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A recipe for success?

A multiple case study of cross-organizational projects between multinational companies and non-governmental organizations

Authors:

Sofia Livman

Moa Bengtsson Fröberg

Supervisor:

Devrim Göktepe-Hultén

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Sofia Livman Moa Bengtsson Fröberg

Abstract

Title	A recipe for success? - *A multiple case study of cross-organizational projects between multinational companies and non-governmental organizations*
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Authors	Sofia Livman & Moa Bengtsson Fröberg
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Key words	Cross-organizational collaborations, project life cycle, project management, CSR, non-governmental organizations
Purpose	The purpose of this thesis is to examine what makes a cross-organizational collaboration between a multinational company and an NGO successful, by reviewing what factors play an important role in a project's life cycle, from a corporate perspective.
Theoretical perspectives	The theoretical framework is based on project management theories within the subjects of international business and cross-organizational teams. The project life cycle model is used to evaluate the impact of identified success factors. The concepts of NGOs, CSR and business strategy are further presented.
Methodology	A qualitative research strategy with semi-structured interviews and an abductive approach was used in order to fulfil the purpose. The study is a multiple-case study with a comparative approach.
Empirical foundation	The empirical data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with employees in a CSR-related managing position from three multinational companies. Five cross-organizational projects executed in collaboration with five different NGOs are analyzed. Empirical data has also been gathered from organizational documents and websites.
Conclusion	The study presents three main themes whose relevance and degree of consideration differ in the stages of the project life cycle – project incentives, stakeholders and applied working methods and tools. The themes present different factors that can facilitate project success. The conclusion is based on identified factors in the studied projects and previous research. The findings invite exploration of new and deeper research areas in the field.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The world is facing major issues in numerous areas, directly impacting the quality of our globe's citizens' lives. Climate change, equality issues and child famine are just a few examples of problematizations in the area of sustainability that we are currently experiencing. We must ask ourselves – whose responsibility is it to tackle these issues? Opinions on this may vary, but we can all take our responsibility in contributing to a better and more sustainable world. Hence, the subject of sustainability has during the past decades been put on the agenda for individuals, institutions and governments around the world. Businesses and companies are pushed to the leading front in tackling the issues, and since the launch of Agenda 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it has become even more evident that actions in the area are expected.

With the increased awareness regarding sustainability, the emphasis on the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has raised to a higher relevance than ever before, resulting in companies taking more initiatives to create and sustain activities related to the subject (Henley, 2013). But the expectations do not come easy. With companies being driven by profit, the legitimacy behind CSR-seeking activities has to some extent been questioned, referring to perceptions of lack of expertise and questioning of companies' true intentions (Margolis & Walsh, 2003).

To not only tackle the issue of legitimacy but to also enhance the opportunity to make an actual difference, a solution-oriented strategy has grown to take a larger part of the CSR-activities: collaborations with trustworthy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009). Non-governmental organizations have during the past decades gained a strengthened position as key players on the world market (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel & Yazji, 2010), and the societal purposes of most NGOs align with the trending focus areas of sustainability, making them highly knowledgeable within these areas. Given the influence of NGOs, collaborative projects with these entities are considered a promising strategy for multinational companies (MNCs) to ensure the CSR-strategy (Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009).

Cross-organizational collaborations enable companies to access new resources, exploit knowledge, and pursue value creating activities that might lie outside ordinary business operations, either through long-term partnerships or by conducting short-term collaborative projects (Grant, 2016). These particular partnerships are therefore nowadays a part of numerous companies' CSR-strategies.

The cross-organizational collaborations take many shapes. A partnership may be developed with a long-term plan, as for example ICA Sweden who partnered with The Red Cross during the Covid-19 pandemic (Red Cross - LinkedIn, 2020), or General Mills' collaboration with The Nature Conservancy to protect and preserve lands and water in the U.S. (Rackard & Gunsbury, 2016). However, the implementation of tangible activities and projects provide organizations with the ability to measure, evaluate and formulate strategies. To exemplify, Microsoft regularly performs CSR-activities in collaboration with NGOs by donating technology and software to NGOs and encouraging their employees to volunteer. They also host collaborative workshops and training to share IT-knowledge in the public and private sector (Microsoft, n.d.). Furthermore, examples of specific projects carried out in collaborations are Ben & Jerry U.K.'s collaboration with the NGO Stonewall by launching an ice cream flavor in honor of Stonewall's work to show support for marriage equality in the U.K. (Ben & Jerry U.K., n.d.), and Jollyroom and The Children Foundation who executed a collaborative project to improve school facilities in Ethiopia (Jollyroom, n.d.).

These particular examples of cross-organizational collaborative projects between companies and NGOs offer great potential for numerous stakeholders by tackling worldwide issues and compiling resolutions, while also allowing for all involved organizations to improve their legitimacy, resources, support and competences (Dahan et al., 2010). Furthermore, through the collaborations, multinationals are given the opportunity to enhance their own goals and strategies in relation to sustainable actions (Henley, 2013). The collaborations bring in an external source of expertise and knowledge, derived from the nature of NGOs (Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009). Moreover, NGOs are offered resources such as an extended network, finances and managerial knowledge (Poret, 2017). However, the partnerships do not only provide opportunities, but also present challenges (Tonnquist, 2016). With several different stakeholders, goals and resources, it is undoubtedly important for companies to facilitate the projects in proper manners. The usage of project management methods and tools are thus highly relevant in cross-organizational projects (Köster, 2009).

1.2 Problematization

Within the field of corporate-NGO partnerships, past research investigates the strategic reasons and implications for companies and NGOs to collaborate (Poret, 2017; Dahan et al., 2010; Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009). Since the partnerships are often established with diverging objectives, different access to resources, and varying visions and motivational factors (Chakravorti, 2015), the complex characteristics make mediating between two organizations a difficult task. It is thus advantageous for the multinational companies to be aware of what makes these projects successful (Köster, 2009). Although existing research presents a wide array of possible reasons behind *partnerships* between companies and NGOs as a part of the company's CSR strategy, as well as comprehensive analysis of cross-organizational *projects* in general, it is not as evident what companies can do to ensure successful outcomes of the projects with NGOs. There is thus a gap in research with focus on success factors in these particular projects. Nevertheless, scholarly articles do provide insights to generic conclusions on prerequisites vital for successful collaborations. However, deeper reviews of how companies put this into practice in collaborations with NGOs, and whether the chosen methods contribute to project success are not as extensive. Companies could thus benefit from assessing successful projects that have provided the possibility for companies to achieve their goals as envisioned in their strategy.

1.3 Purpose and research question

This thesis aims to investigate what factors make a cross-organizational project between a multinational company and an NGO successful, from the company's perspective. Project management literature offers evaluation methods by identifying tools and factors in the life cycle of a project that generate desired outcomes. By examining managerial actions and the development of collaborative projects through the researched projects' life cycle, we seek to identify factors and practices that contributed to the projects' success. The following exploratory research question is posed:

What factors are important for multinational companies to successfully execute projects with non-governmental organizational partners?

The study examines cross-organizational projects from the involved company's perspective. Participating multinational companies are Tetra Pak, AstraZeneca and Accenture. In order to identify the success factors throughout a project, we use the understanding of the project life cycle. The project life cycle is a theoretical model that refers to four stages: Initiation, Planning, Execution and Completion. We intend for the study to recognize success factors, and when in the different stages of the life cycle these can be used by companies to establish an environment facilitating project success. Furthermore, the study will hopefully spark interest in the topic and incentivize further research within the area.

1.4 Delimitations

This thesis includes certain delimitations. Firstly, the studied cases are limited to three companies in different industries, with examination of five projects. The scope of the study has been narrowed down to researching the topic from the company's point of view and emphasizing success factors for the company. This study further examines projects without considering the particular business year and will not consider certain resources and objectives specific for that year. Since these are subject to change and moderation, the results could possibly differ if this was considered. The investigated projects are mainly implemented through the Swedish affiliations, and all respondents are thus of Swedish representation. However, the actual projects and actions are carried out in various locations in the world, extending the international scope and impacts of the projects.

1.5 Disposition

The study is built upon a number of different chapters, all with their own purpose of contribution. The first chapter comprises an introduction to give an understanding of the research study and its purpose. Following, a literature review of used frameworks and research is presented. The methodological approach used when conducting the study is then described, followed by an empirical background that aims to give a comprehensive understanding of the studied companies and NGOs. The next chapter comprises the findings of the study. The material is then analyzed and followed by a final chapter with conclusion and recommendations for future research. Sources and references, and an appendix with the interview guide is found last in the paper.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Sustainability and corporate social responsibility

To examine cross-organizational projects between companies and non-governmental organizations, an understanding of what makes them an important component for a company is essential. These types of collaborations stem from the relevance of incorporating the aspects of sustainability in the business strategy, through CSR (Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009).

The term sustainability has recently increased in popularity and is a topic considered in all sorts of interactions – whether on a level regarding individuals, businesses or governments. The term itself was introduced in the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987, defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987, p. 16). It discussed sustainability similarly to the way it is discussed today, with focus on development, limited resources and environmental issues (Caroll, 2008). The concept of sustainability and sustainable development have since evolved. Even though the meaning of the broad term has given rise for worldwide debates, there is a general agreement on three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic sustainability, also known as the "triple bottom line" (Elkington, 2004). The triple bottom line suggests that sustainability is only achieved to its full extent at the intersection of the three dimensions (Elkington, 2004).

The pressure on all entities, especially companies, to take sustainable actions has brought attention to the concept of CSR as a vital part of the business strategy. Chandler (1962, p. 13) defines strategy as "the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary to carry out these goals". Strategy is thus connected to the course of actions to secure success, which for a business means achieving set objectives. To do so, businesses need a plan for *how* to reach their goals, which is done by identifying linkages between a company's resources and the external environment (Grant, 2016). Companies should thus develop and implement a strategy fitting their business, resources and area of operations (Omalaja & Eurola, 2011). The incorporation of sustainability has changed the classical formulation for business strategies and led to integration between CSR, strategic management and corporate governance (Caroll, 2008). CSR was introduced during the 20th century. It challenged the classical view of the firm, which implies that the company prioritizes the shareholders' interest (Caroll, 2008) The CSR-concept is often associated with Freeman's stakeholder theory, introduced in the 1980s (Caroll, 2008). The stakeholder theory argues that the responsibility of a company and its management is to create value for all stakeholders of the company: employees, suppliers, customers as well as the external world and environment (Freeman, 2002). This perspective is the ground for CSR-work, which seeks to positively impact the company's stakeholders (Caroll, 2008). To embody the aspects of sustainability, companies should thus integrate social, environmental and economic value pursuing activities into their business strategy (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). The activities are typically presented in specified documents, such as an annual sustainability report (Grant, 2016).

Although CSR-activities generally have a positive impact, the underlying reasons are at times questioned and have led to a suspicious mindset from the public. Such suspicions often regard the fact that occasionally companies contribute to the actual problematization themselves (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Adding this perspective, the company's response might thus be viewed as an obligation, and that the main purpose of the activities is to improve the company's reputation, rather than being motivated to make a difference. These mindsets impact the perception of the CSR-activities credibility (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Correspondingly, Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) mention that viewing CSR as a business case is to a certain extent generally accepted, but argue the need for considerations of CSR as a natural or societal case where the main focal points are environmental and social aspects respectively. Furthermore, Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) suggest that the business case often is prioritized by companies, unless there is external pressure to emphasize the others. Porter and Kramer (2006) present arguments for why companies engage in CSR in terms of the activities' contribution to the business strategy. They suggest that rather than making an honest attempt to "do good", the activities work to strengthen the reputation among external and internal stakeholders. The activities could thus strengthen the support from external stakeholders to pursue ordinary business activities, even though the impact might be viewed as negative (Porter & Kramer, 2006). These arguments signal the strategic matter of CSR. Conflicting public perceptions – some meaning that as long as the activities have a positive impact, the motivation does not matter, and some questioning the legitimacy as well as the actual results from the activities – have thus emphasized the view of CSR as a significant and strategic move (Grant, 2016). How companies select, present and execute the CSR-activities will influence the outcome and possibility to appraise the business objectives (Grant, 2016). Companies could strengthen their legitimacy, bring in key resources and envision their goals by collaborating with NGOs (Falkenberg & Peloza, 2009; Henley, 2013).

In order to understand the collaboration between companies and NGOs, we must first understand what an NGO is and how it is defined in this study. The term non-governmental organization has many varying definitions available. NGOs are, as the name discloses, organizations with no governmental interference. Their purpose is to tackle social and humanitarian issues, including but not limited to equality, human rights, climate change, and justice (MSB, 2013). Although their resources are often limited, their role as key players on the world market is nevertheless extensive. They have major influence on political decision makers, businesses and other stakeholders in the world (MSB, 2013). The definition by MSB (2013) is aligned with the definition by the United Nations NGO Relations and Liaison Service (n.d.): "a non-governmental organization (NGO) is a non-for-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good". Similar to the definition by the United Nations, 'non profit' is commonly included in the definition of NGOs in various business literature (Gordenker & Weiss, 1995; Salamon & Anheier, 1992). Although NGOs are often operating without a business case and are thus referred to as non-profit organizations, the term NGO can be used for profit generating organizations (Vakil, 1997). Hence, the terms non-governmental organization and non-profit organization shall not be used interchangeably. Although the pure definition of NGOs is converging, the main purpose of this study is not to define the term. However, a definition is still necessary. NGOs are hence defined in accordance to the described definitions of the United Nations (n.d.) and MSB (2013) as this appears to be two widely accepted definitions by two trusted institutions and a description suitable for the organizations included in the research.

2.2 Cross-organizational projects and project management

The partnerships between companies and NGOs are put to practice in different manners. Some partnerships might range over an extended period of time, maybe even indefinitely. Included in these collaborations, or implemented without considerations of a long-term partnership, are temporary projects bound by time and resources.

Prior to evaluating the success of collaborative cross-organizational projects, an understanding of the general definition and concepts behind business projects is necessary. The modern and global business environment is rapidly changing, implying that organizations need the ability to efficiently adapt and respond to said change, while continuing to drive the ordinary business forward (Grant, 2016). Forming temporary projects offers a possibility to do exactly so and has become an increasingly common organizational method (Tonnquist, 2016). A project is an activity where resources are coordinated in a unique setting to reach specified goals under certain constraints and is not part of an organization's routine operations (Turner, 2014). This structure allows for attempts to match resources and capabilities with the external environment, without disrupting the ordinary strategy, but rather to employ it (Tonnquist, 2016). This insinuates an organization's need to successfully carry out chosen projects. Discussing successful projects is often done based on Turner's model of the five functions of project management, which implies that the "magic triangle" of time, cost and quality, should be managed within the project scope and project organization (Turner, 2014).

Three main characteristics define a project: a project is risky, limited and unique. Each project carried out within an organisation is unique since it differs in at least a few aspects from previous projects (Köster, 2009). A project is subject to limitations and constraints, as for example budget, time frame and resources. These are allocated based on plans and estimations, indicating the relevance of thorough project planning (Köster, 2009). In combination, the unique setting and limitations compel uncertainty, making a project risky, complex and often unpredictable (Köster, 2009). Projects set in an international and outer-organizational context, for example involving international stakeholders, with a scope extended outside of cultural and geographical boundaries, include additional dynamics and an even more diverse setting. The risks in an international project are therefore typically higher (Köster, 2009). Adding to that, further factors contribute to the complexity of cross-organizational and international projects (Tonnquist, 2016). The changing global market includes strong competition, geographical distances, time differences and instabilities evolving from political, social or economic reasons. These can possibly disturb communication, lead to conflicts and stall decision making (Köster, 2009). Working with temporary structures in the form of projects is a response to those kinds of challenges (Tonnquist, 2016). Cross-organizational projects, implemented in collaboration with NGOs, are no exceptions in terms of strategic linkages to project management. By identifying requirements, managing stakeholders and communication as well as balancing aspects such as scope, budget, resources, risks and quality, the project management aims to meet the objectives of the project (Tonnquist, 2016). This is done through the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques at different points in time as the project proceeds (Köster, 2009).

The project life cycle presents a theoretical process of how a project proceeds forward in different stages. Although the life cycle of specific projects may vary due to organizational, industrial or technological aspects, the framework provides a basis applicable to all projects (Köster, 2009). The cycle helps to define managerial actions, tools and mindsets necessary in each stage to ensure smooth and successful transitions between the stages. A fulfilled cycle indicates project completion (Tonnquist, 2016). If a project is completed within the triangle of budget, time and scope with desired quality, the project is deemed to be successful (Tonnquist, 2016). To reach success, factors in the different stages play an important role.

The project life cycle provides an outline of projects in general, but length and scope of the stages vary with each project (Köster, 2009). The project life cycle consists of four stages.

1. Initiation
2. Planning
3. Execution
4. Completion

Initiation

In the first stage, the need of the project is identified, followed by consideration of the feasibility and determination of the project concept and plan (Tonnquist, 2016). In the initiating stage, the project manager is assigned her role, and ideally all respective project members are introduced to the project and their main tasks (Köster, 2009). Additional stakeholders are identified, and the project manager evaluates the influence and involvement of all stakeholders concerned by the project. The initiation stage should with advantage result in clearly defined tasks, roles and goals (Tonnquist, 2016). When each project member is up to date with what is expected, the project moves to the planning stage (Köster, 2009).

Planning

The ultimate goal of planning is to have a set project plan, including a time plan and identification of needed resources, examined and approved by the project group (Köster, 2009). This also includes planning for risks and continuously working with backup plans and possible actions for different kinds of situations that might occur (Tonnquist, 2016). In the planning stage, decisions regarding means of communication and conflict resolutions should also be determined (Köster, 2009).

Execution

The third stage of the cycle is typically referred to as the execution or controlling stage (Köster, 2009). Not only is the project implemented and executed but controlling and monitoring are also vital in this stage (Tonnquist, 2016). This means that schedules and budgets should be followed and identified, and possible emerging risks should be managed (Köster, 2009). A robust planning sets ground for the execution stage and impacts factors such as flexibility in terms of changing routes and responding to unforeseen events (Tonnquist, 2016). Further, additional stakeholders, resources and plans might be added (Köster, 2009).

Completion

The final stage of the cycle occurs when the project is finalized and executed. The project group is dissolved and plausible satisfactions as well as dissatisfactions are reviewed (Köster, 2009). This stage includes evaluation and analysis of the past process’ success and mistakes (Tonnquist, 2016).

In a study by Pinto and Prescott (1988), the importance of certain critical success factors over the stages of the project life cycle are examined. The study shows that in the initiating stage, the critical success factors are *project mission* and *client consultation*. This refers to the importance of clearly formulating goals for the project and communicating this with the client. In the case of partnerships between companies and NGOs this implies the importance of aligning the goals and visions of the organizations, as suggested by Renaudin (2016). Furthermore, this is supported by Chakravorti (2015), who identifies challenges such as the natural friction in the relationship due to incompatibility of organizational culture and lack of chemistry between key individuals. Additionally, Köster (2009) argues the importance of a *consideration of context* which refers to the diversity and complexity of international projects and their stakeholders. Considering the context further implies the consideration of the incentives and visions of entering a partnership.

In the second stage, the planning stage, of the project life cycle, Pinto and Prescott (1988) find that the *project mission* is still critical for the success of the project. Furthermore, *client acceptance* and *top management support* are also identified as critical at this stage, referring to the acceptance of the project by the customer and the recognition by top management in allocation of resources (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). Additionally, Köster (2009) lists *initial clarity of goals* and *establishment of smooth communication* as critical for the success of a project. With goals and means of communication being mainly decided upon in the planning stage, these factors are critical at this stage. Continuously, the aspect of culture impacts the planning (Köster, 2009). Chakravorti (2015) recognizes a challenge for NGO-corporate collaborations in the *compatibility of the organizational culture* which reconciles with Hofstede's (1994) explanation that differences in cultural factors, on both a national and organizational level, influence the nature of a collaboration between different organizations. Culture will not only impact the involved individuals, but the involved individuals impact culture as well (Hofstede, 1994). Hence, it is vital for organisations to acknowledge and manage these aspects while planning the project.

In the execution stage, Pinto and Prescott (1988) find that the *project mission* continues to be a critical success factor together with *trouble-shooting*, *schedule/plan* and *technical tasks*.

This implies the importance of managing the budget, time-frame, scope and quality of the project, following up the plan and allocating the correct technical resources for the project to be doable. In a cross-organizational project, both parties should preferably be involved in these aspects. This enables them to ensure that the project continuously aligns with the goals and purpose of both organizations and that no party gains excessive control of the project (Köster, 2009). This is further emphasized by the challenge identified by Chakravorti (2015) regarding the risk of shifting priorities, as well as by the identification of *client consultation* as critical by Pinto and Prescott (1988). When executing a project, unforeseen events are a possibility, highlighting the importance of trouble-shooting, but Tonnquist (2016) argues that by preparing and taking precautions such as thorough risk planning, the impact of risks can be minimized. However, Köster (2009) highlights the importance of *finding the balance between common methodology and flexibility* which provides a middle ground, where both planning for risk and handling emergent risks is acknowledged. Finding a common methodological approach to the execution of the project is dependent on the involved organizations working methods and preferences of specific individual stakeholders.

In the final stage, the completion, *technical tasks*, *project mission,* and *client consultation* are identified as critical (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). The common mission and the client's input are still vital, as in all the previous stages, in order to gain insights and learnings to the largest extent. Technical tasks highlight the importance of properly evaluating the success of the project execution and methods. Another aspect that may be considered in all stages but that becomes most evident in the completion stage, is that of *measurability of the value added to both organizations,* considering business value and social purpose. It is posed as a challenge to collaborative projects between companies and NGOs by Chakravorti (2015), who argues that both organizations must be able to measure the contribution made by the project. Only at the completion stage will the value added be fully understood.

To conclude, the importance of the *project mission* in all stages, as well as *client consultation,* highlights the importance of aligning goals and visions, as well as establishing trust and expectations in cross-organizational partnerships. Furthermore, Renaudin (2016) emphasizes the importance of "sincerity, conviction and good-will" throughout collaborations between

NGOs and companies in particular. Renaudin (2016) also argues the importance of the personal values of the representatives and decision makers at both the company and the NGO for the success of the partnership. This is further supported by the challenges identified by Chakravorti (2015) who concludes that "[t]he more reasons that each party can cite for entering into the relationship, the greater the likelihood that it will last, and contribute to strategic goals" (Chakravorti, 2015).

The aspects of *communication* and *monitoring and feedback* face divided opinions in existing literature. Pinto & Prescott (1988) do not recognise them as critical, but the importance of client consultation and trouble-shooting, also referred to as risk management (Köster, 2009), implies the importance of these aspects. Furthermore, the need for clear alignment of the project mission, and key individuals' impact, also suggests the importance of communication between the parties to facilitate success. Additionally, *establishment of smooth communication* is identified by Köster (2009) and Tonnquist (2016) as a factor for success in international projects, further emphasizing the importance of communication.

In addition to these success factors identified in the literature, the use of certain explicit project management tools and techniques as significant contributors to project success is investigated by Patanakul, Iewwongcharoen and Milosevic (2010). Patanakul, Iewwongcharoen and Milosevic (2010) suggest factors such as *communication plans, cost and time estimations, milestone analysis, work breakdown structure,* and *hierarchical structural schedules* to be of importance in various stages of the project. Using specific, developed tools could create a mutual understanding and insight which will impact the project's outcome (Tonnquist, 2016).

Key takeaways

- Increased awareness regarding sustainability has established corporate social responsibility as a vital component in business strategy.
- Collaborative projects in partnerships between companies and NGOs contribute to the CSR-strategy and provide mutual beneficial resource exchange. Companies can strengthen their legitimacy.

- The project life cycle consists of four stages describing the process of a project. It allows for identification of specific success factors at different points in the process as a project proceeds.
- Aspects such as the compatibility of organizational culture, traits of involved individuals, and alignment of visions and goals through a common project mission are identified as key success factors throughout the life cycle of the project.
- It is considered important to plan for risk at an early stage in order to manage the potential impacts, while still being able to quickly adapt to emergent risk as the project proceeds.
- The ability to measure the outcome and value added is critical in order to assure that the project was in fact successful.
- Different tools and techniques such as cost and time estimations, milestone analysis, and work breakdown structure may be used to facilitate success in different stages of the project life cycle.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research strategy

To answer the research question, a multiple-case study with a qualitative research method, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data-gathering method, was conducted. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth analysis of the data derived from conducted interviews, which helped us gain an understanding of certain social phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2018). The study objects are of major relevance for the final result since the conclusion is based on the opinions and experiences of the employees at the studied companies. The data is strengthened through the usage of additional sources (Bowen, 2009).

In this qualitative study, a literature review was conducted beforehand, providing an initial understanding of previous research on the topic. However, as empirical data was collected, the theoretical framework has been adapted as relevant insights occur during data collection. Thus, the conducted study takes an abductive approach. Certain success factors were identified in the literature review, whereas other factors became evident in the empirical work. On the grounds of that, contributions to the insights of success factors in different stages of the project life cycle led to adaptations of the initial framework. Through the abductive approach, we were able to merge the theoretical framework with the findings in the data (Bryman & Bell, 2018).

3.2 Research design

The research consists of a comparative multiple-case study with analysis of a selected number of projects. Case studies are beneficial when studying phenomena in a certain context, such as the projects (Yin, 2018). An instrumental case study was most suitable due to the aim to gain deep understanding of a specific concept (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, a comparative multiple-case study allowed identification of similarities and differences among the cases, and their relation to success (Bryman & Bell, 2018). In this study, representative cases were chosen. These types of cases serve as a representation of a wider phenomenon, in order to make an example of the general situation (Yin, 2018). Although generalizability is commonly criticized when it comes to case studies, the multiple case study provided a more generic picture of the project partnerships than a single case study would have (Yin, 2018).

3.3 Sample

The included projects were intended to be selected through purposive sampling, which indicates that the sampling was not conducted randomly but through a strategic choice (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Despite the intentions, due to the time and efforts required from the participants of the study, the willingness and ability to participate was however limited. The outbreak of the Covid-19 virus should also be considered, since this heavily constrained companies' ability to participate. As a result, the final sample is considered a combination of a purposive and a convenience sample (Bryman & Bell, 2018). We firstly identified companies that have collaborative projects with NGOs and listed these in order based on judgement of their relevance to the study, as well as our preferences and interest in the business area of the companies. The suggestions were based on typical case sampling where we sought to find cases that could be considered typical within the areas of interest (Yin, 2018). Additionally, the rankings were based on availability of secondary data on each company's website. We reached out with interview requests to company representatives and employees involved in the projects. Due to the sampling strategy, the validity of the study contains certain limitations, further discussed in the study's research quality.

The abilities of the respondents to provide insights regarding the project, their success, and their contribution to the CSR-strategy, is highly important. The more involved the person is, the deeper understanding of the projects and its process could be presented, which strengthens the validity of the analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2018). When listing potential participating companies, we identified key employees, deemed to have these insights, derived from the websites of the companies.

We sought to include three different companies that could present different types of possible projects. One participant was willing to present three projects, meaning the final selection beneficially consisted of five projects, divided among three companies. The conclusions are limited by a possible lack of variation in variables between the three cases deriving from Accenture, but the interviews were conducted in similar manners as the others, with focus on one project at the time, with the same questions. The studied case companies and respondents are presented in the table below.

Table 1 An Overview of Cases and Interviewees

Company	**Accenture**	**AstraZeneca**	**Tetra Pak**
Respondent	Ingrid Alexanderson	Jenny Engström	Helena Lindh
Role	Corporate Citizenship & Responsible Business	Brand Communication & Sustainability Manager	Environment Executive Nordics
NGO	Save the Children Plan International Ashoka	Barnens Rätt i Samhället	World Wildlife Fund
Interview date	14 May 2020 15 May 2020	15 May 2020	15 May 2020

3.4 Data collection method

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The main empirical evidence in the study has been collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives from the companies. Due to both geographical distance and the current Covid-19 outbreak, the interviews were conducted through video calls. Semi-structured interviews allowed us to keep a certain extent of flexibility, which generated a deeper insight to, and understanding of the respondents' experiences and ideas (Nyberg & Tidström, 2012). The interviews were rather informal, seen more as a conversation, with some predetermined questions as guidance. This enabled the respondents to speak rather freely, and follow-up questions were asked (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Due to the comparative nature of the research, a semi-structured approach was chosen above an unstructured approach to assure comparability of the different study objects (Bryman & Bell, 2018).

In order to validate the responses as a complement to note taking during the process, the interviews were all recorded and transcribed. To further validate the interviews, we were both present at all times. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, due to the mother tongue of all participants being Swedish, which provided a natural environment and minimized exclusion of vital information. Both the Swedish and English version of the interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

3.4.2 Additional documents

In the interest of identifying companies to reach out to, as well as assuring the ability to provide a contextual background regarding the projects, secondary data has been used as a complement to the semi-structured interviews. Various types of organizational documents and publicly available information from the companies' and NGOs' websites have been used. Additional sources ensure the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaningfulness of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Nonetheless, the purpose behind the documents had to be considered, since the organizational documents might exaggerate information the company wants to emphasize and provide little to no information on details not desired to be published (Bowen, 2009). Further, the documents might consist of insufficient details to properly measure the intended outcome. The interviews and additional sources such as press releases did however supplement this and enabled us to clarify any uncertainties with the respondents, as well as get further information about practicalities of the projects (Bowen, 2009).

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 Pattern matching

The study takes an abductive approach to theory and empirical observations, enabling us to go back and forth between the theory, data gathering and analysis. Hence, the data has primarily been analyzed through pattern matching. The research aimed to match a theoretical pattern with an observed pattern in the empirical data (Trochim, 1989). When applying pattern matching, the outcome may lack consistency between the theoretical and observed patterns. Possible reasons are inaccuracy in the theory or observations, or in some cases, both (Trochim, 1989). By conducting extensive interviews and using well established theoretical frameworks, the risk of inaccuracy was minimized. The theoretical pattern consists of the project life cycle theory and identified success factors from previous research, and the observed pattern consists of the success factors identified in the empirical data collection and analysis which the study aims to match together.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Analyzing documents is a systematic procedure with the purpose of reviewing and interpreting documents to add purposeful insights to the empirical evidence (Bowen, 2009). While conducting document analysis, documents with no academic research interfering are being assessed. Bowen (2009) exemplifies documents as among other, organizational reports, websites, press releases, and newspapers, all of which have been used in this study. Combined with conducted interviews, the study was able to find support in both types of data which enhances the quality of the interpretation and analysis (Bowen, 2009).

3.6 Research quality

3.6.1 Validity

A study's validity is evaluated in terms of the study's applicability to other cases, in other words to what degree the results enable generalizability, and if the results are based on what is intended to be measured (Bryman & Bell, 2018). Research method literature criticizes external validity of qualitative research, arguing limitations of generalizability and applicability of the qualitative study's results to other cases. In the case of this study, the time frame for both data collection, interpretation, and careful analysis was limited, and includes a small sample size which limits the possibility for generalization and applicability outside of this study (Nyberg & Tidström, 2012). However, this research aims to provide a deep understanding rather than a broad understanding and creates incentives for further research within the area.

Internal validity relates to whether the presented observations and their relevance match the theories developed. We must thus assess if the study measures what it initially intended to (Bryman & Bell, 2018). This study's internal validity is strengthened based on the relevance of the participating study objects. By conducting interviews, the internal validity is enhanced since it allowed us to ensure the data is applicable to the theories. Furthermore, conducting semi-structured interviews enabled us to ask clarifying follow-up questions which strengthens the internal validity further. The respondents' roles and tasks in the investigated projects are also of high relevance for matching the theoretical framework, and this is assured by interviews with relevant participants.

3.6.2 Reliability

The reliability of a study relates to the extent to which the study method can be repeated and lead to similar results in other conducted studies (Bryman & Bell, 2018). In qualitative research, biases and social context will negatively influence the reliability of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2018). In order to increase the replicability of this research, we have provided extensive and clear descriptions of the research approach and design, as well as the sample and the study objects. To further assure the reliability of this study, we have demonstrated the usage of the theoretical framework and methodological process. The study's reliability is facing limitations due to the nature of the interviews, which opened up for interpretations of the respondents' individual experiences, characterized by their role and position (Nyberg & Tidström, 2012). The recording of the conducted semi-structured interviews eliminates issues related to exclusion of vital information. Additionally, by attaching the interview guide, the replicability of the primary data gathering is enhanced.

Key takeaways

- For this study, a comparative multiple-case study was conducted.

- The study used a qualitative strategy with an abductive approach.
- The sample consists of representatives from three companies, providing insights to five different collaborative projects.
- Semi-structured interviews, organizational documents and press releases are used to provide both primary and secondary data.
- Through pattern matching, results are provided as a merger between theoretical patterns and observed patterns.
- The combination of the chosen methods seeks to enhance the validity and reliability of the study and its findings.

4 Empirical Background

The purpose with this section is to provide a contextual background of the studied companies and the nature of their projects with NGOs, as well as an insight to the NGOs considered.

4.1 Tetra Pak

Tetra Pak is a world leading company in packaging and processing of food and drinks. One of their most famous traits are the classical cardboard packaging, but they also offer equipment and process solutions in the industries of dairy, drinks, ice cream, cheese and pre-packaged food. Further, their services include machinery maintenance, installation and services in other areas of their expertise (Tetra Pak, n.d.c). Tetra Pak is a Swedish company and a part of Tetra Laval Group. Their vision is to make edibles secure and available for everybody (Tetra Pak, n.d.b).

Tetra Pak incorporates the aspect of sustainability through their brand grouping “Protect what’s good”. With their sustainability strategy, they want to offer sustainable products and solutions while ensuring transparency in their distribution process, market and communities of presence (Tetra Pak, n.d.a). Their core values: “Protecting Food, Protecting People and Protecting Future”, are reflected in an overall CSR-strategy, as well as concrete targets and goals, with a heavy focus on environmental sustainability (Tetra Pak, n.d.d). The industries Tetra Pak is present in are definitely put on the radar regarding sustainability and social actions. The production and food-industry have faced many challenges due to the nature and resource use of the industry. However, Tetra Pak works with a mindset and concept focusing on every aspect of their business chain. In their 2019 Sustainability Report, Tetra Pak presents the importance of serving their stakeholders and including their perspectives when combating challenges (Tetra Pak, 2020).

4.1.1 World Wildlife Fund

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is an environmentally oriented NGO with six focus areas of their work: forests, marine, freshwater, wildlife, food, and climate (WWF, n.d.b). The organization works globally with a variety of stakeholders to include different aspects such as the business world, governments and local communities in their efforts (WWF, n.d.b). Furthermore, WWF puts a large emphasis on the importance of collaborating with companies as a way to ensure positive and sustainable development and has several partnerships with companies of various sizes (WWF, n.d.a).

The partnership between Tetra Pak and WWF aims to improve the way forests are preserved by transforming supply chains, engaging customers and supporting conservation efforts (WWF, n.d.c). The partnership started in 2006 with Tetra Pak joining the Global Forest and Trade Network and the partnership has since developed to include several aspects. The main project within the partnership is a school competition called "Kartongmatchen", or "The Cardboard Match" when translated, which aims at increasing awareness about the importance of recycling (WWF, n.d.c). The competition was initially launched as "Jakten på de försvunna kartongerna", translated to "The hunt for the missing cartons", by Tetra Pak without the involvement of WWF who joined the project later (Lindh, 2020). In the competition, children in elementary school collect and recycle packages from their household and register the number online. The competition further consists of several "matches" with different tasks, such as creating their own recycling campaign and informing peers and parents, aiming at not only influencing their families but also incentivize children to influence future generations (Kartongmatchen, 2020). The competition runs in Sweden and Finland and was first launched in 2012 (WWF, n.d.c).

4.2 AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca is a global medicine company that engages in innovative biomedicine solutions, scientific research, and development of prescribed medicine. The company was founded in 1999, when Swedish Astra AB and British Zeneca Group Plc merged. Three research centers are located in Sweden, the U.S. and the U.K., with other business operations in over 100 countries (AstraZeneca, n.d.a). 7200 employees work from the Swedish offices in Gothenburg and Södertälje (AstraZeneca, n.d.a). AstraZeneca is not only one of the largest medicine export companies in the world, but also one of the biggest overall export companies in Sweden (AstraZeneca, n.d.a).

AstraZeneca's global sustainability strategy focuses on three main areas - access to healthcare, environmental protection, and ethics and transparency (AstraZeneca, n.d.b). Globally, AstraZeneca attains a social orientation by collaborating with organizations, contributing to research and science, and supporting local communities. In Sweden, AstraZeneca collaborates with several different organizations, and the corporate social responsibility has two orientations with focus on younger generations; to encourage a technical and natural scientific interest, and to foster mental and physical health (AstraZeneca, n.d.c).

4.2.1 Barnens Rätt i Samhället

Barnens Rätt i Samhället (BRIS), which translates to "Children's Rights in Society", is a Swedish NGO founded in 1971, working to improve children's rights based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (BRIS, n.d.d). The organization works to impact both governments and decision makers, as well as to educate the general public about children's rights (BRIS, n.d.d). More specifically, BRIS works with supporting children, as well as adults in questions regarding children, through different channels such as a chat, over the phone, via email and in support groups (BRIS, n.d.d). Furthermore, BRIS is part of the international network Child Helpline International (CHI) which consists of 183 help lines in 142 countries across the globe (BRIS, n.d.a). Additionally, the organization has several projects targeting specific issues and groups (BRIS, n.d.b).

BRIS has several partnerships with various types of companies, one of these being AstraZeneca, in which they work to further improve the rights of children (BRIS, n.d.c). The collaboration is a part of AstraZeneca's Young Health Program (YHP), which is a global program focusing on non-contagious diseases among youths (AstraZeneca, n.d.d). In Sweden, the focus area is mental health, and so is the main focus of the partnership between BRIS and AstraZeneca (BRIS, n.d.c). Additionally, AstraZeneca finances BRIS "support weekends" for families who are affected by suicide (BRIS, n.d.c).

4.3 Accenture Plc

Accenture Plc is a global American-Irish consultant company, founded in 1989. Accenture is specialized in providing business services with a focus on digitalization, technology and innovation and describes themselves as "a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services in strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations, with digital capabilities across all of these services" (Accenture, n.d.a). The company has operations in 120 countries and employs more than 505 000 people globally. The Swedish affiliation, Accenture AB, has 1300 employees, with offices in Malmö, Stockholm and Gothenburg (Accenture, 2020d). Accenture works in a wide range of industries - from life sciences, to communications, energy, retail, aerospace, and chemicals (Accenture, 2020a). The combined knowledge and expertise lie within areas such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and cyber resilient business (Accenture, 2020a).

Corporate Social Responsibility is an integrated part of Accenture's business model (Accenture, 2020b). Globally, they refer to how their named Corporate Citizenship-focus highlights their purpose of "building a future of shared success" (Accenture, 2020c). In the Swedish affiliation, Accenture has comprehensive CSR-activities and has during the years partnered with several stakeholders to ensure a socially progressive focus. With financial support, knowledge exchange and consulting, Accenture AB has partnered with three NGOs: Save the Children, Plan International and Ashoka (Accenture, n.d.b). These are the partnerships considered in this study.

4.3.1 Save the Children

Save the Children Sweden is part of a larger international organization, Save the Children International, that works for children's rights with the goal to ensure all children live, learn and are protected (Save the Children International, n.d.). This means that no child should die from preventable causes, all children should have a quality basic education, and no child should have to suffer from violence (Save the Children International, n.d.). The international organization has 28 different member organizations and is present in more than 120 different countries throughout the world (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.d). Furthermore, the organization was founded in 1919 which ensures extensive experience of working with various partners to improve the lives of children around the world (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.b).

Accenture and Save the Children started their collaboration in 2005, where Accenture works with the management of Save the Children to provide strategic guidance for the organization. Accenture has provided Save the Children with tools to measure efficiency and develop the partnership model “Collective Impact” where different actors come together to make a positive impact together (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.a). Further, they are helping youths with job interview training and CV-checks (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.a).

The project “På lika villkor”, which translates to “On equal terms”, is a multi-stakeholder initiative with the purpose to strengthen the participation, influence and commitment of children in socio-economic vulnerable areas in Sweden (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.c). Save the Children wants to ensure that these children are not discriminated against, but instead have the opportunity to identify challenges and influence the situation in their neighborhoods (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.c). With support from a number of organizations, the project provides the residents with tools to create activities, improve children rights, and for example heighten school attendance and education (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.c). Accenture is one of six companies that supports the project (Save the Children Sweden, n.d.c). Although På lika villkor is a tangible project, it is still on going with a long-term horizon. The collective impact, or ecosystem partnership as it is referred to nowadays, combines competences and resources from all stakeholders, who together have constructed a governance model suitable for the project (Alexanderson, 2020).

4.3.2 Plan International

Plan International is an NGO that focuses on equal rights for all children, and especially girls, with a base in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Plan International, n.d.c). The work is focused on a grassroot level and they cooperate with various organizations and governments in order to influence the legal frameworks regarding children’s rights (Plan International, n.d.c). Further, Plan International conducts both proactive work as well as efforts directed towards current crises (Plan International, n.d.c). Within their areas of work, two are the main focus: safety and protection in regard to violence and abuse, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (Plan International, n.d.c). Plan International has programs in over 50 countries across Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Plan International, n.d.b). Furthermore, they have national offices in several countries across the globe (Plan International, n.d.b), although the focus in this study is on the Swedish office as this is the office with which Accenture has contact.

Since 2006, Plan International and Accenture have worked together to secure children's rights (Plan International, n.d.a). Accenture has had a major impact in the project "A working future", a project with the aim of supporting workers in the Ugandan countryside (Plan International, n.d.a). Uganda has one of the highest unemployment-rates in the Sub-Saharan area, and in 2016, Accenture, Plan International, and Sida came together to try to tackle the unemployment issues among young adults (Sida, 2017). Sida, or "The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency", is a Swedish governmental agency that works to reduce world poverty (Sida, n.d.). In the project, focus is put on innovation of processes in agricultural work in order to increase the profits of the farmers (Plan International, n.d.a). The project enabled more than 12 000 young farmers to become self-sufficient by either starting their own business or getting employment (Plan International, n.d.a). The average income increased with more than 600 % (Plan International, n.d.a).

4.3.3 Ashoka

Ashoka is a catalyst for social change, an organization that supports social changemakers all over the world since their establishment 35 years ago (Ashoka, n.d.a). The organization consists of a network of more than 3500 social entrepreneurs in over 90 countries, and was launched in Scandinavia in 2012 (Ashoka, n.d.a). The changemaker network releases financial support, as well as provides a network to help social entrepreneurs to accelerate their ideas (Ashoka, n.d.b). Based on the network, Ashoka also identifies solutions, strategies and topics to guide their investments in initiatives (Ashoka, n.d.b).

Accenture, Ashoka and the Swedish bank Nordea, have since 2019 worked together on the project called "Changemakers Accelerator" (Alexanderson, 2020), which is the project at focus within the partnership in this research. The project was carried out by Nordea and Ashoka one year prior to Accenture joining (Alexanderson, 2020). Nine social entrepreneurs with ideas to provide long-term solutions for environmental issues were chosen to participate in the program (Markelius, 2019). The entrepreneurs are provided with support, guidance and consulting to enable their innovations (Markelius, 2019). Accenture has previously collaborated with Ashoka in the program “Hello Nordics” in 2018, with a similar anchoring as the Changemakers Accelerator (Markelius, 2019). Hello Nordics supported ten social entrepreneurs with ideas on how to improve Nordic integration and inclusiveness (Markelius, 2019).

5 Projects between MNCs and NGOs

In the light of the empirical evidence in combination with literature, we have observed three main themes that are important for projects between multinational companies and non-governmental organizations, from the perspective of the companies.

The three themes identified to shape the projects transition through the life cycle:

- Incentives of the projects

To elaborate on the objectives of the projects, the respondents were asked why the companies have chosen to collaborate with NGOs as a part of the CSR-strategy. Additionally, all respondents were asked how the specific projects were initiated and on what basis the particular organizations were selected. This relates to the incentives of engaging in the discussed project.

- Stakeholders

With a basis in existing literature, findings regarding relevant stakeholders, relationships, cultural aspects, and other intangible resources are discussed.

- Applied working methods and tools

Specific and practical tools are emphasized as crucial in project execution, thus specific tangible tools and working methods applied by the companies are discussed. The applied working methods and management tools are divided into three subsections. All discussed methods do nonetheless impact each other.

5.1 Tetra Pak & World Wildlife Fund

5.1.1 Incentives

Tetra Pak implements projects that align with the ordinary business operation and strategy. With Tetra Pak being a major actor in the packaging industry, the project executed in collaboration with WWF focuses on exactly that. As established, the project itself started out as a competition with only Tetra Pak involved, and Lindh explained that Tetra Pak had previously identified that very few of the sold packages were recycled and wanted to tackle this issue. The competition, when initiated years ago, received positive feedback, and have since then varied in execution and configuration. In the past, it even included other stakeholders. Lindh stated that Tetra Pak wanted a clearer format and goals of the competition, which is why they decided to rebrand it to "Kartongmatchen" and target schools and pre-schools in particular. She further explained that when rebranding was on the agenda, Tetra Pak and WWF had already initiated discussions regarding a partnership. The existing version of the project was thus seen as an opportunity to concretize the collaboration to a tangible project. According to Lindh, the continuity of the partnership with WWF thereafter, was seen as a natural procedure since WWF and Tetra Pak share the same values and are both careful in choosing their partners, which provides a trustworthy foundation for external communication of their purposes.

5.1.2 Stakeholders

Kartongmatchen involves several different stakeholders and key individuals, with Lindh being the designated project manager. In the interview, Lindh explained that she makes major decisions, overlooks important matters, and ensures all communication is working smoothly. Tetra Pak is the owner of the project and has specific contact persons at WWF. They have one main contact person regarding the competition, responsible for corporate partnerships at WWF and also the stakeholder mainly pulling administrative strings for Kartongmatchen. Further, Lindh expressed that Tetra Pak has different persons of contact at WWF depending on the matter. For example, before doing a press release, they connect with WWF's press release responsible, and in matters regarding communication with the participating schools, Lindh contacts the person at WWF who is responsible for these matters.

When asked about cultural differences on the organizational level, Lindh referred to WWF as a large, well organized, and well-established organization that functions like an "ordinary" company. The organizational culture therefore is rather similar to that of Tetra Pak. Hence, bridging cultural differences is not considered a major necessity due to the low impact differences have on the project. She further speculated that the differences may be larger when working with smaller NGOs that may be less organized. Moreover, Tetra Pak's careful consideration of who to partner with may contribute to the minimized cultural differences.

With Kartongmatchen being an annual competition, meaning that the project is executed repeatedly with minor adjustments, the duration of the collaboration is explained as a reason to why the relationship between the two organizations is currently not experiencing any major setbacks. The compatibility of the key individuals from the organizations is further mentioned by Lindh as a contributor to the smoothness of the collaboration. She stated that if the values of the specific representatives align, the friction in the partnership is minimized.

An additional stakeholder identified is an external communication agency that Tetra Pak uses in the operative processes and hands-on administrative matters in the project. Lindh explained that the agency is responsible for making time plans, handling external communication matters, and contacting additional, temporary stakeholders such as a printing house when marketing materials are to be created. The communication agency is a subcontractor to Tetra Pak, meaning a third organization has a major impact on the outcome of the project. Although the subcontractors could be driven by monetary factors, it is apparent that Tetra Pak values the relationship to a high degree with Lindh highlighting the importance of having a good relation to all parties involved in the project.

Other stakeholders with an influence on the process were disclosed during the interview. Lindh did for example mention the participating children, their parents and the teachers at the schools that encourage and enable the children to participate in the competition. With the children registering all their collected and recycled packages and cartons, Lindh emphasized the creation of a buzz which directly impacted the measured results. Further, the project has been influenced by the teachers. The competition was previously executed during the fall, ranging from September to just prior to the Christmas break. However, Lindh mentioned that during the early years of the competition, the teachers experienced stress in finalizing the competition along with ordinary schoolwork during this period of time, which resulted in Tetra Pak extending the duration of the competition.

5.1.3 Applied working methods and tools

Planning and evaluation tools

An official annual meeting is held before the competition, with the purpose to set a plan for the upcoming year, with Tetra Pak, their subcontractor and WWF included. Aspects such as the different organizations' role in the external communication of the project and how this may be strengthened are on the agenda. Large excel sheets were used to for example plan external communication, and checklists and documents were used for the planning and monitoring of the project. Lindh put a lot of emphasis on the collaboration with the subcontractor rather than with WWF. Furthermore, since the project is owned by Tetra Pak and the competition was first held on their initiative, without involvement of WWF, the initial planning of the project did not involve WWF and their influence on the processes has hence been limited.

In regard to the formulation of specific goals and milestones of the project, Lindh stated that no specific measurable goals have been set. The overall goal is to assure that the competition functions well, that the communication reaches the intended external environment, and that the participants in the form of schools, teachers, parents, and children have a positive perception of the project. However, Lindh did identify increased recycling as an outcome. Although she argued the difficulty in measuring to what extent this may be attributed to the competition. She further stated that the participating children recycle around 80% of their packaging which is significantly higher than the average of 35% in Sweden. Hence, there are measurable outcomes although they were not identified as goals prior to the competition.

In evaluating the project, Lindh stated that an official meeting with the involved organizations was conducted after the competition finished, where aspects such as the collaboration, the competition, and the external communication were discussed. As the competition is held on an annual basis, Lindh argued that there has been a continuous improvement over the years, although she cannot list specific learnings identified in the evaluation meeting. Furthermore, evaluations of the project in terms of the results of the competition and its impact can be found in sustainability reports and press releases from Tetra Pak.

Communication tools

Lindh stated that the communication between Tetra Pak and WWF was somewhat inadequate from both sides to begin with, and clarifications had to be made regarding areas of responsibility and external communication. By acknowledging these deficiencies and discussing them openly, they could find solutions that contributed to the current processes. Additionally, Lindh highlighted the importance of communication as a means for appraisal and acknowledgement of the positive contributions by different parties. Another vital communication aspect in Kartongmatchen, was the informal aspect of communication with all stakeholders, including the subcontractor. They regularly have informal gatherings such as dinners in order to nurture the relationship and gain an understanding of the people behind the work. Lindh further argued the importance of having open communication and building trust for all the parties involved. In addition to the mentioned official meetings held between all parties twice a year, biweekly meetings were held with the subcontractor. Continuous contact with the subcontractor was also conducted via email and telephone. Additionally, the communication was handled by assigned individuals from the different organizations.

Risk management tools

In regard to identified risks, Lindh highlighted the internal financing of the project, to decide where the financial resources should come from internally and which function of the company should be responsible for such projects. She further argued that this is a common question that must be considered and that may lead to the termination of a partnership if not agreed upon internally. However, no specific plan can be identified to prevent this risk or other risks in the project.

5.2 AstraZeneca & Barnens Rätt I Samhället

5.2.1 Incentives

AstraZeneca chooses to collaborate with NGOs as a part of their sustainability agenda, which incentives are clearly connected to the core business, namely health. Engström argued that the focus area of the YHP, that includes stakeholders drawn from several spectra within the area of health, matches the core values of the company. It was explained that in Sweden, the program targets mental health among youths since AstraZeneca identified this as an important health issue in Sweden. Since the YHP is an internal initiative, Engström stated that AstraZeneca continuously focus on finding partners that could contribute with competencies they do not possess internally, as well as assuring that the chosen partners focus on helping youths specifically. Engström mentioned BRIS as a pronounced and suitable partner, given the objectives of BRIS as an organization. Engström did not have her current position within the company when the partnership with BRIS was initiated, but she elaborated on the criteria AstraZeneca has established in initiating collaborations by highlighting the importance of long-term partnerships within the focus areas AstraZeneca operates in. BRIS has in many projects and collaborations put focus on mental health among children and youths and was thus seen as a good match for the partnership.

5.2.2 Stakeholders

Since the YHP is a global program, with presence in 26 countries, the project between AstraZeneca and BRIS follows a clear general framework. The organizations involved in the program are subject to agreements which ensure the participation and obligations of all involved organizational stakeholders. Engström elaborated that the involved organizations, BRIS in particular, are well established organizations with global operations. She explained that BRIS possesses broad experience, good leadership and is well governed, indicating that the collaboration with BRIS has worked smoothly. Challenges in terms of cultural differences possibly present when involving multiple stakeholders were not specifically identified in this project. Additionally, the fact that AstraZeneca has a history of various collaborations was argued by Lindh to influence their general attitude towards, and frameworks for, collaborations with other organizations. Similar to the case of Tetra Pak, AstraZeneca carefully considers who to partner with, and Engström mentioned that the specification of why they partner with a certain organization is also stated in the contract in order to assure alignment of the visions. Engström further described different individuals and groups of people involved in the project. In the specific part of the program executed in collaboration with BRIS, and thus in the management of the Swedish affiliation of the project, key individuals from both organizations have a general responsibility for the project. Furthermore, Engström stated that depending on what activity or task that needs to be performed, other individuals are contacted if needed.

Engström mentioned additional stakeholders that potentially impact the execution and nature of their general projects, and hence also the YHP, namely current and potential employees. AstraZeneca wants to be an attractive employer, with a working culture reflected by their sustainability agenda. Since the collaboration with BRIS also follows in the track of the core business, health, this could thus create a positive perception of the company as a workplace. It shows that AstraZeneca is taking responsibility, which is a trait commonly sought-after among, for example, recent graduates.

5.2.3 Applied working methods and tools

Planning and evaluation tools

When considering the planning and goal setting in the project between AstraZeneca and BRIS, Engström emphasized the fact that it is a part of the global program YHP which has formulated overall guidelines and goals on a global level. However, the program allows for some flexibility on a national level. This gives coordinating benefits and the possibility to share learnings across the program. However, in the respective countries, goals are set in the beginning of the year. These are based on the overall aim to reach as many youths as possible and make an actual, measurable impact. Engström was not a part of the goal setting for the project between AstraZeneca and BRIS. However, as elaborated, AstraZeneca decide on a set criterion regarding what they want a collaborative project to accomplish, and then meet with several organizations to find the best fit.

Engström referred to a continuous evaluation of the goals and the outcomes of the projects involved in the YHP. She stated that AstraZeneca regularly evaluates their current partnerships and projects to determine whether they should continue with the same organizations or if another organization may be more suited for the objectives of the YHP. Furthermore, evaluation of the goals of the overall program are annually expressed in the sustainability report of AstraZeneca.

Communication tools

Engström emphasized the importance of having open communication and being transparent when collaborating with another organization. She argued that this is a way to reason with each other and find solutions to any issues or questions that appear, which is common for all collaborations and not exclusively projects between a company and an NGO. With continuous communication between the involved organizations, through the key individuals, they can ensure a solution-oriented approach. Furthermore, in the project between AstraZeneca and BRIS, meetings are held before any external communication is made, in order to set a communication plan within the frameworks of the explicit contract.

Risk management tools

AstraZeneca is incorporating risk management on all levels of the organization. The criteria are applied to all types of collaborations and construction of contracts. Hence, Engström stated that no specific risk management plan is formulated for this particular project but that the approach to risks is well incorporated throughout the organization. Prioritizing and planning for risk has become second nature for AstraZeneca.

5.3 Accenture & Save the Children

5.3.1 Incentives

Alexanderson highlighted the historical reasoning behind Accenture's CSR-related activities. She mentioned that the collaborations are a starting point for including the entire civil society in the business operations. By including additional stakeholders such as NGOs in the operative work, they can leverage the entire ecosystem. Accenture has since 2011 operated with a global strategy named "Skills to succeed". The entire strategy was initiated by firstly identifying the competencies Accenture can provide to their stakeholders and the society, and secondly that entrepreneurship and creating job opportunities are important for the company. Alexanderson stated that the projects executed in Accenture Sweden's affiliation are all targeting these subjects.

Save the Children has been a traditional CSR-partner to Accenture since 2005. Historically, the partnership mainly consisted of financial support in exchange of logotypes and so on. However, the partnership was accelerated as strategic matters were further developed. På lika villkor includes additional organizations and entities, but Alexanderson emphasized the aim of the program as a focal point for why Accenture decided to partner with Save the Children in particular: the project targets youth employment. Alexanderson also mentioned that the work on the project, similarly to most work with NGOs, is highly passion driven which has kept the motivation high.

5.3.2 Stakeholders

In regard to having multiple organizations involved in a project, Accenture's project with Save the Children provides a great example. Due to other companies having important roles in the project På lika villkor, the scope of the project is extended beyond the culture and relationship between Accenture and Save the Children. The other companies were involved in both the vision formulation process and in setting goals and key performance indexes that all organizations agreed upon.

Furthermore, På lika villkor involved various governmental authorities in order to create the ecosystem partnership. Alexanderson expressed that the reason behind this was that the number of projects targeted in the marginalized suburbs where På lika villkor is executed was so vast that impacts were difficult to measure. By involving authorities in the process, the possibility of increasing the impact of the project was enhanced. Although, this also increased the difficulty in getting suggestions approved due to the extended process and the regulations that for example city councils need to follow. Due to the differing sectors and organizational structures of companies, NGOs and governmental entities, several cultural clashes were identified. In formulating a vision and outlining the project, the companies tended to focus on providing a solution and implementing this, whereas the NGOs focus was on the formulation of the problem before any solutions could be provided. Additionally, authorities would argue the need of assuring the quality of the processes from previous projects. This extended the process significantly with numerous workshops, although the underlying visions of the organizations were aligned in the sense that they wanted to contribute to the elimination of child poverty.

Furthermore, Alexanderson mentioned the aspect of key individuals as a contributor to where the focus of the organizations lay, and the compatibility among the involved parties. She acknowledged the importance of assigning people to the project who have an understanding for the nature of NGOs and who are not too business focused. However, she argued that most of the employees at Accenture today are more suitable for these types of projects than they were previously. Furthermore, this direction may be more relevant in certain national cultures than others due to the nature of how to conduct business in various countries. På lika villkor has a steering committee that meets every other month, with individuals from all involved organizations, mainly consisting of executives and sustainability managers. Moreover, Accenture has a continuous dialogue with an executive at Save the Children. However, some challenges were identified by Alexanderson. When a new executive was hired, some information and directions of the partnership were lost and that led to a minor "rebranding" of the project. In addition to the stakeholders managing the project, Alexanderson highlighted the importance of considering the participants in the program, referring to the residents in the targeted neighborhoods. They were involved in the identification of problems through forum activities, and the development of measuring tools in workshops with Save the Children. The consultant employees at Accenture are also a group which impacts the project since the project was executed similarly to other client projects they are working with in their daily business operations. Alexanderson mentioned that employees at Accenture are welcome to leave a notice of interest to work on similar projects, and that the list of interested consultants is usually extensive.

5.3.3 Applied working methods and tools

Planning and evaluation tools

Since the project involved several organizations, the planning process was extensive with many differing suggestions and influences. As mentioned, workshops were held in order to align the organizations' inputs into a common plan. However, this posed a major challenge in the project.

The outcomes of these workshops were compiled and communicated by people responsible from the different organizations. Alexanderson questioned the use of these documents and admitted that there is room for improvement in regard to the follow-up of the workshops. As mentioned, the lengthy process of agreeing on problems and solutions led to the involvement of the people targeted by the project. Additionally, she argued that the goals and purpose of the project is constantly refined, but that this is to a certain extent affected by who is responsible for the project from Save the Children arguing a shift in priorities as this person was replaced.

In regard to the evaluation of the project, Alexanderson mentioned a measurement tool developed by the children in the suburbs included in the project. The tool aims to measure the impact the project has. However, she also stated that the usage of learnings from the project has been limited due to a lack of time, decreasing the priority of keeping a live document within Accenture, although this would be desirable. Lastly, Alexanderson argued that the outcome of the project has thus far exceeded Accenture's expectations and provided them with great insights on how to work within ecosystem partnerships. Although the project is not completed, reporting on the outcomes at this stage can be found in sustainability reports and on the websites of several of the involved organizations.

Communication tools

In the collaboration between Accenture and Save the Children communication is handled on different levels such as through the steering committee that meets every other month. In addition, numerous workshops, as established, were held in order to formulate the vision and goals of the project. Furthermore, Alexanderson mentioned the continuous communication between the representatives from both organizations that contributes to the building of relationships among them. Status updates are also sent out every quarter by Save the Children in the form of Word documents. Alexanderson reflected upon the possible need for automating these processes in order to minimize the administrative work of the NGO who she argued should spend their time doing other things. She elaborated on this by speculating whether this is an area where companies such as Accenture may aid the NGOs in developing more efficient communication processes.

Risk management tools

Accenture experiences some diverging strategies in accounting for risks in the planning of their projects. With Save the Children, no explicit risk management plan was constructed beforehand. However, Alexanderson elaborated on factors that should be kept in mind when executing these kinds of collaborative projects, implying that a preventive mindset is still incorporated through the project. For example, she identified the risk of dependence on specific individuals which Accenture seeks to minimize by having a “vice” present in all meetings. This assures the anchoring of decisions within the organization. She further emphasized the fact that in large organizations such as Accenture, any decision has to be approved by several parties and hence these risks are minimized from their point of view.

5.4 Accenture & Plan International

5.4.1 Incentives

The project executed in collaboration with Plan International had a focus on supporting entrepreneurs and farmers in developing countries and was initiated as a coordinated ambition from the three involved organizations: Accenture, Plan International and Sida. The nature of the project differs slightly from the other projects that Accenture has, since it was sold and executed as a consultative client project to a heavily discounted price, meaning Accenture made no profit from it. Although this differentiates the project on certain levels, as previously mentioned, Alexanderson did argue that the choice of NGOs is rooted in Accenture’s core values and A Working Future did, as the other projects, focus on creating job opportunities and self-provision for entrepreneurs.

5.4.2 Stakeholders

A Working Future involved a wide range of stakeholders with diverging influence. As established, the project itself consisted of three main organizations managing the execution:

Accenture, Plan International and Sida. All three organizations are power forces in their respective field. In terms of cultural differences, both aspects of organizational and national culture were clearly present in the process. Alexanderson stated that with the project being carried out in Uganda, the culture regarding for example how to conduct a meeting varies a lot between the countries. In the project, representatives from Uganda, Sweden and the U.S. were involved which meant the inclusion of three different national cultures. However, Alexanderson stated that before consultants at Accenture go into any international NGO project, they are offered a course, spanning over a couple of days, aiming to prepare them for the norms of conducting business in the specific country. Additionally, the course covers the aspect of organizational culture, as previously highlighted, where the underlying values of certain businesspeople in contrast to representatives from NGOs may vary. She further elaborated that certain aspects of the course may seem obvious to some people, depending on the national culture in regard to how business usually is conducted. Additional stakeholders emphasized in the interview are the target group of the project; the farmers and locals in Uganda.

5.4.3 Applied working methods and tools

Planning and evaluation tools

Although a third party, Sida, was involved in the project, the goals were however mostly identified and formulated by Plan International, which became the goals of Accenture as well. When evaluating the outcomes of the project and whether the goals were attained, Alexanderson argued that the outcomes were indeed desirable and that goals were met. However, in retrospect she acknowledged the fact that more could have been done in certain aspects. For example, the included farmers, who sold their raw products and crops, would preferably receive a larger fraction of the final product's retail price. In terms of the overall success of the project, all the involved parties were satisfied. However, when completed, Sida made a restructuring and decided to no longer conduct partnerships with the business sector which would impact the evaluation. Alexanderson stated that when the project was completed, a report with the main success factors of A Working Future was compiled. These factors include being able to adapt to the local context, leveraging the savings groups platform for outreach and scalability, and taking private sector partnerships beyond philanthropy to create shared value (Perzon, Alexanderson, Malithano & Louis, 2016). The report has been used extensively by Plan International to gain insights for future projects. Additionally, as established in the other studied projects, outcomes are reported by the organizations on their websites and in sustainability reports.

Communication tools

In A Working Future, the steering committee with representatives from all parties involved, conducted biweekly meetings with the purpose to update on the status of the project. In these meetings, Alexanderson also mentioned that emerging risks were discussed and assigned to responsible individuals for mitigation. Furthermore, since the project spanned across national borders meetings were held online. However, Alexanderson emphasized that this has been challenging historically as the availability of videoconferencing was not always as extensive as it is today.

Risk management tools

In execution of Accenture's project with Plan International, the status report has thorough incorporation of risk mitigation. The biweekly meetings of the steering committee were also used as a tool for securing that the correct individuals were involved in the management of the risks that emerged.

5.5 Accenture & Ashoka

5.5.1 Incentives

Changemakers Accelerator has a different organization than the other examined projects Accenture is involved in. The incentives arose from "the other side of the table". Ashoka reached out to Accenture with a proposition regarding a partnership – to include Accenture in the already established Changemaker Accelerator-project in particular. Ashoka had conducted an analysis on the skill set Accenture presented in their "Skills to succeed"-program, which they found matched their needs in the project. This was highlighted by Alexanderson, who argued how rare it is for

NGOs to find and present the strategic match before approaching profitable companies. As of September 2019, the collaboration revolved around the Changemaker Accelerator-project, after a pilot had been conducted. The project has, as mentioned previously, already included a third organization, Nordea. Hence, the vision and goals of the project were already set when Accenture decided to join. The incentives from the other parties was thus the need for Accenture's skills. For Accenture, incentives included both the benefits of contributing to society in the areas they prefer, as well as creating exciting project opportunities for their employees. Alexanderson confirmed that these reconciled well with Accenture's reasoning in partnering with NGOs.

5.5.2 Stakeholders

In Changemakers Accelerator, three main organizations are identified – Accenture, Ashoka and Nordea. In terms of cultural distance in the project, Alexanderson mentioned the fact that Ashoka is an organization rooted in the business sector and that she, personally, has a background within the NGO sector. This makes the collaboration smoother as it bridges the natural organizational differences to a certain extent.

Alexanderson further mentioned the differing target groups of Accenture and Nordea as an aspect that led to their respective approaches to the project. Nordea's main target group is their retail customers and investors in terms of external communication of the project's purpose, whereas Accenture's main focus lies with their current and potential employees. This refers to both simulating and creating a rewarding workplace for current employees – and that they are indeed developing skill sets in working with projects with an NGO – and being an attractive employer for incoming employees.

In addition, the aspect of personality traits was seen as an important consideration in this project as well. This particular project had an ad hoc approach which can be more or less comfortable for certain individuals. However, as the representatives in this project all had similar mindsets and visions, this did not pose any major challenges, rather the contrary, especially in times of uncertainty regarding the current Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the nine start-ups constitute a stakeholder group involved when the project sets off, and coaches from both Accenture and Nordea are assigned to the entrepreneurs.

5.5.3 Applied working methods and tools

Planning and evaluation tools

Ashoka was the owner of the project, meaning that setting up a plan and objectives was done by individuals at Ashoka, meaning the main planning was already done when Accenture got involved. Ashoka thus had the main influence over processes and structure. Accenture adapted to the general methods set by Ashoka. Alexanderson argued that one of the reasons why Accenture partners with other organizations, is to learn from each other and hence there is no reason to push too hard for implementing one's own way of working. In fact, Ashoka's way of working has been highly appreciated and provided Accenture with great insights and learnings. However, Accenture experienced some lack in structure and clarity of milestones initially and involved a few consultants to leverage this early in the project. Evaluation from the previous year's project had also been incorporated by Ashoka and Nordea. Additionally, Alexanderson highlighted the strategic fit that Ashoka had identified when approaching Accenture with the suggestion of a partnership which contributed to the easy alignment of the visions.

The project was completed in May 2020, and Accenture currently has two people occupied with conducting interviews with the involved individual stakeholders from Accenture. They want to evaluate the internal value created, while the external value created is evaluated by Ashoka. Due to the recent termination of the project, the learnings and reflections are not finalized yet and can hence not be elaborated on at this point.

Communication tools

Similar to the other projects involving Accenture, in the project with Ashoka, a steering committee was assigned, consisting of senior representatives from both Accenture, Nordea and Ashoka. However, the meetings were held as status updates rather than a decision-making forum. Additionally, the reference to the ad hoc approach of the project, indicates a continuous communication where decisions had to be made to, for example, handle emergent risks such as the current pandemic.

Risk management tools

Alexanderson recalled a list of risks and mitigation plans. The risks of this project were rather low and the main focus of Accenture in this project was to assure that the consultants who worked on the project would feel inspired and challenged. She further argues that the mitigation of this risk has been complex due to the fact that Ashoka owns the project which led to certain consultants leaving the project. However, she argued that the majority of the consultants did not feel this way, but rather saw the project as developing.

6 Success Factors in the Project Life Cycle

By analyzing the role and management of the three themes, their relevance is discussed, from the perspective of the companies. The conclusion provides explicit suggestions on how project success can be facilitated with foundation in the different stages of the life cycle.

6.1 Incentives

Initiation

Establishment of vision and goals are important early in the project process (Tonnquist, 2016) and is thus typically accounted for as a vital factor in the initiation stage of the project life cycle. Pinto and Prescott (1988) identify the importance of having a common project mission throughout the life cycle. In the studied cases, these goals and mission are grounded in the incentives of the projects, which in turn relates to both the focus areas of the NGOs, and why companies collaborate with NGOs as a part of the CSR-strategy. Tetra Pak had early identified an issue in recycling, which was related to their ordinary business strategy, and developed the project as a way of targeting this issue. This is favorable in developing CSR-strategies (Poret, 2017). The initiative to include WWF was based on an already existing process and the incentives of the project. The project initiation between AstraZeneca and BRIS was founded on a similar basis, and implied focus on AstraZeneca's core business. Accenture's projects differed in how and why they were initiated, but the incentives follow a similar strategy. På lika villkor was based on an already existing partnership that needed upscaling and targeted an area Accenture emphasized in their CSR-strategy. Changemaker Accelerator was incentivized on a similar basis as Kartongmatchen and the YHP, but in opposition to the company making the initial step, this was initiated by Ashoka. The findings imply that the incentives of a project influence the alignment of goals and visions, which in both previous research and conducted interviews for this study is proven to be of high relevance in the initiation of a project. Further, the methods of initiating the projects take the consideration of context into account. The companies ensure that the incentives of the project suit the context of their entire business, which enhances the possibility for a smooth transition into the planning stage by establishing a ground and vision (Köster, 2009).

The aligned vision, mission, and goals of the projects were also influenced by the client consultation, which are factors identified as vital by Pinto and Prescott (1988). The findings show that when these, based on the initial incentives, are considered in the initiating stage, the complexity of the aspect client acceptance in the planning stage is reduced. By entering the projects with similar mindsets, all the studied companies indicate the importance of the underlying incentives to lay a ground for the future work. Some of the participants further argue the importance of carefully choosing the partners from both the corporate and the NGOs perspective, confirming the argument of Renaudin (2016) regarding sincerity, conviction, and good-will as a factor for success.

Planning

Even though the impact of incentives behind the projects might be most clear in the initiation stage, the respondents present a line of thoughts that potentially will play a bigger part than expected in the planning stage. Pinto and Prescott (1988) refer to client acceptance as a success factor in the planning stage of the project, and the incentives of the studied projects ensured client acceptance even before the project entered the planning stage. However, some of the studied cases indicated that all organizations were not involved in the planning stage as they entered the project later on. In the case of Kartongmatchen, it was initiated by Tetra Pak, without the involvement of WWF, and Changemakers Accelerator did not involve Accenture from the beginning. The involvement was based on both organizations' similar business agendas, which implies that the incentives indeed impacted the planning stage, but mostly based on previous experiences and alignment of visions. In the case of Changemakers Accelerator, the incentives for the project from Ashoka's perspective influenced Accentures, due to Ashoka's comprehensive background research, which meant the plan and need for use of certain resources was already identified. Luckily, Accenture felt on board with the said plans which indicates that thorough background research and a clear presentation of the need from another party, if aligned with the vision of the company, minimizes the need for involvement of the company in the planning stage. In these cases, the importance of client acceptance becomes more apparent which, based on the data, seems to be a less complicated task when incentives of all parties align from the initiating stage. When the planning was conducted in collaboration, incentives appear to have contributed to the ease of formulating goals, as seen in the project between Accenture and Plan International. However, other aspects complicated this task, as is apparent in the project På lika villkor involving multiple organizations. In that case, incentives were aligned but practicalities regarding culture as well as working methods and tools were not. Hence, although incentives might aid in the planning phase, other aspects must also be considered. Additionally, it can be argued that the incentives of the projects could further enhance the possibility of reaching desired quality, since projects grounded in shared visions will typically make the entire process smoother (Tonnquist, 2016). The aligning incentives in all projects further minimized differentiations and diverging expectations as they, once again, were clear from the initiation.

The aspects of initial clarity of goals as suggested by Köster (2009), and the aligned project mission suggested by Pinto and Prescott (1988), are also related to the underlying incentives of both parties. As discussed, the incentives make the alignment of goals easier by aligning the mission of the project. It is also emphasized by the participants that the reasons behind the projects, namely the incentives, favor the process of communicating the planning stage which is vital for setting the project up for success (Köster, 2009).

Execution

Trouble-shooting, technical tasks and a comprehensive schedule/project plan are critical factors for success in executing a project (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). Further, applied management tools are vital to ensure success in the execution of a project (Tonnquist, 2016; Patanakul, Iewwongcharoen & Milosevic, 2010). One can however argue that due to some of the projects already being established, the incentives' role in impacting the execution stage differ depending on whether the projects were initiated on the company's or the NGO's account. Some tools and risk prevention methods are then already incorporated and decided upon, implying that both organizations are not able to influence them. The incentives of the projects do not seem to play an important role in targeting plans for unforeseen events. The incentives do, as mentioned, of course affect the client consultation, but the study does not provide any evidence of this factor impacting client consultation specifically in the execution stage.

The continuous alignment of the project mission is also enabled by the incentives, which is argued to be a facilitator for success (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). However, priorities might shift (Chakravorti, 2015) which means that as the project proceeds the initial incentives might change. This is however not found to have been a major issue in the studied projects, although it is recognized by Alexanderson that priorities shifted somewhat in På lika villkor as the project manager at Save the Children was replaced. This relates to the stakeholders' influence on the project, which will be discussed, as it relates to personal preferences rather than the organizational incentives.

Completion

Since the completion stage largely involves the aspect of evaluating the outcome of the project and to what extent goals were reached in order to gain insights for future projects (Köster, 2009), it builds upon the goals formulated in the planning stage. In the studied cases, emphasis was not put on the incentives' role in the completion stage, but it may be speculated that the evaluation of goals, and the ability to reach those, is affected by the incentives of conducting the project in the first place. Furthermore, the established importance of client consultation in all stages of the life cycle, including the completion stage, is supported as for example in the project between Accenture and Plan International. The project was evaluated in collusion, and to refer to the importance of incentives it may be speculated that what was evaluated upon and presented is affected by the underlying priorities based on incentives.

Measurability of value – social and business value – is another aspect that should be considered in the completion stage (Chakravorti, 2015). Although incentives may affect the impact and the created value, the measurability of the aspects is not identified to be directly related to the incentives of the studied projects.

6.2 Stakeholders

Initiation

Outer-organizational contexts indicate the involvement of multiple stakeholders which naturally leads to certain challenges and opportunities (Grant, 2016). Considerations of culture and personal characteristics are suggested to be implemented through the entire process, in other words through the entire project life cycle (Hofstede, 1994; Chakravorti, 2015; Köster, 2009). However, the findings of this research provide certain contradictions, where Alexanderson acknowledged differences on both the organizational and national level in certain projects that have posed challenges taken into consideration, whereas Lindh and Engström suggest a minimal level of cultural clashes. Furthermore, the findings suggest that it is in the initiating stage that the cultural aspects may be most significant as the alignment of the organizations underlying values are carefully considered before a partnership is initiated, as previously discussed. This implies that while considering a partnership, the compatibility of the organizations is appraised in accordance to the suggestion of Chakravorti (2015) and Hofstede (1994), making the establishment of the collaboration natural (Poret, 2017). Hence, the cultural considerations and the incentives to participate in a collaborative project are interrelated. Additionally, the respondents present multiple arguments that the formulated common vision that stems from the initiation and planning stages further contributes to a reduced cultural impact later on in the collaboration.

In all projects, a large part of the smooth collaboration has been attributed to the personal characteristics of managers and team members from the different organizations, arguing not only the importance of alignment on an organizational and national level, but also a personal stakeholder level. This further strengthens the theoretical argument that not all individuals within a culture are identical, as well as that of Chakravorti (2015) arguing the importance of chemistry between key individuals in collaborations between companies and NGOs. Similar to the aspect of cultural differences, this is suggested to be considered in all stages of the life cycle with an emphasis on the early stages of initiation and planning, where the individuals are introduced, and roles are assigned. The findings further suggest that the main stakeholders in the initiation stage are the involved organizations and the individuals representing them. However, it may be concluded that the more organizations, or the more individuals, that are involved in the process of formulating the vision, the more extensive will the process be, as exemplified by Alexanderson regarding the project between Accenture and Save the Children. When involving multiple stakeholders in the initiation, additional visions and opinions need to be accounted for (Köster, 2009). Diverging interests might thus stall the process (Tonnquist, 2016) and this is exemplified in the findings to a certain extent. It is also emphasized that the consideration of context is important in the initiation stage (Köster, 2009). The diversity of the stakeholders is taken into account by the companies, since the chosen NGOs match the direction of the ordinary business focus. The diversity in terms of context is thus reduced.

Planning

The impact of stakeholders and individuals in the planning stage is interpreted to vary among the different cases. Based on the findings of both the ease of aligning organizational cultures and the recognition of preventive measures to do so, it may be assumed that when cultural differences are minimized, the alignment of goals and the continuous alignment of the project mission is aided.

Numerous of the projects involve affiliations and organizations from around the world. One can naturally assume that in order to ensure a successful implementation of the project, on all levels and in all countries, coordination is thus vital (Köster, 2009). Coordination on global levels normally implies cultural considerations, but the findings show that national cultural clashes are in general not an issue. However, a majority of the studied projects are executed within Swedish borders, indicating that an understanding for the normative business environment already exists. Accenture's collaboration with Plan International did however involve multiple nationalities and the versatility of cultural considerations are recognized and prevented in the planning stage through the mandatory course on national cultural differences. This supports the reasoning that planning for challenges in culture, which is a common challenge in cross-organizational projects (Chakravorti, 2015), will simplify unforeseen clashes in the execution stage (Tonnquist, 2016; Köster, 2009). Nonetheless, some of the projects span over additional countries within the company, which implies that stakeholders from a higher management level at for example AstraZeneca is of importance to approve goals and needed resources (Tonnquist, 2016). As recognized, top management support is crucial in the planning stage (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). With the management level in all studied projects being either solely, or mostly, involved at a national level, it leads the findings to indicate a general understanding for the Swedish business culture. The complexity might thus be larger with involvement of several national cultures on a higher level.

With foundation in existing literature (Poret, 2017; Chakravorti, 2015; Hofstede, 1994; Köster, 2009; Tonnquist, 2016), as well as the collected data, it is evident that both culture and personal characteristics have an impact on planning in the project. The respondents highlighted the personal traits of the project manager or the responsible person from the different organizations where personal biases and preferences may affect the project. For example, Alexanderson discussed that a lot of passion goes into this type of work. If one person feels very strongly about a matter and also has major influence or power on the project, the focus could be skewed to focus on the personal preferences of that individual. Furthermore, Köster (2009) argues the role of the project manager as vital in the project life cycle. Both Engström and Lindh argued for the meaning of leadership styles, passion and communication abilities among the responsible people from each organization – especially focusing on the communicative abilities with all other stakeholders involved. Since communication and planning for risks, as well as including all stakeholders to make sure they are on track, are important factors in the planning stage to facilitate a successful execution, the style directing and appraising these factors are important.

Execution

The execution stage is proven to naturally be impacted by a wide range of stakeholders such as the leaders from each organization, as well as the sole target groups of the projects. The data introduced several stakeholders that were not directly involved in the initiation and planning stages of the projects but had a larger role in the execution stage. This statement is most visible in the shorter time-bound projects with a clear ending point. As an example, Tetra Pak received feedback from the teachers encouraging participation in the competition. The teachers were not involved in the project until the actual execution, which was when the competition took place. The perceptions of the target groups are judged as highly important for Tetra Pak, and when evaluating the project outcome by both analyzing statistics drawn from the children's registration of participation, and obtaining feedback from the teachers, Tetra Pak restructured the project based on previous results. The stakeholders introduced for the first time in the execution stage are thus also important in the following completion and evaluation stage, since they have a direct impact on the planning stage in the re-execution or re-structuring of a project. This reconciles with the suggestion made by Pinto and Prescott (1988) regarding trouble-shooting, as well as that of Köster (2009) regarding the balance between common methodology and flexibility. By including the stakeholders and their opinions these aspects are recognized and handled to a wider extent. Further, an increased participation rate speaks for additional stakeholders – the more participants, the wider the reach of the project.

Other examples of stakeholders who were introduced and gained influence in the execution stage are the farmers affected by A Working Future, and the children in På lika villkor. Through the forum activities set up by Save the Children, valuable insights regarding the needs of the target group, the ones actually impacted by the project and thus subjects for the measurable success, were gained. This implies the acknowledgement of the people affected, which Alexanderson argued to be a major contributor to the ability to make a positive impact, hence conducting a successful project. When considering the aspect of client consultation, one can hence argue that this should include several other stakeholders when the project involves another external party as the main target group, who are the ones ultimately benefited from the intended outcome.

The chemistry between the involved key individuals did increase the flexibility and reduce frictions in the cases, implying that the key stakeholders influence the outcome on for example working methods, discussed in a later section.

Completion

The inclusion of various stakeholders introduced in the completion stage may contribute to additional insights in the evaluation stage which may not be recognized by the organizations themselves. Furthermore, in the evaluation of the project between Accenture and Plan International, the collaborative efforts in evaluating the outcomes provided a consensus around the challenges and success factors. As further emphasized in the interviews, individual compatibility has a major influence throughout the project life cycle and can hence be assumed to have so in the completion stage as well. When evaluating the success of the project, if the individuals or organizations have not agreed upon what projects success is, the perceptions will vary. Hence, compatibility is continuously important on both an organizational and individual level. A unanimous view on the internal stakeholders, the employees, is also shown in the completion stage since the value creation for the employees is prioritized among several of the cases, indicating that these stakeholders will impact the completion and evaluation. This reconciles with the suggestion of Chakravorti (2015) who argues the importance of measurability of the value added. By including the employees in the evaluation, the company can concretize the added value in this aspect. The companies should thus plan for the impact on the internal stakeholders already in the planning and execution stages. This was exemplified by Alexanderson who mentioned the internal evaluation of the project with Ashoka and by Engström who mentioned the continuous evaluation of the impact on employee perception of the company. Furthermore, this supports the argument by Pinto and Prescott (1988) that client consultation is crucial in the completion stage as well. However, the data implies the importance of further including the consultation of additional stakeholders, not only the two organizations.

6.3 Applied working methods and tools

Initiation

The degree of usage of practical methods, such as communication, risk management and planning tools, vary in the studied projects. In cross-organizational projects between companies and NGOs, and the study objects specifically, the increased number of organizations involved implies complex processes which could be simplified by efficiently working with these methods (Tonnquist, 2016; Pinto & Prescott, 1988). The data derived from the interviews indicates that goals are formulated on a very general basis in the case of the studied projects as a part of the CSR-strategy. The incentives of some of the projects, as presented in the first theme, eliminate the usage of practical tools in the first stage of the cycle – since visions are already formulated and stakeholders already identified. The aspects of communication and carefully choosing their strategic partners are discussed by the respondents as important, supporting the argument by Köster (2009) that establishment of smooth communication contributes to project success. From the data, this is identified to help align the mission of the project, another factor contributing to success (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). However, it is also evident that smooth communication is interrelated with, and affected by, both the incentives of the different organizations and the compatibility of cultures and key individuals in the initiation stage, thus impacting the use of certain tools.

Although risk management and the planning for risk is established in project management theory as crucial tools, the participating interviewees provide a wide range of approaches towards risks in their collaborations with NGOs. Some of the respondents declared that the general risk management tools for the company itself were also included in the particular projects, implying the consideration of risk in both the initiation and planning stage but without specific guidelines for the projects. Generally, all participants acknowledge that there are risks of the projects, with certain risks being more or less manageable depending on its nature. This indicates the internal usage of risk identification and planning tools prior to bringing in additional stakeholders in the form of the NGO. By using these tools before starting the planning stage, the companies can minimize risks specifically related to the collaboration in their choice of which organization to partner with.

Planning

The formulation of project plans and determination of the focal points of the projects appear to be influenced by who the official project owner is. The study consists of diverging cases related to this matter. In the case of Accenture and Ashoka, Alexanderson stated that Ashoka was the project owner and hence had a major influence on the practicalities of the project, whereas Tetra Pak and WWF's collaborative project is owned by Tetra Pak and therefore mainly influenced and planned by them and their subcontractor. Alexanderson did however mention the lack of defined milestones in the project with Ashoka as an identified issue when Accenture entered the partnership, indicating the need for clarity in the practical aspects of the project, enhancing usage of certain tools and methods in the planning stage. However, Accenture mainly followed Ashoka's methods, which speaks for the relevance of finding common methodology and keeping a certain flexibility in the planning, as well as execution stage (Köster, 2009). AstraZeneca and BRIS' collaboration followed regulations from a global level. It is thus evident that different tools are used in the planning stage to create initial clarity of goals, as suggested by Köster (2009), which is a helpful matter in facilitating success. The responsibility of accounting for this is however not always in the hands of the companies.

All respondents emphasize the need for clear and open communication in the planning stage. Official meetings, on different occasion rates, are used prior and post project execution. The official meetings seem to occur more often between the involved organizations in the planning and evaluation stages, indicating intensified communication in these stages. The respondents argued that the building of relationships, which can be related to the minimization of the natural friction defined by Chakravorti (2015), is dependent on fundamental communication. The respondents emphasize relationships as important in both planning and executing a project, which they are facilitating with both informal and formal communication matters. The informal gatherings, such as dinners and get-to-know-each-others, are argued to be helpful in understanding each other's point of view. This implies the reduction of certain internal risks and aligns with the argued importance of establishing smooth communication (Köster, 2009). Additionally, by establishing steering committees, conducting regular meetings, and updating the involved parties on the status of the project, the formal aspects of communication and planning are also present in the studied cases. This further strengthens the argument of the importance of communication means, as the respondents have mentioned that these meetings keep all involved parties in the loop and provides a forum to discuss emerging questions and concerns.

As mentioned, the approaches to risk and incorporation of tools managing this aspect vary with some adopting a preventive approach and some having a more ad hoc approach. Some but not all, of the respondents mention plans for risk mitigation, implying they are considered and identified in collusion in the planning stage. However, as this does not appear to be general for all the studied projects the importance of it may be questioned, although it is identified as crucial in previous literature (Köster, 2009; Tonnquist, 2016).

Execution

The consideration of the client, or in this case partner, is emphasized throughout the project life cycle, further implying the complexity of cross-organizational projects (Pinto & Prescott, 1988). Based on the argument that a project is deemed successful when reaching its goals within the set time, scope and budget with a desired quality, the formulation of goals is crucial also in the planning and completion stage. This will in turn impact the outcome in the execution stage of the projects and indicates that certain management practices might be helpful in executing successful projects. However, the execution is highly dependent on the planning stage (Köster, 2009). Although Patanakul, Iewwongcharoen and Milosevic (2010) identify several tools and techniques that contribute to the success of a project, such tools for evaluation were not emphasized by the respondents in the study. This might however be due to a lack of emphasis on these aspects in the interviews, and tools may in fact be present although they were not elaborated upon.

All of the studied projects have clearly assigned individuals who manage the communication with the respective parties in the execution of projects, assuring the clarity and smoothness of communication. The importance of communication can hence be considered increasingly important at the culmination of the project. Deciding upon means to communicate could, as for the planning stage, thus simplify decision making and communicative matters. However, the findings do not imply any major relevance of using certain methods or models. This could possibly be explained by the influence of other factors, such as the key individuals' relationship and the alignment of organizational cultures, aligning with Chakravorti's (2015) view.

In regard to risk management in the execution stage, the aspect of managing emergent risk becomes increasingly important. The interviewees highlight the importance of open communication in the mitigation and management of risks as they appear. As established, the flexibility and attitude towards unforeseen events are stemming from the planning stage and the general approach towards the project. Risk management tools are thus of importance in the execution stage, but to what degree depends on the usage in the planning stage. Particular usage of monitoring tools is not clearly identified in the execution stage of the projects, but the study shows that all cases have incorporated time plans and budgets in one way or another. However, as mentioned, the management of those depends on the owner of the project and how necessary they are deemed to be. Lindh exemplified the importance of risk planning and management in all types of projects and collaborations by arguing AstraZeneca's general attitude towards risk, and Alexanderson highlighted the ad hoc approach of Accenture's project with Ashoka as another way of handling risks as they emerge. Additionally, Alexanderson argued a more proactive approach to risk in the project between Accenture and Plan International. Both approaches were argued to have worked well, implying the importance of adapting to the context and that no one approach is superior. This strengthens the argument of Köster (2009) that a balance must be found between common methodology and flexibility.

Completion

The evaluation of the projects is argued to be a procedure to gain knowledge and insights which may be used in future projects (Köster, 2009). Facilitating communicative tools that allow for evaluation and a smooth completion, involving all parties of the project, could thus be argued as vital (Tonnquist, 2016). Based on the data, the processes of evaluation varied between project, where Accenture and Plan International had provided a report, identifying key success factors of the specific project, and where Tetra Pak and WWF had an evaluation meeting each year after the competition was finalized. However, it must be considered that not all of the studied projects have been terminated yet, and hence the evaluation stage might not be reached in all cases. On this note, it should be highlighted that both Engström and Alexanderson argue the continuous monitoring of impact, referring to monitoring during the execution stage. A public evaluation method is used in all the studied cases – a presentation of the projects in sustainability reports. These provide more tangible measurements of the outcomes, but we recommend companies to further emphasize the measurement of value added since this is identified as important of all companies as well as Chakravorti (2015). Since some of the studied projects are parts of a long-term collaboration, the companies could benefit from ensuring communication of insights about planning and risk management tools in the completion of existing projects, to ensure the incorporation of these in future projects within the collaboration. This insight became evident in the interviews, since many of the projects were rebranded from previous, similar projects. The knowledge gained from previous executions was thus used in the studied projects, implying that set management tools for identifying communication needs and risks are important in the completion stage. This can be considered a part of the technical tasks highlighted by Pinto and Prescott (1988) as important in the completion stage.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

This study has investigated cross-organizational projects between multinational companies and non-governmental organizations. The posed research question was: *What factors are important for multinational companies to successfully execute projects with non-governmental organizational partners?* The research question is answered through the following conclusions drawn within the three identified themes, as well as the different stages of the project's life cycle.

Incentives of the projects

The incentives when initiating a collaborative project with a desired outcome is versatile. Our findings imply that if the ordinary strategies of the organizations entering a partnership reconcile, the alignment of goals and visions will naturally occur through the entire project life cycle. It is also evident that the perceived role the chosen NGOs have as key institutions and what focus areas are emphasized by the companies, was an underlying consideration in the establishment of the projects which created a foundation for the incentives.

Stakeholders

In international and cross-organizational projects, it is evident that a wide range of stakeholders affect the outcome of the project on different levels, and all examined projects involve numerous stakeholders, in addition to the company and the NGO. The degree of involvement and influence of the stakeholders do however differ, as well as during what point in the project they are involved. The study hence emphasizes the importance in understanding the involvement of additional stakeholders apart from the company and the NGO, as well as cultural differences and similarities, and the relationship among the key individuals working with the projects. The studied projects present additions and removals of both internal and external stakeholders throughout the projects' life cycles, and an even better incorporation of all in the different stages would make success more likely.

Applied working methods and tools

International cross-organizational collaborations are complex, and management tools are helpful in combating complexities and challenges. Both formal and informal communication tools are incorporated throughout the entire life cycle in the studied projects, and the respondents indicate these as vital. If smooth communication among stakeholders and aligning the visions that stem from the incentives at both an organizational and individual level are established, specific management tools do not become a priority in the collaborations. However, external risk not directly related to the collaborative efforts are to a certain extent acknowledged and should be considered.

Initiation

Incentives and stakeholders take a major role in the initiation stage. The analysis shows that initiation of the projects, and why chosen partnerships are conducted, is based entirely on the incentives from either of the organizations. The respective organization and its stakeholders are also highly relevant, since the goal formulation in some cases already is conducted. Furthermore, the projects are thus initiated with foundation in strengthening the legitimacy, fulfilling the need for resources and making a positive impact. As explored by Poret (2017), NGOs can indeed help companies to appraise their legitimacy and evidently this mindset is incorporated in the studied cases. We can further conclude that if the NGOs involved operate within an area relevant for the company's ordinary business, the alignment will be smoother. Additional aspects considered in the initiation stage are the possible risks of the project which however are argued in the study to be minimized when visions and incentives of the involved organizations are aligned.

Planning

Excel-sheets, time plans and various documents are evident in the planning stage. However, due to some of the projects' origins, the incentives have influenced the planning stage as well, since the mere incentives of the partnerships in many cases were to strengthen already existing projects, with the planning already executed. Companies can further benefit from allowing a third party to handle operative matters, such as an external organization or the involved NGO.

This method implies the extensive need for well suited communication, meaning that the different types of stakeholders and relations are important to appraise in the planning stage to facilitate success. Moreover, organizational cultural differences are not an issue if the involved organizations are recognized and trusted, leading to the conclusion that cultural differences are more vital to plan for if involved stakeholders stem from different countries or eminently different types of organizations. Planning for risks and unforeseen events is incorporated in the ordinary business strategy among some of the case companies, but others have not included this in the planning stage, arguing that the involved individuals and alignment of incentives minimizes the need of doing so. The incentives and stakeholders' relationships are therefore important in the planning stage and can help in facilitating success. However, we strongly recommend companies to incorporate more tangible tools in the planning stage, which will be helpful in the execution and evaluation stage although this was not discussed on a deeper level in the interviews. In addition, the interviewees highlight internal value creation, which indicates that the employees and their impact should be accounted for already in the planning stage, if the companies define their satisfaction as a part of success.

Execution

The consideration of stakeholders, both internal and external, play a vital role as this is the stage where the majority of them are mostly involved. The study suggests that it is in this stage, when the plan is put in motion, the impact on target groups becomes evident and where a continuous follow-up by managers is emphasized. The employees are also evidently accounted for in the execution. Additionally, the usage of tools for communication is further enhanced and the study suggests the importance of having open communication among the involved parties. Since no major setbacks or risks were identified in the studied projects, we were unable to investigate the impact that risk management tools would have on the execution. However, the reason for not needing explicit tools are shown by instead facilitating relationships among key individuals and aligning visions, thus meaning that incentives and stakeholders impact the execution. If the corporate representatives have an understanding for the case of NGOs, and the other way around, it is implied to lead to a smoother execution. Having a clear, set project plan with milestones and time frame to follow is highlighted in some of the cases as vital, however not recognized as important by all of the respondents. However, a clear time frame might motivate and facilitate successful execution in terms of the magic triangle.

Completion

The studied partnerships between companies and NGOs seem to stretch with long-term perspective in focus as a part of the companies CSR-strategy, evaluation is hence highly important. The study indicates that the stakeholders have a major impact on how robust and helpful the completion stage will be in facilitating upcoming projects. Hence, the aspect of communication with all stakeholders involved also impacts this. Furthermore, the aspect of incentives appears to have influenced the completion stage in the sense that the perception of success is dependent on the underlying objectives of each organization.

A recipe for success?

- Incentives are of significant relevance in all stages but mainly in the initiation of the project as it contributes to the other factors' relevance in the different stages.
- The organization which is considered the project owner has major influence on the entire process.
- Various external stakeholders should be considered in all stages as they impact the project and can contribute with insights that facilitates success of both current and future projects.
- Internal stakeholders should be considered in planning and execution of a project. Success is enhanced if the execution of the projects consists of relevant tasks for the employees.
- Cultural considerations may need to be considered and managed in the initiating and planning stages, to minimize clashes in the execution. Similarities decrease the need of risk planning and applying specific communication tools in the planning and execution stage.

- Key individuals' personality traits are drivers in the planning and execution stage. Companies should ensure that their involved stakeholders have an understanding for the strategy of NGOs.
- Establishment of smooth communication in the planning stage facilitates success by building trust, aiding in risk management and assuring all parties of the project are on track in the execution stage. Similar incentives facilitate communication.
- Planning for and managing external risk can be done in various ways in both the planning stage and the execution stage depending on the project and the preferences of the involved parties.
- By adjusting working methods and tools after the preferences of NGOs or third parties in the planning and execution stage, other priorities can be enhanced and facilitate success.
- Companies can also with advantage bring in their own specific working methods in the planning and execution stage, which will make transitions between the stages smoother.
- Evaluation tools in the completion stage are for some companies seen as vital contributors to future success.

7.1 Limitations and implications for future research

This study covered the perspective of the companies when facilitating success in cross-organizational projects. By examining projects from an NGO point of view, additional and different success factors could possibly be identified. An interesting take would be to compare success factors from the different points of view. An understanding for both perspectives and success factors can be assumed to further simplify the collaborations and facilitate their success.

This study mainly consisted of projects executed in Sweden. Researching a wider variety of organizational stakeholders could give insights into other factors and probably result in larger differences in national culture, influencing the project execution. We also recommend research in different sizes and natures of the involved NGOs. Further, in depth research of specific constellations of the collaborations might result in different success factors, such as investigating and comparing projects with a set number of NGOs or companies involved. Additionally, whether all involved organizations are present from the start of the project appears to have affected the practical aspects such as the planning stage to a large extent, which may also be a consideration for future research.

Another aspect that was found in the research was the usage of different specific management tools and techniques. Since the focus was on overall success factors, the contribution of specific tools such as the work breakdown structure, budgeting or monitoring tools has not been deeply analyzed and might be further evaluated in future research.

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Appendix A - Interview guide

The interview guide lists all questions outlined before conducting the interviews. It provides a guideline that was adapted based on background research and the characteristics of the company, NGO and projects. Follow-up questions and clarifying questions were also asked.

Swedish version

- Kan du berätta kort om din roll och dina arbetsuppgifter på X?
- Hur länge har du arbetat på X? Hur länge har du arbetat med hållbarhetsrelaterade frågor?
- Kan du berätta om betydelsen av CSR för X och hur ni arbetar med detta?
    - Hur är det uppdelat i olika fokusområden?
- Varför har ni valt att samarbeta med NGO(s) som en del av CSR-arbetet?
- Hur väljs samarbetspartnerna och de aktuella projekten ut?
- Varför har ni valt att arbeta med just X?
    - Hur bidrar detta till er CSR-strategi?
- Vad var målen med det specifika projektet med NGO X?
    - Utformades dessa gemensamt eller på varsitt håll?
    - Uppnåddes dem?
    - Ändrades dem under projektets gång?
- Hur inleddes samarbetet? Vem tog initiativet?
- Vilka organisationer och individer är inblandade och hur ser den organisatoriska strukturen ut? Ansvarsfördelning, arbetsuppgifter?
    - Motivation och samarbete.
- Hur såg tidsramen och begränsningarna ut, samt hur förhöll ni er tills dessa?
- Använde ni er av något av följande, och i sådana fall, hur?
    - Projektplan
    - Planeringsverktyg
    - Kommunikationsverktyg
        - Formell och informell kommunikation
    - Övriga metoder

- Identifierade och planerade ni för risker på förhand?
- Uppstod risker och konflikter? Hur hanterades dessa?
- Skedde något oväntat/oönskat och hur hanterades detta?
- Upplevde du påverkan av skillnader i kulturella faktorer (organisatoriska och nationella)? Hur jobbade ni med att överbrygga gapet?
- Hur jobbade ni med att kontinuerligt säkerställa att målen hölls?
- Hur jobbade ni med resultatuppföljning och utvärdering? Kändes detta nödvändigt?
- Vilka var de största utmaningarna under projektets gång?
- Vad är den viktigaste komponenten som gjort samarbetet framgångsrikt?
- Vilka var dina största lärdomar?

Frågor som berodde på om projektet var pågående, avslutat eller en del av ett längre samarbete:

- Hur länge planerar ni på att fortsätta samarbetet?
- Finns det något som skulle kunna göra att samarbetet avbryts?

English version

- Would you please tell us about your role and tasks at X?
- How long have you been working at X? How long have you been working with sustainability?
- Could you elaborate on the meaning of CSR at X and how you work with this?
    - How is it divided into different focal areas?
- Why have you chosen to collaborate with NGO(s) as a part of the CSR-strategy?
- Based on what selection criteria do you choose the partners and projects?
- Why have you chosen to work with NGO X?
    - How is this contributing to your CSR-strategy?
- What were the goals of the specific project with NGO X?
    - Were these formulated in collaboration or separately?
    - Were they reached?

    - Did they change during the course of the project?
- How was the collaboration initiated? Who took the initiative?
- Which organizations and individuals are/were involved and how does the organizational structure look? Delegation of responsibilities and tasks?
    - Motivation and cooperation
- What timeframe and limitations did you work within?
- Did you use any of the following, and if so, how?
    - Project plan
    - Planning tools
    - Communication tools
        - Informal and formal communication
    - Other methods
- Did you conduct any particular identification of, and planning for, risks?
- Did the project face any risks and conflicts? How did you solve them?
- Did any other unexpected events occur? How were they handled?
- Did you experience any cultural differences (organizational and national)? How did you work to bridge the gap?
- How did you ensure that the goals were met?
- How did you work with result measurements and evaluation? Did this feel necessary?
- What were the biggest challenges?
- What was the most important component that made the collaboration successful?
- What were your main learning points?

Questions depending on if the project was already completed, a part of an extended partnership or still ongoing:

- How long do you plan on continuing the collaboration?
- What could possibly terminate the collaboration?