Success Factors for Supporting Intercultural Engagement of Employees towards Sustainability

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Abstract: The goal of this thesis is to contribute to the overall progress of society towards sustainability by supporting the engagement of employees of multinational organizations. By first identifying unique aspects of sustainability that are important for engagement and aspects of national culture that affect receptivity to sustainability messages, the authors were able to make informed selections of success factors contributing to intercultural sustainability engagement. Within these categories, specific strategies and actions leading to successful engagement were identified, based on interviews and survey results from experienced sustainability practitioners and intercultural management experts, as well as an extensive literature review. The further selection and refinement of these led to the development of a capacity building tool to help sustainability practitioners address cultural differences when working to engage employees of multinational organizations in sustain-ability.

Keywords: Sustainability, Culture, Employee Engagement, Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development.

Statement of Contribution

This thesis was written in a collaborative fashion with each team member bringing their strengths, passions and perspectives to the process. Our goals included expanding our connections, applying what we learned through the MSLS programme and creating a well written, practical thesis.

With members from the U.S., Iran and China, our group was diverse in gender, culture, and professional backgrounds. Our topic evolved from a shared interest in the contributions culture could make to sustainability. This paper and the tool attached are the harvest of our journey and a proof of collaboration among diversity.

We each contributed equally to important decisions through all stages of the thesis through a process of discussion and consensus-building. Each of us reviewed articles and shared notes, and everyone read key documents. With her amazing people skills, drive and determination, Zhuona lined up interviews with people who were experts in their fields. Shahla's superior organizational abilities kept the team on track, making sure our efforts were efficient. As a native English speaker, Nathan waded through large numbers of articles in the research phase, and did much of the writing and final editing.

Our journey together has been an inspiring experience and applying the strategies we describe gave us confidence they could really improve intercultural effectiveness. Talking about our different backgrounds and working habits at the beginning enabled us to accept our differences and trust each other's abilities. We enjoyed learning about each other's cultures and celebrating events like the Iranian New Year together. Throughout the process our goals of mutual respect, understanding, patience and acknowledging differences were like beautiful fireflies shining on our pathway, reminding us why we formed the team.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The trans-disciplinary, interconnected nature of the serious environmental and social problems confronting human society today demands a strategic response that is based on a systems thinking approach. The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) provides a way to understand these problems in the overall context of society within the biosphere and to perceive the sustainability challenge that results from our current direction as a species.

Multinational organizations comprise an increasingly powerful and dominant sector of society and the trends of globalization indicate that their influence will only increase in the near future. It is essential that multinationals be a part of the transition towards a more sustainable society and their long term viability depends on their achievement of this goal. As major users of energy and natural resources, sources of economic wealth, and catalysts of change, multinationals impact every aspect of the sustainability paradigm, influencing political governance, consumer behaviors, and cultural transitions. They are therefore key actors affecting society's interactions with the biosphere and people's ability to meet their needs.

Since multinationals are composed of interrelated networks of people, any organizational shift towards sustainability must be mirrored in the people that make up that organization. Engagement of employees in multinationals is necessary if they are to benefit from the talent, creativity and discretionary effort of those employees in their journey towards sustainability.

Engagement can be challenging in multinational organizations because of the diversity of their employees, who may be from many different nations, backgrounds and cultures. The authors feel sustainability practitioners and others working with these employees should respect cultural diversity, which forms a "fourth pillar" of sustainable development and which

comprises the traditions of the world's peoples as well as their future potential. The requirements of the sustainability principles (which define success within the FSSD and are discussed at length in the introduction) make it clear that respecting human needs for identity, participation and understanding are prerequisites to any efforts to engage an organization's members in sustainability.

Finding appropriate success factors for multinational organizations to engage their culturally diverse constituent groups of employees in sustainability therefore becomes an essential step in the overall transition of society towards a more sustainable world. Success factors for creating employee engagement among various cultural groups will result in a quicker and more efficient transition to sustainability, as people's energy, enthusiasm, and capacity for innovation are harnessed. The desire to identify such factors and make them available for practical application in the form of a capacity-building tool for sustainability practitioners is the motivation behind this thesis.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to apply the core concepts of Strategic Sustainable Development and existing theories of culture and human needs in order to:

  • Identify and examine success factors that sustainability practitioners and others can employ to support the sustainability engagement of culturally diverse groups of employees in multinationals.

  • Provide a tool to help those working with multinationals identify the most important cultural aspects to consider for supporting employee engagement for sustainability and to culturally adapt their approach for specific target groups of employees.

Research Questions

- Primary research question:

1. What success factors can be identified for culturally adapting efforts to engage employees of multinational organizations from different national backgrounds in sustainability?

- Secondary research questions:

1. What unique aspects of sustainability can be found that relate to culture and are important to consider when attempting to engage people?

2. What aspects of employees' national culture backgrounds affect the success of sustainability engagement efforts?

Methods

The research was carried out through interviews and an on-line survey with sustainability practitioners and intercultural experts, supported by an extensive literature review. Important results were found by categorizing and analyzing data, and then a tool for intercultural adaptation of sustainability engagement was designed on basis of those key findings. The researchers also sought feedback on the tool from the experts they interviewed to help validate and refine it.

Results

The results found specific aspects of sustainability that relate to culture and also aspects of national cultures that could influence people's attitudes

towards sustainability. Strategies for respecting diversity and avoiding ethnocentrism were identified to contribute to the success of engaging employees in sustainability across different cultural backgrounds. Based on these, a set of success factors for intercultural engagement towards sustainability were organized within the following three main groups:

The *Effective Intercultural Communication* group includes the strategies "Make it Interactive", "Ensure Understanding", and "Have the Skills".

The *Situation and Context* group deals with the need for situational awareness, contextualization and being aware of hierarchy issues.

The *Finding Common Values* group relates to focusing engagement efforts on common values held among people from different cultures.

Specific strategies and recommended actions within each of these headings formed the basis of the authors' capacity-building tool for aiding sustainability practitioners to culturally adapt their efforts to engage employees of multinational organizations.

Discussion

The discussion section examines the results of the research project, including their implications for intercultural sustainability engagement in organizations and their validity.

One major research findings reviewed in this section is that cultural diversity supports innovation, a key component of successful sustainability strategy development. Another finding is that the complexity of sustainability means that communicating it can be an issue, requiring practitioners to have a good understanding of cultural knowledge bases and learning styles, and an ability to simplify complex issues and scientific arguments when necessary.

Another finding of great importance is that attention should be paid to differences in culturally-based values in communicating sustainability to people. A lack of awareness of differences in values has contributed to the failure of many sustainable development programs, and there is a need to find ways to align values when communicating, and to use areas of overlapping values as entry points to build on. Two of the most important areas of values to consider for intercultural sustainability engagement are those corresponding to Hofstede's culture dimensions of power distance and the soft/hard (MAS) dimension.

Finally, the need for intercultural competencies among sustainability practitioners and the importance of contextualizing sustainability messages are also discussed in this section.

Conclusion

The heart of this research project lies at the intersection of culture and sustainability, two areas of vital importance in the international arena. Solutions to global problems of unsustainability will require unprecedented levels of cooperation across national, cultural and organizational lines, necessitating high levels of intercultural competence. Only by fully engaging their culturally diverse employees in sustainability will multinationals be able to take advantage of their energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. Successful engagement will entail respecting cultural diversity by supporting employee's human needs for understanding, participation, and identity.

By considering the aspects of sustainability which are unique with regard to culture and engagement, looking at the role of national culture on influencing receptiveness to sustainability messages, and identifying success factors to help practitioners culturally adapt their engagement efforts, this thesis seeks to make both a theoretical and a practical contribution to strategic sustainable development. The capacity-building

tool developed by the authors will be made available to sustainability practitioners and others working to with employees of multinational organizations, and will hopefully prove useful for increasing sustainability engagement.

Glossary

Biosphere: The global system integrating all living organisms on Earth, the relationships between them, and their interactions with the lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere.

Culture: The mental programming common to a certain group of people, consisting of learned patterns of behavior, values, norms and practices derived from one's social environment.

Culture Dimensions: Aspects of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures.

Employee Engagement: An engaged employee is one motivated to achieve an organization's goals on a personal level and willing to put extra thought, effort and creativity into achieving them, beyond what is required by his or her job description.

Ethnocentrism: The belief that one's own culture is somehow more valid than others, and the tendency to judge other groups by one's own cultural norms.

Five Level Framework: A generic framework for planning in complex systems consisting of five distinct levels: System, Success, Strategic Guidelines, Action, and Tools.

Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD): The Five Level Framework applied to the global system of society within the biosphere and relying on a definition of success described by the four sustainability principles.

Hofstede's Model of culture: Theory of culture as "software of the mind" developed by Geert Hofstede and based on five culture dimensions that were derived from different value orientations in intercultural survey results.

Human needs: Within Max-Neef's theory of Human Scale Development, fundamental human needs are seen as common to all human cultures and

across time, classifiable and limited in number. They include: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom.

Intercultural: Between people or groups from different national cultures.

Intercultural competencies: Abilities to understand, communicate, and interact effectively with people from cultures different from one's own.

National Culture: Culture measured at the level of national group.

Organizational Culture: The shared attitudes, perceptions and practices of an organization; more superficial and flexible than national culture, although still difficult to manage directly .

Systems Thinking: A way of understanding complexity and solving problems that relies on seeing the interconnected nature of elements of complex systems and trying to understand the causal relationships between seemingly disparate parts of the whole.

Values: Defined by Hofstede as "Broad Tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others", values are learned in childhood, often largely unconscious, and fairly stable within cultures over time.

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"If we go through a list of some of the main problematiques that are defining the new Century, such as water, forced migrations, poverty, environmental crises, violence, terrorism, neo-imperialism, destruction of social fabric, we must conclude that none of them can be adequately tackled from the sphere of specific individual disciplines. They clearly represent trans-disciplinary challenges." - Manfred Max-Neef

1   Introduction

1.1   The Need for a System Perspective

A casual glance at a newspaper today will likely reveal a list of headlines that read like a litany of ecological and social problems. Climate change, biodiversity loss, air and water pollution, and ozone depletion are words evoking ecological degradation that have become commonplace enough to be included in almost everyone's vocabulary. Similarly, stories about poverty, injustice, violence and the suppression of basic human rights remind us that human beings are often as destructive towards each other as they are toward the natural world.

Like climate change, many of the ecological effects of the ever expanding impacts of humans on the earth are truly global in scale. The human population is now above 6.8 billion and between 30 and 50% of the planet's land area is now exploited by people. So great are the changes to natural systems caused by human activity that the term "anthropocene" has been proposed as a new name for a geologic era in which people have become a world-altering force (Crutzen, 2002).

At a time where so many serious ecological and social crises are escalating at once, responding to varied and constantly changing problems can seem like a futile effort to put out multiple small fires before they merge into one giant conflagration. The effect is increased by the extent to which problems are interrelated and reinforce one another; for instance climate change may contribute to desertification, which in turn can cause erosion and loss of cropland, leading to poverty and hunger. Famine and the disruption of

livelihoods can then contribute to a breakdown of established social structures, resulting in violence or even genocide. Such a chain of causality may seem speculative to some, but in fact UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has argued that just such a series of connections is one of the root causes of violence in Darfur and other parts of Africa (Ban Ki-Moon, 2007). The failure to appreciate the complex interrelationships between ecological and social issues often results in imperfect solutions which contribute to new problems as they seek to solve others.

The recognition of the need for a concept that could encompass the trans-disciplinary, interconnected nature of many social and environmental problems led the Brundtland Commission to its landmark 1987 definition of sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). The often cited declaration that "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" provides a step in the right direction, but falls short of a detailed blueprint that could show the way forward. Brian Edwards in *The Rough Guide To Sustainability* (2009) called it, "a virtuous but imprecise concept, open to various and often conflicting interpretations". What is needed is a way to provide a strategic, structured approach to the multiple crises humanity faces; one that considers both society's internal needs and its relationship with the natural world, and that integrates systems thinking. One approach that aims to address sustainability challenges in a strategic way is the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development.

1.2   The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development

The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) is a strategic planning methodology for sustainability that considers the global system of society in the biosphere and can also be applied to moving a specific organization or entity within that system towards sustainability. It is based on a generic Five Level Framework that is suitable for planning in any complex system.

The five levels of the FSSD (System, Success, Strategic Guidelines, Action and Tools) provide a means to understand what the basic conditions for a sustainable society would be and to develop strategic plans to move organizations towards that goal. The levels are not hierarchical but are mean to inform one another in a reciprocal planning process.

The FSSD considers the system of "Society in the Biosphere" and recognizes that society's activities are ultimately constrained by the limitations of geophysical processes that support life on earth. The continued function of society is therefore dependent on not creating conditions that undermine people's capacity to meet their needs, while also avoiding degradation of the biosphere.

Success within the FSSD is defined by four sustainability human principles (SPs), which were derived through a process of scientific consensus by Dr. Karl Henrik Robèrt and other scientists (Robèrt, 2000). These principles recognize that society should not create conditions preventing people from meeting their human needs within the system in order for it to be sustainable. By identifying the main causes of unsustainability, it is possible to imagine a sustainable society where contributions to those causes are eliminated.

The constraints of a sustainable society described by the sustainability principles are as follows:

"In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing...

I. concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust.

II. concentrations of substances produced by society.

III. degradation by physical means and, in that society...

IV. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs" (Holmberg and Robert, 2000).

The Strategic Guidelines level of the FSSD contains strategies that guide

planning efforts towards sustainability. One of the most important of these is the concept of *backcasting*, a planning methodology which imagines a desired future and then identifies steps necessary to bridge the gap between the current reality of the system and success. Backcasting can be based on imagined future scenarios, but in the context of the FSSD it is based on the four sustainability principles.

The *action level* contains concrete steps designed to close the sustainability gap and to help move towards the goal of sustainability within the system.

The *tools level* contains conceptual tools designed to lead to actions which are strategic for leading to success. There are three main categories of tools: *strategic tools* for ensuring actions are strategic, *systems tools* for directly measuring the system, and *capacity tools* for building sustainability capacity and supporting learning about sustainability (Robèrt et al., 2007). One of the outcomes of this thesis is a tool that fits into the capacity category.

1.3   The Sustainability Challenge

The four sustainability principles indicate that contributions to unsustain-ability occur when there is a *systematic* increase of ecological degradation and when society creates conditions that undermine people's capacity to meet their needs. According to SP1, the extraction of certain materials from the earth's crust, for example, may only become a problem with regard to sustainability if they are part of a trend that results in higher concentrations in the biosphere than would normally be present.

There are many specific examples of such trends. Rockström et al. (2009) identified three out of nine suggested "planetary boundaries" that have already been crossed, with potentially serious and even irreversible effects. These include climate change, the global rate of biodiversity loss, and disruption of the nitrogen cycle. Atmospheric CO_2 levels are currently around 387 parts per million (ppm), compared to a pre-industrial rate of 280 ppm and continue to rise steadily due to anthropogenic emissions

(UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2010). Graphs of the exponential increase in CO_2 emissions correspond closely with trends in global energy use and population growth (Hoffman et al., 2009).

Although more difficult to measure, social indicators of unsustainability often show similar trends of systematic increase. Society's failure to provide conditions which allow people to meet their needs leads to the erosion of trust in social institutions. This can reduce their functionality, resulting in positive feedback loops in which social cohesion is continually weakened. Chilean economist and thinker Manfred Max-Neef sees an underlying system of interrelated human needs that can be used to evaluate social structures and institutions. The fourth sustainability principle deals with the social conditions that might prevent people from meeting their basic physiological and psychological needs for *Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Idleness, Creation, Identity and Freedom*. Max-Neef's concept is that these needs are universal to all people, but the ways in which they are satisfied differ among cultures, societies and individuals (Max-Neef, 1991). The goal of sustainable development is to eliminate barriers to meeting human needs while allowing people the greatest possible freedom to choose their own satisfiers within the possibilities of a sustainable society.

A convenient way of understanding the results of systematic increases in ecological and social degradation on the one hand, and increases in global population, consumption and resource use on the other, is to visualize a funnel, seen in Figure 1.1 (Robèrt et al., 2000). This metaphor illustrates the current situation of unsustainability with regard to society in the biosphere. Increased use of natural resources degrades the biosphere, causing it to be less productive in the future and less able to support human society. Natural capital is depleted and planetary boundaries for geophysical cycles are approached at the same time as the growing human population and increasingly resource-intensive lifestyles increase demand. At some point organizations and societies will collide with the walls of the funnel, unable to continue their unsustainable patterns of behavior.

Increasing social / ecological degradation

Restoration of natural systems

Increasing population and resource use

Sustainability
*No systematic
increases in social or
ecological degradation*

Improvement of social systems

Present   **Future**
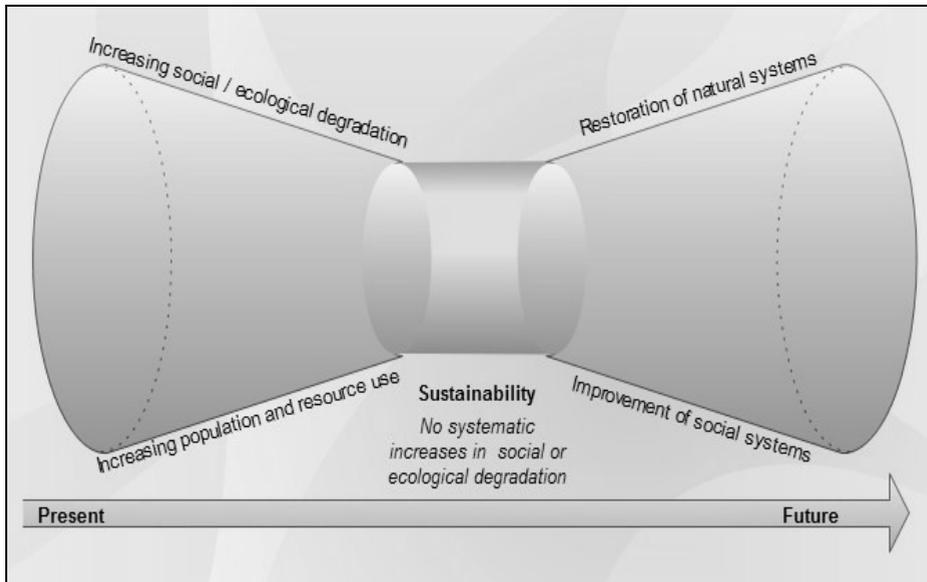
Figure 1.1. The Funnel Metaphor (after Robèrt 2000).

Achieving sustainability will mean reaching an equilibrium between what society takes from nature and what nature is able to provide without degradation. Additionally, people's abilities to meet their human needs would not be undermined. At this point society will have moved into the straight part of the funnel, representing a state where resources are not diminishing and society's demands on the system are not increasing.

1.4   Multinational Organizations and Sustainability

Multinational organizations are key actors influencing how society as a whole interacts with the biosphere and how human needs are satisfied. This category includes both for-profit corporations and non-profit NGOs (non-governmental organizations). They have powerful impacts on natural

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ecosystems, social structures and the ability of people to meet their needs globally, through the use of natural resources, production of man-made substances, physical changes to the environment, social effects, and economic influence. In addition to their direct impacts on society and the biosphere, multinationals wield considerable political influence on governments at various levels from locally through internationally. They also have great power to shape consumer habits and behaviors through their considerable marketing efforts.

Multinational organizations compromise one of the most significant sectors of society in terms of both their contributions to unsustainability and their potential to drive sustainable development. It has been estimated that the largest 300 multinational corporations own more than 25% of the world's productive assets (Economist, 1993).

Multinationals impact the social side of sustainability through their roles as providers of employment and economic growth, and in the case of NGOs, through social programs and supporting development. The "2006 World Investment Report" from the United Nations found that 77000 multinational corporations employed 62 million workers globally. Foreign direct investment by such companies reached a peak of more than 1.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2007, of which more than 600 billion was in developing countries (UNCTAD, 2007).

In addition to their direct economic power, global organizations are able to influence decision making by all levels of government through a variety of means. In many countries these include the ability to influence legislation through lobbying efforts and even to give money directly to decision makers. The international oil and gas industry alone spent more than 160 million U.S.D. on lobbying members of the American Congress in 2009 (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009).

Because of the tremendous amount of economic and political power multinational organizations have in today's increasingly globalized world, it is necessary for them to move towards sustainability if society as a whole is to do so. Many multinationals have already begun reporting on their progress towards sustainability. Kolk (2009) found a 30% increase in the

number of Fortune 250 MNCs that published sustainability reports from 1999-2005. Sustainability reports based on Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) G3 guidelines were published by more than 1000 companies in 2008 / 2009, representing a more than 46% increase from the previous year. (Global Reporting Initiative, 2010). Public awareness of the need for action on climate change has driven much of the interest in sustainability: the Carbon Disclosure Project found that in 2009, 70% of Global 500 companies included greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) in their annual reporting. While having sustainability reporting does not necessarily mean that companies are committed to fully implementing sustainability across their organizations, it is encouraging that they are responding to public opinion on these issues.

Even organizations that have made a sincere commitment to becoming more sustainable face significant difficulties in doing so. One of the most important of these is the challenge of fully engaging their employees in sustainability. The consulting company SpeakEnergy LLC. based in San Francisco, reports that, "For organizations with mature, environmental sustainability programs, employee engagement is the number one stumbling block" (Nemani, 2008).

1.5   The Need for Sustainability Engagement

Sustainability consultant Richard Blume describes a typical consulting project with a multinational as having two phases: a development phase, and an implementation phase. In the development phase, the goal is to engage the top management of the organization and get a commitment to move forward with a widespread implementation of sustainability across the organization's operations. In the implementation phase, many more people are involved, perhaps thousands as opposed to dozens. Because implementing sustainability in a meaningful way can involve all branches and departments of a multinational organization, the need to engage people from different cultural backgrounds becomes apparent (Blume, 2010).

Joanna Wirtenberg (2009) wrote in the "Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook" that employee engagement is "a crucial factor for the successful management of sustainability." Because the successful development and implementation of sustainability programs requires creativity, commitment and hard work, it is essential that employees believe in the sustainability vision and are motivated to achieve it. Yet a 2009 survey found that 86% of employees reported that they were not engaged by their employers in sustainability, even though in most case the employers had sustainability policies (Brighter Planet, 2009). The failure of many organizations to fully engage their employees in sustainability is a key factor that is slowing down progress both within their organizations, and by extension in society as a whole.

On the other hand, the potential benefits of creating employee engagement are huge. Front-line employees know the day to day operations of businesses best, and are often more capable of identifying and finding creative solutions to sustainability problems than distant managers. At Xerox, the "Earth Awards" program saved more than 235 million USD in just fourteen years based on employee suggestions for eco-efficiency measures (Willard, B., 2005). As Bob Willard wrote, "Most eco-efficiency savings are not rocket science. They simply require educating, encouraging and empowering employees working at the sites to unleash their creativity and help capture them" (Willard, B., 2005).

If the benefits of sustainability are not clearly communicated to employees in a way that resonates with their culture, background and values, they may fail to become engaged in organizations' sustainability visions. The result can be that they will perceive sustainability programs as additional work and cost, and may give them a low priority. As Marsha Willard writes, "As long as employees believe sustainability is something 'extra' to do, something on top of the already full plate of duties they're juggling, meaningful change is unlikely" (Willard, M., 2009).

Jagan Nemani, CEO of consulting company SpeakEnergy LLC, explains that although many executives expect employees to automatically follow corporate initiatives for sustainability, "this is true only for the most motivated employees, and these employees constitute 10 – 12% of the work

force for large organizations" (Nemani, 2008). In any case, employees who are not effectively engaged are unlikely to generate the kind of creative solutions and progressive thinking that the transition to more sustainable organizations demands.

1.5.1 Culture and Sustainability

"A society's values are the basis upon which all else is built. These values and the ways they are expressed are a society's culture. The way a society governs itself cannot be fully democratic without there being clear avenues for the expression of community values, and unless these expressions directly affect the directions society takes. These processes are culture at work. Cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic vitality."

Jon Hawke*s, The fourth pillar of sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning.*

Building on ideas first developed at the Mauritius International Meeting for Small Island Developing States (also known as Barbados +10) in 1994, American author Jon Hawkes and others have called for culture to be included as a "fourth pillar" of sustainability alongside the traditional three of ecology, economy and society (United Nations, 2005 and Nurse, 2006). There is a growing movement recognizing the need to preserve cultural diversity and knowledge in danger of being lost due to the forces of globalization. Cities and local governments from around the world have taken a leading role in calling for cultural sustainability, agreeing on "Agenda 21 For Culture" at the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona in 2004 (Pascual, 2006). Important work in this area is ongoing at the Cultural Development Network in Vancouver, Canada and the UNESCO observatory at the University of Melbourne in Australia (CDN, 2005).

The 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity reaffirms the importance of culture in supporting basic human needs for identity and participation. The document makes the key point that cultural is an essential

repository for ideas and inspiration that should be preserved, stating that "As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (UNESCO, 2001). In the same way that biodiversity is valuable as a source of potential medicines and foods to benefit mankind, cultural diversity may be the key to innovative solutions that can help solve the problems faced by society. The respect for and preservation of cultural diversity is therefore of major importance for sustainable development for two reasons: to avoid creating barriers that prevent people from meeting their human needs by depriving groups of their cultural identities, and as a source of creative solutions for the future.

For these reasons, the authors believe it is of the greatest importance for multinational organizations to engage members of local and national cultures, whether as employees or external stakeholders, in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways. Marquant, Berger and Loan (2004) list "respect for the values and practices of other cultures" as the first item in a section on "Competencies for Global HRD effectiveness." They also highlight the importance of avoiding "corporate ethnocentrism" and being sensitive to local cultural norms.

1.5.2 Culture and Human Needs

The fourth sustainability principle (SP4) states that in a sustainable society, people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs. This thesis follows the work of a 2008 masters thesis from the MSLS program in recognizing participation, identity and understanding as the most relevant human needs to culture and engagement (Alimli, Imran, Ireg, Nichols, 2008).

The human need for identity includes having symbols, language, religion, habits, customs, values and norms, all attributes of culture (Max-Neef, 1991). Of these, *values* represent the deepest level of culture, which is least susceptible to rapid change and therefore the most important to understand when seeking to manage intercultural differences (Hofstede, 2005).

If the need for identity is to be respected, individuals and societies should be free to maintain their cultural identity and heritage. Manfred Max-Neef indicates that a poverty of the human need for identity will result from the "imposition of alien values upon local and regional cultures" (Max-Neef, 1991). One implication of this in the field of sustainable development is that sustainability engagement must be voluntary, since any attempt to impose sustainability values on others could suppress their freedom of identity.

At the same time, the need for participation should also be respected. Actions Max-Neef associates with this need include cooperating, proposing, sharing, dissenting, interacting, agreeing, and expressing opinions. Respecting this need requires "participative interaction": settings where people are allowed to freely express their opinions and offer their ideas (Max-Neef, 1991).

The human need for understanding is characterized by investigation, study, analysis and meditation. In order for this need to be actualized, people should have access to education and dialogue (Max-Neef, 1991). From an sustainability engagement perspective, the failure to communicate effectively with people could result in a failure to support their needs for understanding.

Gudykunst and Kim, 1997, define communication as the "exchange of messages and the creation of meaning" and note that no two people ever attribute the exact same meaning to a message. The more effective the communication, the greater the similarity between the meaning understood by the recipient to that intended by the communicator. Effective communication becomes more challenging in an intercultural context, because conceptual filters which differ between cultures influence the way people transmit and receive messages (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

Although intercultural communication is of key importance for engaging people from different cultural backgrounds in sustainability, it is not the only important aspect to consider. For this reason, this thesis seeks to identify *success factors* for effective intercultural sustainability engagement. These include not only factors related to supporting the need

for understanding (intercultural communication), but also those related to participation and identity.

1.5.3 Intercultural Challenges and Successful Engagement

Multinational organizations face significant challenges in that they operate in many different regions of the world, and therefore many different cultural environments, simultaneously. Their functioning depends on intercultural communication and cooperation and their ability to bridge national and organizational cultures (Hofstede, 2005). Ehrenfeld, 2005, notes that, "Underlying cultural values will always trump technology and design in determining behavior. It is at that bedrock level that the foundation for sustainability must be built." To successfully engage their members, multinationals need to communicate their organizational values in a way that resonates with their employee's cultural backgrounds.

This is especially true for a transition towards sustainability, which requires fully engaged and committed employees to be successful. A report from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) in the United States notes that organizations can't get to sustainability just by educating people, but that, "What is really needed is a cultural shift and enormous commitment throughout the company" (Gullo and Haygood, 2009).

The degree of change needed tends to be considerable, as is the degree of employee buy-in needed to support successful change efforts and supply the innovative ideas that can drive progress. Harris and Ogbonna (1998) found that "managements formulating and implementing change initiatives should consider the issue of employees' willingness to change and attempt to generate positive and supportive employee attitudes towards the change effort". When national cultural differences are involved, the successful application of intercultural management techniques are essential for generating such support. As Huib Wursten of Intercultural Consulting Firm ITIM International writes, "the preparation and implementation of change is highly culturally sensitive" (Wursten, 2008).

Employee engagement does not only require that an organization's members follow the protocols and duties laid out for them by management, but also implies a personal and emotional commitment. Kahn (1990) defined engagement as "harnessing organizational member's selves to their work roles". An engaged employee goes beyond basic job requirements and "puts discretionary effort into his or her work... in the form of extra time, brainpower or energy" (Devi, 2009).

The authors take the position that sustainability engagement can only result from respecting the human needs of the individual, including those for identity, participation and understanding. This implies respecting cultural identity, ensuring everyone is able to participate, and creating a learning environment conducive to understanding. It follows that success factors for intercultural sustainability engagement must be based on respect for cultural diversity, non-discrimination, avoiding ethnocentrism and inclusiveness in addition to fostering a personal, emotional and professional commitment to sustainability.

1.5.4 Intercultural Management Theories

The study of culture and intercultural management has been well developed, beginning with pioneers such as Edward T. Hall, who published *The Silent Language* in 1959, and continuing with researchers such as Geerte Hofstede, Gerhard Maletzke, Fons Trompenaars, Charles Hampden-Turner, and Helen Spencer-Oatley. Culture is a complex topic subject to many differing interpretations, and which has been approached from the perspectives of many different disciplines: psychology, anthropology, geography and others.

Preliminary research by the authors identified the need for well defined, useful and accessible theory of culture to help provide conceptual grounding and structure to this thesis. The work of Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede was identified as the best conceptual framework to fulfill this need. The strengths of Hofstede's theory of culture dimensions are that it is measurable and reproducible, and at the same time simple enough to be

understandable to the layman.

Hofstede's theoretical concepts have been supported by consistent results in surveys of various cultural groups and continue to find practical application by consultants and human resource development professionals working with multinationals (Hofstede 2009, Marquant, Berger and Loan, 2004).

Hofstede developed his original four cultural dimensions of *power distance, individualism /collectivism, masculinity/femininity* (referred to as the soft / hard dimension in this thesis) and *uncertainty avoidance* during his work as a researcher at IBM in the 1970s (Dahl, 2004). Hofstede added a fifth cultural dimension *long term vs. short term orientation* in the 1980s based on work by researchers in China who identified this additional dimension based on Confucian values.   Hofstede's model for understanding culture is explained more fully in the methods section of this thesis.

In addition to the concepts mentioned above, there are many others relevant to intercultural engagement for sustainability. Some of these include: deductive vs. inductive reasoning styles (proposed by Gerhard Maletzke), typical learning styles and decision-making patterns (Marquant, Berger and Loan, 2004 and Dahl, 2004). The challenge is to identify which of these concepts is most relevant for sustainability, and to strategically employ them to promote employee engagement and knowledge transfer across cultural lines.

1.6   Scope of the Study

This research project focuses on success factors for supporting sustainability engagement among employees from different national culture backgrounds in multinational organizations. The authors use Hofstede's theory of culture dimensions as a way to discuss underlying values relevant to sustainability as precursors to engagement. Success factors for intercultural engagement are identified based on the experience of sustainability practitioners and intercultural management and communication experts. These are prioritized and used as the basis for a tool to help sustainability

practitioners better understand cultural differences and more effectively support the engagement of people from different national backgrounds.

The authors' research interest is focused on national culture rather than organizational culture. National culture is measured through values that people from the same nationality share, while organizational culture is concerned with "shared perceptions of daily practices" within an organization (Hofstede, Gert Jan, 2000). Organizational culture is important to consider when managing change within organizations, and it is typically influenced by the national culture in which it originates (Hofstede, 2005). As a result, it is not possible to completely ignore organizational culture in this thesis, but the complexity of the topic and the constraints of the research project preclude more than a cursory treatment of the subject.

1.7 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to apply the core concepts of Strategic Sustainable Development and existing concepts in the study of intercultural interactions, management, and communication in order to:

• Identify and examine success factors that sustainability practitioners and others can employ to support the sustainability engagement of culturally diverse groups of employees in multinationals.

• Provide a tool to help those working with multinationals identify the most important cultural aspects to consider for supporting employee engagement for sustainability and to culturally adapt their approach for specific target groups of employees. The tool does not attempt to make recommendations based on the characteristics of specific cultural groups, but provides suggested strategies to follow for ensuring that relevant cultural aspects have been adequately considered. Rather than being a list of recommendations for a specific situation, the tool is a guide that will incorporate the user's own knowledge and creativity to

achieve a successful result.

1.8   Research Questions

- Primary research question:

1. What success factors can be identified for culturally adapting efforts to engage employees of multinational organizations from different national backgrounds in sustainability?

- Secondary research questions:

1. What unique aspects of sustainability can be found that relate to culture and are important to consider when attempting to engage people?

2. What aspects of employees' national culture backgrounds affect the success of sustainability engagement efforts?

2   Methodology

2.1   Research Design

The authors used the book *Qualitative Research Design — An Interactive Approach* by J.A. Maxwell (2005) as a model for designing the research project. The result is a systemic approach allowing the researchers to handle five main abstractions of the research simultaneously.
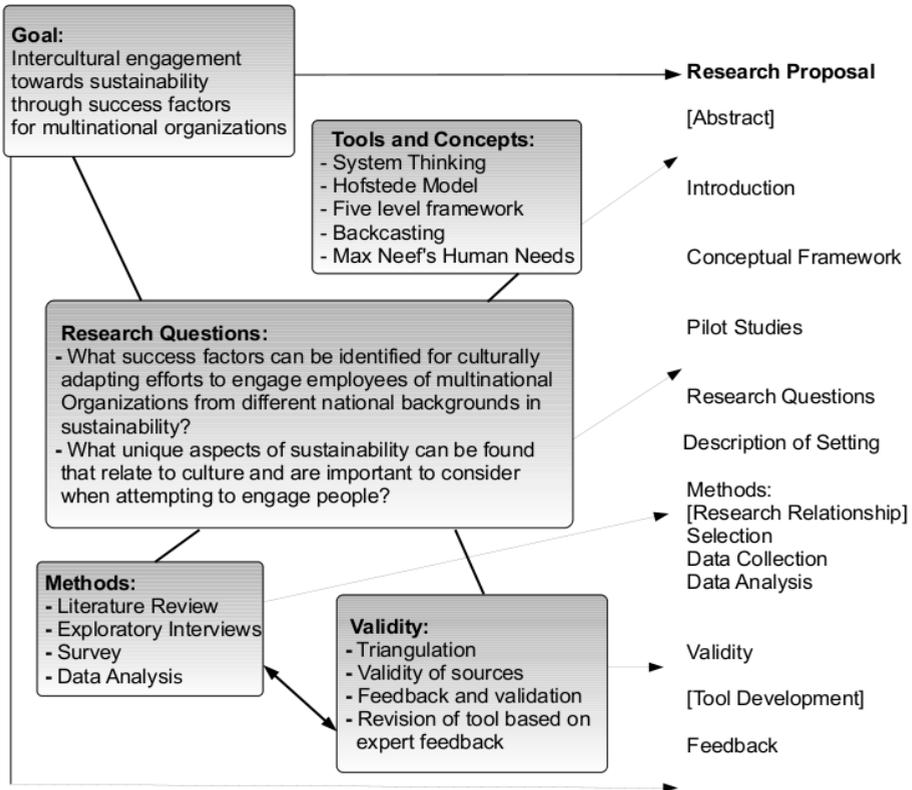

Figure 2.1. Research Design

2.2   Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is the process of understanding complex interrelationships between apparently discrete elements of a complex system. Systems thinking is relevant to this research for understanding the complex relationships among human needs, satisfiers and cultures, and how culture can influence people's choices of different satisfiers. Systems thinking is also key to understanding the system "society within the biosphere" within the FSSD and how society and the biosphere are impacted by satisfiers of human needs (Robèrt et al., 2004).

2.2.2 Hofstede's Model of Culture

Hofstede's model of culture was used as a conceptual framework for this study, and as a basis for developing survey and interview questions that dealt with values and other characteristics of national culture. The authors do not seek to validate or disprove the model, but rather to use it as a lens with which to view various aspects of culture in an understandable way. The reader will better understand the conceptual basis used to examine relationships between culture and sustainability after reading the explanation of Hofstede's model found in Appendix V.

2.2.3 The FSSD Applied to the Research Topic

The five levels of the FSSD (System, Success, Strategic Guidelines, Action and Tools) are useful for understanding the contribution of the research topic towards a sustainable society.

For this research project, the *system boundaries* define the scope of the project within the intersection of sustainability, culture, and employee engagement in multinationals. Within the *system* level, sustainability is

defined by basic social and environmental mechanisms such as biological and geochemical cycles and natural laws such as thermodynamics. Also in this level, culture is examined through the conceptual lens of Hofstede's model, and multinationals are included along with relevant actors for employee engagement (sustainability practitioners and employees). These represent the elements of the wider system of "society within the biosphere" that relate to the research topic.

To understand what aspects of sustainability can affect people's receptivity to becoming engaged in an intercultural context, the secondary research questions are also explored at the system level. Answers to these questions help guide the development and selection of success factors at the strategic level.

The *success* level describes a goal of engaged employees from different national backgrounds who are motivated to work towards sustainability within their organizations. The fourth sustainability principle and Max-Neef's theory of human needs are used to define one important aspect of sustainable employee engagement, which is the necessity of respecting diversity and avoiding ethnocentrism.

At the strategic guidelines level, the authors identified a challenge faced by sustainability practitioners in effectively engaging people across cultural lines. The primary research question was designed to address this challenge. By identifying strategies or *success factors* that will lead to success within the system the authors make a contribution towards this goal. The success factors identified form the basis of the authors' tool to help culturally adapt sustainability engagement programs.

At the *action level*, the authors explored the best practices (actions) that interview respondents were using to address intercultural sustainability engagement challenges. These actions were related to strategies that informed the selection of success factors answering the primary research question, which in turn formed the basis of the authors' tool. While the tool suggests general strategies and approaches rather than specific actions (since these should be based on individual circumstances), sustainability

practitioners using the tool may take concrete actions based on the strategies recommended, which will contribute to success in the system.

The capacity tool created by the authors from the strategies identified as results of the research will contribute to the *tools* level of the FSSD, making a modest contribution in society's transition towards sustainability by helping sustainability practitioners and others seeking to engage employees from different cultural backgrounds.

2.2.4 Max-Neef's Human Needs

Max-Neef classifies the fundamental human needs as: *subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, recreation, creation, identity and freedom.* As mentioned in the introduction, the needs for identity, participation and understanding have been identified as those most relevant to intercultural engagement. Needs fall into the existential categories of being, having, doing and interacting. They are seen as few and are constant through all human cultures and over historical time periods. What changes over time and between cultures is the way these needs are satisfied. The definition of success used for this research project is derived in part from Max-Neef's theory. It includes employees who are not only engaged, but whose cultural diversity has been respected through supporting their needs for identity, participation, and understanding.

Table 2.1. Max-Neef's Human Needs

Fundamental Human Needs	Being (Qualities)	Having (Things)	Doing (Actions)	Interacting (Settings)
Understanding	Critical Capacity, Curiosity, Intuition.	Literature, Teachers, Policies, Educational.	Analyze, Study, Meditate Investigate.	Schools, Families, Universities, Communities.
Participation	Receptiveness, Dedication, Sense of humor.	Responsibilities, Duties, Work, Rights.	Cooperate, Dissent, Express opinions.	Associations, Parties, Churches, Neighborhoods
Identify	Sense of belonging, Self- esteem, Consistency.	Language, Religions, Work, Customs, Values, Norms.	Get to know oneself, Grow, Commit oneself.	Places one belongs to, Everyday settings.

2.3   Methods

The research team planned their project in five phases as shown in figure 2.2. Phase one was designed to get more information about the topic in order to narrow it down in a logical way and build the research questions. In phase two, the team focused on more in depth review and research about the topic. Data analysis in phase three concentrated on categorizing the collected data and identifying important results. In phase four, the research team used the results as a basis to build a tool for intercultural adaptation of sustainability engagement approaches. Phase five included the initial, preliminary validation of the tool by experts.
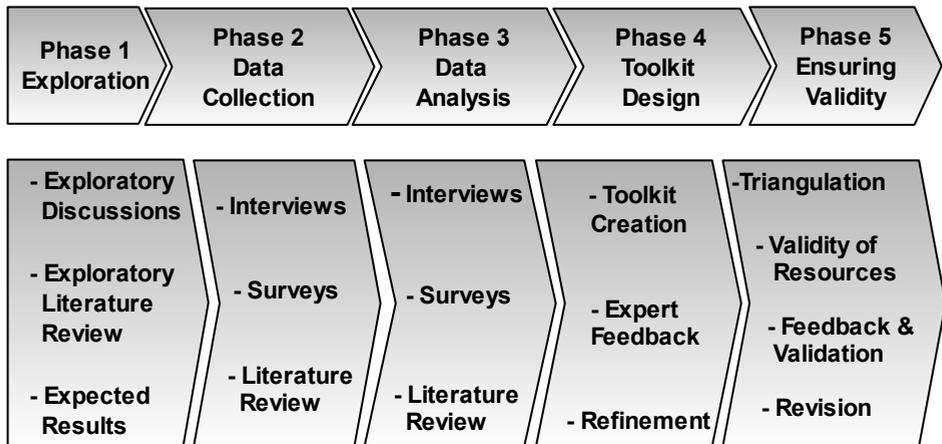
Figure 2.2. Phases of Research

2.3.1 Phase One: Exploration

Exploratory discussions. In order to gain a better initial understanding of the topic and create research questions, the research team performed a few informal exploratory interviews by either Skype calls or face-to-face meetings. The interviewees were sustainability practitioners and consultants who had done research or practical work in the areas of intercultural communication, sustainability competence development, and employee engagement. Interviewers asked open questions so that interviewees could draw on their professional experience in their answers and had the freedom to introduce new relevant concepts. Intercultural communication consultant and fellow MSLS student Pablo Villoch and sustainability consultant Phillipe Patouraux were the first two people interviewed, and were very helpful as guides in the initial project planning phases.

Exploratory literature review. After defining the research questions and the research team's area of interest, the authors collected relevant information from different sources in the focus areas of multiculturalism, cultural differences and sensitivities, culture and sustainability, communication,

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change management, competence development, employee engagement, and human resources. This initial discovery phase of the literature review revealed a fascinating number of connections and related subjects, not all of which could be investigated in depth. Feedback and advice from sustainability practitioners and experts in the exploratory phase were of great help in uncovering the most relevant, valid and up-to-date articles. Hofstede's model for understanding culture was one of the most important concepts uncovered at this stage.

The team also became aware of various organizations such as Society of Intercultural Education Training and Research (SIETAR), ITIM International, the Global People Project, The Society of Sustainability Professionals, and recognized authors and researchers including Geert Hofstede and Helen Spencer-Oatley, whose expertise and works guided the team to form the core basis of the thesis.

Resources used to locate articles and sources during the literature review included Libris (provided by the National Library of Sweden), the BTH Library Catalogue, Google Scholar, and other on-line databases and search tools.

Expected results. By discovering more about the reliable sources and experts in the field of intercultural studies and employee engagement, the research team developed the following expected results to the research questions:

- Primary Research Question: What success factors can be identified for culturally adapting efforts to engage employees of multinational organizations from different national backgrounds in sustainability?

The research teams' expectations for success factors were based on their study and experiences in the MSLS program. They included the expectation that encouraging interactive dialogue would support engagement, the idea that the support of top management was important, and the expectation that intercultural competencies for working with diverse groups would be important for sustainability practitioners.

• Secondary Research Question 1: What unique aspects of sustainability can be found that relate to culture and are important to consider when attempting to engage people?

The authors expected that unique aspects of sustainability relating to culture would include a requirement for innovation (innovation as a societal value varying among cultures), complexity (familiarity with systems thinking varying among cultures) and empathy (concern for the other, human rights norms and expression of human needs varying among cultures).

• Secondary Research Question 2: What aspects of employees' national culture backgrounds affect the success of sustainability engagement efforts?

The authors expected that employees' values, expectations and culturally derived norms would affect the success of sustainability engagement programs aimed at them. Specifically, the authors expected that values related to man's relationship with the environment would differ among cultures and affect the receptivity of employees to sustainability engagement. The authors also expected that a long-term perspective would prove to be an important characteristic for becoming engaged in sustainability; that is, that people who plan for the long-term rather than thinking only in terms of short-term returns would be more receptive.

2.3.2 Phase Two: Data Collection

Interviews. The first step to conducting formal interviews was to prepare open-ended questions designed around the topic focus areas and research questions that invited people to a dialogue and to reflect on their experiences. Interview questions were designed to contribute to answering the research questions and were based on the concepts identified in section 2.2 above, including the FSSD, Hofstede's model of culture and Max-Neef's theory of human needs. The same questions were used for most of the semi-structured interviews, which were aimed at sustainability consultants and practitioners; there were seven primary questions and three alternate

questions which were asked only if time permitted. Most interviews took between a half hour and and hour to complete. Intercultural experts Sanjoo Malhotra and Helen Spencer-Oatley were asked different sets of questions aimed specifically at their experience.

A spreadsheet containing contact info for organizations, consultants and practitioners was developed based on the professional experience and expertise of potential interviewees, and initial contacts were made by phone or email. The interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings, phone or Skype calls, varying between 30 minutes to one hour. In each interview a facilitator was assigned to ask questions and direct the interview, while the other team members were responsible for taking written notes. For most of the interviews, audio recordings were also made with the permission of the interviewees.

Survey. Survey design was based on qualitative and quantitative methodology derived from studying survey design literature, the "Survey Methods" website and personal experience with previous surveys. Thirty-seven questions based on a six-point Likert scale system, and three open-ended questions were designed around the research focus area. Questions asked respondents to rate the usefulness of intercultural engagement strategies and the importance for sustainability engagement of values-based items derived from Hofstede's culture dimensions. The survey also gathered demographic information of respondents, including education, professional background, and years of experience.

An on-line platform "Survey Methods" was used to construct and launch the survey. To initially test and validate the survey, a trial version was deployed to 15 people to test the clarity of questions, grammar, spelling and reply time. Results from the trial version were not included in the final results.

The on-line survey was targeted towards sustainability practitioners, HR professionals and intercultural experts. In launching the survey, invitation emails were sent to practitioners, contacts received from interviewees, and members of The International Society of Sustainability Professionals. Links to the surveys were also posted on professional groups that members

of the research team belonged to on the business networking website LinkedIn.

Literature Review. Literature review began in the early planning stages of the project and continued through the data analysis phase. Literature sources were used to establish a conceptual basis for the research as well as to guide the practical aspects of the project including research design, interview methods, survey design, and data analysis. In all, more than 200 journal articles and over two dozen books were reviewed as supporting literature for the project. Of these, the most useful, relevant and valid sources were collected to guide research methods and provide supporting evidence for this thesis.

2.3.3 Phase Three: Data Analysis

Interviews. After each interview was performed and recorded, a written transcript was prepared by one of team members. From the replies to each question, the key points were highlighted and listed in a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was used to organize responses and to combine similar responses made by different people. Themes were then developed to categorize the key points according to the research questions and main topic areas.

Survey. Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of items or rank the usefulness of various strategies on a Likert scale. This method allowed their responses to be converted into numerical scores by dividing the value they chose by the highest ranking they could have assigned. Average values were then calculated for each question so that scores for different questions could be compared within each group of questions. This allowed items to be ranked by the relative importance or usefulness they were assigned by the survey respondents.

Open-ended questions were treated like the interview questions. Key points were collected and imported into the interview spreadsheet to analyze patterns of responses. These were used as supporting evidence to reinforce

points from the interviews and literature review.

2.3.4 Phase Four: Designing The Tool

The objective of the tool development phase was to provide a capacity tool to help sustainability practitioners be aware of important cultural aspects and sensitivities, and to provide strategies to help them culturally adapt engagement efforts. The authors' desire was to create a practical guide which would be easily accessible to practitioners, would present information in a clear, simple format, and in which individual items could be referenced without having to read the entire guide.

The tool was structured around the three main categories of success factors identified in the results section, with specific items relating to each category as subheadings. Each item followed the same format, presenting information under consistent headings. Table 2.2 shows the headings followed and their meaning.

Table 2.2.Tool Format

Heading	**Explanation**
Challenges	related to intercultural sustainability engagement for each item
Opportunities	for increasing engagement by addressing the challenges
Questions	related to each item that sustainability practitioners should ask about their audience and methods
Strategies	practical suggestions for techniques to meet the challenges
Resources	websites, books, and other resources practitioners could go to for further information

In addition, the guide included a brief introduction and a section explaining how to use the tool. Attention was paid to graphic design and layout to

make the tool more visually interesting and enjoyable to read.

2.3.5 Phase Five: Validity

Validity is one of the major aspects in design of a research (Maxwell, 2005). The authors sought to increase the validity of their work by triangulation of data, selecting professional, reputable and experienced sources, and validating results through expert feedback.

Triangulation of the information sources from the literature review, interviews and a survey was one way to avoid bias in information. Three separate methods of triangulation were used to avoid subjective biases and inaccurate data: triangulation by different researchers, triangulation from different data sources, and triangulation by different methods.

i.   Different Researchers. For interviews, the research team divided the conducting, note-taking and transcription tasks so that a different person was responsible for each. This made it possible to compare the results of these different activities to ensure that they were consistent and valid. In data analysis phase, separate scoring by each researcher during prioritization of results allowed subjective interpretations to be minimized.

ii.   Different Data Sources. Interview respondents were drawn from a diverse group to ensure an extensive data pool and wide range of viewpoints. An effort was made to include people from various professional backgrounds (business, education, non-profit organizations), fields of expertise (sustainability, international development, management, intercultural consulting and communication) and national backgrounds (U.S., France, China, Iran, Chile, India, Germany, etc.).

iii.   Different Methods. Interviews, the survey and a literature review were different methods of collecting data. Those responses which were confirmed by multiple methods were assigned the highest validity for inclusion in results.

Validity of sources. Although interviews and surveys did not have large sample sizes (19 interviews, 52 survey responses) they were of high quality. The validity of the data gathered was enhanced by the high level of professional experience of the interviewees and survey respondents, and by the diverse perspectives received from many different nationalities and fields of expertise.

Feedback and validation. No matter how perfect a product might look in the eyes of its creator, its shortcomings will not be revealed until it is tested and reviewed in real situations by different users. Accordingly, the product of this thesis was reviewed by different practitioners and experts from the fields of sustainability and intercultural communication to ensure validity. Their responses made sure that the information they provided was correctly interpreted and that the recommended strategies were relevant and practical. The authors' peer clusters and shadow groups in the MSLS program also helped us make sure our information and relationships between the project results and tool development were logical. Ensuring the validity of information, having a correct understanding of human needs and the fourth sustainability principle, and using common sense to relate information from different disciplines together were key factors in preparing a practical set of recommendations.

Tool Validation. The tool developed by the authors was sent out in a draft version to the sustainability and intercultural experts who had contributed to the research to obtain their feedback and comments. These were incorporated into the finished tool, in an effort to improve its content and usability. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to do any field testing of the tool by the end of the thesis period, but the authors' intention is to continue to refine the tool based on feedback from practitioners who actually use it in the field.

3 Results

In this chapter, the results of an extensive literature review, findings from 19 interviews, and data from a 40 question survey are organized into five categories: *unique aspects of sustainability, national culture and sustainability, the role of organizational culture, factors related to respecting diversity,* and *success factors for cultural adaptation*. These were designed to reflect the main topic areas within the project scope, and to relate the interview and survey data to the research questions. Within each topic area, interview results and survey results are referenced. Numbers and statistical evidence to support the findings are primarily given in appendices to improve the readability of this section.

3.1 Unique Aspects of Sustainability

To identify success factors for engaging people from different national culture backgrounds in sustainability it is first necessary to understand the specific qualities of sustainability that relate to people's values and other aspects of culture. The first topic area relates to secondary research question 1: "What unique aspects of sustainability can be found that relate to culture and are important to consider when attempting to engage people?" Based on the data collected from interviews and the survey, the following five subcategories were developed from responses related to this question: *meaningful and personal, voluntary and participatory, universal and inevitable, complex and challenging* and *economically rewarding.*

3.1.1 Meaningful and Personal

This category contains responses indicating sustainability was meaningful, inspiring, and relevant to people's personal lives, and that it elicited strong emotional responses, both positive (pride) and negative (guilt). The implication is that sustainability appeals to employee's values. As Richard

Blume said, "people choose the company based on values...if they align with their own personal values" (Blume, 2010). Bob Willard noted that if you "get into sustainability, then you get into things that people care about as human beings...rather than just as employees" (Bob Willard, 2010).

3.1.2 Voluntary and Participatory

The second category encompasses the ideas that sustainability should be voluntary and that people's ideas and input should be valued. Respondent's comments suggested people should be allowed to determine the focus area and to contribute their ideas, and that co-creation and open dialogue were good ways to achieve this goal. Overall, 17 points made by 10 people fell this category. Respondents noted that people should come to sustainability voluntarily through processes involving "participatory analysis and decision making (Patouraux, 2010, Slezak, 2010). Other respondents thought that engagement needed to follow interests of the audience, "they should start where they want to start and are ready to start and it has to go at their pace" (Leekha, 2010).

3.1.3 Universal and Inevitable

Many respondents identified that sustainability was unique in that it affects everyone, is growing in importance, and can only become more necessary over time. The *Universal and Inevitable* category reflects these ideas, and is perhaps best summarized in the words of Philippe Patouraux, "We are going in the direction of history." Six interview responses from three people contributed to this category. On the survey, 86% of respondents felt that "emphasizing that unsustainability is a global problem and not specific to any one cultural group" was at least moderately useful as a strategy, while 54% felt it was very useful or extremely useful.

3.1.4   Complex and Challenging

Responses included in this category related to the complexity of sustainability and the challenges of getting people to understand inter-connectivity and the science behind sustainability. Respondents referred to the complexity of the subject and that it takes time to adequately explain it to people. They indicated two especially challenging areas: getting people to understand inter-connectivity,and conveying the underlying science behind the FSSD, especially to people without scientific backgrounds or adequate levels of education. Five points made by four people from the interviews fit in this category. From the survey, 65% of respondents felt that making a strong scientific case for sustainability was *not* a good way to engage people from different cultural backgrounds.

3.1.5   Economically Rewarding

This category included responses related to the business case for sustainability. Interviewees noted that sustainability could increase commitment and passion of employees, help companies in their competition for talent, and be a business advantage. They also noted that sustainability could bring economic advantages to people in a development context. Six points made by four people fell into this category. From the survey, "talking about the economic advantages of moving towards sustainability" was ranked as the second most useful strategy for engaging people, with 100% of respondents rating it as at least moderately useful and 77% rating it as very useful or extremely useful.

3.2   National Culture and Sustainability

This section addresses the need to understand which aspects of National cultures could influence people's attitudes towards sustainability and their receptivity to engagement efforts, and contains the results to secondary research question 2: "What aspects of employees' national culture

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backgrounds affect the success of sustainability engagement efforts?" Identifying such aspects helped inform the selection of success factors for answering the primary research question and provided a basis of understanding for the development of intercultural engagement strategies.

Hofstede's culture dimensions were used as a conceptual lens to examine aspects of national culture that could influence sustainability engagement. Three of the five dimensions (long-term orientation, power distance and soft/hard cultures) found to have special significance for sustainability are discussed in this section.

3.2.1 Importance of Values

Results from interviews and the survey support the importance of culturally influenced values as factors which affect receptivity towards sustainability engagement. The idea that sustainability engagement touches deeply held values was proposed by several respondents (Leadbitter 2010, Richard, 2010, Malhotra, 2010), and also highlighted in the section of the survey designed around Hofstede's culture dimensions. The three most important values to consider for sustainability engagement identified by respondents were long-term orientation, power distance, and the soft/hard dimension. Complete results to the survey questions are found in Appendix IV.

Long-term orientation. Although long-term orientation was identified by survey respondents as an important value to consider for sustainability, this finding was not further supported by the literature review and interviews. At this point the authors cannot indicate that LTO is an important value to consider for sustainability engagement, but only can say that respondents *thought* it was important.

Power Distance. Survey respondents belief that social norms related to power and hierarchy are important factors in sustainability engagement are supported by results from the literature review and interviews.

The 2007 paper "National Culture and Environmental Sustainability" by

Park, Russell, and Lee found a significant negative correlation between power distance and the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI). The ESI is a global ranking of countries by their progress on ecological and social sustainability published by the World Economic Forum in 2005.

Park, Russell, and Lee's results indicated a "significant and negative" correlation of power distance with the ESI, supporting their hypothesis that "low power-distance cultures tend to have a higher level of environmental sustainability than high-power-distance cultures". They suggest that more egalitarian societies may have more accountability and less corruption, leading to a more conducive environment for social and environmental justice (Park, Russell, and Lee, 2007).

Interviewees identified decentralized models and flat management structures with low hierarchy as the best organizational environments for supporting sustainability engagement. This make sense when considering that countries like Sweden and Norway with relatively low power distance scores (ranking 67-68th out of 74 countries) are world leaders for sustainability, in the top 5 of the ESI (Hofstede, 1991, World Economic Forum, 2001)

Soft/hard Cultures. Survey results show that respondents recognize the importance of nature orientation and social empathy, both related to soft/hard dimension, as factors influencing sustainability engagement. Park, Russell, and Lee also found a correlation between the soft/hard dimension (otherwise known as MAS) and the ESI. This finding was further supported by interview responses (Malhotra, 2010, Leekha, 2010).

3.3   The Role of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a complex topic which lies largely outside the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, it is difficult to overlook since sustainability practitioners must typically be aware of the culture of the organization they are working with, and many interview respondents

identified the importance of understanding organizational cultures for their work. Since the authors' findings related to organizational culture are tangential to the research questions and main focus of the thesis, detailed results are presented separately in Appendix I.

3.4   Factors Related to Respecting Diversity

This topic area relates to the primary research question and to the authors' definition of successful intercultural engagement based on respect for human needs. The four subcategories under this topic show that interview and survey respondents also recognize the need to respect identity, ensure participation, build trust through effective communication, and overcome historical challenges resulting from ethnocentrism and exploitation. Specific strategies related to the factors described here were included in the authors' tool for supporting intercultural sustainability engagement.

3.4.1 Diversity as Opportunity

The authors' identified respecting diversity and avoiding ethnocentrism as important aspects of successful intercultural sustainability engagement. This section presents results indicating our respondents also saw the importance of valuing diversity, as well as strategies for achieving this goal Many of the strategies reported here were included in the tool for sustainability practitioners.

Many interview comments reflected the view that diversity was above all an opportunity. Some examples are: "Sustainability is enriched by diversity", and "Many cultures have lifestyles closer to sustainability that we can learn from" (Kersten, 2010, Howard, 2010). Survey results indicated that most respondents felt groups from different cultural backgrounds would be more likely to come up with creative solutions to sustainability problems than groups from culturally homogeneous back-grounds.

At the same time respondents noted the challenges that diversity poses when trying to engage different groups in sustainability. Some of these include: getting employees from different backgrounds to have the same vision, allowing the expression of cultural differences, and allowing people to engage where their interests are (Yang, 2010, Leadbitter, 2010, Willard, B., 2010). Others pointed out that "cultural diversity is not a barrier to sustainability, recognizing cultural diversity will help us to move towards sustainability" (Villoch, 2010) and that "companies should look towards a future in which ethnocentrism will not exist" (Yang, 2010).

3.4.2 Ensuring Full Participation

Many strategies identified in the interviews relate to the need to increase participation and make sure no one is left out of sustainability programs. Key points here include the idea that sustainability is a universal and global issue (not something that affects only certain cultural groups) and the use of an open dialogue model based on asking people for their input and co-creation as a way to engage and include them. When creating an engagement program, one respondent mentioned that it was important to "ensure that its not biased towards men, or its not biased towards higher management, political hierarchy, not biased towards any particular level" (Mallick, 2010).

3.4.3 Trust and Transparency

This category relates to the ethics of organizations regarding their sustainability programs, the transparency of their communications about their programs, and the way they are perceived by people, especially those from minority cultural groups. Interview respondents identified trust as a major issue determining the likelihood of success of sustainability engagement initiatives. Jason Leadbitter noted that, "Employees need to be convinced that the company is serious about sustainability, once they are convinced that it is real and that the company is not paying lip service then

they will engage" and that communications should be accurate (Leadbitter, 2010, Kaemmerling, 2010). Others noted that any history or imputation of green-washing by a company could lead to a major lack of trust which could make it very hard to engage employees (Mallick, 2010, Patouraux, 2010). Among value-based questions from the survey, "whether people trust the sincerity of their employer's efforts to move towards sustainability" was ranked by respondents as the most important of all fifteen items.

One respondent noted the reality that employees of multinational companies from minority cultural groups often have no choice but to deal with company policies and regulations that reflect the values of the dominant culture (Goudarzipour, 2010). Another offered a strategy for dealing with ethnocentrism by "making it explicit": being open about the facilitator's own cultural biases and acknowledging that everyone has their own set of cultural norms (Villoch, 2010).

3.4.4 The FSSD and Cultural Diversity

Interview respondents identified many advantages of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) with regard to intercultural sustainability engagement, as well as a few challenges. Many responses noted that the generic nature of the FSSD allow it to be applied in many different ways and this could be advantageous when working with diverse groups, with comments such as "the TNS framework cut through any intercultural differences" (Leadbitter, 2010)[1]. Richard Blume noted that "culture is the lens by which we view the world, and its also the biggest influence over the way we satisfy our needs. So if you can have that conversation around human needs being relevant to everyone and the satisfiers being different, then that's a way you can identify what's relevant to people." (Blume, 2010).

Most respondents felt that different groups should be able to approach

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1   Note that some practitioners refer to the FSSD as the "TNS framework" due to its use by The Natural Step (TNS).

sustainability in different ways. Even among respondents who worked with the FSSD, many felt that a shared vision of success was not necessary across different cultures. Wouter Kerstad expressed this view when he said, "do you really need to have completely the same vision in a company that has branches in different countries? Do you need to have one vision completely or is there some power in richness in small differences of that vision? In the end, it's also based on contextual and cultural differences" (Kerstad, 2010). Bob Willard had a similar view, "The visions should be tailored and respect the cultural interest. But they should align with the definition" of sustainability (Willard, B., 2010). Some respondents combined the FSSD with other approaches to sustainability, such as the triple bottom line or natural capitalism. "The nice thing about natural capitalism is that they stress the positives" (Willard, B., 2010).

3.4.5 Being Aware of History

The final category in this section relies on the comments of only a few interview respondents, but the authors feel that it is too important to neglect. A respondent from China pointed out the importance of being "aware of the differences between developed and developing countries" when working to engage people in sustainability (Yang, 2010). The personal experience of the authors suggests that histories of colonialism and unfair economic practices between countries, as well as social distrust resulting from histories of conflict, frequently lead to strong reactions in the developing world to initiatives coming from the developed world, including sustainability. In the words of Manfred Max-Neef "the exploitation of some groups by others must give way to a social will encouraging participation, autonomy and the equitable distribution of resources" (Max-Neef, 1991).

3.5 Success Factors for Cultural Adaptation

The final section of this chapter presents results related to the primary research question. Success factors for culturally adapting efforts to engage

employees from different national culture backgrounds in sustainability were derived from interviews and survey results. Their selection was informed by the results of the two secondary research questions and the understanding of culture and engagement gained through the research project. Together with strategies from the previous section (3.4), items in this section provide the basis of a tool for culturally adapting engagement efforts developed by the authors.

Results from interview and survey data for this section were organized into nine strategies within three groups that deal with communication, context, and common values between cultures. Since many individual success factors came out of the results, they have been grouped into the headings presented here in order to simplify things for the reader, but the headings should not be mistaken for the specific success factors themselves.

3.5.1 Effective Communication

The first group addresses the need for effective intercultural communication. It includes three strategies: *Make it Interactive, Ensure Understanding*, and *Have the Skills*.

Make it Interactive. One of the most frequently mentioned engagement strategies to come out of the interviews was the idea of co-creation of sustainability visions and plans, closely related to Bob Willard's concept of meeting people where they are. Fifteen different respondents mentioned some variation of the idea that engagement began with asking people about what sustainability means to them. As one respondent put it, "we ask them what changes they want to make in their personal lives for sustainability and what resources they need. And then we can see what people want to do and where the gaps are and then we can help fill the gaps by connecting them with resources in the community." (Leekha, 2010).

Jason Leadbitter gave a good description of the facilitation model for sustainability engagement often followed by those familiar with the FSSD or TNS approach: "Host workshops across the company to get the buy-in

from employees, allow them to be a part of the visioning process. Co-creating in this way can create a sense of shared ownership thereby leading to the same vision." (Leadbitter, 2010). Other points in this category addressed the need to get employee feedback about sustainability programs and to make communications interactive (Mallick, 2010, Weldon, 2010). The authors take the position that the importance of getting people to contribute their ideas leads to engagement through respecting their human needs for identity and participation.

Ensure Understanding. This strategy includes items related to the need to allow people's human need for understanding to be met. It includes the use of clear and culturally appropriate language, including the use of plain language principles, and respecting diversity by making an effort to communicate in local languages, active listening and perception checking, and making sure that the material and concepts being presented are appropriate for the audiences' educational background. It also includes the need to be sensitive to words and phrases which may be loaded with strong connotations for people that could potentially elicit powerful emotional responses.

Renauld Richard and others identified the importance of checking for understanding: "you send the message and listen to the feedback and check if it's correctly understood" (Richard, 2010).

Gagan Leekha, Marsha Willard and Mark Slezak pointed out that words like "sustainability" and phrases like "climate change" could at times become a barrier for engaging people if they either did not understand their meaning or had strong emotional reactions against them.

Several interviewees also highlighted the need to "simplify the science" of the FSSD approach to sustainability for certain audiences as a means of increasing engagement, helping to ensure understanding of the scientific basis of sustainability.

Have the skills. This category addresses the art of facilitation in an intercultural context, and the need for intercultural competencies. Several

points from the interviews addressed the need for sustainability practitioners working with multicultural groups to have good intercultural communications competencies, and to be able to handle objections from their audience (Blume, 2010, Richard, 2010).

The authors have drawn on work by The Global People project at the University of Warwick and Gudykunst and Young to identify some key competencies for intercultural communication. These include: mindfulness, self-control, flexibility, empathy, and acceptance of differences.

3.5.2 Situation and Context

The situation and context group deals with the need for situational awareness, the need to contextualize metaphors, stories, examples and training materials, and the need for sustainability practitioners to be aware of issues related to hierarchy and power distance.

Situational awareness. Several interview respondents indicated the need to understand cultural and local norms, know the audience, and be aware of sensitive areas and topics. (Goudarzipour, 2010, Blume, 2010, Slezak, 2010). One respondent pointed out the need to be aware of any external pressures people may be facing that could affect their behavior and choices (Slezak, 2010).

Find the right context. The need to contextualize engagement efforts was even more clearly highlighted in the analysis of interview data. Seven people mentioned the importance of local context analysis, and the importance of using culturally appropriate metaphors as conditions for engagement. From the survey, "Being aware of local issues and talking about how they relate to sustainability" was ranked as the most important of 8 engagement strategies.

Be smart about power. The final item in this relates to power distance and hierarchy, already discussed in Section 3.2 above. This strategy acknowledges that power is a key factor affecting the ways in which people

interact in organizations, including their willingness to engage.

Bob Willard noted that in a very hierarchical organization, "there will be more challenges and more inhibitors to employees being engaged in the sense of contributing ideas", because they are not used to being asked for their input (Willard, B. 2010). Others noted that in high power distance situations, having the support of people with status and authority becomes more important (Leekha, 2010, Slezak, 2010).

3.5.3. Finding Common Values

The final group of strategies relates to finding common values among people from different cultures. This could occur by finding areas in which differing sets of values overlap, or by attempting to focus attention on human universals- values that almost everyone could find appealing. These strategies are also about meeting the definition of successful intercultural engagement, which includes respect for diversity and cultural differences.

Appeal to human universals. Many interview respondents identified engagement strategies that relate to universal human concerns for families, economics, and fundamental human needs. The authors take the position that such universal issues can make good entry points for intercultural sustainability engagement, and may also be a good way to engage very diverse groups where members of many different cultures are represented.

Many respondents identified people's families as a universal and highly effective tie-in to sustainability. As Marsha Willard put it, "Humans share an emotional desire to make things better for our children" (Willard, M., 2010). On the survey, the statement "Since many people have families with children, talking about the importance of sustainability for future generations is a good way to engage them" was the second highest ranked item out of six strategies, with 98% of the sample agreeing with it and only one person disagreeing.

The business case for sustainability was also consistently identified as an

important strategy in this category. As one interviewee said "the economic argument and business case can easily be understood by anybody." (Slezak, 2010). Others noted that if people were preoccupied with meeting basic human needs they were unlikely to be interested in sustainability, unless sustainability could be presented as somehow connected to meeting those needs (Leekha, 2010, Howard, 2010).

Including diversity. Several respondents mentioned the importance of including different kinds of diversity (gender, occupational, departmental and national) in workshops, World Café groups, and other groups when attempting to engage people. The authors particularly appreciated the suggestion from Chris Weldon to include women in groups. This observation makes sense in the context of soft/hard cultures and the close alignment of soft cultures' values with sustainability values. Hofstede's work suggests that differences in values between males and females are greater in hard than in soft cultures, so that even in hard cultures females will be closer to the soft values. Chris Weldon observed that having a mix of males and females in a group "makes the men behave differently" and creates a more effective environment for sustainability engagement (Weldon, 2010).

Acknowledging differences and spreading compromise around. The final group of strategies recognizes that when different culture values come together, it is not always possible to create practical outcomes in which both culture's values are equally represented. Helen Spencer-Oatley shared her insight into such situations as follows, "One thing we found is that it's important to on the one hand to find things in common, and at the same time to acknowledge where you hold different values and beliefs. And then try to find solutions that would suit both of you." In situations where situational constraints prevented this way of resolving conflict, she acknowledged "very difficult times in trying to resolve the differences." (Spencer-Oatley, 2010). Chris Weldon shared another strategy for dealing with intercultural conflicts: to spread compromise around so that the same people are not always the ones to compromise. If everyone gets to win at least some of the time, they are much more likely to have a healthy attitude and be willing to become engaged (Weldon, 2010).

4   Discussion

This chapter presents some key findings from the research results.   They are analyzed according to how they relate to the results expected by the authors and their implications for sustainability engagement within organizations. The validity of the findings is also discussed.

4.1   What's Unique about Sustainability?

Findings related to secondary research question 1 informed the selection of results to the primary research question. While many useful strategies and success factors were identified from interview and survey results, findings in this section helped the authors select those most relevant for sustainability engagement rather than just engagement programs in general. This helped keep the results to the primary research question firmly within the sphere of sustainability and within the scope of the research project, ensuring that the tool developed from them would make a contribution towards strategic sustainable development.

Headings in this section correspond to those in section 3.1 above. Unique aspects of sustainability discussed include: *meaningful nature of sustainability, voluntary and participatory nature of sustainability, universal nature of sustainability, complexity of sustainability* and *economic rewards of sustainability.* An additional topic, *innovation*, is also discussed since it was a result expected by the authors.

The authors' expected results to secondary research question 1 were based on a understanding of sustainability in the context of the FSSD. They included the ideas that sustainability is meaningful and requires empathy (understood as a concern for others), that it is a complex subject requiring systems thinking, and that it requires innovation. Some findings were not anticipated by the authors and this is noted under the appropriate sections.

4.1.1 Meaningful Nature of Sustainability

One key research finding was that sustainability was more meaningful and personal to people than other programs organizations might try to engage them in. This is because sustainability connects to deeply held values, including empathy.

The results supported the expected idea that empathy was an important value to sustainability, related to a belief that the human needs of others are worthy of consideration. What was unforeseen was the extent to which this value relates to Hofstede's soft/hard culture dimension and by extension, to gender. The implication is that the same value orientation along the soft/hard dimension influences attitudes towards both the social and ecological sides of sustainability. The association makes sense in light of the importance of families and children as a motivator for sustainability.

Two universal ways of appealing to people regardless of cultural background were identified in the results: one based on the importance of families and children, and one based on economics and the business case for sustainability. The former relates to the soft pole of the soft/hard dimension, while the latter is more tied to 'hard' values of status and material success.

4.1.2 Voluntary and Participatory Nature of Sustainability

The finding that sustainability should be voluntary and participatory was not specifically anticipated by the authors at the beginning of the research process, but evolved out of discussions with interviewees. In hindsight, this finding makes perfect sense in light of the requirements of SP4 for eliminating barriers to meeting human needs, and shows that the experts interviewed were conscious of these requirements. This finding helped to inform the selection of success factors later on by illuminating the need to recommend programs which maximize participation and allow people to contribute their own ideas and interpretations. While such an open, facilitative model can be challenging in some cultural contexts, the finding

that sustainability should be voluntary and participatory meant the authors continue to recommend it as the best overall approach, with slight modifications where needed.

4.1.3 Universal Nature of Sustainability

This finding was not specifically anticipated but is immediately understandable to anyone familiar with the sustainability challenge. It illustrates that sustainability is not so much a choice as a necessity in the context of current trends of population growth and increasing intensity of resource use globally. The finding that sustainability challenges affect all people and cultural groups supports the idea that sustainability engagement efforts should be culturally adapted, working towards an ultimate goal of universal participation.

4.1.4 Complexity of Sustainability

The expectation that sustainability is a complex subject was supported by the findings, which referenced not only the need for a holistic, systems thinking approach, but also the difficulties that a sufficient scientific understanding of sustainability could pose for some groups. The implications regarding culture are that the strengths of some cultures in holistic thinking should be utilized, and that the science and complexity of sustainability needs to be presented in an appropriate way for members of the target organization.

The authors' research suggests the scientific focus of the FSSD could present both an opportunity and a challenge when using it to engage different cultural groups. The use of science can provide an objective platform for discussion of sensitive topics that can help to overcome sensitivities related to differences in values between cultures, one reason "rely on the objectivity" of science is one of the tips included in the United Nations Population Fund's 24 Tips for Culturally Sensitive Programming

(UNFPA, 2004). On the other hand, many interview respondents indicated that understanding the science behind the FSSD could be challenging for people who lacked the necessary background or education. This concern was shared by survey respondents, a majority of whom felt that "focusing on making a strong scientific case for sustainability is not a good way to engage people from many different cultural backgrounds". Therefore, some of the strategies for improving intercultural sustainability engagement recommended by the authors are concerned with the appropriate use of science, and making it understandable to the target audience.

4.1.5 Economic Rewards of Sustainability

The finding that sustainability should be economically rewarding showed the authors the importance of including some success factors related to the business case for sustainability in the results to the primary research question. While this finding was not listed as an expected result by the authors at the outset, it is consistent with their understanding of the FSSD and the work of Bob Willard and other authors who discuss the business case for sustainability.

4.1.6 Innovation

The authors expected that the need for innovation would be found to be an important aspect of sustainability affected by cultural differences. Perhaps because most interview and research questions were focused on engagement of people in sustainability rather than the development of sustainability programs, the necessity of innovation did not emerge strongly from these sources. The importance of innovation as a necessary element for sustainability is however well supported in existing literature (Rennings, 2000). The authors expected that innovation would be related to Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension, but did not find specific evidence to support this idea in the context of sustainability.

The idea that cultural diversity supports innovation was a key finding, validated through triangulation of sources between interviews, the survey and the literature review. This indicates that cultural diversity as a source of creativity and ideas is of great value in the path towards sustainability. As such, it can be an important factor contributing to the success of organizations in their sustainability journey.

4.2 National Culture Values and Sustainability

This section analyzes findings related to secondary research question 2. The authors' finding that differing values among cultural groups affects their receptivity to becoming engaged in sustainability is consistent with expected results and has implications for strategic planning of engagement approaches. Considering the role of values was an important step in the process of selecting effective intercultural engagement strategies when answering the primary research question.

Hofstede conceives of culture as a series of concentric circles like an onion, where values are the innermost layer, surrounded by outer layers of practices. Values tend to be largely unconscious and are formed early in life through exposure to the norms of parents, teachers, and society. Because of their unconscious and deeply ingrained nature, people often pass them on to the next generation relatively unchanged. As Hofstede puts it, "People tend to reproduce the education they received, whether they want to or not". While the outer layers of the onion (cultural practices) can change quite quickly, as in the case of the adoption of new technologies, the underlying values tend to be relatively stable and change slowly if at all. Since values are stable while practices change, "comparative research on cultures presumes the measurement of values" (Hofstede, 1991).

The implications for sustainable development are that attention must be paid to cultural values if development programs are to succeed. Manfred Max-Neef points out that poverties of human needs result from situations in which needs are not satisfied. Since institutions are typically produced in a

certain cultural context, they reflect the values inherent in the culture in which they originated. Hofstede notes that "we cannot change the way people in a country think, feel and act by simply importing foreign institutions" (Hofstede, 1991).

When Max-Neef says that "satisfiers may include, among other things, forms of organization, political structures, social practices, subjective conditions, values and norms, spaces, contexts, modes, types of behavior and attitudes", he is essentially describing various aspects of culture. The authors take the position, expressed by Richard Blume of TNS Sweden, that values influence the choices that people make about how to actualize their human needs.

The reason that needs are satisfied differently in different societies has much to do with underlying values. Pablo Villoch expressed this idea in an interview when he said, "What we understand as sustainable development in the western world is an expression of our culture" (Villoch, 2010). Culture is not just another dimension of development activity, it is the basis of the underlying system of values that determines the development choices made by a society.

When cultural values are seen in this way, it becomes clear that the challenge of sustainable development is to find ways to align the values inherent in sustainability with those of various cultural groups. This has more to do with the way the content of sustainability is presented and contextualized than with making changes to the content itself, but it also implies acceptance of the reality that different cultures will interpret, express and practice sustainability in different ways.

4.2.1 Long-term Orientation

The authors expected that a long-term perspective would prove to be an important value contributing to acceptance and interest in sustainability. This value corresponds closely to Hofstede's culture dimension of long-term orientation (LTO). The authors take the position that sustainability

requires foresight and a concern for the future, and that extremely short-term goals often contribute to unsustainable practices. The high importance survey respondents gave to long-term orientation as a success factor for sustainability indicates that this idea is commonly held. On the other hand the "National Culture and Environmental Sustainability" study by Park, Russell, and Lee that found statistical correlations between two of Hofstede's dimensions and sustainability (power distance and soft/hard) also examined LTO and found no significant relationship to national sustainability performance. The authors conclude that further investigation is needed to show whether or not LTO is an important factor to consider for sustainability engagement.

4.2.2 Power Distance

Hofstede's culture dimension of power distance is concerned with how different cultures respond to a universal human problem, how to deal with inequalities among people within societies. In societies with high power distance it is accepted as a cultural norm that some people will have much more power than others, even by those without power. There is a relationship between power distance and corruption. Hofstede found that among wealthy countries levels of corruption measured by Transparency International were correlated to power distance scores (Hofstede, 1991). To put it another way, societies in which high levels of inequality are the norm may suffer from a lack of accountability, and an erosion of social trust. Distrust in societies can increase the likelihood of situations where ecological resources are degraded due to a tragedy of the commons (Baland and Platteau, 1998).

Besides affecting people's values and expectations related to the *content* of sustainability, power distance can also affect the *process* of engaging people in sustainability. People from high power distance cultures will be less accustomed to volunteering their ideas and more dependent on decisions made by managers and others with greater status than themselves. Many points brought up in interviews conducted by the authors reflect this reality. As Bob Willard noted that if a culture "has a very high hierarchy" then

"there is a sort of given assumption that the executives and managers walk on water and the employees are simply pawns of the game. Then asking the employees for their opinions may seem a bit of like unnatural step" (Willard, B., 2010).

4.2.3 The Soft/Hard Dimension

The finding that positions along the soft/hard dimension are a significant indicator of receptiveness to sustainability engagement supports the authors' expectation of the important role of values. The soft end of this dimension is associated with a concern for the quality of life and caring for others and, while the hard end is associated with assertiveness and materialism. Park, Russell, and Lee, 2007, note that hard cultures are goal oriented and focused on material gains, tending to "ignore environmental risks and judge them as less problematic". Their findings indicate that a culture with a lower score (a "soft" culture) is predicted to have more progress on sustainability than one with a high score, where education, income, and other relevant factors are equal.

Sanjoo Malhotra of intercultural consulting firm ITIM International confirmed this idea in an interview, noting that Sweden's position as a world leader in sustainability is likely related to its soft/hard score, the lowest in the world. Uniquely Swedish cultural concepts such as "Lagom" (moderation) and Allemansrätten (the right of public access to land, even that which is privately owned) may be related to this culture dimension, which emphasizes consensus and caring about the needs of others (Malhotra, 2010). The authors feel that evidence shows that a culture's position on the soft/hard dimension is likely to be a significant factor affecting sustainability engagement, and that practitioners should be aware of their audience's values related to this dimension when seeking to engage them.

4.3   Success Factors

This section discusses some of the key findings from sections 3.4 (factors related to respecting diversity) and 3.5 (success factors for cultural adaptation) of the results above. Rather than go through each heading from the results section one by one, only the most important items and those related to the authors' expected results are included.

Many individual factors were identified for contributing to the success of intercultural communication efforts. These were organized into groups to form the basis of the authors' tool for helping sustainability practitioners effectively address cultural differences.

Expected results for the primary research question were drawn from the research team's knowledge of the FSSD. These included the expectation that encouraging people from different backgrounds to express their opinions and concerns would be an effective means of sustainability engagement, the expectation that management support would prove important, and the expectation that sustainability practitioners working with cultural groups different than their own should have good intercultural competencies.

4.3.1   Participatory Model for Engagement

Although unanticipated, one of the most significant findings was the importance of considering power and hierarchy when engaging different cultural groups within organizations. Understanding that flat, decentralized management structures are best for implementing sustainability in organizations, and that engaging people in high power distance environments may require modifying the participatory open dialogue model typically used by sustainability practitioners, is an important and useful finding that can help engagement efforts be more effective. The importance of this finding is underscored by its emergence from various areas of the authors' research. It relates to results in sections 3.4.2 (*ensuring participation* as a requirement for supporting cultural diversity) and section 3.5.3 (*including diversity*).

4.3.2 Importance of Management Support for Sustainability

The idea that the support of top management for sustainability programs is necessary and important is well established. A report on employee engagement in sustainability from Brighter Planet found that "an official sustainability officer is no substitute for visible upper-level support. Programs in which a sustainability director is the main advocate for employee sustainability are one third as effective as programs where management or the board is the main advocate" (Brighter Planet, 2009).

The authors' findings indicate that power distance affects the degree to which management support is necessary for employee engagement in sustainability. In high power distance situations the importance of management support is magnified, while in more egalitarian cultural environments it may be less important. There is also a relationship between power and trust, with the result that dis-empowered employees may fail to become engaged in sustainability initiatives due to a lack of faith in management and their support. Finding related to this idea include those presented in sections 3.4.3 (*trust and transparency*) and 3.5.2 *(be smart about power*).

4.3.3 Intercultural Competencies

Research results presented in section 3.5.1 *(have the skills*) support the authors' expectation that intercultural competencies are necessary for sustainability practitioners as an important success factor for engaging employees from different national backgrounds. Chief among the necessary skills are mindfulness, self-control, flexibility, empathy, and acceptance of differences.

Mindfulness encompasses being aware of one's own cultural biases and limitations when it comes to understanding the values and motivations of those from different cultural groups. This competency is key to avoiding ethnocentrism and respecting diversity, a requirement of the fourth sustainability principle.

Self-control is necessary for the facilitator to avoid revealing negative emotions caused by the stress of intercultural interactions which could affect his or her effectiveness.

Flexibility involves a tolerance for uncertainty about communication and interpersonal relations, recognizing that intercultural interactions are apt to be less structured and familiar than those within cultures, especially when it comes to topics that are connected to deeply held values, as in the case of sustainability.

Empathy involves the ability to set aside one's personal values and prejudices to attempt to see through the eyes of the other. It implies a sensitivity to the needs of other people and a willingness to entertain their point of view. The authors take the position that empathy is an essential quality for anyone working in the sustainability field, since it is mandated by SP4's requirement that the human needs of others be considered. It is also a key competency needed for intercultural management and communication. In addition, it is related to the values described by Hofstede's soft/hard culture dimension, which includes the idea of caring for others in society.

Acceptance of differences relates to the importance of respecting the human need for identity by being non-judgmental and open to the cultural backgrounds and values of others.

4.3.4 The Need to Contextualize

An additional key finding not anticipated by the authors has to do with the need to put sustainability engagement into local cultural contexts. This affects language, learning materials, storytelling, and even people who may be employed to help in the engagement process. Success factors related to this finding are presented in section 3.5.2 (*situation and context group*) above.

In terms of language, contextualizing means using local languages when

possible, even if only a few key phrases. It also implies using local examples and locally understandable metaphors. One interviewee gave an example from the example of the Open Space workshop model, which uses a metaphor of a butterfly to describe someone who floats around from group to group. He illustrated the need for contextualizing approaches to local cultural contexts by pointing out that a butterfly (mariposa in Spanish) would not be an appropriate metaphor in Latin America, since males in those cultures could be insulted by this appellation.

Learning materials and media should be appropriate and familiar to the groups that will use them, and stories should be contextualized with local and relevant examples whenever possible. The need for context also has implications for change agents. Employing people from the local culture prevalent in the target organization to help explain sustainability in a contextualized way could be a powerful strategy to increasing the effectiveness of engagement efforts.

The business case for sustainability is yet another area that should be presented in an appropriate cultural context, using locally relevant examples and success stories and addressing the local needs and challenges of employees.

4.4   Validity of the Results

The authors made every effort to arrive at research findings through an open-minded, neutral process of inquiry, relying on the triangulation of data from different sources to arrive at unbiased, objective results. Due to the time constraints of the research project, there were limits to the number of people who could be interviewed and the number of survey responses that could be obtained. More important than quantity however, is the quality of the responses that contributed to the research findings. Interview respondents included people with extensive experience as sustainability and intercultural consultants, as well as published authors who are leaders in their respective fields. Survey responses were also of high quality.

Respondents had an average of 12 years of experience and more than 86% were experienced with sustainability, while 86% had at least a bachelor's degree and 55% held a Master's degree or Ph.D.

The authors feel confident in the results included in this report, and believe that the strategies recommended will prove useful for sustainability practitioners seeking to engage people from different cultural backgrounds. It should be noted that there is an element of subjectivity in any qualitative research project and that the personalities and working styles of individuals influence the effectiveness of different techniques they may use. It is recommended that practitioners take from the strategies proposed here those they feel to be most relevant to their work and make changes and adaptations where necessary.

The tool developed by the authors was validated through incorporating feedback and comments from experts into a series of revisions. Although the tool was not able to be field-tested by the time this thesis was published, the authors plan to continue to improve it based on the results of its practical application. Initial feedback from sustainability practitioners included many positive and encouraging comments and suggest that it will be a useful and understandable addition to their resources.

5   Conclusion

Whether one follows Hofstede's conception of culture as the mental programming we inherit from the social environments in which we mature, or see it as shared values, practices, attitudes and beliefs, it is clear that culture cannot be ignored when working towards sustainability. It is the mental programming that we have and the values we share that drive the choices we make as individuals and societies. The material practices and social norms of modern societies have resulted in social and ecological problems on a global scale, resulting in the evolving concept of sustainable development as a way to address them. Global challenges require intercultural cooperation on a hitherto unprecedented level.

The challenge of sustainability is to allow the human needs of present and future generations to be met in ways that do not degrade the ecosystems on which life on earth depend. Even in today's world some examples of cultures persist for which the ecological aspects sustainability is not especially relevant, because their members already live within the bounds of natural systems. Human needs, though, are universal, and diverse choices about how they are satisfied reflect different cultural solutions to the common problems of humanity.

The fourth principle of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development requires that barriers to people being able to meet their human needs should not be created, but says nothing about the specific ways in which this should be addressed. Values are deeply held, often unconscious tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others, which become ingrained in the psychological makeup of individuals through the influence of culture. It is values which influence the choices people make about how to satisfy their needs.

Sustainability encompasses a certain collection of values, some of which have been identified and discussed in this report. These include the following values related to the soft/hard dimension: social empathy and concern for the environment. A concern for the future, related to long-term orientation, is also important. Respect for the human needs of the individual

is another value, one with implications for the distribution of power in society and therefore related to the dimension of power distance. A respect for the validity and empiricism of science as a means of understanding the world and our place in it is another important value. Finally, respect for diversity is a requirement of meeting the fourth sustainability principle, necessary to allow expression of the human need for identity among different cultural groups.

Since respecting diversity is an essential part of sustainability values, the idea that sustainability could be imposed on other cultures is a contradiction in terms. Therefore sustainability must be voluntary. Cultures must be free to interpret and practice sustainability in their own way. Although an effort should be made to ensure the various interpretations are in accordance with guiding principles, even this cannot be imposed.

The preliminary challenge of sustainability with regard to culture is to find ways to engage people from different cultural backgrounds, while allowing diverse approaches and avoiding ethnocentrism (the suppression of identity). Where possible guiding principles should be shared, or at least efforts should be made to make sure diverse interpretations of sustainability tend towards the "right direction" illuminated by the principles.

The authors have identified several success factors to help accomplish this goal. The first is by aligning values. This could be done through identifying universal human values such as the concern for families and children (related to the human need for affection), or economy (subsistence, participation, and identity). Values can also be aligned by identifying areas of overlapping values between sustainability and the culture of the target audience.

Sustainability is a complex topic relating in some way to most fields of human endeavor, so it is likely that in almost any culture some common values exist. These could be entry points to a larger discussion of sustainability that in time could reveal other shared areas of interest.

Another success factor is concerned with effective communication. Strategies in this area include the use of appropriate language,

contextualizing approaches for the target group's culture, respecting the need for understanding by simplifying the science when necessary and conveying the complexity of sustainability in a culturally appropriate way.

Respecting diversity and building trust are of key importance for sustainability. It is essential that people's needs for identity and participation be met by asking for and receiving their ideas and creativity. Cultures we might think of as primitive may have cultural practices far closer to sustainability than our own. Avoiding ethnocentrism means being aware of ones own culturally inherited biases. From a sustainability perspective this includes being aware of the assumptions about values that are implicit in the sustainability framework and being aware that they may not be universally shared. An awareness that any attempt to impose values on others is unsupportable under the fourth sustainability principle can help practitioners avoid legitimate charges of hypocrisy levied by those who see sustainability as a reaction to mistakes made in the developed world.

A final recommendation is to try to build on existing strengths and skills that cultures may have that are relevant to sustainability. Some cultures may have soft values that align with the social aspects of sustainability, while others may have hard values, but may excel at engineering technical solutions to ecological problems. Organizing competitions for sustainability could be effective in competitive cultures, while those focused more on consensus might excel at visioning and creating shared mental models.

5.1   Future Research

The intersection of culture and sustainability is a broad topic and one with increasing relevance in light of the globalization of the modern economy, the increasing awareness of sustainability worldwide, and the serious global ecological problems that exist. This research project has only managed to touch on a small area related to these subjects, one concentrated on strategies for engagement. There are many other important aspects of sustainability that could be considered in light of culture, such as visioning,

implementation of programs, or product design.

One area that emerged from this project which seems to be particularly interesting is that of organizational culture. Sustainability practitioners interviewed for this project identified organizational culture as one of the key factors they seek to understand when going into a consulting situation. A study of factors involved in managing an organizational culture shift towards sustainability could be very interesting, as could comparative case studies of cultures of organization in various stages of their sustainability journey. Such a study could look at industry leaders to determine best practices and establish benchmarks.

Another area for further study could be the relationship between long-term orientation (LTO) and sustainability. While survey respondents identified LTO as an important factor to consider for sustainability engagement, other evidence failed to support the connection. Further research could help to determine, what relationship, if any, exists between them.

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Appendices

Appendix I Results related to Organizational Culture and Sustainability.

Hofstede defines organizational culture as a culture which distinguishes members of one organization from another. It is more superficial than national culture and is characterized by "shared perceptions of daily practices". This distinguishes it from national culture which derives from deeply rooted values, and means that people with different basic values are able to successfully cooperate in organizations. (Hofstede, Gert Jan, 2000).

Importance to sustainability practitioners and consultants:

Chapter 8 of the "Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability" textbook emphasizes the importance of understanding organizational culture, defined as consisting of core values, vision, management model, and leadership and communications styles (Robèrt et al., 2007), and most interview respondents indicated that understanding the culture of organizations they worked with was important to them.

Influences on organizational cultures:

Several beliefs about the influences which shape organizational culture emerged from the interviews. One of these is that organizational cultures are influenced by the national cultures in which they originate (Blume, 2010, Villoch, 2010, Howard, 2010, Willard, B., 2010). This is significant as is provides a link between national and organizational culture. If national culture of origin is a primary influence on organizational culture,

understanding the national culture influences on an organization will help sustainability practitioners assess the "current reality" of the organizational culture.

Some interviewees suggested that national culture influences occurred through the leadership of the organization, while others thought a mixture of employee cultural backgrounds was more significant (Blume, 2010, Carlsbad, 2010, Willard M., 2010). One respondent pointed out that the financiers of an organization could determine its culture (Slezak, 2010).

Organizational culture change:

In order to move towards sustainability from a previously unsustainable position, a company must undergo a culture shift. Borland, 2009 points out that "Changing corporate values, beliefs, assumptions and principles to fit with strategic sustainability are essential for successful implementation." Interview respondents noted that the management approach to change is important (Blume, 2010) and that a culture shift for sustainability is "about change management in a way" (Kersten, 2010). Others recognized the difficulties of changing organizational cultures, reporting that people have an emotional attachment to company values and ways of doing things (Goudarzipour, 2010).

Two respondents pointed out that one can't "create a culture of sustainability" but can only create the conditions for it to develop (Slezak, 2010, Carlstede, 2010). This idea is also found in Chapter 8 of the "Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability" textbook and is related to Peter Senge's concept of a learning organization (Senge, 1990). To this can be added Gert Jan Hofstede's observation that change in an organization "demands vision and communication, and as a consequence, more often than not it also demands changes in perceptions of daily practices, that is: in the organization's culture." (Hofstede, Gert Jan, 2000).

Appendix II List of Interviewees.

No.	Interviewee	Position	Organization	Country
1	Richard Blume	Consultant	The Natural Step	Australia /Sweden
2	Phillippe Patouraux	Sustainable Project Manager	Eclosions	France
3	Pablo Villoch	Owner	Glocalminds	Spain/Chile
4	Wouter Kersten	Manager Research & Innovation	Enviu	Netherlands
5	Bob Willard	Speaker & Author	The Sustainability Advantage	Canada
6	Robert Howard	Independent Consultant	Principal at Life Science Consulting	USA
7	Pravin Mallick	MSLS, Former CSR Manager	SRF Limited	India
8	Mark Slezak	Senior Consultant	Global Emergency Group	USA
9	Tamur Goudarzipour	General Manager	Central Europe Lufthansa	Hungary
10	Goran Carlstedt	Chairman	TNS	Sweden
11	Jason Leadbitter	Sustainability Manager	Ineos ChlorVinyls	UK
12	Marsha Willard	Executive Director	International Society of Sustainability Professionals	USA
13	Helen Spencer-Oatley	Programme Director	Global People	UK
14	Gagan Leekha	Project Coordinator	Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Center	Canada
15	Chris Weldon	Head of Communications	PlasticsEurope	Belgium
16	Renaud Richard	Consultant	TNS	France
17	Ralf Kaemmerling	HR Manager	Central Europe Lufthansa	Hungary
18	Jin Yang	CDM Director	Energy Initiative	Japan/China
19	Sanjoo Malhotra	Head of Client Strategy	ITIM International	Sweden

Appendix III Interview Questions.

1. What opportunities and challenges do you see in trying to get employees from different cultural groups engaged in sustainability?

2. What, if anything, is unique about engaging employees in sustainability vs. engaging them in other values that a company might have?

3. What background information about a company's employees would you want to have before attempting to engage them in sustainability?

4. What relationship, if any, do you see between organizational culture and the cultural backgrounds of employees?

5. How do you make sustainability appeal to employees on a personal level?

6. How do you avoid ethnocentrism (the tendency to judge other cultural groups relative to one's own group) when trying to convey the importance of sustainability to people?

7. How do you share a certain definition of sustainability with people to make sure they all have the same vision?
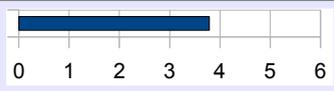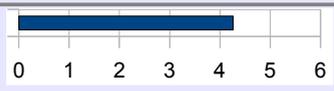
Additional questions if time permits:

1. Who should we be talking to? Do you have any colleagues that are especially experienced in this area who might help us?

2. Can you describe some of the intercultural communication strategies you have found useful?

3. Do you use the TNS framework (Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development) in your work?

1. We'd like to know more about the process you went through in developing intercultural communication tools at Global People. Did you have certain criteria used to identify what was important from the data you had collected? How did you test or validate your tools once you created them?

2. Are the tools developed by Global People project intended to be independent of the content being communicated (such as sustainability)? do you think that different content could be presented in different ways in order to better engage people?

3. Much of our research has been about trying to understand how culturally influenced values that people may have could influence their attitudes and level of acceptance of sustainability. Did you find differences in values to be an issue in your work with the Global People project, and do you have any insights about how to manage such differences?

4. What relationship, if any, do you see between organizational culture and the national cultural backgrounds of employees (or members of an organization)?

5. Although we feel that sustainability represents a universal challenge for humanity, we are also aware that it is a concept mostly developed in Western, developed countries. Do you have any ideas about how to avoid ethnocentrism when trying to promote sustainable values and thinking in an intercultural context?

6. How could diversity be used in a positive way in intercultural communication to engage people towards sustainability? What opportunities and challenges do you see for this?

7. Our research has identified trust as a major factor contributing to the success or failure of efforts to engage employees in sustainability. Do you have any thoughts on how to build trust in relationships between international organizations and their members?
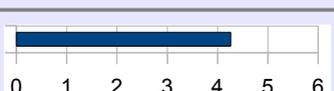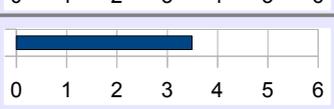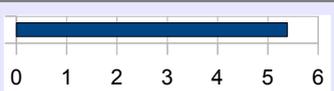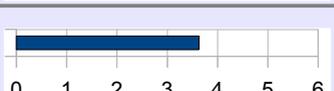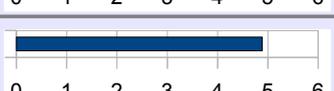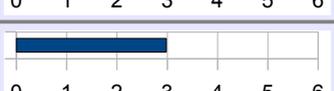
Additional questions if time permits:

1. What opportunities do you see in the combined areas of intercultural communication and sustainability?

2. Sustainability practitioners typically try to engage people through facilitation and to ask them to volunteer ideas as a way to make them feel connected to sustainability initiatives. Do you see any advantages or disadvantages to this kind of approach when used in an intercultural context?
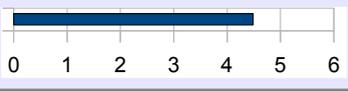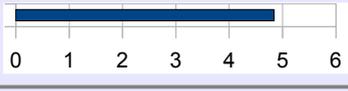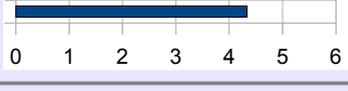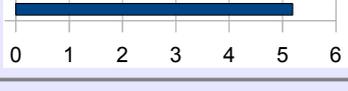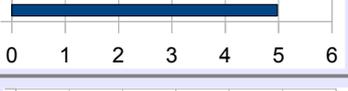
1. Can you describe to us a typical consulting project that ITIM would do? Do you work more with developing intercultural communication competencies among management or do you help with designing training programs for different cultural groups?

2. What are some of the common challenges and opportunities that you encounter in your work in intercultural management?

3. We are interested in using Hofstede's Cultural dimensions theory as a way to structure our approach. We want to know how these theories can be applied in a practical way to address real situations in intercultural communication and management. Could you give us some examples of how ITIM uses the theories in a practical way?

4. Ideally we would like to create a tool that would help sustainability consultants culturally adapt their approach to engaging employees in sustainability. We are looking for examples of tools developed around intercultural communication theories so that we can see different models to help us think about how to develop our own tool. Does ITIM have any such tools that you could share with us or describe to us?

5. In our phone conversation you mentioned that one reason Sweden was doing so much with sustainability related to its score on Hofstede's Masculine/Feminine value dimension. We are very interested in your thoughts about how the other dimensions might also be related to sustainability.

6. What relationship do you see between organizational culture and the national cultural backgrounds of employees?

7. What opportunities do you see in the combined areas of intercultural management and sustainability?

8. Do you have any thoughts on change management of organizational culture and how that can be optimized for sustainability?

9. Can you describe some of the intercultural communication strategies you have found especially useful?

Appendix IV Survey Questions and Results.

No.	How important is it to be aware of...	Average of all Responses	
	1. unimportant, 2. of little importance, 3. moderately important, 4. important, 5. very important, 6. extremely important		
1	Whether they are comfortable with unstructured situations, or expect more structured situations where everyone knows his	3.79	
2	Whether they value competition or cooperation more highly.	3.52	
3	Whether people value their membership in social groups or their freedom to act as an individual more highly.	3.79	
4	Whether they tend to value theories, or facts more highly.	3.81	
5	Whether people trust the sincerity of their employer's efforts to move towards sustainability.	4.79	
6	Whether people believe being trained in sustainability will help to advance their career.	4.08	
7	Whether they are from a culture that seeks to dominate nature or one that seeks a harmonious relationship with the natural	4.04	
8	Whether they are more used to memorizing information or more used to critical thinking and debate.	3.51	
9	Whether they are unlikely to accept a new idea unless they see that it is supported by people in positions of authority.	4.22	
10	Whether they are comfortable with the communication media that is being used to engage them in sustainability	4.11	
11	Whether they are from a cultural background in which caring for the weaker members of society is important.	3.91	
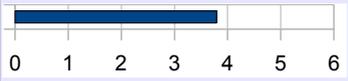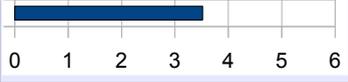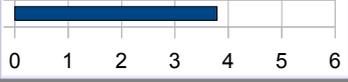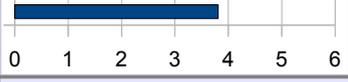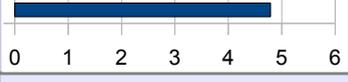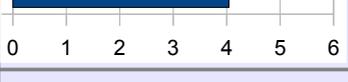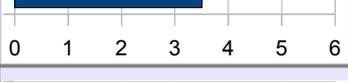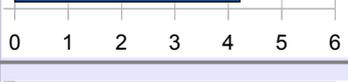
No.	How important is it to be aware of...		Average of all Responses
	1. unimportant, 2. of little importance, 3. moderately important, 4. important, 5. very important, 6. extremely important		
12	Whether they are from a cultural background where being innovative is encouraged.	3.88	
13	Whether people with their cultural background tend to plan for the long-term or short-term.	4.26	
14	Whether they are used to holistic thinking styles that focus on seeing relationships between different things.	4.26	
15	Whether they expect people will have roughly equal amounts of power in society or expect that some will be much more powerful than others.	3.49	

No.	Indicate how much you agree or disagree...		Average of all Responses
	1. completely disagree, 2. mostly disagree, 3. slightly disagree 4. slightly agree, 5. mostly agree, 6. completely agree		
1	Since many people have families with children, talking about the importance of sustainability for future generations is a good way to engage them.	5.14	
2	It's helpful when engaging people in sustainability to ask them to give examples of how sustainability relates to them on a personal level.	5.39	
3	Focusing on making a strong scientific case for sustainability is not a good way to engage people from many different cultural backgrounds.	3.63	
4	backgrounds are less likely to come up with creative solutions to unsustainability problems than groups that share a single cultural	2.05	
5	Cultural diversity presents more opportunities than challenges when it comes to engaging people in sustainability.	4.89	
6	When working to engage employees in sustainability it makes no difference whether a company has a centralized or decentralized management structure.	2.98	
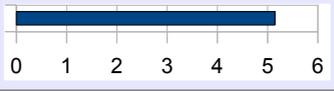
No.	Indicate the usefulness of each strategy...	Average of all Responses	
	1. not at all useful, 2. of very little use, 3. moderately useful, 4. useful, 5. very useful, 6. extremely useful		
1	Creating a memorable event that will stand out in people's minds in order to increase their engagement in sustainability.	4.49	
2	Telling stories about successful sustainability initiatives as a way to engage people.	4.84	
3	Concentrating engagement efforts on the most receptive, energetic people in the hopes that they will in turn engage others.	4.33	
4	Being aware of local issues and talking about how they are related to sustainability.	5.19	
5	Acknowledging any objections people raise when talking about sustainability and attempting to address them.	4.98	
6	Focusing more on either the social side or the ecological side of sustainability depending on the group you are seeking to engage.	4.24	
7	Emphasizing that unsustainability is a global problem and not specific to any one cultural group.	4.42	
8	Talking about the the economic advantages of moving towards sustainability.	5.19	
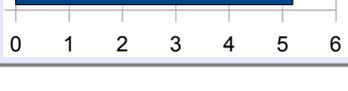
No.	Open Questions
1	Can you think of any instance in your work when something about a person's cultural background strongly affected your ability to engage that person in sustainability (if so, please describe it)?
2	Do you have any particularly successful strategies for engaging people from different cultural backgrounds in sustainability that you could share with us here?
3	If you were going to try to engage members of a certain group in sustainability and you could only ask three questions about the group beforehand, what questions would you ask?

Appendix V Hofstede's Model of Culture.

Hofstede's theory of culture dimensions demonstrates that there are national cultural groupings that affect the behavior of societies and organizations, and that these are persistent across time. Although culture can be defined at many levels (e.g. occupational, organizational, regional, national, and subcultures) the use of nationality as a system boundary for culture allows measurement and reproducibility, since it is much easier to determine a person's nationality than their affiliation with subcultures.

Hofstede conceives of culture as being comprised of values, defined as "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others", and practices, which include symbols, heroes, and rituals. Practices are learned throughout life and new practices are easily adopted, but values are mostly passed on to us as children. They are deeply ingrained and often largely unconscious, forming a kind of "software of the mind" which influences decision-making. Within a culture, values are slow to change, because people tend to unconsciously pass them on to their children even if they don't consciously agree with them. In examining national culture values it can be seen that values typifying certain national cultures have often persisted for many generations.

Because values are more stable than practices, "comparative research on culture presumes the measurement of values" (Hofstede, 2005). Hofstede's oeuvre is based on culture dimensions he arrived at based on the analysis of values present in survey results from employees in fifty countries at IBM in the 1960s. Since then the results of his measurements of cultural values have been confirmed in many other studies by other researchers. His scores for national culture values have been found to remain relatively stable over time from the 1960's until the present (Hofstede, 2005, Dahl, 2004).

When applying Hofstede's or any other theory of culture, it is important to understand that measurements made at a cultural level (surveys of many individuals) are only valid at the same level of analysis. Individuals can and do hold values and engage in practices outside of their national cultural

norms (Dahl, 2004). Hofstede (1980, 1991) referred to this type of error as an "ecological fallacy". While it may be perfectly valid to characterize one forest as a pine forest and another as a beech forest based on an aerial view, no one would expect that every single tree in the pine forest would be a pine. It is similar with cultures; they include many disparate individuals, each with their own unique characteristics, and yet valid, reproducible measurements of the aggregate can still be made.

The implication of this is that one should adopt an open-mind assumption when working with smaller groups. One can use the culture dimensions theory as a way to guide and inform one's understanding, but should be careful never to stereotype individuals by expecting them to conform to cultural norms.

Culture Dimensions: Hofstede's five dimensions of culture are briefly explained below.

I.   Power distance (PDI): Defined as "the extent to which the less powerful people in a country accept and expect that power is distributed unequally", power distance suggests that a society's level of inequality is accepted by the followers as much as by the leaders. Low-power distance societies tend to be more egalitarian, and displays of power and status are discouraged. In high power-distance societies, status and rank are more important and the emotional distance between managers and subordinates is greater. This may make it more difficult for employees to question superiors and reduce overall accountability.

II.   Individualism/Collectivism (IDV): This dimension measures orient-ation towards the individual or towards the group. People in individualist societies tend to think in terms of "I" and to make decisions based on personal motivations and goals, while people in collectivist societies think more in terms of "we" and consider the implications for other members of their in-group in decision making. This dimension is related to family size: cultures in which children grow up in large families tend to be collectivist while cultures in which small families are the norm tend to be more individualist. Individualism is also related to affluence in societies: more affluent societies tend to be more individualist, since personal wealth rather

than interpersonal relationships becomes important for satisfying needs.

III. Soft/Hard (MAS): Hofstede referred to this dimension as "masculine / feminine" and it has proved to be the most controversial of his culture dimensions. The authors believe that this is partly due to sensitivities related to the use of gender-related labels, so in this text it will be referred to in a gender-neutral way as the soft/hard dimension.

IV. The soft pole of this dimension implies modesty, consensus orientation, cooperation, nurturing, caring for the weaker members of society, and concern for the environment, families and children. The hard pole implies assertiveness, competition, confrontation, and an orientation towards status, materialism, and economic success. Soft cultures tend to emphasize quality of life and have a "work to live" attitude, while hard cultures "live to work".

V. Uncertainty avoidance (UAI): This dimension show how different cultures deal with uncertainty and unknown situations. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have little need for structure and rules, allow risk taking, show little emotion, and maintain relaxed attitudes. High uncertainty-avoidance cultures need structure and rules, and emphasize security, predictability, showing more emotion, and may tend towards stressful reactions to novel situations.

VI. Long term orientation (LTO): This dimension, based on Confucian values, was developed by Canadian researcher Michael Bond and subsequently adopted by Hofstede. Short term orientation is characterized by a belief in absolute truth, short term planning, an expectation of quick results, and spending for today. Long term orientation characteristics are a belief that various truths can co-exist, long term planning, perseverance, and saving for tomorrow.

(Hofstede, 2005, Gudykunst and Kim, 1997, Dahl, 2004)