CSC. This strategy is long-term and requires the active management and participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Hence, the lack of open-dialogue and relationship when communicating CS strategies will have major implications on the practice. CS as a concept, and even CSC as a practice, might end up being a meaningless concept, or even worse be associated with greenwashing.

During the course of this research, many interesting issues were discovered and raised. In my opinion, these three are worth reiterating. Firstly, the novelty of sustainability reporting. While I too agree that sustainability reporting might serve as a form of ‘fact check’ for stakeholders, I do wonder if there is a possibility for over-exposure for these companies. That is to say, that they are more open, vulnerable and subjected to increased scrutiny and prone to ‘copycating’ from competitors? As sustainability reporting is enjoying its spotlight, will it only be a matter of time before it suffers the same fate as annual reports where false information will undermine its credibility (e.g. Lehman Brothers)? Also, will companies be perceived as illegitimate if they do not have the resources to invest in sustainability reporting?

Secondly, how does one identify an organisation that is genuinely committed to sustainability and one that is just using it as a branding tool? Is this a valid argument in the society or will we end up blindly giving into all claims (e.g greenwash)? How does one go about discovering a company’s real motives? As Fredriksson (2008) suggested, marketplace rhetoric still dominates in social responsibility communication.

Thirdly, this study has demonstrated that there is a long tradition of adopting new concepts both within the corporate and academic spheres. It has been exemplified that informants have mixed opinions about what CS consists. Already there are new concepts like CSV (Created Shared Value) looming on the business horizon. Question is are we all working towards the same goal or is our path to fulfilling sustainability obstructed by too many exit signs?

CS is a business concept that integrates environmental, social and economic performances in an organisation. It challenges us to rethink the notion of our existence in the society and participation in organisational life. Unlike CSR, CS stresses the need for corporate actors to consider the needs of future generations. Thus, this calls for a change in mindsets and communications has a central role to promote understanding and gain support from the society. Hence, with all due respect to Milton Friedman, I do not agree that the social responsibility for businesses is just to increase profits. Increased awareness that there are better ways to conduct business will render this idea void. Uprising and activism (like the ongoing Occupy Wall Street movement) will force not just governments but corporations to rethink society’s expectations of them.

In short, this research showed that when managing CSC, experts underscored that fostering relations with stakeholders is key to effective communications. Communications must be in the form of open-dialogue where stakeholders also have access to the organisation's decision-making process. Only when the organisation is open for new ideas and willing to learn about the ways it can improve its operations, it can adapt and change. Change is essential when working with CS because room for improvements is endless. By adapting to the norms set out by society, the organisation earns legitimacy and is provided with the 'licence to operate'. Unlike marketing, it has been argued in this study that PR is a function that can effectively execute CSC because practitioners have the expertise to manage legitimation with dialogue and relations.

Finally, I hope this research in this new area has contributed to a better understanding of CSC, some 'food for thought' for Getinge managers and provided insights to the legitimate practice of CSC.

### ***6.1 Research Limitations & Further Research***

The objective of this research is to exemplify the concept of CSC through perspectives from communication experts and Getinge managers. As a new phenomenon, CSC poses limitations in terms of scope in this research while opening up opportunities for future ones.

Firstly, perspectives from experts should be placed in the context of the industries and countries they represent. That is to say, their views are not meant to imply that their opinions on the practice of CSC are applicable across all businesses areas and regions. Furthermore, as mentioned before, experts who specialise in CSC are scarce and the lack of this expert knowledge affects the degree of our understanding on this topic both in research and practice. One can also question if what is preached is also practiced.

Secondly, the case study at Getinge does not aim to suggest that the findings demonstrate how CSC is generally practiced in most organisations but rather to understand how CSC is perceived by managers at Getinge. In retrospect, a case company that is more active in sustainability efforts would provide more nuanced insights into CSC objectives, as well as why and how they are communicated.

Finally, this study has sought to understand CSC from the organisation's perspective. Another angle that is worthy of looking from that may provide a more well-rounded understanding of CSC is from the external stakeholders' perspectives, primarily B2B and customers. This will in hopes of furthering our knowledge on whether sustainability strategies from organisations actually affect stakeholder's perceptions of the company and to what extent it contributes to an organisation's legitimacy.

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## Appendix

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### ***Interview Guide for Communication Experts***

#### **General**

1. Has there been any major change in the society that has affected how companies operate?
2. How do you see Public Relations today compared to 10 years ago?
3. What are the new challenges?  
\*Can you tell me more about the meanings of the terms 'Sustainability' and 'Sustainable Development'?
4. How new is the sustainability/ sustainable development phenomenon?
5. What is Corporate Sustainability? How new is it? What does it entail?
6. Is it important for organisations to engage in sustainability efforts?
7. Can you give examples of cases where it succeeded or failed?
8. To what effect does engaging in Corporate Sustainability contribute to a company's overall performance/ goals? Any examples?  
\*Can you tell me what you know about Corporate Social Responsibility?  
\*What is the difference between Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability?
9. Why are organisations now focusing more on the concept of sustainability?
10. What is the outlook for CS?
11. What do companies put value on when practising CS?
12. How much of these stem from genuine concerns for the welfare of the environment and society or is this just a PR stance to sway the public's opinion about an organisation?

#### **Communication**

13. Is it important for organisations to communicate their sustainability efforts?  
Why? Any examples?
14. Do you see the need for organisations to communicate these efforts? Why?
15. Who does one communicate CS to? Who are the stakeholders/ audiences/ publics for an organisation?
16. What are the aims in communicating CS? Are those aims different from other PR activities?
17. How does one communicate CS? What kind of tools/ channels do organisations use?
18. Are there different approaches for different kinds of businesses?
19. What kind of role does a communication department play in terms of CS? Are there other departments involved?

20. What are the responsibilities of an organisation's environmental department in terms of communication?
21. When communicating CS, do PR professionals have to possess certain expertise or skills, in comparison to other forms of strategic communication (e.g. internal communication)?
22. Is CS communication different from other types of communication? Is the role of the communicator different?
23. How are stakeholders to know that CS is not another marketing gimmick?
24. What will prevent stakeholders from associating CS with terms such as 'window dressing', 'green marketing' or 'greenwashing'?
25. Is CS just a fad that will wear off overtime, like CSR, or will it stay for good for many generations to come?

### **Reporting**

26. How important is it for an organisation to report on sustainability efforts it is undertaking? Is it necessary?
27. How does one report? Which tool/ channel does one use?
28. What is a Sustainability Report?
29. To whom is this report targeted at?
30. What does an organisation hope to achieve by publishing Sustainability Reports?
31. Are there any forms of feedback from stakeholders?
32. Have environmental and social reports been replaced by Sustainability Reports?
33. Do you foresee more companies integrating environmental and social (CSR) reporting into their annual reports?
34. Do you know of any successful CS efforts/ strategies? Can you elaborate?

\* Questions were asked spontaneously.

## ***Interview Guide for Getinge Management***

### **General & Corporate Sustainability**

1. Can you describe your role at Getinge?
2. In your opinion, what is the difference between Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability?
3. How important is it for an organisation to work with sustainability efforts?
4. What is Getinge doing in terms of sustainability strategies?
5. Why do you think Getinge needs to work on sustainability strategies?
6. Who has decided that Getinge needs to work on sustainability strategies?
7. How can it be beneficial for Getinge to work with sustainability efforts?
8. What are the challenges that Getinge might encounter when working with sustainability efforts?
9. Who/ which department should be responsible for Getinge's sustainability strategies? Why?
10. How can Getinge improve on its sustainability efforts?

### **Stakeholders**

11. Are your stakeholders (e.g. employees, customers, suppliers, etc.) demanding/ expecting Getinge to work on sustainability issues? If YES, which areas/ aspects are they putting focus on and why do you think they are making these demands? If NO, why do you think this is the case?
12. Are there different demands/ expectations in different country markets? If YES, how are they different and why do you think they are different? If NO, why do you think they are similar?
13. How do you think your stakeholders perceive Getinge's reputation?
14. Why do you think your stakeholders perceive Getinge that way?

### **Communication**

15. Are there any tools in place to receive feedbacks from your stakeholders? If YES, why do you receive feedbacks and which tools are being used? If NO, why?
16. Are there any tools in place to create dialogues with your stakeholders? If YES, why are dialogues necessary and which tools are in use? If NO, why?
17. Do you think it is important for an organisation to communicate its sustainability efforts? Why?

18. In your opinion, do you think Getinge needs to communicate its sustainability strategies? Why?
19. How can Getinge communicate these efforts?
20. In terms of transparency, how much information about environmental and social performance is Getinge willing to disclose?
21. Do you think there should be a department/ person that should be responsible for communicating Getinge's sustainability strategies? Why and who should undertake this task?
22. What do you think Getinge can improve on in terms of communications and public relations?



## ***Biographies for Communication Experts***

### **Consultant in Investor Relations and Sustainability Communication**

#### ***Aspekta AB***

This expert's communication expertise includes experience in both the Nordic and international markets. He has worked at Exportrådet, as a project leader at DaimlerChrysler, as a consultant at Appelberg Publishing Agency and at Bonnier as their Nordic Marketing Manager. He is also the writer for the article "*Varför arbetar inte alla företag strategiskt med CSR- och hållbarhetsfrågor?*" that was mentioned in the beginning of this thesis.

### **Vice President Internal Communications and Supply Chain Operations**

#### ***Tetra Pak AB***

This expert is a senior business communications professional who previously led the Public Affairs and Corporate Communications function at the international head office of Borealis A/S, an international plastics solutions provider, in Denmark for several years. She has also worked in Human Resources, IT and Programme Evaluation supporting various organisations with business development, reorganisation and change programmes.

### **Group Director Corporate Communications**

#### ***Gulf Agency Company Ltd***

This expert joined the Gulf Agency Company Group in 2002 to set up its corporate communications department, overseeing the Group's strategic communications programme comprising public relations, advertising, events, corporate sponsorships and hospitality for the company's international network of more than 300 offices. Prior to her current position, she was a consultant with leading international public relations agency Hill & Knowlton. During her tenure she provided strategic PR counsel, corporate/ marketing communications and crisis and issues management services to major corporations across the financial, automotive, logistics, petrochemical and government sectors.

### **Anonymous**

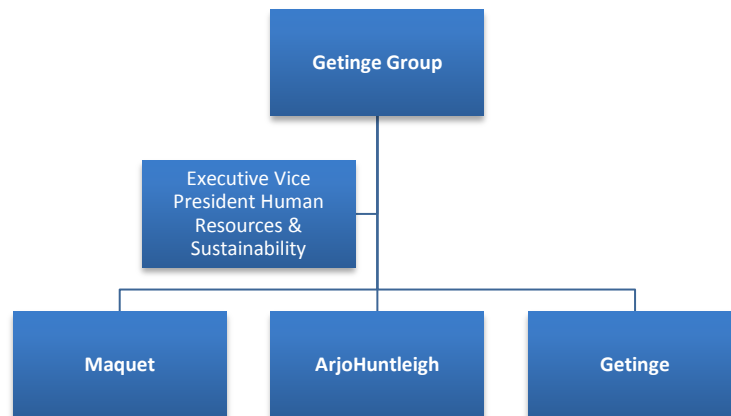
This expert has been working in the communications field for 11 years. After three years with a government statutory board, she joined the Singapore office of an American global public relations agency. Her primary area of practice at the PR agency included corporate reputation building and management, with a strong focus on media relations and advocacy communications. Thereafter, the informant left to join her current employer, a major chemical company, as public affairs manager for South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Her primary responsibilities are strategic counsel to business leaders, change and employee communication, crisis and issues communication, and corporate reputation management, where corporate social responsibility and the company's sustainability goals play important roles.

## Head of Communications

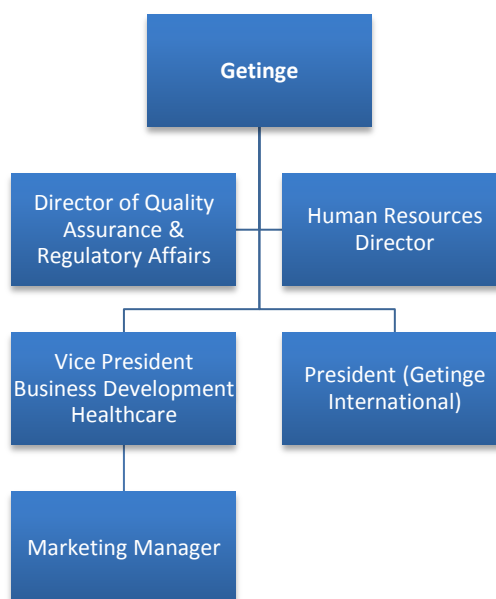
### *Skanska UK Plc*

This expert was responsible for public relations and communications at Kvaerner Construction & Trafalgar House for 11 years before heading Skanska's Corporate Communications in London. Skanska is one of the world's leading construction groups with expertise in construction, development of commercial and residential projects and public-private partnerships. In June 2011, Skanska was named UK's Best Green Company by The Sunday Times Green List.

## Managers from Getinge



Informant from Getinge Group



Informants from Getinge

## **Six Competitive Advantages of PR in CSC**

(Signitzer and Prexl, 2006, p. 17)

- *Differentiated target group analysis and segmentation* – For decades, public relations theorists have been concerned with developing elaborated means for stakeholder analysis and segmentation.
- *(Personal) knowledge of stakeholders* – As relationship building is part of the daily routine of public relations professionals, they already know the company's most important stakeholders, some of them even personally, which makes it easier for them to credibly communicate on CS.
- *Professional education and experience* – Public relations practitioners tend to have more competence to communicate the complex issue in a differentiated way to various stakeholders. They are also likely to have more time to do that than sustainability managers whose main function is to efficiently lead the company towards more sustainable behaviour.
- *Expertise in internal communication* – Many public relations specialists have expertise communicating with internal stakeholders, which is one of the key elements of sustainability management.
- *Consensus-orientation as reaction to conflicts* – The communication on corporate sustainability often implies a significant potential for conflict. In order to solve potential conflicts between companies and stakeholders, a platform for dialogue (as mentioned above) is suggested to take place within an ideal situation of mutual understanding, trust, confidence, and equal rights for all participants.
- *Possibility of acknowledging a 'public case' for CSC* – Through informational or educational campaigns, public relations professionals of many companies have already gained experience in 'communication for development'. Hence, the rather altruistic goal of contributing to bring about a more sustainable behaviour with society in general, is not completely new for them.